



Salty Comments

No. 36



We recently had the good luck to find an old wheelbarrow salt with a pewter wheel - not the one with the BARLEY pattern on the sides but an odd shape with vertical ribs on the barrow part. We found it illustrated in the back part of H&J, and this led us to the Adams Glass Co. Now we've dug up more information about them, and are surprised to find that many of their salts are in our collection.

The Company started as Adams, Macklin & Co. in Pittsburgh in 1851. It was originally located at the site of the Stourbridge Flint Glass Works which had produced tableware including several lacy salts and the Pittsburgh boats. This factory had been closed for 6 years when the new Company started. In 1861 the Company changed its name the Adams Glass Co., with two Adams sons among the stockholders. By 1881 it was one of the biggest glass operations in the city, with about 200 employees. John Adams, the founder, died in 1886, and his sons took over. They joined the U.S. Glass combine in 1891 as Factory A. The plant was still operating in 1930, but was shut down later as U.S. Glass faded from the scene.

Adams produced tableware throughout its existence, so it naturally made open salts. The earliest catalog we found was dated 1871, 20 years after the business started. A second catalog was dated about 1891, which leaves another gap in their history. What we found makes an interesting but probably not complete list of the open salts they made. Many were Table Salts (we call them masters today), and many were offered both plain and engraved. Some have several sizes of the same pattern, and some are novelties like our wheelbarrow, which they call a "Barrow Salt". We have identified 23 that we will present here. We have omitted four salts from the 1871 catalog because similar shapes were made by other companies (Prism Salt, Octagon Salt, Plain Salt, Cincinnati Salt), and we don't know which exact shape is Adams. We also omitted labelled Shell Salt because its shape is unclear ; it looks like nothing we have ever seen.

The 1871 Adams catalog has caused some confusion in the pattern glass area. Jane Shadel Spillman of the Corning Museum studied this catalog and concluded that the Adams CHAIN, MEDALLION, and MYRTLE patterns were what people had been calling BEADED CHAIN, BEADED ACORN, and GRAPE AND FESTOON. It is not unusual for the old pattern names to be changed by modern collectors, but in this case each of the patterns had been attributed to someone other than Adams. The same catalog shows the old DIAMOND master with the hexagonal foot, a salt that is seen frequently but attracts few collectors. It also lists a rectangular salt with terraced feet at the four corners, called the No. 329 Table Salt. We have seen this but passed it up as "ordinary" - now we wish we hadn't.

The earliest Adams patent seems to be the Liberty Bell design. This was made in an extensive tableware setting for the 1876 centennial year, and was quite popular at the time. The salt is an individual size with a plain oval bowl. It has the Liberty Bell and the dates 1776 and 1876 embossed on the bottom. The years are sometimes hard to read, if the glass was cold or the presser didn't pull hard enough on the lever when he made the dish. Quite a few of these salts have survived, but be on the lookout for ones with polished spots on the rim where chips have been removed.

(continued on p. 4)

SOME ADAMS CO. SALTS

<u>Fig. No.</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Adams Designation When Known</u>	<u>Size*</u>	<u>Smith No.</u>	<u>H&J No.</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1	1871	#329 Table Salt	M			Rectangular, terraced feet
2	1871	CHAIN	M	408-5-2		Now BEADED CHAIN pattern
3	1871	Diamond Footed	M	408-2-3		Not a pattern
4	1871	MEDALLION	M		3533	Now BEADED ACORN pattern
5	1871	MYRTLE	M		3558	Now GRAPE & FESTOON pattern
6	1876	(CENTENNIAL)	I	4-3-3	2689	LIBERTY BELL pattern
7	1881	(HORSESHOE)	I	53-4-2	3741	GOOD LUCK pattern
8	1881	(HORSESHOE)	I	19-4-2	3740	Embossed "LUCK"
9	1881	(HORSESHOE)	M	407-5-2	3742	GOOD LUCK pattern
10	1882	Wheelbarrow	I	224-1-1		BARLEY pattern sides
11	1885	THOUSAND EYE	M	213-5-3	860	Carriage shape
12	1885	(VALENCIA WAFFLE)	M	317-5-2	452	Rectangular
13	1885	WILDFLOWER	M	204-3-3	364	Bowl on turtle base
14	1886	APOLLO	M		3576	
15	1887	COTTAGE	M			Square, vertical ribs
16	1887?	Wheelbarrow	I	356-4-1	4679	Matches COTTAGE pattern
17	1887	HIDALGO	M		3663	
18	1888	PALACE	I	28-3-3	3044	MOON & STARS pattern
19	1888	PALACE	I			Conflicting catalog picture
20	1890	CRYSTAL WEDDING	M			
21	1890	XLCR	I	76-5-3	2776	KING'S CROWN pattern
22	1890	XLCR	I	91-4-3		RUBY THUMBPRINT, flashed red
23	1890	XLCR	M			KING'S CROWN pattern, bigger

* - M = Table or Master, I = Individual

References:

- "Adams & Co., a Closer Look", Jane Shadel Spillman in the National Early American Glass Club Bulletin, Winter 1990/91
- "Pressed Glass in America", by John & Elizabeth Welker
- "An Eighth Pattern Glass Book", by Minnie Watson Kamm
- "Early American Pattern Glass" by Jenks and Luna
- "Open Salts Illustrated", a series of 10 books by Alan and Helen Smith
- "5000 Open Salts" by Heacock and Johnson

SOME ADAMS CO. OPEN SALTS



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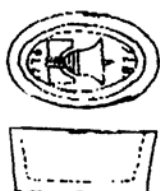
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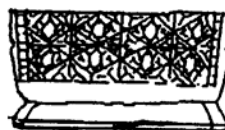
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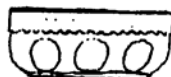
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One Adams pattern with several figural salts is the HORSESHOE pattern, now called GOOD LUCK. They come in 3 sizes - a small horseshoe shape, a mid-size horseshoe embossed "LUCK", and a circular bowl which has a ribbed beaded rim and a horseshoe and anchor on the bottom. This last looks like the other larger pieces in the set, while the smaller ones look like novelty items. We suspect that the mid-size one was intended as a celery dip.

Adams made 2 wheelbarrows, both with metal wheels which rotate freely. These must have been inserted when the dish came out of the mold and the glass could be bent. The first of these - the BARLEY pattern - was patented in 1882. The second is the one we found recently, and we know of no patent for it. The design looks like their COTTAGE pattern, but it is not shown with that set of tableware. The COTTAGE salt which is shown with the set looked ordinary to us until we found it illustrated. Now we have much more respect for it.

We have included the THOUSAND EYE carriage on the list, because it is attributed to Adams, though we did not find it in any catalog. The shape has been copied by L.G. Wright and A.A. Imports. Both of them used the DAISY AND BUTTON pattern on the sides, so there is no confusing the new with the old.

The WILDFLOWER pattern has a novelty salt - a boat-shaped bowl on the back of a turtle. Wright copied this one also, but gave it a ribbed base because the turtle was so hard to make. He also copied the WILDFLOWER pattern on a rectangular dish which is the right size for a salt. This shape is not in the old catalogs - all of the rectangular dishes are new.

The Adams PALACE pattern, now called MOON AND STARS, is one of the most reproduced patterns around. The old catalogs are confusing. One shows a salt with only stars - no moons (see Fig. 19). The second shows one like the pictures in our open salts books. We have never seen a dish like the first illustration - we would like to hear about it if you know of one. The second shape has been reproduced by L.G. Wright and L.E. Smith. You can tell the Smith salts by their slightly higher base - compare H&J 870 (Smith) and H&J 903 (Wright). Several collectors have assured us that they have the old version, but Wright has been in business for over 50 years, and his already are "old". We have one of these salts that shows a small difference from a known Wright dish. It has a small flat triangular area at the bottom of the moon. We can't be sure this makes it an original Adams, but it is a difference. We would like to hear from other collectors who have any reliable information on the subject. It is possible that Wright bought the old mold, and his can never be distinguished from the ones that Adams made.



The Adams XLCR (Excelsior) shape wound up with two names. It is called KING'S CROWN if it is clear, and RUBY THUMBPRINT if it is flashed red around the top. The red color is fired on, and normally shows small scratches from use. There is also a table salt shown in this pattern, which is larger and has curved ends. We have never seen one like it.

The DAISY AND BUTTON WITH THUMBPRINT PANEL shown in H&J puzzles us. The picture shows a hobstar design rather than a button, and there are no daisies. The design on larger dishes in the pattern glass books looks nothing like this, though they say there is a "flat open salt". We think the H&J picture may be mis-identified. We are now on the lookout for a salt with a design closer to the larger pieces. Maybe the pattern glass collectors have one.

We hope that the enclosed list of Adams salts will help you identify some of the dishes in your collection. We also hope it will help you appreciate a few salts that many consider "ordinary old masters". It has made us think more highly of them - we hope we can look as good after being around for over 100 years.