

MOSSY COMMENTS - #14

We have always admired tiny, delicate things that are made by hand. The detailed painting done on some open salts is a good example. Our fingers are short, stubby and clumsy, and we couldn't begin to control a brush well enough to paint the tiny roses we see on our salts. Even more difficult for us would be making and placing the tiny applied flowers.

Most porcelain salts with applied flowers seem to have come from Germany in the period 1920-40. The simplest ones have just a single rose or other flower, with perhaps a few leaves thrown in. Figure 1 shows a basket like this. A more elaborately decorated one with forget-me-nots around the flower and over the handle is in Figure 2. The extreme in basket decoration is in Figure 3. This has all surfaces covered with either flowers or a green moss and is what the antique dealers call "Elfinware".

Where "Applied Flowers" stops and "Elfinware" begins is unclear to us. It remains up to each individual to decide for herself which category the salt fits. The usual distinction may apply – if it's mine, it's genuine, if it's yours, it's not.

There are applied flowers that are definitely not in the Elfinware category. Figure 4 is marked Dresden Saxony, and is more detailed than any of the previous ones. Figure 5 is a double made of heavy porcelain –quite unusual. Figure 6 might be a salt, but we wonder if anyone would ever dare use it as such. It has ceramic lace inside the rim, made by soaking real cotton lace in a slurry of clay before firing. When heated, the cotton burns away and leaves a ceramic replica. Inside that are tiny applied flowers. If you used it for salt at the dinner table, how long would the decorations last?

We have several egg shapes with applied flowers on them. The one in Figure 7 is typical. It bears the marks of Ernst Bohne Sons of Rudolstadt, Germany.

We found only one Japanese salt like this in the collection – the wheelbarrow in Figure 8. There is substantially less detail in their flowers than in the German ones.

There are a few glass salts with applied flowers but we're not sure of their origin. One expert told us that the one in Figure 9 and a similar round one were made by Moser in Czechoslovakia. We have a blue one, however, with a RTL Czechoslovakia sticker inside it (Figure 10). The flowers look the same, but we can't get "Moser" out of "RTL".

We hope you have some salts with applied flowers in your collection. The "Elfinware" dishes are expensive, but it's nice to have one as an example. Whenever you see one, stop to admire the detail and the careful work it took to make it.

