

SALTY COMMENTS #9

(Information and opinion on open salt dish collecting)

One of the fascinating things about china salt dishes is the variety of marks you can find on the bottom. They can tell a lot about the origin of the particular dish, and many books have been written to help us identify them. One of the largest of these books deals with a single country - the Encyclopedia of Marks on British Pottery and Porcelain. This is the best of its kind that we know of. Other books may or may not have the particular mark you are after, but this is the one to start with if the mark is British.

The first bit of information we look for is the country where the dish was made. If the name is written on the bottom it can tell us several things. First is an idea of how old the dish might be. Before the McKinley Tariff Act was passed in 1890, there was no requirement that the dish be marked at all. If "England" or some other country's name is on the bottom, it was probably made after 1890. If the mark says "Nippon", the dates are 1890 to 1921. Nippon is the what the Japanese marked their products until 1921 when the US made them change. "Czechoslovakia" dates the dish after 1918, since this country did not exist before the treaties ending World War I. We have dishes with the spelling "Czecho-Slovakia" on them, which was only used during the first few years of the country's existence. Bohemia was a separate element in the in the Austro-Hungarian empire until World War I, and Bavaria and Saxony were in the German Empire at the same time. Any china bearing these names is almost certainly 70 or more years old. "Occupied Japan" dates the piece as 1945-52, which is a relatively short period. If there is no mark, the dish could either be old, labelled when made rather than marked permanently, or made in the USA. In some cases only one dish of a set was marked. A fifth possibility is that the mark has been removed - during World War II many of the "Germany" and "Japan" marks were taken off by owners who did not want to seem to support the enemy.

Another clue we get from the name of the country is that the dish was made for export. Articles made for use at home had no need to bear the country's name, at least in the days before the balance of payments became such a big issue. And the way the name is spelled can often reveal that the exporting target was English-speaking. If you look at the postage stamps of a country, you can often tell the way its name is spelled at home. Czechoslovakia, for example, calls itself "Ceskoslovensko", Norway is "Norge", Germany is "Deutschland", and Japan is written in Japanese characters. The fact that the anglicized version of the country's name is used says quite clearly that the dishes were made for shipment to an English-speaking country, more often than not the United States.

Some open salt collectors try to get marks from as many countries or districts as possible. Our china salts come from 21 different ones:

Austria	Bavaria	China	Czechoslovakia
Denmark	England	France	Germany
Holland	Hungary	Ireland	Italy
Japan	Nippon	Prussia	Portugal
Saxony	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland
United States			

You might also try to collect marks from the major cities or districts where china was made. Not all of them made open salts, but we know that there are marked salts from these:

Austria: Vienna
Czechoslovakia: Karlsbad, Thuny
England: Staffordshire (many towns), Torquay
France: Limoges, Paris, Quimper, Sevres
Germany: Altenburg, Dresden
Holland: Delft
Hungary: Herend

If you try to collect a mark from every manufacturer you can find, it will be a lifetime effort. In England alone there have been so many different companies in the business that the map showing their locations looks like it had pepper spilled on it. The "Encyclopedia of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks" has over 4500 different marks, which gives you an idea of how big the British ceramics industry has been in the past. It is nice to have a representation of the major producers, however. We identify these by looking in the antique price guides to see which ones are listed separately. Generally this means that the company was fairly large, that a number of easily-identified pieces are available, and that there are some people who collect only that kind of ware. Our list of major manufacturers that we know made salt dishes includes:

Austria: Gutherz (O&E G)
 Denmark: Royal Copenhagen
 England: Adams, Coalport, Copelands (Spode), Doulton, Goss, McIntyre, Moorcroft, Wedgewood
 France: Charles Field Haviland, Habaudiere (Quimper)
 Germany: Hutschenreuter, Meissen, Royal Bayreuth, Rosenthal, Schlegelmilch (RS)
 Ireland: Belleek
 Japan: Noritake, Satsuma
 United States: Lenox, Pickard

There are, of course, hundreds of lesser-known companies that made salts - these are the only the ones whose names have earned separate listing in the antique guides. If you decide to go after a list like this, remember that well-known makers usually command high prices in the antiques market. A salt from the ones named, like Wedgewood, Adams, Royal Bayreuth or Royal Copenhagen will usually cost \$50-100, if you can find one.

Sometimes you will see china salts whose marks seem downright confusing. This happens when the company uses only a logo, such as an anchor, a windmill or a wreath with a letter in it. Fortunately there are reference books to decipher these, at least much of the time. You can also find marks from two different countries on the same dish. We have a nice example - a salt signed Hutschenreuter, a German firm, and also signed Pickard, which is American. The answer is that the first company sold a blank to the second, who decorated it; both marked it. The use of blanks from abroad was also common among ladies who painted salts as a hobby around the turn of the century. We have a dish from Czecho-Slovakia that is signed R.B. Gibbs, a decidedly non-Czechoslovakian name. Another is a matched set in which the salt is marked "EPIAG" (Erste Bohmische Porzellan-Industrie-Akt. Ges.) Czechoslovakia, and the pepper is marked "Japan" and signed Anna Whitney. The lady involved lived in western Pennsylvania, enjoyed decorating china, and got her blanks from abroad.

When we look at hand-painted china, we often stop to admire the delicate work that was done. Most of the attractive ones are made commercially, rather than as a hobby. Sometime look carefully at the roses and leaves on an old hand-painted salt, and think about how much talent and patience it would take to do that for a living. By comparing several flowers on a salt, or differences from salt to salt if you have a set, you can see that the work is really done by hand, but in such an expert fashion that each design looks like it might have been applied as a decal. The second anniversary salt from the Open Salt Seekers of the West is a good example of this kind of work. If you have one, look carefully at the roses and leaves, and think how hard it is to make such a perfect picture. For a more elaborate scene, examine the details in a Royal Bayreuth salt (if you're lucky enough to own one) or a Japanese pedestal salt with a lady and pagoda scene inside. The person painting these was a real artist, working in great detail in a very small area, and creating something that few of us could match even if we practiced for years.

When we look for china marks in a book, one of the things we hope to find is a clue as to the age of the piece. We are lucky enough to get this about one time in ten. Recently we have received information on two well-known marks which we would like to share with you in case you haven't seen it. The first is the Belleek Company from County Fermanagh, Ireland. Their Hound, Harp and Castle mark has been in use since 1863. The words "Co. Fermanagh Ireland" were added in 1891. This makes the "first black mark" that you see in advertisements. In 1927, a circle with decorations, some Irish (?) words, and a registration number was added below the previous design. This makes the "second black mark", which continued until 1941. The color of the mark was then changed to green until 1980, when it was changed to gold. They still make salt dishes - a friend brought us one with the gold mark after a trip to Europe last year.

The Lenox Company was kind enough to send information about their marks when we wrote them. Starting in 1891, when they were the Ceramic Arts Co., their marks have been as follows:

<u>Mark Color</u>	<u>Used</u>	
CAC in wreath	Any	1892-96
CAC in circle, artist's palette, decorated	Lavender or red	1894-96, Factory
Belleek written under it		
Same Green, gold, black		1896-1906, White ware
CAC in wreath, Lenox under it	Lavender	1894-96 White ware
Same Green or gold		1896-1906
L in circle, artist's palette, Belleek written under it	Any	1906-24 White ware
L in wreath, Lenox under it	Green	1906-30
Same, with Made in USA under it	Green	1930-53
Same Gold		1953-today

White ware are dishes sold for some other firm or individual to decorate. We have found salts with most of these marks, but are still looking for salts with the 1st, 2nd and 4th ones listed.

This discussion of china salt marks and decorations is not at all complete - there is much more available in the reference books. It should help you identify, and we hope appreciate, several more salts in your collection, however. We also hope it can give you some ideas of special salts to look for, so that your hunting can be more interesting. Maybe you can appreciate some of the dishes we both collect a little bit more - if you do, this writing and your reading will have been worthwhile.

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REFERENCES:

"Dictionary of Marks - Pottery and Porcelain" by Ralph M. and Terry H. Kovel, Crown Publishers, 1953. Smaller, fewer details on each mark, but also less expensive if you want to buy a book on the subject.

"Encyclopedia of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks", Geoffrey A. Godden, Crown Publishers, NY 1964 - the most complete book on English marks.

"Handbook of Pottery and Porcelain Marks", by J.P. Cushion, Faber and Faber, 1980 - about 4000 marks from 20 countries.

"Porcelain Marks of the World" by Emanuel Poche, Arco Publishing 1974. The author is Czechoslovakian, and has covered about 2000 marks. Some familiar ones are missing, but many of the marks he does cover are not found in other books.