

View from the Salt Box - #25

When we see china of any kind, the first thing we do is look on the bottom to see the mark. This habit brings us an icy glare from Kay once in a while, when we are visiting someone and take a peek at a saucer or plate. Nevertheless, we are fascinated by the variety of marks we find, and enjoy identifying their source.

On a recent trip to Ohio we found a mark that was new to us. It is on an open salt, a double, and is one word - DEUTSCHLAND. This is what the Germans call their country, as you probably know. It set us to speculating. In 1891 a law was passed requiring that country of origin be marked on goods imported into the United States. Japan put NIPPON on their china, because that was what they called their country. Because Americans called the country "Japan", they were required to change the NIPPON to JAPAN in 1921. Could it be that the Germans ran into the same thing? About the turn of the century the salts from the German Republic seem to be marked with the names of the states - Bavaria, Saxony, Prussia etc. When they formed a central government after the war, maybe they started using Deutschland and were forced to revise it to GERMANY in 1921. If so, that would date our salt rather closely. The lady sitting on the back of the salt is dressed in the fashion of the 1920's, which is consistent with this idea. It's an intriguing question, and we hope to run into an answer sometime.

Similar inferences about dates can be made from other marks. We have some salts marked CzechoSlovakia, and Czecho-Slovakia. We speculate that these were made soon after World War I, when Czechoslovakia was formed by uniting the two countries. Their postage stamps bear out this theory, because the country's name is hyphenated in the 1918 issues and not in the 1920 ones.

Some marks on salts tell us they were made for export to an English-speaking country, because the English name for most places is different from the name in the native language. The Chinese or Japanese write their country's name in a Chinese or Japanese script that we could not begin to decipher. Norway is another good example - it is Norge (pronounced Nor-Gay) to Norwegians. We see Viking boats with this mark, and we infer they were sold in that country and not made for export. Others that look just the same are marked Norway - these must have been made for overseas markets.

We hope that you will take a closer look at the marks on your salts, and can figure out more about them than you will find in the books about marks. And be careful when you peek under your hostess's plates at the dinner table - Kay might be watching.

Ed Berg

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