

VIEW FROM THE SALT BOX - #8

Often we hear a collector say, "I don't want any repros in my collection!" Our usual response is, "But what do you consider a repro?", because the word is not clear in our vocabulary. Is a faceted lead-crystal salt signed Baccarat a "repro" (shape of H&J 2919), even if the maker prices it at \$45 retail? It copies the design of many old ones. Is the Guernsey CAPRICE salt a "repro"? (H&J 915). It uses the Cambridge pattern, but is less than half the size of any salt that Cambridge made. Is the Wetzel Holly Salt a "repro"? (H&J 910) It was made recently but is an original design and is extremely scarce today. Is the 1988 New England club anniversary salt a "repro"? The shape is original, although the style is similar to salts made 100 years ago. We find that there is no one definition of the word that all collectors will agree to.

Ruth Webb Lee was probably the first to write a book on the subject. She maintained there is nothing wrong with a reproduction clearly labelled and sold as such. Problems arise when an uninformed dealer or collector thinks something is old when it is not. Because we crave a "real bargain", (we call it greed when someone else does it), we have sometimes bought an underpriced salt too quickly. After we get home we may find it isn't what we were told it was. If we were smart, we have a detailed receipt from the dealer that lets us get our money back. Often we don't, and have just paid another installment on our education. We tell ourselves, "It's nice to have the salt in the collection to compare with the real thing", assuming that some day we will find a genuine original.

There are many open salts being made today that someone will classify as a "repro". The ones most deserving of the label are those made from a new mold which copies an old design almost exactly. A typical example is the bird and nest on a branch (H&J 1004), which Mosser makes both marked and unmarked. Not so easy to classify are salts produced from a single mold, owned by several companies in succession. A good example is the CAPRICE salt (H&J 448). It is original with Cambridge. When they went out of business, Imperial Glass bought the mold and produced CAPRICE salts (H&J 447, 922), some marked IG and some unmarked. When they went bankrupt, Summit Art Glass bought the mold and is making the same dish today. They have added a tiny dot on the middle of the bottom, which is the only way to identify their production. Are the Imperial and Summit salts "repros"? Things are getting a bit fuzzier. Then there is the situation where a glass company revives their own mold that has not been used for decades. A few years ago Viking used one of their own old molds to make red and green diamond-faceted salts at Christmas time (shape H&J 469). Are these "repros"? We don't think the term really applies.

Sometimes an old pattern will be used in a different shape, yet collectors will use the "repro" label. A good example is the WILDFLOWER salt (H&J 364). The original has a boat-shaped bowl supported on a turtle. L.G. Wright made a salt which duplicates the bowl but has a ribbed base (H&J 899). There can be no confusion between new and old in this case, but many call his version a copy.

We suspect that collectors will always be asking us the "repro" question. We hesitate to use the term, preferring to say who made the salt and when, if we know. The collector can then decide whether it is a "repro", based on his or her own definition. We will continue to use the term "contemporary salts" to identify those currently available from the maker, even if they copy an old design. And if you want to dispose of a Wetzel Holly or a faceted Baccarat because you consider it a "repro", we'd be happy to buy it - at a "repro" price.

Ed Berg  
401 Nottingham Rd., Newark, DE

March 1991