

## SALTY COMMENTS #20

(Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting)

Last issue I intended to end the story of contemporary salts. Murphy's Law prevailed, however, and we have some new information that needs to be passed on. We will cover this first, then get to the main topic - Duncan salts.

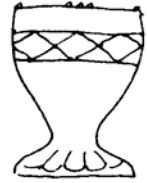
In Salty Comments #17 we showed an egg-cup shaped salt whose mold Boyd had bought but never run (Fig.1). Thanks to a lead from Ruth Potter, a collector in Columbus, Ohio, we have obtained the details about the previous owner, Bill Kasher. He originally worked as a chemist for the Holophane Co. in their glass making operation. About 1968 he left them, and with his wife set up a small business in the country outside St. Louisville, Ohio. He handled the manufacture and she handled the selling. They called their company Techniglass.

During their existence, the firm made small pressed glass objects including one open salt, toothpicks, candy and relish dishes, cream and sugar sets, and candle holders. They also made some freehand objects. They purchased molds from a company in Washington, PA that buys old molds from glass companies and resells them. The business had about 14 employees at its peak.

The company lasted about 6 months, after which it ran out of money and went bankrupt. One of the employees, Thelma Ponser, was given dozens of boxes of finished product in lieu of the money owed her. She sells the glass at flea markets to recoup her losses. The salt dishes they made are one shape in 8 different colors. Mrs. Ponser estimates that about 3500 total were produced. The colors are: Milk glass (very limited number made, scarce), amberina, red, plum, beer bottle brown, bright blue, coke bottle green, and yellow-green. This is supposedly an old mold, so there might be a dish somewhere, probably in crystal, that was made by the original owner. We have yet to see one.

We also visited Summit Art Glass and found they are making 2 more salts than before. The first is the Westmoreland #209, shown in H&J 3224 and Smith 78-1-3 and in Fig. 2 above. They have made it only in cobalt so far, and it has no marks. The second is an original with them. They have added roses and leaves over the zippers on an old Imperial mold. The resulting design they call Rose Lattice (Fig. 3). It has been made in cobalt red, and red carnival. No mark to indicate who made it, but if you see it, remember that it is a new one.

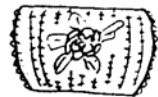
The Duncans were a well-known family in glass making. Companies bearing the name operated from 1874 until 1955. The father, George Duncan, gradually bought out Ripley Glass in Pittsburgh, and renamed it George Duncan and Sons. After buying it, he sold half interest to a son and a daughter (who happened to be the wife of A.H. Heisey who later founded Heisey Glass). The sale was for the "sum of 1 dollar plus natural love and affection", but his personal assets were security to an iron business that had just gone bankrupt. It is speculated that the sale was to insure that the family would have something left if the courts came after his holdings. George died in 1877, and was succeeded by his son, James E. Duncan. The business ran successfully until 1891, when it joined the U.S. Glass Co. conglomerate. The plant burned in March 1892, and was never rebuilt. The Duncan & Miller firm in Washington, PA was founded after this.



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In this discussion we will limit ourselves to the George Duncan & Sons business. This covers about 17 years, from the time the Ripley name was changed until U.S. Glass was formed. It was the height of the pattern glass era, with much competition among glass companies for the available business. It was also the time when free-flowing salt was being developed. Open salts were becoming less popular and "salt bottles", as they were first called, began to replace them. The end of the period saw competition among the glass companies becoming so intense that many were near bankruptcy. The Duncan catalogs show this effect. In the 8 years ending 1882, they were introducing about 40 new pressed items per year. In the following 4 years, the average rose to about 70 per year. In 1887-1890, over 130 items per year were introduced. Since each item required an expensive mold, and the market could absorb only a limited amount of production, the mold costs must have been eating them alive. This is why the U.S. Glass conglomerate was formed - to get the pressed glass business under control so that it could once again be profitable.

In the factory fire in 1892, it is believed that most of the molds were destroyed. New ones were probably made by U.S. Glass for a few successful pieces, but most of the Duncan line was never made again. Among the open salts, we only know of the DAISY & BUTTON hat and the THREE FACE being copied, each with a new mold. The first of these is currently made by Fenton, but theirs is slightly smaller (2-1/8" across the brim) than the Duncan one (2-1/4" across, according to the catalog). There may have been others who made this kind of dish - they certainly are plentiful enough. We know what the Fenton one looks like - we bought ours at the factory - but we don't have one that is known to be Duncan.

The THREE FACE salt has been copied by L.G. Wright, sometimes marked with his W in a circle but usually unmarked. It can be identified by the design on the rim, which has round beads, somewhat messy and irregular. The old one has square, regular beading all the way around - once you see one you will never forget the difference.

The known open salts that George Duncan & Sons made are listed on page 4 and illustrated on page 5. We have also listed 3 that Duncan catalogs call novelty items - the bandmaster's cap, sled and slipper - because they are found in many open salt collections today.

Open salts in the first three patterns on the list are certainly scarce. They are shown clearly in the old catalogs, but we have not been able to find them pictured in any of the open salt books. We have never seen them anywhere, for that matter, although we are now looking harder than ever. Other dishes in these patterns are shown in the pattern glass books, so they were probably in production for a number of years. If any of our readers has one, we would like to hear about it. We see the sailors hat and the band cap occasionally, although they are also sought after by glass hat collectors and are somewhat expensive. The knife rest, SNAIL and THREE FACE dishes are also available but expensive, because of competition from other collector groups. The rest of the Duncan salts can be found rather frequently, although we do not know how to distinguish the ones in the bottom group on page 4 (fig. 18-27) from similar shapes made by other companies.

The Duncan #800 pattern had several different names. It was originally issued in April 1883. The original set included individual and table salts, and was given the name "Heavy Finecut" by collectors. More of the #800 pattern were issued in July, but these have plain panels between the pattern. These are called "Heavy Paneled Finecut" by collectors, and do not include any salts. In October 1884 new pieces with silver-plated feet, called Cottage Ware by the Company, were added to the #800 line. Finally some more new shapes with a slightly changed pattern were added. These were still the #800 line, but were called Bag Ware by the company. The salts we know today as "Bagware" were actually part of the "Heavy Finecut" group, but remained in production through the Bag Ware period and until the fire in 1892.

The BLOCK pattern is listed in the catalog as available in cut as well as pressed. We believe that the cut ones are simply the pressed salts which were touched up on a cutting wheel after they were made. This kind of operation was not unusual, since it was much easier than making a fully cut glass dish, starting from a plain glass blank.

All the known Duncan catalogs show a set of 13 salts and a knife rest salt that is marked "Patented Feb. 27, 1872". The knife rest is unique, but the rest are ones that were made by many glass companies. We know of no way of distinguishing Duncan salts like this from those made by others. Nobody else can, either, so you might as well call yours "Duncan" if you are trying to collect all the ones they made.

The Gleny individual salt has an interesting characteristic that you don't see unless you work with several dishes at once. Because of its collar base, you can stack a set of them on top of each other. When talking about these dishes we often call them "the stackables". Some of them do not fit with others because several different manufacturers made them with slightly different molds, but when you get a genuine set they pile up very neatly. We're certain this is one reason for the rather unusual design being as common as it is - it probably was popular because it took up less cupboard space. The shape has another interesting feature - dishes like this have been dug up at Sandwich by Ray Barlow. We saw one at his exhibit, but could see no way to separate it from similar ones made by others. You may have a Sandwich salt in your collection and not know it!

The tableware patterns that Duncan made show how open salts were going out of style as free-flowing salt was becoming available. In the decade 1870-80, 8 patterns of tableware were made. These included 3 table salts, 2 individual salts and one salt bottle (they did not use the term "master salt", and the word "shaker" does not appear in their catalog until about 10 years later.) The next decade (1890-1900) they made 32 patterns of tableware, including 2 table salts, 3 individuals, and no less than 22 different salt bottles. It is clear that shakers had taken over most dinner tables by the turn of the century.

After the factory fire in 1892 and the decision not to rebuild, James E. and Harry B. Duncan formed a partnership with J.E. Miller, who had been a highly respected foreman in the old plant. It was first known as George Duncan's Sons & Co., but when James died in 1900 it was reorganized as the Duncan and Miller Glass Co. They built a plant in Washington, PA which started operation in 1893. It continued in business until 1955, when they closed because they could not meet competition from automated glass factories. The fires were put out, and the molds and equipment sold to U.S. Glass. This firm also made a number of open salts, in some of the more familiar patterns. We hope to review their operation in the next Salty Comments.

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September 1988

References: "Early Duncan Glassware" by Neila M. Bredehoft, George A. Fogg & Francis C. Maloney  
"Pressed Glass in America" by John & Elizabeth Welker  
"5000 Open Salts" by William Heacock & Patricia Johnson  
Ten books, "Open Salts Illustrated" by Alan B. & Helen B. Smith

SALTS BY GEORGE DUNCAN & SONS

<u>Fig. No.</u>	<u>Duncan No.</u>	<u>First Listed</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sizes</u>	<u>Smith No.</u>	<u>H&amp;J No.</u>
4A 4B	95,96	1874	Mitchell Pattern	Table Footed table		
5	125	1877	(Cane and Rosette Pattern)	Table		
6	150	1878	(Ribbon, Ribbon Frosted Pattern)	Table		
7	308	1887	Block Pattern - Pressed and Cut	Table, Ind.	12-2-3	
8	360	1890	(Snail Pattern)	Individual	23-4-3	2656
9	400	1878	(Three Face Pattern)	Individual	56-1-3	4429
10	800	1883	(Heavy Finecut) or Bag Pattern	Table, Ind.	8-3-2	2795
11		1885	Hat Salt (Daisy & Button Hat)	2-1/4" across brim	56-2-2	844
12	3	1887	Slipper (Daisy & Button Shoe)	2-5/8" long	46-1-2 shape	
13			Sailor Hat Salt	Individual	207-4-2	550
14			Tub Salt (Daisy & Button Tub)	Individual		849
15			Band Cap (Bandmaster's Hat)	2-3/8" diam.	85-3-3	862
16			Sled	4-1/2" long		
17		1872	Combination Salt & Knife Rest	Individual	109-5-2	3039

Thirteen salts shown in every Duncan catalog:

		<u>Shape Like</u>
18	No. 1 Plain, Table & Ind. (Oblong, rayed bottom)	481-5-3
19	No. 2 Plain, Table & Ind. (Oblong, lines on bottom)	2-3-3 3309
20	Brilliant, Table & Ind. (Oval, crosshatched bottom)	2728
21	French Table (8 sides, long, oval bowl)	
22	Diamond Table (faceted sides)	
23	Round Individual (rayed bottom?)	6-5-1 2509?
24	Octagon Individual (8 sides, long, stubby legs on end)	33-5-2 433
25	Square Individual (round bowl, waffle bottom)	8-1-3 2766
26	Gleny Individual (round bowl, bulging sides, collar base)	3-4-2 2512
27	Argus Individual (sloping sides with thumbprints)	21-3-3 2612

## Notes:

1. Duncan usually sold their glass by line number, given in column 2. Where they used a name, it is given in column 3. When others have given the pattern a name, or where a description is used, this is shown in parentheses.
2. Novelty items found in the books and in many open salt collections are included; If Duncan called them salts, I have used the word "salt" in their name.

SALTS BY GEORGE DUNCAN & SONS



4A



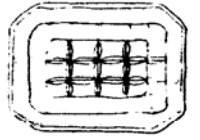
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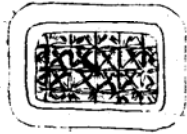
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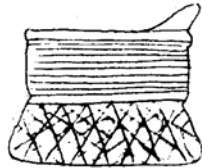
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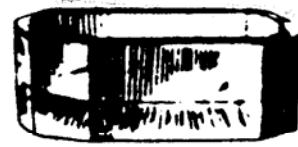
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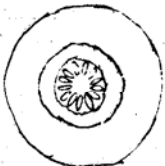
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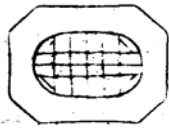
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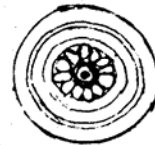
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