

VIEW FROM THE SALT BOX - #14

Our mail recently contained an offer to sell us two pretty salts. It came from a firm that specializes in expensive art glass, and was complete with a color picture of the pair. They were fine porcelain, low with a ruffled rim, the same shape as H&J 1310, Smith 212-4-1. They were decorated with purple flowers and a gold rim, and were marked Willets Belleek. When we came to the price, however, we gasped - \$95 each! Needless to say, we are not buying them.



The experience points out several things about our situation. The first is that when you collect open salts, you are competing with many other people. The pattern glass collectors will buy pattern glass salts, the Steuben collectors want Steuben salts, and the porcelain collectors are looking for salts like these two. This competition makes some shapes or types quite hard to find, and also runs up the price. We're don't know if the \$95 in this instance is a price that the Willets collectors will pay, but with the H&J price list quoting them at \$30 and Smith at \$45, we're quite sure that they won't wind up with someone who buys only opensalts.

The second point to be made from this experience is that the law of supply and demand does not always operate in the field of antiques. We have seen dozens of the gold iridescent Tiffany dishes like H&J 32, Smith 45-1-2, at antique shows, and all seem to be tagged about \$295 currently. The price seems to keep climbing, too, even though the dishes are plentiful. The high price has led someone to reproduce them, complete with Tiffany marks. This has not effected the prices of the originals, though it has made us suspicious enough that we won't buy any of them in fear of getting a repro. If you want one of these dishes at the current price, we can find one for you in a month or two. If you want an EMPRESS or a BUTTON ARCHES salt, which list for one tenth as much, we can't guarantee that we can ever find one for sale.



A frequent question is, "How much is my salt worth?". The best answer is, "To whom?". The true value of any open salt is determined by how much someone else is willing to pay to get it. If you can find a person who is anxious enough to have one, you can get double the "book" value. For most collectors, however, the price list that goes with H&J seems to be the bible. Salts that are truly scarce and unusually attractive can sell for more, but our experience is that relatively few collectors will be interested. If you want to pay \$95 for a Willets Belleek salt, we'd be glad to refer you to our source. If you want one for half that price, be patient. We're sure that you will find one if you hunt around.