

SALTY COMMENTS #6

Probably the most difficult part of writing about salt dishes is describing them. Thanks to the Smith and Heacock & Johnson books, we have a source of pictures which are indeed worth the proverbial thousand words. When we find a salt that is not in the books, however, the trouble begins. You may have tried the old game of describing a spiral staircase verbally without using your hands – some salts are no easier to define. And even though you may cover the appearance carefully, there is no guarantee that you will be understood when your words are read by someone else.

In describing cut glass dishes, there seems to be a terminology that is somewhat standard. This can be a starting point for open salts, since many of the pressed glass details come from cut glass. By using this and adding terms we commonly hear from salt collectors, we have been trying to develop a glossary that will keep our descriptions at least consistent. By illustrating the various terms, we think that we can describe dishes more accurately for you when you don't have the books or when a dish is not listed in them. This letter will give you the latest in our list of terms, along with sketches of them, and will hopefully help us both in communicating. Please remember that there are many things which we have not covered, and that words very often mean different things to different people.

The sketches need comments in a few cases. Diamond point has the surface covered with pointed pyramids – something hard for us to convey in a drawing. In some cut glass books, a hobnail always has 6 sides, and more sides make it a button. Not everybody follows this strict usage. The HOBNAIL pattern comes with either sharp or rounded hobs, with varied spacing between them. The ENGLISH HOBNAIL pattern is quite different. Both of these designations are pressed glass patterns, and do not seem to be used for cut glass. Hobstars have a button or hobnail raised in the center, formed by the cutting of the star. This is sometimes decorated separately. If the hobnail is ground out to leave a hole in the center, the figure becomes a sunburst. The honeycomb design in cut glass is formed by overlapping depressions, quite unlike the faceted shapes that are sometimes called honeycomb salts.

The task of making these drawings gives a real appreciation for the work that glass cutters do. They use rotating wheels that will cut a groove or a rounded indentation, and make all the many varieties of designs with only these tools. After trying to reproduce the cane pattern with pencil and straight-edge we decided that they must have had machines to hold and turn their work in many cases. You can make a lot of patterns with only straight lines, but you need a high degree of accuracy in spacing the cuts or else the figure will look lopsided.

Rims have a language of their own. They can be notched, sawtooth, serrated, or scalloped or a combination of these. They can be beaded or ruffled. They can be flared, or if they turn at a right angle they are flanged. More terminology than this is needed, but we have not found good definitions which are widely useful.

The figures shown are those we consider to be basic ones. The more complex field of pattern glass includes many other designs, but most are combinations of the basics or use figures that occur much less frequently. The two patterns we have shown – ENGLISH HOBNAIL and HOBNAIL – are included to differentiate them from the "hobnail" shape found in cut glass. It would undoubtedly be useful to expand the list of basic shapes to improve the accuracy of descriptions. If you have any suggestions for additions to the list, or comments about the ones listed, please let us know.

(2)

Terms not covered by the drawings include embossed, which means that the figure or lettering is raised above the surrounding surface. A coin is embossed. Impressed designs are sunk into the surface, and are sometimes called "inverted", as in the INVERTED STRAWBERRY pattern dish (Smith 20-4-3, H&J 2647). Lacy or stippled dishes have fine dots over all the flat portions of the surface. On dishes with sloping sides, we say they slope inward if the bottom of the dish is smaller than the top.

Although our list covers a lot of territory, it is far from adequate to do the entire job. Too often we find ourselves having to be creative, with terms such as "looks like a figure 8", or giving an accurate description that is too complex ("Vertical oval bullseyes around the sides with a row of teardrop shapes above and below". Want to try to guess which one? It's in the books - Smith 116-3-1, H&J 4646.)

And sometimes we find a shape not shown anywhere that we can't even begin to put into words. Ever see a spiral staircase salt?

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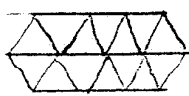


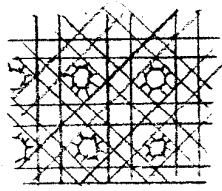
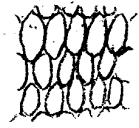

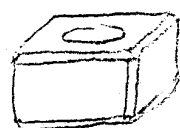
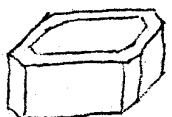



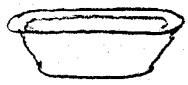



November 1985.

References: "Identifying American Cut Glass", Bill & Louise Boggess, Crown Publishers, 1984
Ten books by Alan B. and Helen B. Smith, "Open Salts Illustrated"
"5000 Open Salts", by William Heacock and Patricia Johnson




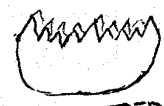
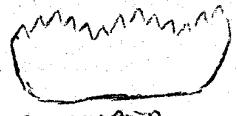

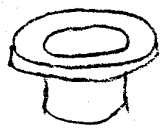

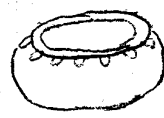


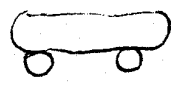
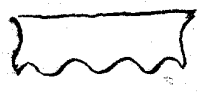


FOLLOW-UP NOTE TO SALTY COMMENTS #5

Someday we will learn never to be 100% sure in identifying what is not a salt dish. We had an opportunity to spend a day in the library at the Corning Museum recently, and found a number of old catalog pages from the Cambridge Glass Co. We found the CAPRICE pattern pages showing a nut dish and no open salt, just as we had advised in "Salty Comments #5" (Smith 307-4-1, H&J 447). We also found something we should have expected but did not - on a catalog page listing ash trays and on one showing salts and shakers, there was the same "nut dish"! The manufacturer obviously was willing to sell it for any end use, and anticipated that a salt might be one. We have to withdraw this one from our listing of "Dishes Made For Another Use", and warn you that more things like this could happen in the future. Fortunately there is enough space on our shelves to fit our copy back where it belongs. We hope you didn't do anything rash with your dish when you read our last letter.

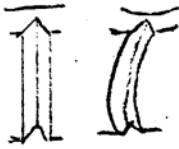

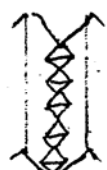

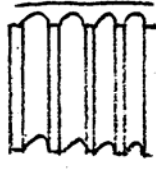
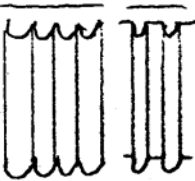
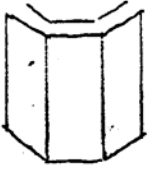


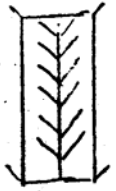
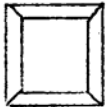

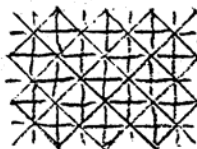

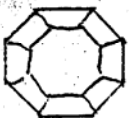
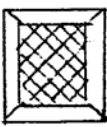
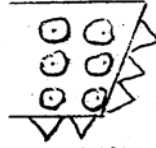




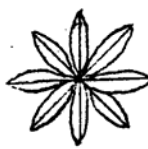

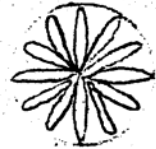

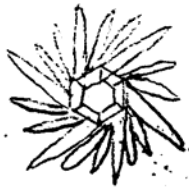
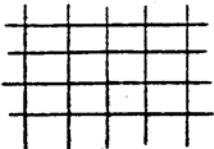
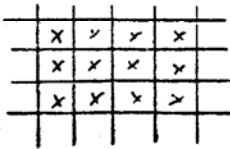


BASIC DESIGNS

 TRIANGULAR FACETED	 DIAMOND FACETED	 ROPE (CABLE)	 CANE	 HONEYCOMB
 BULLSEYE	 BEVELLED EDGES	 TRUNCATED CORNERS	 BULBOUS	 MELON RIB
 SHERBET DISH	 VEGETABLE DISH	 CHILD'S DISH	 TUB (TAB-HANDLED)	 BOAT-SHAPED PEDESTAL

RIMS AND BASES

 BEADED	 SCALLOPED	 SAWTOOTH	 SERRATED	 SCALLOPED SAWTOOTH
 RUFFLED	 FLANGED	 FLARING	 NOTCHED	 CHIPPENDALE HANDLES
 PEDESTALS	 BALL FEET	 SCALLOPED FEET	 LEGS	 COLLAR BASE

BASIC DESIGNS

 <p>GROOVES (MITERS)</p>	 <p>PRISMS</p>	 <p>ZIPPERS (NOTCHED PRISM)</p>	 <p>NOTCHED PRISM</p>	 <p>FLUTES</p>
 <p>RIBS</p>	 <p>PANELS</p>	 <p>THUMBPRINT (PUNTY)</p>	 <p>OVAL THUMBPRINT</p>	 <p>FEATHER</p>
 <p>BLOCK</p>	 <p>DIAMOND</p>	 <p>DIAMOND POINT</p>	 <p>HOBNAIL (6 SIDES)</p>	 <p>BUTTON</p>
 <p>CROSS HATCHED BLOCK</p>	 <p>HOBNAIL PATTERN</p>	 <p>ENGLISH HOBNAIL PATTERN</p>	 <p>CROSS CUT DIAMOND</p>	 <p>STARRED DIAMOND</p>
 <p>STRAW BERRY DIAMOND</p>	 <p>STAR</p>	 <p>STAR BURST</p>	 <p>DAISY</p>	 <p>HOBSTAR</p>
 <p>BUZZ STAR</p>	 <p>CROSS HATCHED</p>	 <p>WAFFLED</p>	 <p>FAN</p>	 <p>FEATHERED FAN</p>