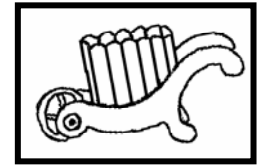


Salty Comments



Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting

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Kemple Salts, Danish Salts

We first heard about the Kemple Glass Company when we visited the Glass Bash in Columbus, OH in 1987. A man was there with a table full of its products, which included two open salt shapes. He explained that Mr. Kemple had died, the Company was out of business, and he was helping Mrs. Kemple sell the inventory. He said he was gathering data for a book about Kemple, but did not say when it would be ready. We wish we could remember his name. We bought the two salt types, of course, and still have them with their original Kemple stickers.



Twelve years later a book has finally been published. The authors are Tom O'Connor who works with the Glass Collector's Digest and John R. Burkholder, who may have been the gentleman we met in Columbus. It is a thorough job of documenting Company history and identifying the sources and destiny of most of the 1100 molds they owned. If you are interested in the detailed history of the Company or in the glassware they made, we recommend you get a copy.

John Kemple was a skilled glass worker. He was born in 1895 and went to work for Fostoria at the age of 11, learning glassmaking first hand. After his second marriage in 1941, he and his wife Geraldine decided to start a business of their own. The focus of their product line was "Authentic Antique Reproductions", which they made using old pressed glass molds they bought from other companies. When they started making glass in 1945, they already owned 246 molds bought from Mannington Art Glass. Some of these were Mannington originals and others were from even older glass companies. They used stickers on their items, and later had the letter "K" added to some of their molds to identify their product. As the years passed they bought more old molds from companies like McKee until they finally owned over 1100 of them.

In 1956 their plant in Ohio burned, and they moved to an old glass factory in Kenova, West Virginia. At the peak they had over 50 employees, so they made a lot of glass. When John died in 1970, Geraldine Kemple retired and sold over 800 of their molds to the Wheaton Glass Co. in Millville, NJ. Geraldine now lives in a retirement home in Ohio. At the age of 95 she is still alert and active, and helped the book's authors fill in some of the historical details.

For their first 15 years, the Kemple Glass Company made only white and blue milk glass, using closely guarded formulas. We think that you can distinguish their white milk glass by its color, but we have only limited data to work with. Our one salt marked with the Kemple "K" is definitely "whiter" than the other milk ones we own. This is only a theory, however – variations in the ingredients from batch to batch could account for much of the small color differences we notice. If we get to talk to any Kemple collectors we'll have to discuss it with them. After Kemple started making other colors, milk glass gradually became a minor part of their production.

We think we can identify 14 open salts and other Kemple shapes that are in salt collections. In many cases we can't tell whether a specific dish is Kemple production or was made in the same mold by an earlier (or later) glass company. We believe those of ours with the Kemple sticker are authentic,

however, since there is no real incentive for anyone to label a salt an “Authentic Antique Reproduction” when an older version would be worth substantially more..

There are 11 open salts on our Kemple list, and 3 more that he forgot to call salts but can be found in many collections. Two of the salts are not clearly identified in the book. We’re making some educated guesses on them, however. The molds came from Mannington, and the patterns are SCROLL WITH BEADED EDGE and SCROLL VARIANT. The book shows the pattern on powder boxes and other dresser accessories, so we are pretty confident that our identification is correct.

The first, SCROLL WITH BEADED EDGE, is the small oval one shown at the right (Figure 1). The design around the bottom gives it scalloped “feet”. The book calls it an “Unidentified Open Salt”. We have this in amber and milk, and have no way of telling whether either is by Kemple or by Mannington. The second is the SCROLL VARIANT pattern, which is on the Kemple list but whose shape is a mystery to the writers. We have a theory derived from our milk glass dish shown at the right (Figure 2). It is master size (3” diameter) and has the Kemple “K” in the middle of the bottom. The pattern is definitely one of the SCROLL series, and it looks like a small dresser box. All of the dresser items came with covers, however. Our salt has a lacy design on top of the flat rim which would have been damaged if a cover was used. The regular SCROLL pattern has no salt listed, so we feel this must be the SCROLL VARIANT salt that the authors could not find.

There are three salts that have no illustrations in the book, and are a mystery to us. The first two came from McKee molds. The BANZANTINE pattern has a sugar bowl shown in one of the pictures, (Figure 3), and from it we can guess what the salt looked like. We think it would be a miniature version of the sugar, with a scalloped foot and rim and Chippendale handles. The only problem is that we’ve never seen one like it, either in pictures or in real life. Maybe you have one - if you do we’d love to hear about it. If you have two, please put a price on your second one.

The second McKee pattern in the book whose salt is not illustrated is CHAMPION. The book shows other shapes with this design, but no salts. We have a clear glass CHAMPION salt which is undoubtedly McKee, but have never seen any colored or milk glass ones which would be Kemple. Again, we’re still hunting.

The third salt listed but not illustrated is the DIAMOND pattern. The book shows a drawing of an Iced Tea Pitcher, but none of the salts in our collection match it. Notice that the diamonds have a square base. We have a salt where the diamonds are taller than they are wide, but none with a pattern like the pitcher. We would expect the salt to be in milk glass or in color – another one for the “must find it someday” list.



Figure 1 2-1/4” long



Figure 2 3” diam.



Figure 3 – Sugar Bowl



Figure 4 1-3/4” diam.



Figure 5

For years we looked down our noses at the big heavy HOBNAIL (Figure 6), thinking it was probably an ash tray. We now know it was made by Kemple, using a mold purchased from Zarilla. Our copy was bought at the Cleveland show and has the Kemple sticker so we're sure it was his. Whether Zarilla ever made any like it, and whether he thought they were salts has yet to be established. When Kemple called his a salt, he must have thought his customers would want to use it for this purpose. Perhaps the Kemple family still used open salt dishes on their own tables, and thus thought it was an appropriate destiny for this round hobnailed dish.

The "TEC" patterns made by McKee included YUTEC which had an individual salt as part of the set (Figure 7). When Kemple bought the YUTEC molds, he made some of these salts in a variety of colors. One mystery remains however – the salts come both with and without a beaded rim. We have yet to figure out who made what – maybe both McKee and Kemple made them both ways. It's easy enough to change back and forth by swapping a cap ring on the mold, so one type doesn't have to be a later version of the other. Perhaps the beads were too easily broken in the dishpan, so both beaded and smooth rim versions were offered.

McKee also provided the wooden tub molds that Kemple used. We have the smaller one (Figure 8) in clear glass, which could well be the original McKee. We also have a later copy in cobalt which was made by Wheaton after they bought Kemple's molds. They didn't call it a salt – they sold it as a candle holder, since candles were an "in" thing at the time. The larger tub (Figure 9) was called a master salt by Kemple. We got ours from the gentleman in Cleveland, complete with the original sticker.

A name that surprised us was the "Ribbed 4-Toe Salt Dip" from a McKee mold. When we found the picture, it turned out to be the familiar OCTAGON salt (Figure 10) that so many companies produced. Being from an old mold, and being such a common shape, it is impossible to be sure which, if any, of our salts were Kemple. The Kemple book shows the shape in emerald green, amber and milk glass. Our collection has this shape from 5 different molds, including several clear and 4 colors. We would like to know which, if any, were made by Kemple, but we don't know how to tell.

One shape we never considered for our collection is the Shell Salt Dip shown at the right (Figure 11). It looks like an ash tray, but that's not what Kemple called it. This is another shape we need to look for when we're browsing through the shops and flea markets. Once we identify something that the maker called a salt, it becomes a desirable item for our collection, even if it looks like it could have other uses.



Figure 6 3" diam.



Figure 7 2" diam.



Figure 8 2" diam.



Figure 9 3" diam.



Figure 10 2" long



Figure 11

There are three shapes in many collections that Kemple forgot to call salts. The first is the Chick Egg Cup, (Figure 12) which shows a chicken with an egg-shaped bowl above it. We have a milk glass one, but it is signed "Portieux". We don't know whether the French used it only for holding eggs or if they realized it is a nice open salt as well. Our French one looks like the Kemple version, but it has a sawtooth rim and the glass is a grayish color.. The second shape is the Basket Two-Handled Toothpick (Figure 13). Here again, Kemple missed a chance to entice open salt collectors. In 1963, when Degenhart introduced a similar shape he also called it a toothpick, perhaps influenced by the fact that Kemple was already making them. There are other sizes of this basket shape, but we don't know who made them or what they said they were selling.

The third Kemple "could-be" is the Pony And Cart. There are other versions of this particular shape, but we don't know who made them. Kemple's is 4-3/4" long, and is the only one where the pony's mane extends in front of the ears. It was reproduced by Wheaton after they bought the Kemple molds. The other three sizes we have are 3-1/2" long in milk glass, 4" long in amber with a groove in the back for a spoon rest (or, heaven forbid, a cigarette), and 4-1/2" long in clear glass. Certainly one of these sizes must have been intended for serving salt! Kemple's version has the most detail on the horse and cart. The mold came from the American Glass Co. according to the book, but we have no idea whether they ever used it. The Welker book says American went out of business in 1891, over 50 years before Kemple started operations.



Figure 12



Figure 13 2-1/4" high



Figure 14 4-3/4" long

Since Kemple used old molds, the shapes he reissued are just like those from the original factory.. Fortunately there weren't very many, so he had little impact on open salt collecting.. Now that his firm is out of business and the molds are in the hands of Wheaton Industries, we don't think the picture will be changed any further.. We will never be sure who made our colored YUTEC salts, our colored wooden tubs are probably younger than we are, and the OCTAGON situation is as confusing as ever. Like salts from Joe St. Clair, the Kemple ones will at least retain their current value in the foreseeable future.

Switching to a completely unrelated subject, we want to pass along information about salts from Denmark. Dorothy Lee Jones from the Jones Museum gave it to us when we visited there last summer. (Pause to put in a plug for the Jones Museum at Douglas Hill, Maine. It has a fantastic collection of glass and ceramics and is well worth a day to visit if you are ever in the Portland, Maine area.) The book she showed us is written in Danish, but with the help of Carolyn Bugel and her friends we were able to get some of the captions translated. What made us the most excited is that we have one of the salts which looks nothing like any we have seen from old U.S. glass companies. It was made by the Holmegaard factory somewhere in Denmark, and is illustrated in their 1853 catalog. Along with it are 10 other shapes, some of which look just like those commonly attributed to Sandwich. The complete group is shown on the next page.

DANISH SALTS

Figure 15 is our salt, the 1853 Holmegaard one.

Figure 16 is a lacy staghorn type, very close to the Sandwich SN type in Neal.

Figure 17 is an OO type, like a Sandwich lacy. Without having the actual salt to study, we cannot say whether it does or doesn't match the Neal illustrations.

Figure 18 looks exactly like Neal OP-11, which they call "Origin Unknown". Maybe it's Danish.

Figures 19 and 20 are lacy types similar to ones in Neal, but not an real close match.

Figure 21 might be a lacy we've not seen before. The Danish book thinks it is from the lacy era.

Figure 22 is oval and resembles the simple heavy ones made by US companies – perhaps you have one in your collection.

Figures 23 and 24 are typical of the 1850-65 era. We may have seen one in the past and not realized what we were looking at.

The last two, Figures 25 and 26, are also ones we have usually ignored when we have seen them. Now need to look more closely at the "clunky old master" types.

We have heard about lacy salts being made in France, Belgium, and Finland before, but never in Denmark. The book shows us that the style had wide popularity, and further muddies the water about who made which lacy shape. If you are lucky enough to have any of the Danish ones in your collection, we'd like to hear about it.

Kemple Salts and Could-Be's

Kemple No.	Description	Mold From	H&J No.	Smith No.
	BANZANTINE Salt	McKee		
	CHAMPION Salt	McKee	3043	
21	Chick Egg Cup	Mannington		
67	HOBNAIL Master Salt (Coddington 51-2-4)	Zarilla		
103	YUTEC Salt Dip	McKee	2107	428-4-3
162	Basket 2-Handled Toothpick	Mannington	2040	
183	Scroll Variant Salt Dip	Mannington	4455?	115-2-3?
200	Wooden Tub Master Salt	McKee		
201	Wooden Tub Individual Salt	McKee	2837	13-2-1
206	Pony & Cart Toothpick	American Glass Co.	4459	103-5-1
223	Ribbed 4-Toe Salt Dip (OCTAGON)	McKee	4426	115-2-1
228	Diamond Salt Dip	McKee		
270	Scroll with Beaded Edge Salt Dip	Mannington	500	115-5-2
288	Shell Salt Dip	McKee		

References: "Kemple Glass", by John R. Burkholder and D. Thomas O'Connor
 Encyclopedia of Pressed Glass in America:, by John and Elizabeth Welker
 "Dansk Glas 1825-1925", by Alfred Larsen, Peter Riismoller and Mogens Schlüter
 "Pressed Glass Salt Dishes of the Lacy Period", by L.W. and D.B. Neal
 "5000 Open Salts", by William Heacock & Patricia Johnson
 10 books "Open Salts Illustrated", by Alan B. and Helen B. Smith