

SALTY COMMENTS #16
(Information and Opinion on Open Salt Collecting)

Rule One in Murphy's Law states, "Nothing is as simple as it seems". Last issue we casually said that we would cover the rest of the contemporary salts this time. We can't do it. There are too many makers and too many dishes, so this will be the second of Murphy Only Knows how many parts. We intend to keep it up, at any rate, until we have passed along what we know about contemporary open salt production in the US.

Last time we covered Summit Art Glass, who was the biggest purchaser of old open salt molds during the recent shakeup in the hand-made glass business. This time we will cover Wetzel Glass Co., a smaller operation but one who has done some original work.

In 1974, Bob and Sue Wetzel mortgaged everything to start a small glass business. Bob is an experienced glass blower and a master engraver who makes molds as well. He is the one who made the mold for the New England Salt Collectors 10th anniversary dish. (It matches their logo, and will be offered for sale in April 1988 - be sure to get one, because it's really cute). While trying to find a profitable product line, he made 3 original open salts in 1977. These did not sell well, so he sold the molds after 2 years and they haven't been heard of since. Starting in 1984 he made a second try at open salts, buying a number of molds from older glass companies. These also didn't bring him a fortune, and in 1986 he sold his remaining inventory of salts and the molds to Ed and Eleanor Bowman. Now he is concentrating on paperweights and mold-making, which seem to be the most in demand.

Ed and Eleanor Bowman have started a small business, E&E Collectables, as a sideline to their full-time jobs. They use the molds they have bought and have them run by glass companies such as Summit. When they are run, the molds are clearly marked "E & E", so there is no confusion with the original Wetzel work. They are trying to make a profit selling small glass items, including open salts, and hope that great numbers of people will want to collect a variety of colors of whatever they offer. They still have some of the Wetzel stock for sale. If you want to get any of their offerings we suggest you write to: E&E Collectables, 504 Hidden Valley Drive, Plainfield, IN 46168 (phone (317) 839-5003, evenings only). Send a large self-addressed stamped envelope if you want their price list.

Since Bob Wetzel no longer makes open salts, his dishes are contemporary but out of print. The ones he made in 1977 are impossible to find, and should be considered among the rarer open salt dishes. We have been looking for one of his Holly salts for 3 years, and have not seen one for sale at any price. Many of his more recent ones are still available from E&E, but when they are gone there will be no more with the RW mark. His colors are often unique - he made some that are not found in the normal production of other glass companies. The E&E dishes are currently available, and new colors are offered periodically.

Here is a list of the Wetzel shapes. The table that follows the list gives information on colors and Smith/H&J references, with an attached page showing sketches of the various shapes.

1. Wetzel Holly salt, made in limited quantity in 1977. Marked RW 77. We have seen this only as a picture in H&J. Wetzel made the mold himself, and sold it to someone a few years later - we don't know who.
2. Beaded rim, 4 ball feet, marked RW 77 hidden in a field of dots on the bottom. Plain sides. A Wetzel mold, also sold after limited production. Hard to find.
3. Ribbed sides, beaded rim, marked RW 77 hidden in a field of dots on the bottom. Another Wetzel original with the mold gone and the dish hard to find.
4. ENGLISH HOBNAIL pattern, this looks just like dishes made by Mosser, Summit and some old-time glass companies. Wetzel got this mold from the Rodefer-Gleason Glass Co. (Bellaire, Ohio) in 1984 and ran a few dishes in blue slag. The dish is unmarked, so there is no way to tell it from others except by comparison of minute mold details. We don't know where the mold went - E&E does not list it in their inventory.

5. Plain dish with 12 vertical zippers on the sides. Another Rodefer-Gleason mold, now owned by E&E. Wetzel production marked RW, still available.

6. Shallow dish, flanged rim with 12 loops on the edge. Called the Daisy Rim by E&E, who owns the mold and has run added colors. Wetzel production marked RW, still available.

7. Four-lobed dish, like the Westmoreland EUCHRE salts, but with higher sides. The mold came from Imperial and is now with E&E. Wetzel production marked RW, still available.

8. Rectangular, double salt, half-ball feet at the corners. Raised ribs around inside of bowls. The mold came from Imperial and is now with E&E. Wetzel production marked RW, still available.

9. Rectangular, plain, dots in rectangles on bottom. A Cambridge mold bought from Imperial and now with E&E. Wetzel production marked RW, still available.

10. Double salt, two octagonal tab-handled tubs with notches in the tabs, joined at a central knobbed handle. A Cambridge mold, bought from Imperial and now with E&E. Wetzel production marked RW in tiny letters under the center, still available.

11. Square salt, bulging zippered sides and corners, plain base. Cambridge mold bought from Imperial. Wetzel production marked RW in tiny letters underneath, still available.

12. Regal salt, hexagonal rim, 6 hobstars in diamonds around the sides, 6 half-ball feet. Cambridge mold for a knob bought from Imperial and converted to a salt by Wetzel. E&E has made additional colors with their mark. Wetzel colors both marked and unmarked, still available.

13. Octagonal, very fine crosshatching on bottom. Imperial mold now with E&E. Wetzel production marked RW, still available.

14. Square, round bowl, vertical prism sides, called fluted square by E&E. Ours is unmarked, and we don't know where the mold came from. Wetzel production still being sold.

15. Old style design, 9 panels around lower sides with diamond-type pattern above them. Don't know source of the mold which is now with E&E. Wetzel production marked RW, still available.

16. Round dish, diamond point on the sides, plain bottom. Don't know source of the mold which is now with E&E. Wetzel production marked RW, still available.

17. Shallow hat salt, prism sides and ribbon under rim. Don't know source of the mold which is now with E&E. Wetzel production marked RW, still available. E&E has run additional colors with their mark.

18. Mini-hen on nest, not really a salt but cute enough to be accepted as one. An original mold by Wetzel, with his RW mark. Run on a button press because the normal glass press is too big and clumsy. Wetzel production sold out. Mold now with E&E who has run several colors with their mark.

19. Mini-rabbit on nest. Like the mini-hen, but only made as an E&E dish. Several colors available with their mark.

Since Wetzel operated recently and for only a few years, it should be possible to get one of each shape that he made. We've done this except for the Holly salt - if you hear of one of these for sale, please let us know. If you want to be really ambitious, try collecting all the colors. There may be some that aren't on our list - if you find out about any, please let us know that too. It would be nice to document the Wetzel activity completely before too many years intervene.

We'll continue on contemporary salts next time.

Ed Berg
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November 1987

References: H&J - "5000 Open Salts" by William Heacock and Patricia Johnson
Smith - 10 books "Open Salts Illustrated" by Alan & Helen Smith

OPEN SALTS BY WETZEL GLASS

<u>Sketch No.</u>	<u>Smith No.</u>	<u>H&J No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Wetzel Colors</u>	<u>E&E Colors</u>
1		910	Holly rim	LB(C)	
2			Beaded rim, half ball feet	SB	
3			Beaded rim, ribbed lower side	LB	
4	36-3-3	438	ENGLISH HOBNAIL pattern	BS	
5			12 vertical zippers, round	LB,MB,BS,CU,RD	
6			Scalloped flat rim	DB,AB	
7			4-lobed Euchre type	CU,CO,LB,MB,AB,LP	
8			Rectangular double	AM,CO,BS	
9			Rectangular, small, plain	MB,DB,LP	
10	52-3-1	2092	Cambridge double tubs	LB,MB,BS,LP	
11	10-1-2	2743	Cambridge square, zippers	AM,AM(C),PS LB,LB(C)	
12			REGAL knob salt	MB,DB,RD,AB LP(C)	RD,VA(O)
13			Octagonal	LP,VA,MB,CO,AB	
14	480-3-1		Square, prism sides	AM,AM(C),CO LB,LB(C)	
15			9 panels lower sides	CU,CO,RD,MB,VA	
16			Diamond point sides, round	VA,RD,CU,MB,CO	
17			Hat	CR	VA,LB,CO,RD
18			Mini-hen	DG,MB,AM	CO,VA,AG,LB RD,BK,CR(O)
19			Mini-rabbit		CO,BK,CR(O)

COLORS: LB=light blue AB=amberina CO=cobalt LP=light purple
 MB=medium blue AG=apple green CR=crystal RD=red
 DB=dark blue AM=amber CU=custard PS=purple slag
 BS=blue slag BK=black DG=dark green SB=smoky brown
 VA=vaseline

(C)= carnival iridescence (O)= opalescent

References: H&J - "5000 Open Salts" by William Heacock and Patricia Johnson
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OPEN SALTS BY WETZEL GLASS (AND E&E COLLECTIBLES)



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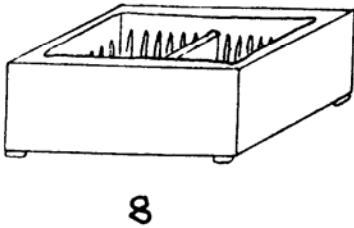
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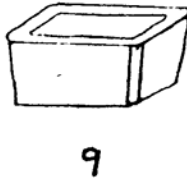
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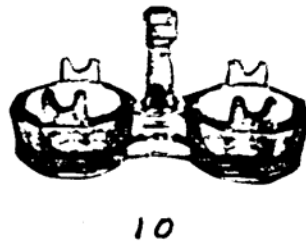
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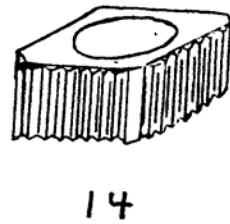
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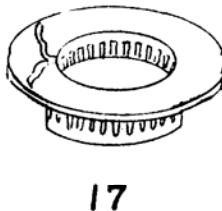
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