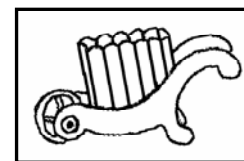


Salty Comments

Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting



Number 89

December 2004



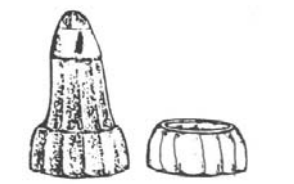
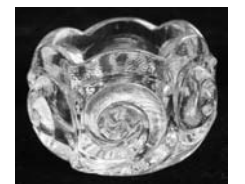


Slimming Down

When we first started collecting, salts, we tried to get one of each that we saw. The limit was price – we kept our purchases under \$10, and half that was even better. Then one day in 1981 we found Mimi Rudnick’s booth at an antique show in the Cherry Hill, NJ mall. She was “The Salt Lady”, and had nothing but open salts on sale. She started our education on the subject. We decided that the \$10.00 limit was keeping us away from a lot of nice dishes, and we started buying a more expensive one now and then. As we learned more about where they came from and the scarcity of some, the dam burst so the cost was rationalized if the salt was really rare. Today the collection fills the walls of our large dining room and hall, and has overflowed the shelves and cabinets to the top of the piano.

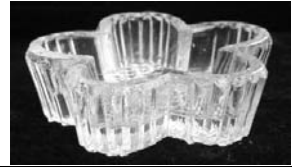





Now our sister-in-law, Evelyn, has gone into an assisted living facility and sold a majority of her salts. Her collection had more special salts in it than ours but fewer of the common ones. She has chosen to keep the ones she likes the very most. It makes us think – some day we will have to make the same decision. We really ought to make it now while we can do it at a leisurely pace. Making it now would also take the pressure off the display space and free the top of the piano for more mundane things.

So what should we keep? The first project we undertook was studying and collecting the Heisey salts. We have most of them, including the rare emerald green PINEAPPLE AND FAN and cobalt REVERE. We wouldn’t want to sell those. In fact, if we ever see a MEDIUM FLAT PANEL salt – the one with the pepper shaker on top – we’d buy it in a minute. We want to hang on to the Heisey ones.



We have many salts from old glass companies that we have identified from old catalog pictures. We have most of the Duncan salts, though some of theirs are so close to what other companies made that we can’t be certain whose is whose. The pattern glass ones like SNAIL, CLOVER, INVERTED THISTLE and about 20 others are definitely theirs. These take up more than 2 shelves, but it is nice to keep that group. The same goes for other 19th century glass companies – Higbee, King, and Adams, to name a few. Once we’ve seen a picture of a salt in an old glass company catalog, it becomes special.

	
<i>PINEAPPLE & FAN</i>	<i>REVERE</i>
	
<i>MEDIUM FLAT PANEL</i>	<i>SNAIL</i>
	
<i>CLOVER</i>	<i>INVERTED THISTLE</i>


The same attachment applies to the 20th century companies. We have the Heisey we mentioned before, and also many Westmoreland ones, like the euchres, duck and LACY DAISY. We have identified and found most of the Fostoria salts like the BRAZILIAN, BEDFORD and GRAPE LEAF. We'd want to keep that portion intact.

		
<i>Euchre</i>	<i>Duck</i>	<i>LACY DAISY</i>
		
<i>BRAZILIAN</i>	<i>HERMITAGE</i>	<i>GRAPE LEAF</i>

Keeping with pressed glass, we collected many of the reproductions by modern glass companies so we could identify the differences where possible. This includes a broad spectrum of shapes, from the simple ENGLISH HOBNAIL and the LOTUS salt by Westmoreland to the Swan Boat, originally by Mosaic. We would need to keep these to demonstrate the differences. On the LOTUS salt, we have been trying to get one of each color we can find. So far there are 35 of them, and we may be missing a few. It's fun to try to get all the colors of something – maybe we should have chosen a less popular shape to keep the shelves less crowded.

	
<i>ENGLISH HOBNAIL</i>	<i>LOTUS</i>
	
<i>Swan Boat</i>	

Then there is pattern glass. It has been fun trying to get all the patterns that we read about. There are over 1400 identified, though not all have open salts. Our computer says we have almost 200 pattern masters and over 400 pattern individuals. One of them is the LILY OF THE VALLEY, which was listed as "Maker Unknown". We found it in an old Richards & Hartley catalog identified as their MAY FLOWER, and wrote an article about that for the Early American Pattern Glass Society Journal. The catalog also showed that the version with legs was a covered salt, not a horseradish as suggested in H&J 3528. Since these pattern glass salts have an identity, it would be a shame to sell any of them.

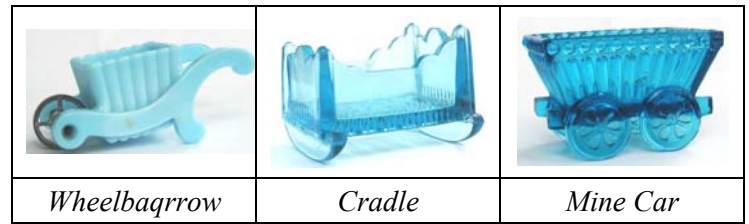

<i>LILY OF THE VALLEY</i> <i>(needs cover)</i>

Then there is the question of color. Many people focus on a particular color for their glass salts. Kay likes black, and we have about 30 of them, including a footed frosted black pedestal, a scallop shell and the New England Anniversary salt. This part of the collection can only grow larger.

		
<i>Frosted Black Pedestal</i>	<i>Scallop Shell</i>	<i>NESOSC Anniversary Salt</i>

(3)

Of course there are the figural glass salts. Each of these is special since it is attractive to people who aren't at all interested in the maker or how old it is. Salts like a wagon, a cradle or a touring car make the collection intriguing to "outsiders" who haven't learned yet how wonderful open salts can be.



And then there are the lacy salts. Some collectors have specialized in them and have a lot more that we do. We like our sampling of the various types, which includes the Henry Clay with 3 feet broken off and one that we need more information about – one with fish on the sides. It may or may not belong with the lacy group.

Early in our collecting days we tried to get one of each kind of square glass salt with plain sides. We managed to get 14 different ones, the differences being in the bottom design. Many had varying numbers of "waffle" squares, but others had stars or even pegs there. This is one thing we'd like to continue – it would be interesting to see how many more are out there. Ed Bowman has taken an inventory of the faceted salts he has, and showed 30 different ones at the last MOSS club meeting. We'll never know who made which one for salts like this, but the variety makes an interesting project.



So far we have just reviewed only the glass. The china salts are just as plentiful in the collection. The first thing we do with a china salt is look for a mark on the bottom. We have never counted the number of different marks we have, but they can make a collection in themselves. The hand-painted decorations often have a story behind them, especially when the home artist has signed the bottom. We have only a few from the more famous china companies like Lenox and Haviland, but it would be fun to focus on one or both and find quite a few more salts.

The latest Open Salt Collectors National Newsletter has a thorough discussion of the Belleek salts. These involve a variety of shapes, and the article gives an extensive list of the marks you can look for. When we read it, we learned that we have only a small portion of what is known. We have Lenox and Willets, but none of the rest. Here is an area we would like to investigate further, but it won't make the collection any smaller.

Wedgwood is a special group, since the company has been making salts since their inception and has made a variety of them. We have some of their jasper ware and also some that are not blue, like their Queen's Ware. Again we have only a sample of their products and wouldn't want to cut back there.

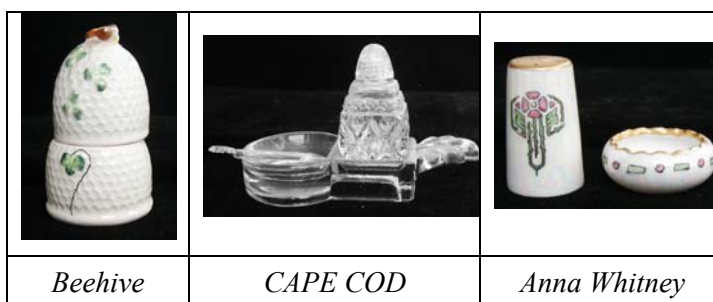


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Faience pottery is a specialized field that has become more popular since we began collecting. The premier maker in this area seems to be Quimper – write that name on the bottom of a piece and the price doubles. There are many nice figural salts of this type, and we have to keep a sample of them to make the collection complete. One of our favorites is the goat, made by Keller and Guerin in France. We bought this from George and Carolyn Tompkins, and wouldn't part with it for that reason.



One type of salt we are attracted to is china ones with matching peppers. Some have the shaker sitting on top of the salt, like the beehive, some have the shaker sitting in a holder like the Imperial CAPE COD set, and some have matching decorations like the home-painted set signed "Anna Whitney".



So far we have covered only china and glass.

Certainly there are other materials in the collection that help it take up so much space. We have a good sampling of silver salts including several of the Gorham ones in the Tompkins book. We have some of the Russian silver cloisonné work, and some modern Russian which is mass produced. The comparison shows how much more intricate the originals were and how much labor was needed to produce them.

We have salts of wood (treen, if you want to use the modern term). We have salts carved from shells, pewter ones, saltware ones (don't put that kind in the dishpan!), and one made from anthracite coal. We have a set that is supposed to be made from cherry amber – wish we knew how to prove that it is (or is not) that material. We think it is nice to have such a variety and are always hoping to find something else that is different.



Finally there are the salts that have people associations. We wrote about some of them in Salty Comments 86. We started to list the names, but there are too many. We are afraid of missing some unless we go through all 4000 of our cards that have the information on each of our salts. We owe a lot to the many wonderful collectors and dealers we have met during the 25 plus years we have enjoyed this hobby.

So how do we make room on the shelves for the salts on the piano? Or how can we move to smaller quarters when we need to? There seems to be a reason for keeping almost every one! We have to face up to it some day, but it is going to be very painful. We hope you have a good solution to this situation – please let us know if you have any ideas.

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PS In gathering salts for the pictures, we realize how many categories we have not discussed. Each has a reason for being there. We may never move, and they will have to bury our salts beside us.