

SALTY COMMENTS #5

That time had come again. The salt dish shelves were full, and the top of the piano was covered with new additions to the collection.

"We've got to cut down. I can't see where we can put another set of shelves in this room", said Kay. "Maybe the thing to do is take out the ones that aren't really salt dishes."

"Fine", I replied. "Which ones do you mean? How are you going to decide which is really a salt dish and which is not?"

"That should be simple", she said. "Just look in the Smith books or in Heacock and Johnson. They tell you that some of ours are ash trays, nut dishes, or something else."

"But how do you know that people really didn't use them for salt? The manufacturers listed them for whatever use they thought would sell them. Look at the intaglio types. We've seen them in their original box as ash trays, and one even has a woman smoking a cigarette shown on the bottom. But they were also sold and used as salts. Which ones do you want to take out?"

"I guess our collection of swans is the same way", she responded. "We know some of the glass ones really are meant for salt, but the inside of most china ones looks like they must be washed out every time if you serve salt in them. And the basket collection too - we've seen a few ads that show a basket salt, but don't try to convince me that all those delicate elfinware ones were made to be set on a dining room table at mealtime".

The ensuing discussion showed how hard it is to define just what it is we are collecting. Basically, manufacturers make things they think the public will buy. A hundred years ago, everyone needed open dishes for serving salt. Now shakers are better, and salt dips are only used by a few people on special occasions. Most are bought with no intention of putting salt in them. As an example, some glass houses make a variety of dishes in a new color every month. They develop their own designs, some of which they call salts, and even revive old salt dish molds. Their product has to be considered a legitimate salt dish if they list it as one in their catalog. Another example is the New England Society of Open Salt Collectors 5th Anniversary dish. This is an original design made of pewter, and I doubt that even one of them has had any salt in it. The Open Salt Seekers of the West is coming out with a First Anniversary china dish - you can get a set of 8 for serving your guests for only \$120 plus postage. I don't think many tables will be set this way.

On the other hand, we have dishes that were sold as something else that are widely accepted as salt dips. The round LACY DAISY dish is a good example. According to Doris Lechler who has written several books on children's glass dishes, Westmoreland originally made a clear, amber and lime green version of this as a child's berry set, which included a larger serving dish with several of the smaller "salt dips" to match. We have seen a number of complete sets for sale at antique shows. Later, however, they saw their opportunity and reissued the design in milk glass and in teal green. These were advertised as CRYSTAL JEWEL pattern salt dishes. Should we dispose of the first three colors because the manufacturer didn't consider them to be salts? We prefer to think that people used them as such, even though Westmoreland didn't see the light right away.

If you want to get a very diversified collection, the best way may be to visit antique shows and flea markets and announce yourself as a collector. You will have a wide variety of dishes offered to you. We have quite an assortment of "salts" that we later found to be something else which we obtained via this route. The majority of dealers we encounter are honest, but many of them are only making intelligent guesses and have no good source of information. And they are all interested in making a sale. At the same time, we are so anxious to find a new salt that we forget to listen very hard when the dealer says "I think". At the present time we have a collection which includes the following (many of which we bought with our eyes open because we thought the dish was cute or interesting):

"SALT DISHES" MADE FOR ANOTHER USE

Smith No.	H&J No.	Description	Information Source*
4-3-2	2652	Child's dish	L
18-4-3	2980	COLONY pattern footed almond dish by Fostoria	W
20-3-1	2675	Sold both as child's dish and as a salt	1
21-1-1	2620	Child's dish	L
26-1-1	2626	Ash tray by Heisey	M
26-1-3	2648	LACY DAISY pattern, child's dish if clear, amber or lime	L
26-4-2	2623	Child's dish	L
40-5-1	498	Child's punch bowl by Imperial	1
54-1-1		Heisey CRYSTOLITE pattern individual nut dish	M
66-4-2	4591	Tea strainer holder	4
77-5-1	2719	Individual jelly, Heisey RIDGELEIGH pattern	M
94-6-1	4604	Dentist's cup	4
104-3-1	4487	Fruit immerser for canning jars	Y
105-3-1	354	SPIRAL OPTIC nut dish by Fostoria, salt is 1-3/4" diameter. Smith picture may be correct	W,2
115-2-3		Lower part of covered box from dresser set	4
115-3-1	605	Grape leaf individual almond by Fostoria	W
169-4-2	2873	Candle holder	M
196-2-2	3456	Handled mint dish or shaker holder by Imperial	M
296-3-3	4454	Creamer lid, but may have been intended as salt too	4
307-4-1	447	Cambridge CAPRICE pattern nut dish	M
363-4-3	477	Sugar bowl lid	4
406-5-3		Piano insulator by McKee Glass Co.	M
425-5-1		Miniature vase by Fenton Glass Co.	3
431-2-3		Tooth powder holder by Colgate	4
468-5-1	777	Cambridge DECAGON pattern (nut dish?), salt is smaller	2
	467	Ash tray, Heisey OLD SANDWICH pattern	M
	1237	CAPRICE pattern card holder & ash tray by Cambridge	M
	3738	Military cap ash tray or candy dish	M,4
	4610	Caster cup to protect rugs under furniture	4

ALMOST CERTAIN IT'S NOT A SALT DISH

Smith No.	H&J No.	Description
17-4-3	782	Similar designs are nut dishes in the catalogs
18-1-1		Bottom of a shaker. Top was made of aluminum. Have seen complete shakers at flea markets
142-2-3		Holder for set of chicken salt & pepper shakers
361-2-2		Cambridge CAPRICE pattern, probably a nut dish. Pattern had only shakers for salt
432-1-2		Bottom part of trinket box - have seen the complete box
470-3-2		Bottom of a shaker, have seen complete shaker with aluminum top
484-6-3	2936	Pomade jar, originally with metal lid
	781	Probably a nut dish - too large and too recent for a salt dish
	1195	This and other heraldic china was usually sold as a souvenir miniature, not as a salt dish
	3776	Shaker holder - have seen it with the original shakers

* INFO. SOURCES:

L - Lechler & O'Neill, "Children's Glass Dishes"

M - Manufacturer's Catalogs or Correspondence

W - Hazel Marie Weatherman, "Fostoria, Its First 50 Years"

Y - R.F. & M.F. Ferson, "Yesterday's Milk Glass Today"

1 - Discussion with Doris Lechler

2 - Have seen both for comparison

3 - Seen in Fenton Glass Co. Museum

4 - Seen in use or in original set

WE'RE SUSPICIOUS BUT HAVE NO EVIDENCE

Smith No.	H&J No.	Description
22-2-3	4599	Tiddley winks jars look just like this
93-2-2	480	Shape similar to compote from child's set
104-4-1	4453	Very shallow - makes a better ash tray
270-4-2		Better for holding shakers than serving salt
356-3-1		Looks like individual butter tub advertised by importers
362-1-2	948	Makes an excellent egg cup
362-3-2	3743	Makes an excellent egg cup
428-5-2	1857	Looks like individual butter tub advertised by importers
458-3-1		Lefton China started in the 1940's - probably an ash tray
462-4-3	3754	Makes an excellent egg cup
468-4-1		Makes an excellent liqueur glass if you need one
473-3-2		Some dealers sell these as saccharine containers
477-6-3	3378	Child's dish shape
478-6-1	2601	Child's dish shape

The above list is not complete. It does not cover the ones we have that aren't in the books, like the Domino sugar holder, the inverted glass bottle stopper or the marble miniature bird bath. It also does not cover all the pictures in the books either - we have used only one reference when there are sometimes several colors shown in the same shape. It is also limited to salts that are in our collection - so far we have been busy enough researching them without looking for information on ones we don't have. We have tried to be clear in our source of our identifications, realizing that there may be conflicting information around. If you have any further sources which can add to or revise our list, please let us know. We are always interested in gaining a better understanding about the world of salt dishes.

The fact that some non-salts are in the Smith and H&J books is certainly not a reflection on the tremendous effort the authors spent in putting these works together. In many cases the writeups say clearly that they may not have been salts originally. Remember also, our list has about 50 non-salts, and the books show 4500 to 7500 genuine salts. There are few books on antiques that are more accurate than that!

Where does all this leave us?

"The shelves are still full", said Kay. "You haven't helped me one bit in deciding what to part with. I think I'll just take out any one that somebody has said is not a salt. Of course if it's an especially nice little dish, I may decide to keep it anyway."

And I guess I'll have to get busy and make some shelves for the ash tray, nut dish and egg cup collections I'll be starting.

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REFERENCES: Ten books by Allan and Helen Smith, "Open Salts Illustrated"
"5000 Open Salts" by William Heacock and Patricia Johnson
See also the reference list at the bottom of page 2.