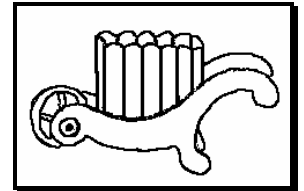


Salty Comments

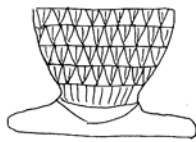
Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting



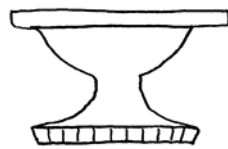
Number 53

March 1996

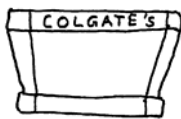
Live and Learn with Open Salts



Lemon Holder



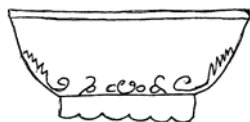
Fruit Jar Immerser



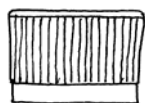
Tooth Powder Holder



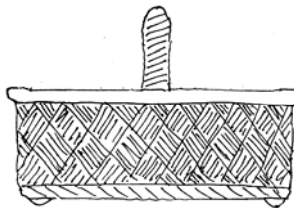
Apothecary Jar Stopper



Sugar Bowl Lid



Tiddley Winks Jar



Double Salt or Shaker Holder



CAPRICE pattern Salt or Nut or Ash Tray

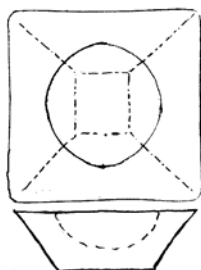
We have been buying open salts for over 15 years. It started when Kay began her collection and we knew very little about what we were doing. Now we know more, but we still learn something every time we go on a hunting expedition. It is interesting and instructive to look back on the experiences we have had and the surprises we encountered when we investigated what we purchased. We often refer to it as "buying an education".

The classic surprise we encounter is finding that what we have purchased is not really a salt. In our collection we have half a cabinet devoted to dishes that are the right size but show up in old catalogs as something else. Two examples of this are the lemon holder (Smith 52-2-2) and the fruit jar immerser. (H&J 4487). The first of these is designed to protect a lady's hands while she is squeezing lemons. The second goes into the top of canning jars to keep the fruit under the surface of the liquid. Both look like the right size but they would not quite work on a dinner table. We have many other things in this category - a dish for Colgate's tooth powder, an inverted stopper from an apothecary jar, the creamer and sugar bowl lids from Westmoreland mustard jars, and the traditional Tiddley Winks jar, to mention a few. Some we bought because we couldn't resist them - the tooth powder dish for instance - but most of them looked like salts and we thought we had found something special until some time later.

Some of our buys go from salts to non-salts and then back again. The basket double shown is one example. We bought it as a double open salt, then later saw it as a holder for two shakers. It turns out to have been both. The old Co-Operative Flint Glass Co. catalog calls it a Basket Salt, while Imperial produced it as a shaker holder at a later date. A second example is the Cambridge CAPRICE pattern. The catalog pages listing the complete pattern called the shape a nut dish. We published this in an earlier Salty Comments, and swore that it didn't belong in our collection. A few years later we found another Cambridge catalog which showed a page of ash trays and another of open salts. Sure enough, the CAPRICE



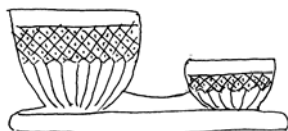
Euchre Salt



*Square Salt
Slanting Sides*



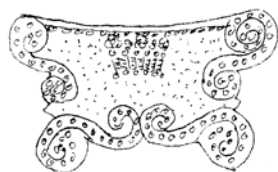
*Pier 1 Imports
Salt*



What Is It?



*Gorham #550
Butterfly Rim*



Our Green Lacy Salt

dish was included in both categories. With china doubles we have several shaker holders in the collection that we found were not open salts after the fact. Most shaker holders have an open space between the two bowls, which identifies them as such. A few have separate compartments, and it isn't until we see them complete with shakers that we realize what we own.

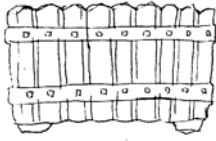
Sometimes there is a question as to whether the salt we see was really sold as such. Euchres, intaglios and the square ones with slanting sides are examples. The Euchres are clearly shown as celery dips in the old Westmoreland catalog, though why they were named for a card game is not obvious. Intaglios have been advertised as ash trays, as salts, and as "useful dishes". The square ones have also been sold as ash trays, but many years ago we found an original box of them labeled "Open Salts by Saben", complete with silver plated spoons.. We have no idea who Saben was.

Sometimes we think we have something special and are let down abruptly when we find the real source. We were given a nice blue and white china salt which has a fish on the back rim and a Chinese mark on the bottom. We had never seen one like it, and thought it probably was scarce. The giver later told us he had bought it at Pier 1 Imports for \$1.95 a day earlier. It is still a nice salt, but we don't keep it in the same cabinet as the Mt. Washington ones.

Another category of educational buys we call "What is it? It might be a real find!". A classic one of these is shown on the left. It is clear glass, on a glass base, and has a large and a small open dish. Inside the small dish is the word "DRUM", and the bottom is marked "Foreign". It might be a salt and pepper holder, or maybe there is another, more subtle use for it. If you have any ideas, please help us out.

A more common situation is when we find the salt is damaged when we get it home. Sometimes there is a crack or a chip we didn't see, which is our fault. When the dealer has it covered with a price sticker, we are less charitable in placing the responsibility. In one case we bought a Gorham salt we had not seen before and thought we had a real find. It was a pedestal, like the one shown at the left, except that it had wasps instead of butterflies on the rim. When we got it home and looked up the number in our Tompkins book, we found it was really the butterfly salt with the wings cut off. Evidently one of the wings had been broken, so the owner removed them all. We took that one back to the dealer we bought it from and showed her the book, complete with the Gorham number on the bottom. She was surprised, because she didn't know the situation when she bought the dish. She refunded our money gracefully, and went after the person who sold it to her.

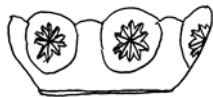
Sometimes a damaged salt can be repaired by the "Glass Doctor" at an antique show or by the judicious use of epoxy glue. When an scarce old one is broken and carefully repaired, it can still be valuable. We have an emerald green lacy salt that fits this description. We bought it from a dealer who told us it had been mended, and were glad to pay almost two hundred dollars for it. The repair cannot be seen unless you look carefully, and it is the only emerald green lacy we have in the collection. One in mint condition would cost more than we would be willing to pay, if it were available at all.



*PICKET FENCE
Salt*



*Anchor Hocking
Juice Glass*



*MOON & STARS
Creamer Foot*



*Girl With Baskets
One Handle Missing*



Butterfly Mark

More often we see a genuine salt that has the rim ground down to remove chips. The PICKET FENCE salt shown in H&J (#2792) is an example of this. It has a flat rim, where the original design had a toothed rim like the top of a picket fence. We have seen many nice pressed glass shapes with the rims polished, and we pass them up because we consider them altered. They are undoubtedly better than they were before the polishing, but they are still worth less than a mint copy in our opinion.

Another category of “repaired” salts are ones made from a different original shape. Examples of this include our cut-down juice glass with the Anchor Hocking emblem on the bottom. As far as we have been able to determine, AH never made an open salt. Their production was all high-volume glassware in times when open salts were low-volume items. A second example is the “rare” MOON AND STARS salt we found. We had seen a picture like it in an old catalog, listed under the PALACE pattern which was the original name. We thought we had a real find. When we got it home and looked closer we saw that the bottom had signs of breakage on it. We looked in the old catalog where the pattern was shown and found it really was the foot from a cream pitcher. We have since bought one of the old pitchers so we can show it to people as a horrible example of what to avoid. There is one instance of cutting down that leaves us on the fence, however. Virginia Wright of the Corning Library was going through some old papers from the T.G. Hawkes Co. and found a purchase order from J.E. Caldwell & Co. It stated they were returning two broken claret jugs to be made into rose bowls, and a tumbler to be cut down into a salt. She kindly sent us a copy to add to our knowledge. It leaves us wondering though - if we were fortunate enough to find that particular salt for sale, should we consider it damaged goods?

On china salts, there are sometimes small chips on the rims. If they are under the glaze, it shows that the little piece of the material was gone before the decoration was done. Other times it is clear that the chip occurred after the salt was sold. In this latter case, you can color the spot so that the salt appears to be mint, though it is not. If we find one like this, we consider it repaired but still worth something if it is an unusual shape. We have one figural salt of a girl holding a flower and sitting between two baskets. We bought it for \$16.00, thinking we had a real bargain. When we got home we found it in the books, but noticed that both of her baskets had handles. On our salt one of the handles was missing and the rim was ground flush so that it looked like it was supposed to be that way. We are still happy with our purchase, but once more we learned something.

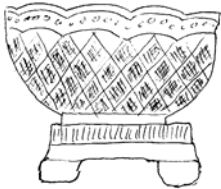
In the early days of our collecting, it was believed that the butterfly mark on an intaglio salt indicated it was made in England by Webb. We paid premium prices for several on that basis. Then Carol Van Norman wrote to Webb asking about it, and they responded the mark is not theirs. We later found the maker identified in a book on Czechoslovakian glass. It still may make a salt more valuable, but not as much as if it really belonged to Webb.



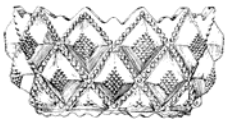
Heisey Label



*Summit Art Glass
Salt Found
With Above Label*



Avon Lacy Salt



*MMA
Reproduction That
Surprised Us*

sometimes. Our first real adventure with one of these came in the early days when we were trying to get all the Heisey salts. At an open-air show in Ohio we found an oval master with a blue Heisey sticker on it. It was very nice glass and in good condition, so we grabbed it. Later we took it to the Heisey Museum and asked them for an opinion. They carefully avoided saying it couldn't possibly be Heisey, but did point out that nothing like it ever appeared in the Heisey catalogs to their knowledge. They also invited us to visit their gift shop where labels like the one on our salt could be purchase for \$1.00 the packet. We have since seen the same labels used on a cobalt blue pedestal salt made by Summit Art Glass - a clear example of deception by someone.

When we see claims made about the origin of a salt, we always ask how the person knows. Often the dealer will get indignant - so often in fact that we have given up disputing any claims unless we are seriously interested in a purchase. If we see an Avon lacy at a Sandwich price we will point out the mark to the seller, but if our knowledge is based only on what we have seen in an old catalog, we avoid discussing the subject. Earlier the trend was to call many unknown shapes "Sandwich", and price them accordingly. Lately the Portland Glass Co. attribution has been popular, based on a book which credits them with the manufacture of a vast number of shapes that show up in other glass company catalogs. We try hard to avoid mis-identification, but we do make mistakes about a salt's origin sometimes. Recently we sold a lacy salt we thought was old to a lady who found MMA (Metropolitan Museum of Art) embossed in the bottom of the bowl. We didn't know that shape had been reproduced, so we had not examined it carefully. Of course we refunded her money, and retrieved the salt for our collection of reproduced shapes.

We hope our experiences will help you avoid mistakes in the future when you look for salts for your collection. Hunting is half the fun of collecting, providing you don't wind up with excess pain in your pocketbook when the buying is done. Even when we make mistakes, however, we find the pleasure we get from discovering new salts far exceeds the agony from our errors.

Ed Berg

401 Nottingham Rd., Newark, DE 19711

References: William Heacock & Patricia Johnson, "5000 Open Salts"
Alan B. & Helen B. Smith, series of 10 books, "Open Salts Illustrated"

Paper labels can
be a trap