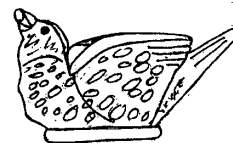


## VIEW FROM THE SALT BOX - #18

We thought we had figured all the angles on the BIRD WITH SEED salt until we had a call from Keith Tucker, a collector in Yorkville, IL. He asked about a version without the seed. We have one, and know it is different from the rest because the base is considerably smaller. There is no indication that there ever was a seed in its mouth either. We have seen only 2 others like it, and have never found a picture of it in the books.



Then Keith pointed out that the old one pictured in the Heacock and Johnson book (#977) doesn't have a seed in its mouth either. In all the years we have looked at the picture we never noticed that. We would have been willing to bet with him that it had one. It definitely has the larger base, but its mouth is empty. The old McKee catalog reproduced in the back of H&J shows a seed, but the salt shown in the color print does not.

This sent us back to the drawing board. We got down all our old birds, and have examined them carefully. As a result we have put together the following theory:

- ◆ The first bird was the one without the seed. Its distinguishing characteristic (beyond the lack of seed) is that the base is only 1-1/4 inches long. The glass tends to be thinner than on other birds, and the detailing seems to be sharper. We have this version in amber and vaseline.
- ◆ After this was made, the mold was reworked to give the flush-eye version. The base was increased to 1-5/8 inches long, the tail was made a little thicker and the feathering on top of the tail was redone. All the rest of the detail resembles the first version exactly.
- ◆ Some time later the mold was reworked again, and much of the detailing redone. This would have been necessary to compensate for mold wear. During this rework the eyes were sharpened by making little holes in the mold, giving the protruding eye version.

The lack of a seed in the H&J photo can be explained in one of two ways. The seed may have been broken out, inadvertently or deliberately. We have seen a bird for sale that had definite marks where the seed had been originally. The other possibility is that there was a version produced which came between the first two - one in which the base size was increased but the seed had not yet been added. We wish we had the one in the photo to look at, so we could examine the beak closely.

If you have any birds without the seed in their mouth, take a close look to see if one might have been there originally. If you find one, measure the base. If it is the small size, consider yourself lucky, because it is a rare salt. If it is the larger size and there is no sign of a piece chipped out, please let us know.

The case is not closed, and may never be, on the old bird with seed. Hopefully we can get more information to make the picture clearer. In the meantime we won't be taking any bets from Keith Tucker about what's shown in the books.

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