

SALTY COMMENTS - #8
(Information and opinion on open salt dish collecting)

The L.G. Wright Company is of considerable interest to collectors since they have made at least 20 different open salts. They are a mystery in many ways, however, since little has ever been published about them. Founded about 50 years ago, they seem to have specialized in reviving old pressed glass designs. Some of their dishes are direct copies, perhaps from the original molds, but most of their salts are new shapes which use the old patterns. We know of only one person who has made an effort to find out the details of their production - Arthur G. Peterson. In gathering material for his writings on salt shakers he talked with Mr. Wright directly. He could not get any data, because Mr. Wright felt that such information should be kept confidential to protect his business interests. Mr. Wright has since died, but the firm seems to be alive and well today.

The people closest to the Wright Company seem to be the Jennings family, who operate Jennings Red Barn in New Martinsville, West Virginia. This is a lovely store, with a large line of Wright glass. When we visited there, they were able to get some salts for us directly from the factory while we browsed through the store for half an hour or so. Steve Jennings has just written a short piece for the Glass Review in which he mentions "Si" Wright, and that Mrs. Wright, his widow, is still running the Company. If you are ever in the area, we would recommend that you visit the Jennings store which is on the highway along the river just north of New Martinsville.

In the fall of 1985 we visited Jennings Red Barn to learn which of the Wright open salts are still in production. While we were there, we had the privilege of seeing a large stack of picture pages from old Wright catalogs which turned up quite a bit of information that was new to us. Much of it is not in H&J or in the Smith books. We now know that the following open salts have been made by L.G. Wright in the past. Those still in production last fall are so noted. We have not attempted to list all the different colors shown in the books - only a representative example.

<u>Smith No.</u>	<u>H&J No.</u>	<u>Description</u>
28-3-3	903	MOON AND STARS pattern. We have been asking for several several years, trying to find someone who has a dish of this kind which can be reliably dated before 1930. The pattern is old, but is this particular shape? Wright has made this, and since he has been in business for over 50 years, he could have made many of the ones that are thought to be old. We do know that L.E. Smith Co. has a very close copy - H&J 870. The only obvious difference is in the base - the Smith base is smaller and slightly higher. We have bought a Wright dish at Jennings Red Barn, and can find no mold differences between it and the pictures in the books or several other crystal dishes which were sold to us as old. We are still not willing to bet the farm that this one was made by anyone other Smith or Wright.
36-4-2	905	DAISY AND BUTTON pattern cylindrical salt. This looks like a toothpick holder, but the original was designed by Elizabeth Degenhart, and was sold as a salt. There is a tiny difference between the Wright and Degenhart molds - the outside daisies on the bottom have 2 more petals on Degenhart's. None like this before 1940 that we know of.
46-1-2	841	Small shoe. We have seen only the catalog picture, not a genuine Wright product, so we cannot be sure what would make this unique.

- 56-2-2 844? DAISY AND BUTTON hat. Again, this design has been made by so many firms that a genuine Wright copy would be needed to define differences, and we do not have such that we know of.
- 115-4-3 938 Swan. This is a unique shape - the rim is unlike any of the other swans of this size range. Still in production.
- 262-6-1 898 WILDFLOWER pattern, rectangular. The pattern is old, but we do not know if the original had a dish in this shape. All the ones we have seen are the Wright version.
- 265-5-2 881 STIPPLED STAR pattern. Another old pattern, but we do not believe the original set had anything this shape in it - at least we have seen no old catalog pictures or any dish claiming to be old.
- 317-3-1 899 WILDFLOWER pattern, this time imitating but not copying the old dish which has a boat-shaped bowl on the back of a turtle. The turtle is hard to make; the Wright version substituted a ribbed base in its place. The old one is Smith 317-3-3, H&J 506.
- 324-1-1 897 Design taken from an old lacy salt, but Wright put cherries on the sides instead of the old stag-horn pattern.
- 325-2-1 Fish with bowl on his back. H&J says there was an old milk glass one (H&J 4464), but we believe all the other colored ones are by L.G. Wright. The scallops on the rim of our copy look slightly lower than on the milk glass one in the picture. We cannot tell whether Wright reused the old mold until we get a genuine old one for comparison.
- 325-2-2 1003 Frog. There are at least 3 different molds for these frogs, probably by at least 2 different companies. The picture we saw shows that the Wright frog has the top of the bowl well above the top of the frog's head, unlike either of the other two. This is different enough to define it rather clearly.
- 325-5-3 868 DAISY AND BUTTON anvil. We believe that several different companies made this design, and we do not have enough information to identify the Wright version directly.
- 380-5-3 893 EYEWINKER pattern. An old pattern, but we do not know if any dish of this shape was included in the original set. If it's in color, it's almost certainly by Wright.
- 397-4-3 DAISY AND BUTTON carriage. This copies the original shape, (H&J 860) but substitutes a new pattern for the THOUSAND EYE design on the original. No trouble identifying the Wright version because of this change.
- 474-6-1 869 JERSEY SWIRL pattern. Again the shape has been changed, this time by adding a ribbed base. The old ones are smaller and shorter (Smith 36-5-1, H&J 426).
- 859 Old-time carriage, a barouche. Wright enlarged the size of the original salt dish, and this is enough to distinguish it. Old one is Smith 45-3-3, H&J 858.

- 876 Triangular dish, called DAISY AND BUTTON WITH THIN BARS by H&J - a mouthful. Close to the original TRIANGLE pattern (Smith 444-1-1, H&J 442), but larger and with a scalloped rather than a toothed rim.
- 900 PANELLED THISTLE pattern. This is the same design, but a different shape than the original Higbee one (H&J 3050, Smith 15-2-2). It is still in production.
- 946 BIRD WITH SEED, master size. This copies an old one (Smith 297-2-1, H&J 947), but there are numerous differences when you put them side by side. The difference we look for most is the size of the base - the original McKee is smaller. The rear of the Wright base extends beyond the rear of the bowl in the bird's back. Another difference is in the back of the head - the original is curved, and the reproduction is flat.
- 4431 THREE FACE pattern. This is an attempt to reproduce the original Duncan salt, but there are marked differences in the design around the top rim. The Wright version has crude "beads"; the original has sharply-defined square blocks. We have a copy of this signed W in a circle, which is rare. Most are unsigned. Still in production. Smith shows only the old one (56-1-3).

DOUBLE WEDDING RING pattern. This dish has the same shape as the EYEWINKER dish, but has a different old pattern on it. We don't know whether the original set had a dish this shape - we doubt that it did. Anything in color is very probably by Wright.

The availability of the Wright dishes varies considerably. Four of them - THREE FACE, PANELLED THISTLE, SWAN and master BIRD WITH SEED are still in production. We don't have a list of the colors available - probably a limited range, since there is not a big demand for open salts. The THREE FACE we have seen only in crystal (usually frosted) - the other three we have seen only in color. On the other end of the scale, the fish, frog and D&B carriage are ones we rarely ever see. Certainly none of these has been made in any quantity in recent years.

We deplore glass makers who put out dishes that copy the older designs closely without some clear marking to prevent confusion or deceit. L.G. Wright has revived many old patterns, but with their salt dishes, all but the Degenhart copy can be distinguished readily. They really have done a lot less than others to confuse any collector who is willing to spend a little time to learn. Our only wish is that they had marked all their THREE FACE salts, and that someone could come up with a MOON AND STARS that pre-dates Wright beyond all shadow of a doubt.

We find the Wright salts are an interesting and colorful addition to our collection. Some are hard to find, but now is the time to get them. Someday there will probably be a L.G. Wright Collectors Club, and then they will really be hard to come by.

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References: Salt and Salt Shakers by Arthur G. Peterson
Open Salts Illustrated, a series of 10 books by Allan B. and Helen B. Smith
5000 Open Salts by William Heacock and Patricia Johnson