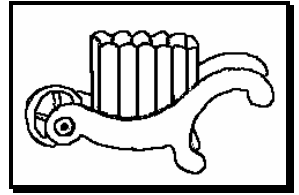


Salty Comments

Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting



Number 54

June 1996

Black Can Be Beautiful



Fig. 1
French Drapery Salt

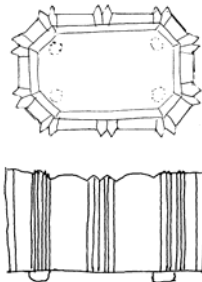


Fig. 2
Old Pressed Master

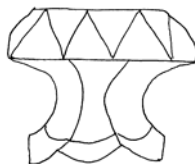


Fig. 3
Capstan Type

ay is partial to black salts. Whenever we see one we don't have, she is tempted to buy it for the collection. We might have three other colors of the same shape, but she would be happy to replace one of them with black if there is no more room on that particular shelf. In reality, of course, the ones already there will be pushed together once more to accommodate a new arrival.

Black glass is not common. We don't know how much demand there is for it, but we have learned that it is not easy to fit into the glassmaking process. To make it, you add a large excess of colorant to the batch, usually amethyst but sometimes amber, red or blue. This costs a little more, but it puts so much color in the pot that it won't disappear for many subsequent batches. When a run of a color is complete, there is always some glass left in the red-hot pot which carries over into the next batch. If you want to make black, the best time to do it is just before the melting pot needs replacing. Until then you stick to the lighter shades and try to schedule them so that the leftover color won't show in the new one you want to run.

Most of our black salts are glass. Our oldest (we think) is a heavy blown one with a drapery type pattern (Fig. 1). It has been authenticated by an expert in French glass as almost certainly French, made about 1840 with the Robinet pump. Robinet was a French glassblower who developed tuberculosis and was unable to exert enough lung pressure to keep his job. He invented a hand pump which he could put on the end of his blowpipe so he could continue to practice his skill. The idea worked so well that healthy workers adopted it too. The pump gives more pressure than human lungs and produces better detail on the final dish. As with lung-blown ware you can feel the design on the inside of the dish, which tells that it was blown not pressed..

Our second oldest black salt is a pressed glass one not in the books. It is rectangular with pairs of prisms for decoration on the sides (Fig. 2). We have no way of dating this, except that the design and the glass certainly look old. One dealer said it was probably New England Glass Co., but he also said our French salt was from the Pittsburgh area. One day we will find it illustrated in an old glass company catalog, we hope.

Another early glass shape is the capstan master shown in Heacock & Johnson, #89.(Fig. 3). We have no clue to its origin, and we do not have a clear one like it, but we know it is not the Sandwich or the Bakewell Pears design. Each of those has a different rim silhouette than the H&J picture. We are not sure exactly what the rim looks like, because it is next to impossible to take a clear picture of a black salt. The sketch is our best guess of the real rim design.

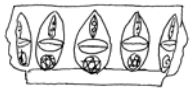


Fig. 4
TORPEDO
Master

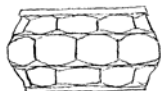


Fig. 5
TILE Master

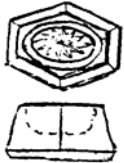


Fig. 6
FLAWLESS
Individual

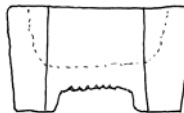


Fig. 7
OCTAGON
Master

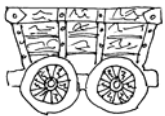


Fig. 8
Coal Wagon



Fig. 9
Enameled Ind.

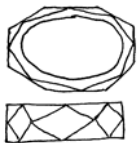


Fig. 10
Oval Faceted
Individual



Fig. 11
Six Polished
Sides Indiv.



Fig. 12
Frosted Pedestal
Indiv. Salt

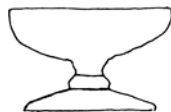


Fig. 13
Thin Blown
Bowl Pedestal



Fig. 14
Engraved Bulbous Indiv.



Fig. 15
Fostoria Nut Dish

We know of three black pattern glass salts made around the turn of the century. The first is one we saw but did not purchase - a TORPEDO master (Fig. 4). The dealer knew it was valuable and priced it accordingly (\$150). The second we found with a collection - the TILE master (Fig. 5), which is not shown in any of the books, even in clear. It is shaped like the individual size and is slightly smaller than the TILE Dresser Jar shown in H&J (#2057). The third pattern is an individual size of Duncan's FLAWLESS (Fig. 6), which is oblong with an oval bowl and six sloping polished sides. Other non-pattern dishes of about the same vintage include a master size OCTAGON salt (Fig. 7), and a coal wagon (Fig. 8) which we think is British. Except for the FLAWLESS, we have never seen a second black one of any of these.

Moving into the first half of this century we add a number of others to our list. There is an attractive one with an ordinary shape - heavy with six curving sides (Fig. 9). What makes it special is the white enameling decoration that has been fired on. We have no clues as to which company made it because the shape appears in so many old catalogs. We have a black oval faceted salt with the faces polished (Fig. 10), and a plain six-sided one with vertical polished sides which has the edges beveled (Fig. 11). We have seen this shape often in many other colors, but only once in black.

One time we found a set of four small black pedestal salts (Fig. 12) and sold all but one. They look like the small clear salts that Libbey engraved, except that these are pressed so the walls of the bowl are thicker. The surface is frosted so that it has a matte finish. We have never seen any more of them since.

Both Smith and H&J show a black pedestal dish with a wide shallow bowl and thin walls (Fig. 13). They remind us of some nut dishes, and perhaps could be used for either salt or nuts. We have one in the collection, so we classify it as a salt first and foremost.

Black is not an attractive color for engraved glass. Like cobalt or any but the faintest colors the engraving will not show very well. The best colored and engraved salts have a layer of clear glass under a thin layer of color, so that the design is "cut to clear". We do have an engraved completely black salt (Fig. 14) that demonstrates this problem. It is a beautiful one, shaped like the clear bulbous salts that Hawkes or Sinclair have produced, but the design does not stand out like it should. This is probably why we haven't seen others like it. Similarly, black intaglios are impractical because the design will not show through when you look at the top. Someone made a few once, because we know a collector who has one, but they are very rare.

Fostoria made a black nut dish that is in many open salt collections, including ours. We haven't yet found one of their catalogs which advertises it as an open salt, but we keep looking. Meanwhile the Fostoria collectors are looking for others like it.



Fig. 16
Type I Swan



Fig. 17
Type II Swan

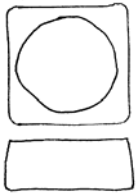


Fig. 18
Plain Square



Fig. 19
Mary Gregory
Pedestal



Fig. 20
Brass Based
Pedestal

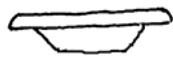


Fig. 21
Flange Rim
Salt



Fig. 22
Scandinavian
Freehand

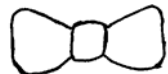


Fig. 23
Bow Tie
Double Salt

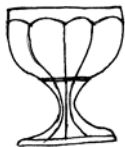


Fig. 24
Imperial
Pedestal



Fig. 25
QUARTERED
BLOCK Repró



Fig. 26
Boyd Rabbit



Fig. 27
Boyd Chick

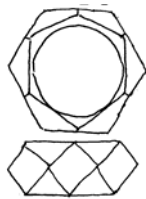


Fig. 28
Viking CINCINNATI salt

The Cambridge Glass Co. used three different molds in making their popular swan salts. We discussed these in Salty Comments #27, and told how to tell one from the other. We have two of the swans in black - the Type I (Fig. 16) and the Type II (Fig. 17). The first of these is the one with the wing tips low. Boyd has the mold now, and all his swans are marked, so any unmarked ones you see are original Cambridge. The second is the swan with the dimple in the sides. The mold for this was either lost or converted to the Type III, so any you find cannot be repros.

We have a simple square black individual salt with no decorations (Fig. 18). The sides are plain, the bottom is plain and the whole thing has been fire polished. A lady in Tiffin, Ohio said she had worked at the glass factory there and had seen them being made, so we are attributing it based on her statement. Figure 19 comes from the Smith books - we have never seen the salt. It has Mary Gregory type decorations, which identify it as European in the first half of this century.

The next four figures (20-23) also come from the Smith books. We have never seen any of them in real life, so have no idea where or when they were made. Figure 22 is a freehand cased glass salt with black over a lining of clear glass. The Scandinavian attribution comes from the Smith books. We expect it is modern, and may have been purchased on a European trip. The Bow Tie shape is most interesting - we will probably buy the first one we see for our collection.

The black pedestal salt in Figure 24 is the Imperial one we discussed in Salty Comments #51. The black version was made by Imperial before they put Anaheim 1969 on the bottom.

The QUARTERED BLOCK individual salt copy that Guernsey Glass made (Fig. 25) was issued in a great variety of colors. We have seen many different ones, but have only seen the frosted black one as a picture in H&J. This another one we are hunting for.

The Boyd Crystal Art Glass Co. in Cambridge, OH has made a run of black glass which included two of their salts - the Rabbit on Nest (Fig. 26) and the Chick (Hen on Nest, Fig. 27). Both are on basket weave nests and are marked with their B in a diamond. Our rabbit had its nest fall apart one day - a clean split into two pieces. Evidently the annealing process had been faulty when it was made. When we visited the factory, Mr. Boyd tried to find us a replacement, but they had all been sold. Summit has a similar rabbit with higher ears which has also been made in black.

Several years ago the Viking Glass Co., now Dalzell Viking, resurrected an old Cincinnati type faceted salt mold and used it for several colors (Fig. 28). Besides emerald green and red (they were pushing these around Christmas time) they also made a black one. It has a plain bottom, and the edges are rounded from fire polishing. Our copy has the original Viking Hand Made sticker on the bottom.



Fig. 29
Star Euchre



Fig. 30
LACY DAISY



Fig. 31
Summit Roses
on Zippers



Fig. 32
LOTUS Pattern

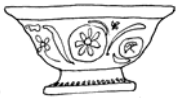


Fig. 33
Pedestal
Wedgwood
Basalt Ware



Fig. 34
Rectangular
Wedgwood
Basalt Ware



Fig. 35
Anthracite Salt



Fig. 36
Bakelite Swan

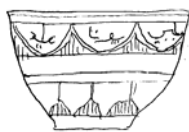


Fig. 37
Stone Salt
Arabic Inscriptions

Summit Art Glass made one or more batches of black glass before they replaced their melting pot several years ago. Some of the shapes they made were open salts. They made five of the Westmoreland euchres, including the Star Euchre shown in figure 29. The other ones include 4 and 5-lobed, heart and hexagon shapes. They have never reproduced any of the 3-lobed ones because the mold needs repairs. They ran the LACY DAISY salt (Fig. 30), their own "roses on zippers" salt (Fig. 31), and the LOTUS salt (Fig. 32). Other salts they ran include the rabbit mentioned earlier, the Cambridge shell, hobstar, the low ENGLISH HOBNAIL, their V salt, the CAPRICE salt/nut cup/ash tray, their tub salt with V-notch handles, and both the single and double versions of the square CAPRICE. References which show these are listed in the attached table, and they also are pictured in our Salty Comments #15.

In considering black salts, we decided to list only those made from a black material. This eliminates the ones with black paint or glaze, and leaves us with surprisingly few other than glass ones. For ceramics we can think of only one truly black line - Wedgwood's Basalt ware. We have this in a master size in an open pedestal shape (Fig. 33) and also in a rectangular shape mid-size (Fig. 34). Both have a matte surface, the typical Basalt finish. Other black ceramic salts we know about have just a surface glaze or paint. We have a few wooden dishes painted black, but again that is only the color of the decoration. We do have a modern salt which is black through and through, however - it is turned on a lathe from anthracite coal. (Fig. 35). We also have a swan with metal wings and a Bakelite body (Fig. 36). This body material is the same one used in pre-war telephones as we old folks recognize.

There is also one mystery dish in our collection, made from black stone. It is 2" diameter and 1-1/4" high, and has a red design inscribed in the sides. In the design is Arabic script which translates as "Oh Allah, Oh (?????) Our Prophet Mohammed Give Us Peace", according to someone who knows the language. It has the date 1254 which is probably the Mohammedan Calendar, and would translate to 1837 AD. It was broken in two and glued together some time in the past. It is the right size for serving salt, and since the Mohammedans don't use alcohol, we suspect that it is genuinely an open salt. Maybe some day we will find someone who can tell us more about it.

This completes our catalog of the black salts we know about. If you have some we have not listed, we would like to add them. In the meantime we will be looking for the 14 of them not already in our collection. We hope that you already have some in your collection, and that you will come across more of the rare ones at a reasonable price in the future.

Ed Berg
401 Nottingham Rd., Newark, DE 19711

May 1996

References:

10 books by Allan B. & Helen B. Smith, "Open Salts Illustrated"
William Heacock & Patricia Johnson, "5000 Open Salts"

Black Open Salts

Figure No.	Description	Maker	H&J Shape	Smith Shape
1	Drapery pattern master, blown	French, 1840		
2	Rectangular master, vertical prisms on sides			
3	Capstan type master, faceted rim		89	
4	TORPEDO pattern master			
5	TILE pattern master	Thompson Glass, 1890		425-2-3*
6	FLAWLESS pattern, individual, polished		2039*	131-4-1*
7	OCTAGON master			124-2-3
8	Coal wagon	British?		
9	6 curving sides, heavy, enamelled decorations		499*	164-5-1*
10	Low oval, faceted sides		2705	483-2-2
11	6 plain vertical sides, faces polished		497*	41-8-4*
12	Small pedestal salt, frosted		2977	
13	Pedestal, wide thin blown bowl		496*	265-4-2*
14	Bulbous bowl, engraved	Hawkes?		86-2-2
15	Pedestal nut dish, square foot	Fostoria	786*	93-6-1
16	Swan, first mold	Cambridge	935	44-7-4
17	Swan, second mold	Cambridge		44-8-3
18	Square, low, plain sides and bottom	Tiffin		
19	Pedestal, round, Mary Gregory decorations	1920's?		255-5-3*
20	Pedestal, brass stem and foot			418-4-1*
21	Flat dish, wide flange rim			424-1-1*
22	Freehand heavy hemisphere, cased	Scandinavia		264-6-1*
23	Bow tie shaped double			459-5-2*
24	Pedestal, panelled bowl, child's dish?	Imperial	498*	40-5-1
25	QUARTERED BLOCK repro, frosted	Guernsey	912*	23-4-1
26	Rabbit on basket-weave nest	Boyd		
27	Hen on basket-weave nest	Boyd	942*	44-1-2
28	Cincinnati type (round, faceted sides)	Viking	2047*	206-3-2*
29	Euchre salt (star shape shown)	Summit	3027	7-4-1
30	LACY DAISY repro	Summit	351	37-3-1
31	Roses in zippers	Summit		
32	LOTUS pattern repro	Summit	522	37-1-2
33	Basalt ware pedestal salt, ceramic	Wedgwood	1847*	110-6-1*
34	Basalt ware rectangular salt, ceramic	Wedgwood		
35	Round, turned from anthracite coal			
36	Swan, metal wings and neck, Bakelite body			463-6-3*
37	Black stone, Arabic inscriptions			

book references are shape only unless marked *

Black Open Salts Not Pictured in Writeup

Description	Maker	H&J Shape	Smith Shape	Salty Comments #15 Shape
ENGLISH HOBNAIL (low version)	Summit	515	36-3-3	23
Star and feather columns (their V salt)	Summit	886	11-3-3	33
Cambridge CAPRICE salt / nut cup / ash tray	Summit	922	307-4-1	7
Rabbit on nest - high ears	Summit	1002	310-5-1	4
Cambridge CAPRICE shell	Summit	1237		12
Hob-star salt	Summit	2812	473-4-2	20
Tub with V-notch tab handles	Summit		13-2-3	36
Cambridge 2-handled CAPRICE	Summit	3346	361-2-2	8
Cambridge 2-handled CAPRICE with divided bowl (making it a double)	Summit			9
Round cut type pattern, zippers & notched prisms	Summit	2558	475-3-2	34
Last Minute Find - Scallop shell	?	1233	33-1-3	

book references are shape only unless marked *