

VIEW FROM THE SALT BOX - #3

Late last year we went to the preview showing of an auction in Odessa, Delaware. They had a gymnasium full of nice antiques, but only a modest amount of glass and china. There was one lot that interested us - a set of 4 blue milk glass pedestal salts, master size and probably flint glass. They were described as "18th Century Sandwich". They had a blown and cut bowl, with a pressed foot, typical of the English or Irish glass made about 1800. Recognizing that the Boston and Sandwich Glass Co. was not organized until well into the 1800's, we asked about their identification. We were referred to the "glass man" in the room. He confirmed the identification, but when we pointed out the discrepancy in dating, he started treading water. His final position was that the dishes came from an estate, and the identification was what the appraiser had put on them. He suggested that we use our own expertise in identifying what they really were.

Calling a piece of glass "Sandwich" is an easy way for a seller to justify a high price for it. We bought a bird salt once on that basis, and then wrote the Sandwich museum about it. They responded that, as far as they knew, Sandwich never made any open salts with any kind of a bird involved in the design. We lucked out on our purchase, however; the salt was a bird without seed, slightly smaller than the common type of bird. We have never seen another one like it.

The Boston and Sandwich Glass Co. produced a tremendous amount of product in the 62 years it operated, but relatively few people know how to identify it. In the area of open salts, there is no good book we know of that tells what they made. The name has magic to it, however, and we have seen all kinds of glass called "Sandwich". The irony of the situation is that more shapes were made by them than we realize. On a quick trip through the Sandwich museum last year we saw some doubles and some heavy plain table salts on display as well as the usual lacy ones. Some day we must get back there and study them in more detail.

When Barlow and Kaiser finish writing their series of books on Sandwich, I hope that a substantial number of open salts will be included. If that happens, we will all be going through our collections, finding salts that have suddenly become special because they are "Sandwich". In the meantime, when someone says that word, don't believe them unless you are positive they know what they are talking about.