

Inkwell made in England

The inkwell was a small jar or container made of various materials — such as porcelain, silver, pewter, brass or another metal — which held ink for writers to dip their quills or pens into when scribing a note or letter. They have a fascinating and practical history in the antique world.

The earliest forms of inkwells date back to the times of Ancient Egypt, where wealthy families hired writers called scribes to write their missives for them. These early inkwells were stones with round holes that held the ink.

Many elaborate inkwells can be found from European origins from the 16th century forward. Before this time period, writing was thought to be a demeaning task, and aristocracy left this endeavor to scribes. However, with the invention of the fanciful inkwell with decorative qualities and rich design, the wealthy class decided the task of writing was suited for good taste, and correspondence became eloquent. People around the world began to use inkwells more often as time went by, and materials varied as they were produced. The use of animal horns, silver, gold, bronze, metals, glass and more saw their use in the industry as time ticked on in the writing world. Early inkwells were used for practicality, and fancy inkwells set a status symbol.