

SALTY COMMENTS #31
(Facts and Opinion on Open Salt Collecting)

In the last issue we discussed open salts made by the McKee Glass Company from its founding until the year 1880. The cut-off date was arbitrary - nothing of note happened to the Company then. This time we will cover the rest of the McKee salts.

The first major change for the Company after 1880 came 8 years later, when they moved from Pittsburgh. They built a new plant and a new town called Jeannette about 20 miles to the east. The site was chosen because of the natural gas supply, and the town was named after Mrs. McKee. Although the natural gas ran out after a few years, they easily switched to coal which was abundant. In 1899 they joined in the National Glass Co. combine, and the McKee family retired from the glass business. National went bankrupt in 1908, however, and the factory became the McKee Glass Company under new management. It was bought by the Thatcher Mfg. Co. in 1951 and by the Jeannette Glass Co. in 1961. It is still operating today.

The old catalogs show 16 open salts sold by McKee in 1880. These were covered in Salty Comments #30. By the turn of the century at least 6 of them were still being sold, along with new designs given in the attached list. Altogether we have identified about 20 open salts introduced after 1880. There were many other tableware designs made, but most contained only shakers which were preferred by the public.

In 1903, McKee introduced their mark "Pres-cut" It was embossed on many of their pieces, and used on paper labels on others. Their catalogs about this time advertise that "every piece is marked". How long this was continued we do not know, but the mark is the only way of identifying McKee's #20 COLONIAL, a shape which many other companies produced.

Comments on the salts in the list follow. We use the standard convention of putting glass pattern names in capital letters.

BABY FACE - This pattern resembles Duncan THREE FACE, with a baby in place of the lady. Pictures show several different dishes, but no salt. We wish we knew what one of these salts looks like - perhaps one of you are lucky enough to own one, and will tell us.

Bird with Seed (individual size) - A classic salt, confused by reproductions (Degenhart, Boyd, Kanawha). If the bird has protruding eyes, it is McKee. If the back of the head looks chopped off at the eye, it is Kanawha. If there is a bump on the left corner of the edge of the tail it is Degenhart (sometimes marked) or Boyd (always marked). There is another version without protruding eyes which we think is also old McKee, but this is controversial and we cannot prove it. The easiest way to identify this one is to run your finger around the bottom of the bowl. If it is circular, the dish is new. Both the protruding eye and the flush eye versions have a decidedly non-circular bottom. As far as we have seen, all clear birds are old. Most, but not all, of the colored ones are new.

Bird with Seed (master size) - L.G. Wright reproduced this within the last 30 years. The base on his is 2-1/2" long. The McKee bird has a 2-1/8" base.

STRIGIL - Heacock & Johnson says their #2563 is this pattern, but we do not agree. It sort of fits with the larger STRIGIL dishes, but its design is not close enough. There may be a salt in this pattern, but we have yet to see one in a catalog.

CHAMPION - This is an duplicate of what the Greentown Museum shows as the Greentown #11 salt. McKee may have purchased the Greentown mold, or the Museum may be wrong. We have been unable to find a way to identify the McKee version.

HICKMAN - The old catalogs show this as part of the JUBILEE Condiment Set. The set was for individual use - no mention of "children's dishes" as some books say. We have this in green as well as clear.

- SUNBEAM - These are three turn-of-the century patterns which are parts of
RAINBOW - tableware sets. The LENOX salt is quite scarce. The RAINBOW is very
LENOX - hard to find in mint condition. Its design has protruding edges
which chip easily in the dish pan.
- Tub Salt - Replica of a wooden tub, with wood-grain sides and hoops. This has
been reproduced, most recently by Wheaton as a holder for a stubby
candle. We don't know how to tell the old from the new.
- ROMONA - Two more patterns from the early 1900's. Both are scarce. We
FANCY ARCH - have not seen the ROMONA at all, except in pictures.
- YUTEC - One of the TEC series of patterns produced by McKee (AZTEC, PLUTEC,
etc.). It is the only TEC we could find with an open salt. The dish is
marked Pres-Cut in the bottom, and comes in several colors. Some salts
have beaded rims; other rims are plain.
- McKee #700 - Part of a tableware set of blanks for cutting or engraving. It
comes in both individual and master sizes.
- COLONIAL #20 - Many companies made these scalloped rim pedestal salts but only
McKee has the Pres-Cut mark in the bottom. If you find the mark, the
salt is McKee. If you don't find it, it could be anybody's.
- BLOCK DIAMOND - Oval, with vertical bars in the blocks.
- HARVARD - Plain sides, part of a tableware set sold as blanks for cutting or
engraving.
- McKee #410 - A pattern, part of a tableware set. Not named in the old
catalogs. The design copies the "Cane" pattern of cut glass.
- Vincennes - The salt has a name, but it is not pattern glass because there are
no other matching pieces of tableware.
- Plain - These are round and oval, and may have also been sold for engraving or
for use as liners. They have star bottoms, and appear in catalogs as
late as 1930.
- New York Twin - Ribbed bowls with a loop handle. It is shown in two different
designs, in catalogs which are undated. The first has two ribbed bowls,
with a rope design handle. The second design is like Heisey double and
the Co-operative Flint Glass double shown in H&J on p. 18. The bowls
have double ribs alternating with double prisms, and the handles have
longitudinal striations. We thought we knew how to identify the real
Heisey - now we're confused (again).

Besides the above, we have listed three other things from our "open salt"
collection. Two are pomade jars, in the AZTEC and PRIZE patterns. They are the
right size, but they have a clear glass ring around the top to fit a metal
lid. Both are pictured in H&J. The McKee catalogs show only shakers in these
patterns. There is also a large, very heavy "master salt" which has a shallow
bowl, much like a trencher type china salt. The McKee catalog lists this as a
piano insulator, designed to keep the casters from making holes in your rug.
Oh well, the salt shelves were getting crowded anyway. Taking these off will
open a few spaces for new additions (arriving regularly).

We hope you will enjoy looking at your collection to see how many of these
McKee salts you already have. Since they are more recent than those in the
last issue, you should have a better chance of finding them. There are a few
scarce ones - LENOX, ROMONA, and especially BABY FACE. If you find one of
these, it's your lucky day. And if you have any more information about
STRIGIL, we'd appreciate hearing it.

MCKEE OPEN SALTS AFTER 1880

Fig. No.	Approx. Date	Pattern Name	Comments	H&J No.	Smith No.
	1880	BABY FACE	Salt dip, no description, design like 3-face but has baby faces on stems and finials		
1	1889	Bird with seed ind.		997	297-2-1
2	1889	Bird with seed master		947	297-2-1
	1892	STRIGIL	Picture in H&J doesn't match McKee or Tarentum patterns very well. I disagree with them. Jenks says there is a salt dip but does not picture it.	2563	361-2-3
3	1896	CHAMPION	Like Greentown #11	3043	
4	1897	HICKMAN	Also sold in condiment set, called JUBILEE pattern	2667	26-1-2
5	1898	SUNBEAM		2662	197-4-3
6	1898	RAINBOW		2660	26-2-1
7	1899	LENOX		3052	484-1-3
8	1900?	Tub salt	Wood-grain tub	2837	13-2-1
9	1903	ROMONA	Low, round, fine dia. pt. with medallions	2569	
10	1905	FANCY ARCH	Low, scalloped rim, diam. pt. arches on sides	3058	475-4-2
11	1909	YUTEC	With & without beads on rim, marked pres-cut	2604	261-2-3
12	1910	McKee #700	Oval, ring of beads on lower side, also used as blank for engraving		75-5-2
13	1910	COLONIAL #20	6-sided bowl on round foot, marked pres-cut	2961	467-3-2
14	1910	BLOCK DIAMOND	Oval, block sides, vertical bars break up pattern	2717	
15	1910?	HARVARD	Plain, blank for cutting		
16	1917	McKee #410	Cane type pattern, sloping sides	2524	270-2-2
17	1917?	Vincennes	Not a pattern	2595	27-2-1
18	1917?	Plain round & oval	Plain sides, star bottom, also used for cutting?		
19	?	New York Twin(I)	First version shown		263-3-3
20	1930	New York Twin (II)	Second version shown in later catalog		

CONTINUED FROM BEFORE (see Salty Comments #30)

Plain square
 Cincinnati (faceted)
 Octagon (ind. size)
 Cable (ind. and master)
 Twin salt

SALT-LIKE THINGS

21	1897	Piano Insulator	Sallow inside bowl		
	1894	AZTEC	Pomade jar, ring of glass at top to match cover	3045	
	1900	PRIZE	Pomade jar, ring of glass at top to match cover	3047	

REFERENCES:

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 John & Elizabeth Welker, "Pressed Glass in America"
 Bill Jenks and Jerry Luna, "Early American Pattern Glass"
 Dori Miles & Robert W. Miller, "Price Guide to Pattern Glass", 11th edition
 Mollie Helen McCain, "Collector's Encyclopedia of Pattern Glass"
 William Heacock & Patricia Johnson, "5000 Open Salts"
 Ten books by Alan B. and Helen B. Smith, "Open Salts Illustrated"

McKEE SALTS INTRODUCED AFTER 1880

