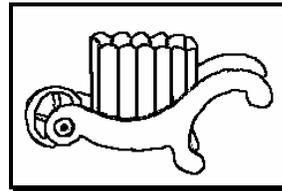


Salty Comments

Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting



Number 64

October, 1998

It's All Wright

In past Salty Comments we relayed what we learned about salts sold by the L. G Wright Glass Co. Now a new book has been published that gives a more comprehensive story, so we think it is worthwhile to repeat the topic to give a complete picture in one place. One of the authors, James Measell, spoke at the April meeting of the Early American Pattern Glass Society and gave additional background that is worth relaying.

Lawrence G. ("Si") Wright was born in 1904 and grew up on his parent's farm. He worked there after high school, but later decided to strike out in other directions. He became a salesman for the New Martinsville Glass Co. in 1936. He soon decided that he could do as well on his own, so he started buying glass wholesale and reselling it. He wanted to revive some of the old patterns, so he had molds made to his specifications and hired companies with glass presses to run whatever colors and quantities he required. He had a successful business until his sudden death in 1969. The Company continued to operate under the direction of his wife, Verna Mae, until she died in 1990. At that time ownership passed to two of Verna Mae's cousins, Dorothy Stephan and her daughter Phyllis Stephan Buettner. It is still in business today, and they have a showroom and gift shop that you can visit in New Martinsville, WV.

Throughout the first 54 years of the business, its operations were kept secret from the general public. The Wrights dealt only with their commercial customers. Any attempt by outsiders to find out more about their operations or their product line was rebuffed. As a result, many legends grew up about the firm – stories of many old molds they had purchased and of exact reproductions made with them. All this changed a few years ago when one of the Wright salesmen, W.C. Roetteis, contacted James Measell and offered to help him get the inside story for a book. Measell recognized the importance of this offer, and contacted the Wright cousins who now owned the business. They had a much different attitude than their predecessors. Their only questions were, "How can we help?" and "When is the book coming out?" As a result Measell dropped all other activities and concentrated on working with Roetteis and digging into the historical information. He was given complete access to the Wright files and office records, and was able to pull together a detailed picture of what the business had been during the past. The resulting book was published in 1997, and is fascinating reading if you would like to learn about the Wright enterprise.

During the 62 years the business has operated, they have sold over 600 different shapes of glassware, some of it blown but mostly pressed. Each was given a line and item number. Interestingly, there is never an item #13 in any of the lines – Si must have been superstitious. The items include 18 shapes they call "salt dips" and 7 other shapes that are often found in open salt collections. Most of these were made in a variety of bright and attractive colors by a variety of glass companies. Since he owned the molds, Wright had each color he wanted made by whichever one could do the best job for the least money at the time. As a result we probably have salts pressed by Fenton, New Martinsville, Cambridge, Paden City, Indiana Glass Co., or others, but we will never be able to tell.

(2)

The first salt in the Wright list was a copy of the old lacy Sleigh type. This is shown on Figure 1. As you can see, he put cherries on the sides with no lacy stippling, so there is no confusing it with the original. Although it is what we would call a master size, he referred to it as a "Salt Dip", as he did with all of his salts.

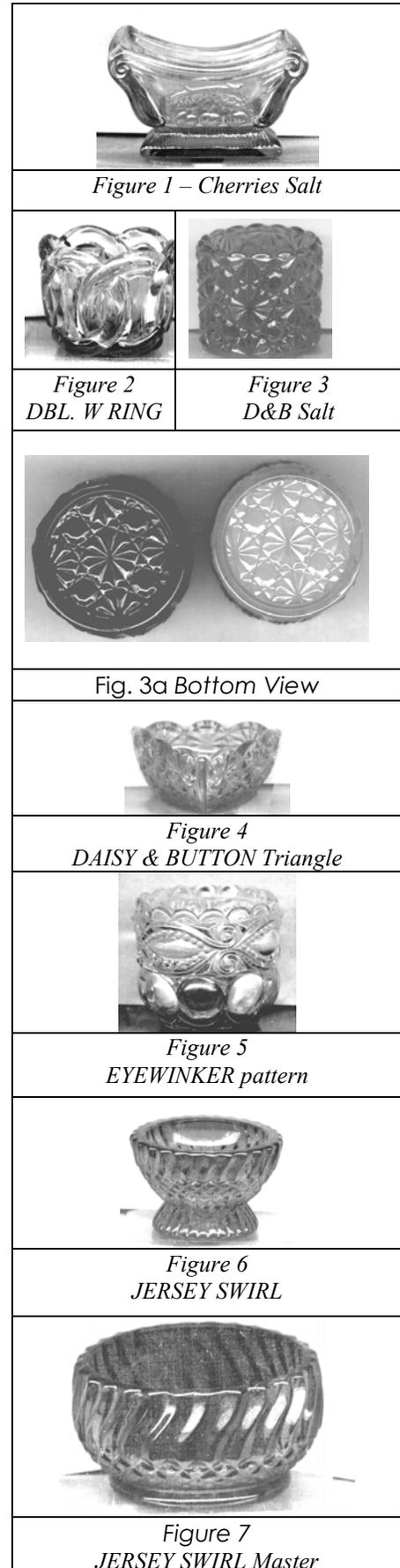
Figure 2 is the DOUBLE WEDDING RING pattern. The design is old, but there was never a salt made in it that we know of. In the late 1980's the mold was used by Dalzell Viking to make some salts for themselves. We bought one in the alexandrite color with their label at their factory store in 1989.

The cylindrical DAISY AND BUTTON salt in Figure 3 is extremely close to one introduced by Degenhart in 1970. Which firm came first we haven't been able to determine. Some of the Degenhart ones are marked with their "D in a Heart", that makes their identification easy. The rest can be differentiated from the Wright versions by examining the bottom. In Figure 3a, the Degenhart salt on the right shows a little more of the daisy at the rim than the Wright one does.

The DAISY AND BUTTON line was a popular one. Over the years Wright sold 72 different shapes that incorporated it. Each shape was given a number, except that he evidently was superstitious, because he skipped the number 13 when identifying the various items. Figure 4 is the "Triangle" salt dip in this popular pattern

The EYEWINKER salt in Figure 5 is another that carries over an old pattern to a new shape. The original set of this pattern did not have any open salt, but Wright invented one to match the other shapes in this design. We have one of these in crystal with the Wright mark embossed in the bottom – a rare find. Most are unmarked.

Wright made two salts in the JERSEY SWIRL pattern. The first of these is the individual size which is larger than the old one and has a ribbed base. This is shown in Figure 6. The master size, Figure 7, copies the original quite closely. It is very large for a salt, measuring about 3 inches across, so you would have to be looking for it to realize that it was an item for your collection and not a sauce dish. We tell the new from the old on this one by counting the diamonds below the swirls. The Wright version has 4 rows of them, while the original has only 3 rows.



(3)

The MOON AND STAR pattern was the second-most popular pattern that Wright reproduced. There were 55 different shapes made, numbered 1 through 56 (skipping the number 13 again). The salt resembles one shown in the old catalog. We have never been able to tell the old from the new on this one, though we have tried hard. Maybe this is a case where Wright actually had an old mold to work with. L.E. Smith made a similar salt, but theirs has a slightly higher base..

The STIPPLED STAR pattern in Figure 9 is another which did not have an open salt originally, so Wright designed one. He called it the "Stipple Salt Dip", not using the old pattern name exactly.

Figure 10 shows the PANELED THISTLE pattern, which Wright recreated in a 43 different shapes. The salt is much larger than the tiny original, so there is no trouble recognizing it. There is an imitation Higbee bee in the bottom, which is pictured and discussed on page 5..

The THREE FACE salt (Figure 11) is one that many collectors recognize. It must have been a popular one for Wright because there are many of his around. They come both with and without the Wright mark embossed on the bottom. The best way to identify the new ones is to look at top of the rim. The old Duncan ones have clearly defined square blocks all the way around. The Wright version has round dots, often not at all clearly defined. As recently as 1996, the Company was selling these wholesale to dealers.

The rectangular WILDFLOWER shown in Figure 12 uses the flowery design on an original Wright shape. The mold was used by the Mosser Glass Co. in the late 1980's to make some crown tuscan color salts for sale in their gift shop. Several years ago we were asked by one of our friends if we thought that one of these he had just bought for \$28.00 was genuine Cambridge, since they originated that particular color. He was disappointed when he learned that we had purchased an identical one at the Mosser factory for \$4.00 a few years earlier.

Figure 14 is a WILDFLOWER version which imitates the old one. The original was boat-shaped, sitting on the back of a turtle. Wright substituted a ribbed base but kept the design of the bowl. This was a practical move because the old version is very hard to make, and the turtle is easily damaged

Figure 15 shows another Wright salt that copies an old design. The Bird With Seed master size was made in a variety of colors and is very close to the old one made by McKee. We look at the bottom to tell the difference. The base on the old one is 2-1/16" long; the Wright bird has a 2-1/2" long base.



Figure 8 - MOON & STAR Salt



Figure 9 - STIPPLED STAR



Figure 10 - PANELED THISTLE



Figure 11 - THREE FACE

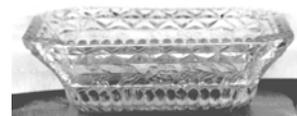


Figure 12
WILDFLOWER Rectangular



Figure 14
WILDFLOWER Crescent



Figure 15
Bird With Seed

(4)

The frog salt is one we're not completely sure of. It looks like the one in the Wright book, and differs from other frogs by having a high rim on the bowl behind the head. The glass looks new – no signs of wear, while our other amphibians show flakes or other marks of use. If you have one that looks like the picture, it's 90% certain to be Wright's.

The swan salt is called a dip, even though it's really master size. A lot of them must have been made because we see them fairly often. Three years ago the Company was still listing them in their catalog as available, though there weren't very many colors in stock.

The large barouche in Figure 18 was sold by Wright as a "Colonial Carriage Ash Tray". The old one that he copied was called a salt in the Central Glass catalog, which he probably did not see. He added a groove for resting the cigarette (or cigar?) at the front, which makes it different from the original. It is shown in the H&J book and is found in many open salt collections, so we're keeping it on our collection. Incidentally, if you ever find two of the Central Glass large size, we'd like to buy one.

Wright's DAISY & BUTTON 4-Wheeled Cart is shown in Figure 19. His catalog listed it as an ashtray or for cigarettes. The original shape was copied from the THOUSAND EYE salt, so we consider his copy a salt also, even though he didn't realize it. The one shown at the right is actually the Korean one which was copied from Wright's by A.A. Imports. Our Wright one is milk glass which doesn't photograph well, so we cheated to get a better picture. The A.A. version has oval wheels, especially on the other side, which is the way to tell the difference.

The "DAISY AND BUTTON small slipper" in Figure 20 is another one in our collection which has the "W in a Circle" mark embossed on it. Many companies made this shape, so the mark is the best way to identify the one by Wright.

The anvil DAISY & BUTTON ash tray (Figure 21) is a shape shown in the salt books and found in many collections. It is another Wright one that A.A. Imports copied. Here we don't know how to tell the difference, and whether there ever was an old one with this coarse a pattern on the sides. Oh well, it's an ashtray anyway.



Figure 16
Frog Salt Dip



Figure 17
Swan Salt Dip



Figure 18
Colonial Carriage Ash Tray

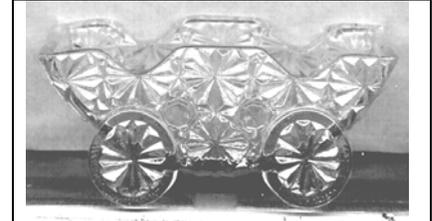


Figure 19
D&B 4-Wheel Cart



Figure 20
D&B Small Slipper

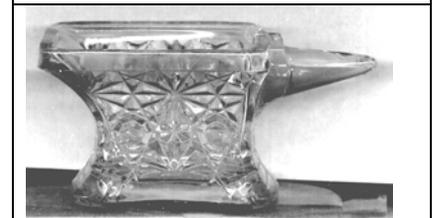


Figure 21
D&B Anvil Ashtray

Figure 22 shows the dish that Wright called his Fish Toothpick. This is a very close copy of an old dish. We believe the old one came only in milk glass, which was often decorated, and that any colored ones are Wright's. There is also one other difference on the old ones – they have a base which has small arches underneath. It touches the table at front, rear and the center of each side. The Wright one sits flat. As to what it is called, the milk glass collectors call it a salt, and that's good enough for us.



Figure 22
Fish Toothpick

We're not sure what the Wright "sandle" (his spelling) in Figure 23 was meant to be, but it's in H&J. We're pretty sure there must have been an old one, but we haven't pinned this fact down yet. We have seen ones that might be old, but don't have one to compare closely.



Figure 23 - Sandle

In 1974, Wright decided to put marks on some of his glassware. The mark is the letter "W" underlined, in a circle, as shown on the right. Relatively few salts show these marks, to our knowledge. We have the D&B Shoe, EYEWINKER, and THREE FACE with the mark embossed on the glass. We also have a number of salts with green and gold stickers that we bought at Jennings Red Barn in New Martinsville, WV in 1983. One of the stickers is also shown. There is one other mark we know of on Wright salts – a copy of the Higbee bee on his PANEELED THISTLE line. The mark on the salts does not duplicate the Higbee one exactly – the bee lacks the letters "H I G" that appear on the original, which is on the far right.



Along with the new book on Wright glass there is a price guide. It is interesting to compare their values with those in Heacock & Johnson, which is the source most salt collectors use. Most of the time the H&J guide calls the Wright glass "repros", and values the pieces at \$5-10. The same pieces are priced at \$12-18 in the new book, and those in red are \$18-32. The most expensive salts are the Fish (toothpick) and the DAISY & BUTTON sandal in the \$38-48 range.

The book shows several of the DAISY & BUTTON 4-wheeled carts on one of their color plates. The amber one in this series is really the old THOUSAND-EYE cart, and not a Wright one. We wrote to James Measell inquiring about this, and he agreed that Wright did not reproduce the THOUSAND-EYE version, and that the one shown was put in by mistake. We think we know how this could happen. Several months ago there was an auction of glass from the Wright family collection. Ed Bowman attended it, and reported that there were a few really old salts among the ones that were sold. These appeared to be the old ones that were copied when making molds for the Wright version. We think the amber cart was one used as a model which was mixed up with authentic Wright glass when the picture was taken.

We hope you already have many of the Wright salts in your collection already. They are interesting shapes, and the colors can do a lot to brighten up your display cabinets. Although they are not plentiful today, we wouldn't suggest paying a lot for them, since the molds could be reactivated, rented or sold at any time. We should also recognize that most of them are adaptations of the old salts, and only a few are repros that will fool the unwary collector.

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Reference: "The L.G. Wright Glass Co.", by James Measell and W.C. "Red" Rotteis
"5000 Open Salts", by William Heacock & Patricia Johnson
10 books, "Open Salts Illustrated", by Alan B. and Helen B. Smith

DATA ON L.G. WRIGHT SALTS

Fig. No.	Wright No.	Description Wright's (Ours)	Colors	H&J No.	Smith No.	Length (mm.)
1	7-6	Cherries Salt Dip (Lacy Repro)	Ama, Amb, Amy, B,G	897	324-1-1	82
2	11-8	DOUBLE WEDDING RING Salt Dip	Amb, Amy, B,G,R			58
3	22-45	DAISY & BUTTON Round Salt Dip	Amb, Amy, B,FrB,G	905		48
4	22-46	DAISY & BUTTON Triangle Salt Dip	Amb, Amy, B,G	876		60
5	25-22	EYEWINKER Salt Dip	Amb, Cr, G,R	893	380-5-3	55
6	35-8	JERSEY SWIRL Small Salt Dip	Amb, Cr, G,R	908	180-1-1	58
7	35-9	JERSEY SWIRL Master Salt Dip	Cr, R			93
8	44-30	MOON & STAR Salt Dip	Amb, Cr,R	903		55
9	59-5	Stipple Salt Dip (STIPPLED STAR Salt)	Amb, Amy, B, Cr, FrB, G,R,	881	265-5-2	75
10	64-6	Thistle Salt Dip (PANELED THISTLE Salt)	Ama, Amb, Amy, B, Cr,G	900		60
11	65-6	THREE FACE Salt Dip	Cr, Fr, P	4431		40
12	67-7	WILDFLOWER Rectangular Salt Dip	Amy, Cr, R	898	338-2-3	85
14	67-8	Crescent Salt Dip (Boat-Shaped WILDFLOWER Salt)	Amb, Amy, Cr	899	317-3-1	95
15	77-59	Bird Salt Dip (Bird With Seed Master)	Ama, Amb, Amy, B	946		102
16	77-51	Frog Salt Dip	Amb, G	1003	325-2-2	80
17	77-52	Swan Salt Dip	Amb, Amy, B,G,M,P	938	115-4-3	90
18		Colonial Carriage Ash Tray (Large Barouche)	Amb, Amy, B	859		90
19		DAISY & BUTTON Small 4-Wheel Cart (D&B Carriage, like THOUSAND EYE)	Amb, Amy, B,G,M		397-4-3	95
20		DAISY & BUTTON Small Slipper (D&B Shoe)	Amy, Amb, B,G,R	841	46-1-2	80
21		DAISY & BUTTON Anvil Ash Tray	Amb, Amy, B,G,M	868	325-5-3	100
22		Fish Toothpick (Flying Fish Salt)	Ama, Amb, Amy, B, PS	4464	457-1-2	120
23		Sandal (Open Slipper Salt)	Amb, Amy, B,G,M	840		113

Colors: Ama=Amberina, Amb=Amber, Amy=Amethyst, B=Blue, Co=Cobalt, Cr=Crystal, Fr=Frosted, G=Green, M=Milk, P=Pink, PS=Purple Slag, R=Red

Colors are ones we know of – there are certainly some we have missed