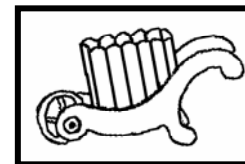


Salty Comments

Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting



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Opaque Glass

We started out looking for information about milk glass, the most common opaque type, but found very little. For some reason interest in the subject has been quite limited. There are books about transparent colored glass, but we could find only two on the topic we were after. One of these suggested that there have been many reproductions, which has discouraged milk glass collectors. Whatever the reason, there is little available to tell us about our white or colored opaque glass salts.

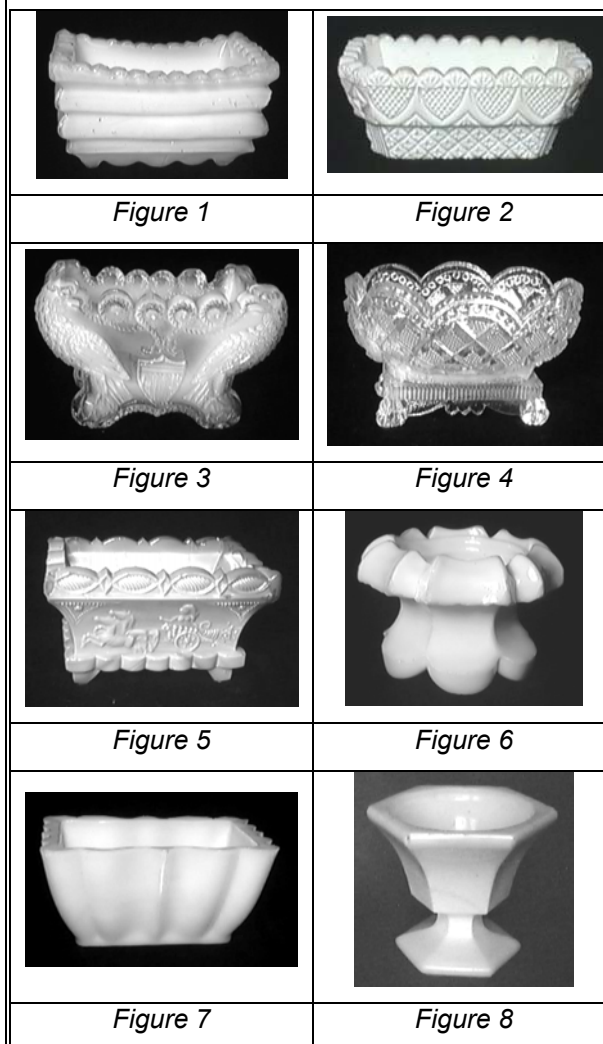
White glass can be made with a number of different formulas. One book written in 1899 shows 32 different "recipes", some of which will turn white on reheating and others which will come out white without further treatment. Another book stated that "Guano seems to be the only substance that will impart a white opacity and yet be economical in cost and effect on the pots." You need to calcine it first to remove the organic matter, but the residual calcium compounds evidently do the job.

With white glass there is the question of "Just how white is it, anyway?" We have salts that are completely white, some that have a fiery opalescence showing reds and yellows when held up to the light, some that are opalescent and sort of a grayish "clam broth" color, and some that have opalescent parts with the rest clear glass.. Most of the "clam broth" ones are lacy salts from the 1825-50 period.

The earliest milk glass salts were made soon after 1825 when pressed glass appeared. We have one of the "beehive" pattern salts in white opalescent (Figure 1) and one lacy in dead white color (Figure 2). Our lacy Eagle salt is an opalescent "clam broth" at the ends and nearly clear in the center (Figure 3). The minimum opalescence is in our oval Strawberry Diamond one, (Figure 4) where the thick part under the bowl is vividly opalescent while the rest is clear. Variations like this make us wonder whether the "clam broth" effect was always intentional.

This same era saw some colored opaque salts, like the chariot (Figure 5) and the Lafayette boat in opaque silver blue. Needless to say the colored versions are worth considerably more than their clear counterparts.

Between the end of the lacy period and the Civil War milk glass salts were made only now and then. The capstan type (Figure 6), the rectangular ribbed type (Figure 7) and the 6-sided pedestal one (Figure 8) probably date from this era. All are solid opaque white – no trace of opalescence except in extremely bright light on a thin edge.



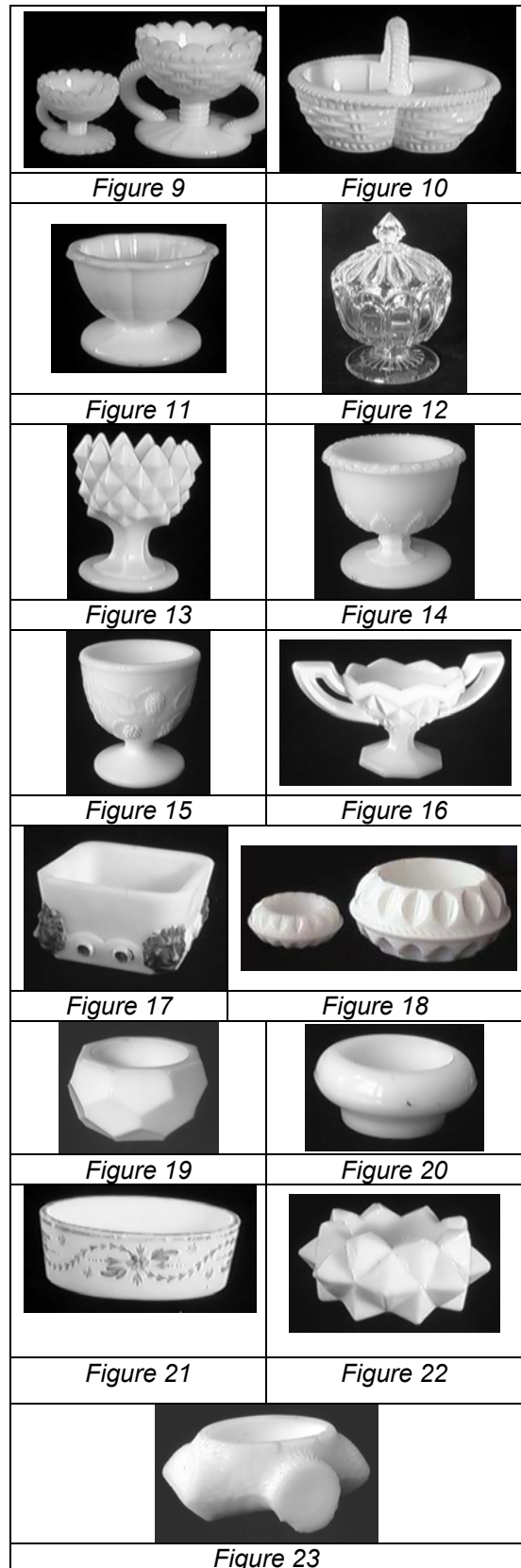
With the discovery of a low-cost soda-lime formula for making clear glass in 1865, the glass tableware boom started. It was like the computers boom that began when their price dropped substantially. What was expensive before could now be afforded by a majority of the people, so everyone wanted some. Clear glassware was the rage, but there was also a market for milk glass because it looked like porcelain.

The biggest factory in the milk glass business was Atterbury in Pittsburgh, which one book calls "The Whitehouse Factory". They referred to their milk glass as "Opal Wear". The most famous of their open salts are the individual and large basket-weave pedestals (Figure 9). The design was patented in both 1874 and 1875, and the dates are marked on the bottoms. A few can be found with only the 1874 patent date, which tells us they were earlier than the others. Atterbury also made a loop handle basket (Figure 10) in several sizes, the smallest called a salt.

The most popular kind of tableware after 1870 was pattern glass, where many different shapes of tableware were made all carrying the same design. Most salts were crystal, but a few milk glass ones crept in. Atterbury had the PLAIN MELON pattern (Figure 11). The word "plain" differentiated it from their regular MELON pattern which had a leaf at the bottom of each lobe. Other patterns with milk glass salts include LOOP by Sandwich (Figure 12 is the clear one), SAWTOOTH (Figure 13), BIRCH LEAF (Figure 14), BLACKBERRY (Figure 15), and WILLIAMSBURG (Figure 16). Both LOOP and SAWTOOTH came with covers as well. Other patterns can be found—we have not tried to list them all. Our favorite is the ATLANTA pattern salt we found in frosted milk glass with the lion heads gilded (Figure 17). So far we have been unable to find anyone else who has one.

Quite a few of the regular non-pattern glass salts were also made in milk glass. We have the "Ellipse" salt in milk, both the individual and master sizes (Figure 18). One of the ordinary faceted ones (Figure 19) and one of the stackable types are also in our collection (Figure 20). The oval type with painting on the outside (Figure 21) is earlier, we think, but we have not been able to prove this. There is also a master in a Giant Sawtooth type design that is old but not yet identified (Figure 21). It might be a pattern, but we've not been able to find anything like it in the pattern glass books.

The latter part of the last century saw the introduction of glass novelty shapes, which included a number of open salts. These are much in demand today, since they make collections much more interesting. Probably the earliest milk glass one is Crossed Logs by Portland Glass (Figure 23). Another old milk glass



novelty we have seen only in books is a sleigh (Figure 24). It is reported to be 4" long, and there is nothing said about who made it. Other milk glass novelty salts from unknown makers include the Pilgrim Shoes, (Figure 25), and the Flying Fish (Figure 26). This latter one is often found with original old paint on it. It was copied by L.G. Wright in several colors but not in milk glass, according to the books.

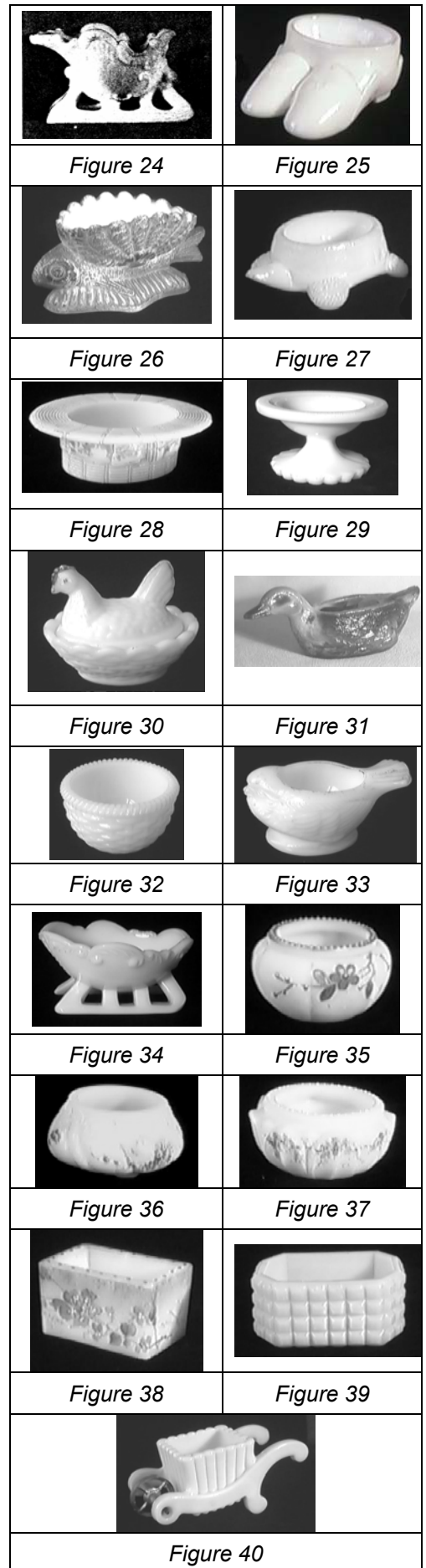
The Turtle (Figure 27) made by Hobbs Brockunier is usually found with the tail or a leg broken. The straw hat by McKee (Figure 28) comes painted – whether all of them were decorated this way we don't know.. And since it is found in the salt books we have to include the Fruit Jar Immerser (Figure 29). This was made to go into the top of a canning jar to keep the top of the fruit under the surface of the liquid. Because it pushed the cover up when the bail was released, it was called a "lid lifter", which led to the erroneous identification as a "cover remover" in H&J.

Several novelty salts were made in milk glass after the turn of the century. Whether or not they were used to hold sodium chloride is open to question. Westmoreland Glass was the major producer of milk glass during this period. Their most common one was the hen on the nest (Figure 30), which was often decorated with a red comb and a black beak or sometimes also completely painted in a variety of colors. Near the end of their existence they added an interlaced WG mark in the bottom of the nest, but earlier ones were unmarked. Their glass duck (Figure 31) and small basket (Figure 32) are two more unmarked examples.

Two milk glass novelty salts by Fostoria in this century are the bird (Figure 33) and sleigh (Figure 34). This latter shape is very much in demand by collectors and sells for about \$40.00.

There are several kinds of white glass that have gained a category all their own. The first is the Crown Milano glass by the New England Glass Co. This is white with an acid etched surface, and the salts (Figure 35) are usually nicely decorated. While most milk glass costs little more than its crystal counterpart, the Crown Milano salts are in a league of their own price-wise. There is also a shiny Crown Milano salt that we have yet to learn anything about. (Figure 36), but which is white too. The Wavecrest salts by C.F. Munroe are also not considered to be ordinary milk glass. According to the book only two salts were ever made. The first of these (Figure 37) is a frosted milk color and usually decorated. It is scarce and expensive. The second (Figure 38) is downright rare. It is a grayish opalescent and decorated. We know of only 3 in existence.

Offshoots of white glass are opaque ones made by adding color to the melt. This was done occasionally last century. We have blue milk glass salts in a block pattern (Figure 39) and in the Barrow Salt shape made originally by Adams (Figure 40). We guess the milk versions of this latter one were made by Challinor Taylor, who got the mold from Adams when both joined the U.S. Glass combine.



Colored opaque glass salts were also made by the Indiana Tumbler and Goblet Co. in Greentown, IN, who created the scarce Nile Green and Chocolate colors. Their salts include a wheelbarrow (Figure 41) and what Greentown collectors call Honeycomb (Figure 42). Chocolate glass was made at other plants after Greentown burned, so some believe the Honeycomb salt was not made in Indiana after all.

One variation of colored milk glass is what we call slag today. This was originally developed in the United States by Challinor Taylor who patented it. Basically they used a pot of milk glass and a pot of colored opaque and mixed the two together. They called it "Mosaic Glass", and their purple and white combination was especially popular. We don't know of any salts they made like this. Companies in Europe made "mosaic" salts, however. We have several by Sowerby with their peacock mark, including a purple slag pedestal one (Figure 43) and a green slag boat (Figure 44). Most Sowerby opaque salts were not slag glass. The two shown in Figures 45 and 46 are a custard color, made to imitate Wedgwood's Queen's Ware. You have to handle them to be sure they are glass because they look so much like the china they are imitating. Other Sowerby shapes are shown in the back of the Heacock & Johnson book. They are worth looking at if you haven't done so already.

The French also made white and colored opaque glass. Their white milk glass salts that we know of are opalescent with a grayish cast. This includes the Vallerysthal duck (Figure 47), one of several doubles (Figure 48), and the hen double (Figure 49) which comes in blue milk too and is marked SV. The Vallerysthal hen on a nest that looks like the Westmoreland one (Figure 28) has the same grayish opalescent appearance.

We have not covered every milk glass salt we know of, but a good portion of the older ones are mentioned. Some people avoid them because reproductions are still being made. If you study them, however, you will find that older ones can be identified, and even the newer ones can add variety to your collection.

There is a National Milk Glass Collectors Society, similar to our open salt clubs. They have a National Museum in Chattanooga, TN and a newsletter, "Opaque News",. If you want to contact them, write to them at 500 Union Cemetery Road, Greensburg, PA 15601.

We hope that you have some interesting opaque glass salts in your collection, and are able to find more in the future. We also hope we have helped your appreciation of opaque glass and maybe have shed some light on a few of your salts.

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References: "5000 Open Salts", by William Heacock & Patricia Johnson
"Yesterday's Milk Glass Today" by Regis F. and Mary F. Ferson
"Milk Glass", by E. McCamley Belknap

