In March of 2018 the Oesper Collections received a gift of 17 large boxes of antique chemical glassware from the Smithsonian Institution that were originally collected by the late Dr. Robert Keppel of the University of Nebraska-Omaha, and this issue of Museum Notes is intended to highlight a few representative examples.

Among the more unusual items in the donation are roughly a half dozen conical sedimentation glasses for urine analysis (figure 1) in which the settled sediment is collected in a cavity located in the large stopcock at the bottom of the glass, and from which it can be recovered for microscopic examination (1).

A second unusual item are two conical assaying or parting flasks (figure 2) for the parting of gold and silver using nitric acid when assaying for gold. Rather than having a lip at the opening, a glass ring is located further down the neck so as to indicate the depth to which the inverted flask is to be inserted into an annealing cup after the dissolution of the silver is complete and the gold residue has been thoroughly washed with distilled water (2).
Other flasks include two large lime-glass Ladenberg flasks (3) with three neck bulbs for fractional distillation (figure 3), a small round bottom flask made of Fry glass (figure 4, left), and a borosilicate Kjeldahl flask made by Schott of Germany (figure 4, right).

There are also two lovely retorts (figure 5) made, according to the engraving on the beaks, by Kohler of Bohemia for the American laboratory supply house of Eimer and Amend in New York City, and a variety of miscellaneous items (figure 6), including lime glass beakers, extraction cones, Woulff bottles, and a large Kipp generator (figure 7).

Figure 4. (Left): Round-bottom flask made of Fry glass. (Right): Kjeldahl flask made of Schott glass.

Figure 5. Lime glass retorts.

Figure 6. Miscellaneous glassware. (Left to right): lime glass beaker, three-necked Woulff bottle, extraction cone.

Figure 7. The Kipp generator.

Figure 8. Circa 1940 chemical bottles.
Though, strictly speaking, not chemical glassware, several circa 1940 chemical bottles are also included (figure 8).

References and Notes

