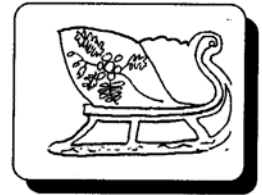




# Salty Comments

*Facts and Opinion on Open Salt Collecting*

*No. 39*



When we started looking for Higbee salts, we found only one catalog in the Corning Library, our best source. Its estimated date is 1908-1911, which is probably accurate. Once we started to look at the records of our collection, we were surprised to find another equally good source of information - the "Bee" marks in the bottom of some of our salts. We added more from other pattern glass sources which we consider reliable, and even found some Bryce, Higbee catalog pages reproduced in one of the Kamm books. This gave us a respectable list of shapes to work with. It is probably incomplete but it is certainly representative.

John B. Higbee first appears on the glassmaking scene in 1879 as a founder and sales manager of Bryce, Higbee & Co. He joined John Bryce, who had just withdrawn from Bryce, Walker & Co., and evidently had the glass making experience that was needed. The firm was located in Homestead, PA, on the south side of Pittsburgh. They must have been reasonably prosperous, because they had their own mold shop, blacksmith shop and cutting shop in addition to an 11 pot furnace. The records show that their primary output was pressed tableware. When Bryce died in 1888, there was no significant change in the organization.



In 1907 the plant was destroyed by a flood, and the Company went out of business. The building was sold to Carnegie Steel, and John Higbee bought the movable equipment for \$8500. He formed a new firm, the John B. Higbee Glass Co., with his son, Oliver, and R. G. West. They built a factory in Bridgeville, PA, also south of Pittsburgh and undoubtedly on higher ground. John died before the factory was finished, but Oliver stepped into his place as president. The new company operated successfully for about 6 years, making pressed tableware and glass novelties. In 1913 they declared bankruptcy, but recovered after about 6 months in receivership. Their financial troubles were not over, it seems, because they went out of business for good in 1918 and the property was purchased by General Electric.

The two firms involved - Bryce, Higbee and John B. Higbee, made a number of open salts which we are able to identify. Since they were in the tableware business at a time when shakers had not taken over completely, an open salt dish was often included as part of a pattern set. We have listed 25 of them that we found. Our list will at least serve as a starting point; perhaps others can find more material to expand it.

The well-known Higbee trade mark, the letters H I G in a bee, was never registered in the patent office. You can find it embossed on their dishes, usually in the bottom of the bowl. It was first used when the John B. Higbee Company started. Not all of their glassware has it - we have seen many of their salts in both signed and unsigned versions. The mark has been copied by L.G. Wright, as a bee without the H I G in his PANEALED THISTLE salt. Unlike the Higbee version, his insect has a stinger, which suggests that you could get stung if you thought the salt was an old one. Fortunately the Wright dish cannot be confused with the original, because it is much larger (2-1/4 inches diameter versus 1-3/4 inches for the Higbee one).



As is true for much pattern glass, the original names bear little relation to the ones currently in use. The DELTA pattern has become PANEALED THISTLE, and the salt we have called the square LACY DAISY was originally in a set of BANNER tableware. The old patterns also include some open

SALTS BY BRYCE, HIGBEE Co. AND HIGBEE Co.

<u>Fig.</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Size*</u>	<u>H&amp;J</u>	<u>Smith</u>
1	1885	BUTTERFLY HANDLES (ALARIC) pattern	M	3635	346-5-2
2	1885	HOMESTEAD (CORDATE LEAF) pattern, oval version	I, M	2708	1-3-1
3	1885 1908	HOMESTEAD (CORDATE LEAF) pattern, rectangular version later called Star salt, "B"	I, M I, M	2784 3646	1-3-2
4	1885	ERA (NEW ERA) pattern (spooner shown for pattern design)	I		
5	1890	OPPOSING PYRAMIDS (FLORA) pattern	M		
6	1890	LATE PANELED DIAMOND POINT pattern	I	2621	21-4-2
7	1905	DIAMOND POINT DISKS pattern	I	2930	15-3-3
8	1905	BUTTON AND STAR PANEL pattern	I	2533	474-6-3
9	1905	PALMLEAF FAN pattern	I	2542	29-2-2
10	1905	MEDALLION SUNBURST pattern	I	2543	30-3-2
11,12	1905	STYLE (MEDORA) pattern	I, M	2637	24-3-3
13	1908	PANELED THISTLE pattern, "B"	I	3050	15-2-2
14	1908	COLONIAL pattern, old catalog picture, "B"	I	2650	185-2-3
15	??	COLONIAL pattern, concave panels	I	2632	25-4-2
16	1908	BANNER (LACY DAISY) pattern	I	2749	9-3-3
17	1908	Salts sold with EUCLID celery vase, looks like BOXED STAR	I	2544	30-4-1
18	1913	HAWAIIAN LEI pattern	I	2577	477-4-1
19	??	Plain rectangular, star in oval on bottom, "B"	I, M		
20	1940+	L.G. Wright PANELED THISTLE salt	I	2929	

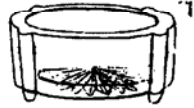
Notes: Size\*: I = Individual, M = Master (called a Table Salt in the old catalogs)  
 "B" indicates we have one or both of these with the Bee mark  
 Pattern names are capitalized, alternate pattern names are in parentheses

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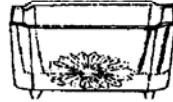
# SALTS BY BRYCE HIGBEE AND HIGBEE



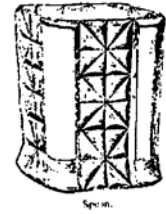
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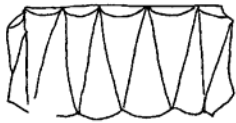
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Sp. m.

(SPOONER  
SHOWN)

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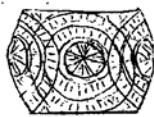
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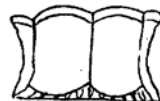
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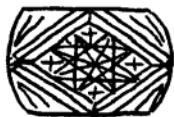
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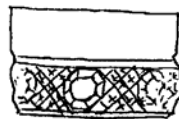
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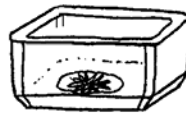
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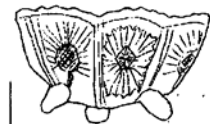
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salts we have never seen. The STYLE (MADORA) pattern shows a table size as well as the familiar individual one. We have included both sizes in the illustrations. If you have one of the larger ones or see one, we would be interested in hearing about it. Similarly the books indicate there is a salt dip in the ERA pattern. We have shown a drawing of a spooner in this pattern in the hope that someone has the corresponding salt. It should be square - the description of the tableware says that all the pieces were square cross section, including the pitchers. This doesn't sound very attractive, which may be why the salts are hard to find.

The HOMESTEAD pattern is interesting because it has two different salt designs - one oval and the other rectangular. It was originally a Bryce, Higbee design, but the later Higbee catalog shows the rectangular shape still available in two sizes as the Star Salt. There is one of these in the Heisey Museum. It is the individual size with an acid Diamond H mark on the inside bottom. There are no old records that Heisey ever made one like this, but someone has been convinced that it must be genuine. Personally we know that acid stamps are easy to make, and think the dish was originally unmarked Higbee.

One salt that we found in our collection is not in the books - a plain rectangular one with a star bottom. We have both the individual size and the table size, each marked with the Higbee Bee. The star is enclosed in an oval in each case, which may distinguish them from similar salts which many other factories made.

About 1908 Higbee offered a Celery Set, which included their EUCLID pattern celery vase and a set of individual salts to go with it. We have not seen any catalog pages offering the salts separately or identifying their pattern. The closest match is with BOXED STAR, but this pattern was made by Jenkins Glass and not Higbee.

One Higbee salt is a challenge to find unchipped. The BUTTON AND STAR PANEL salt has prominent curved prisms on the sides. The edges of these bump against anything that comes near. They must have been damaged often in the bottom of the dishpan, because we seldom see one in mint condition. If you have one that is not chipped, you should consider yourself lucky. Be careful if you move it around, because the edges are very vulnerable.

We have no record of Higbee salts being made in color, but we do have both of the individual HOMESTEAD designs in amber, unmarked. We have also seen the oval version in vaseline, though we do not have one. If they did much in color, it would have been ahead of its time. Colored tableware became really popular only after the firm had gone out of business.

We hope that you can find many of the Higbee salts in your collection, and that some will be marked. We also hope that you will find one of the ERA pattern, or one of the larger size STYLE pattern salts there. And when you visit antique shows and flea markets, keep your eyes open for the Higbee Bee in the bottom of salts that otherwise seem quite ordinary. You may be able to find an unappreciated treasure at a reasonable price.

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References: "5000 Open Salts" by William Heacock and Patricia Johnson  
Ten books, "Open Salts Illustrated", by Alan B. and Helen B. Smith  
"An Eighth Pattern Glass Book", by Minnie Watson Kamm  
"Collector's Encyclopedia of Pattern Glass", by Mollie Helen McCain  
"Pressed Glass in America", by John and Elizabeth Welker