

VIEW FROM THE SALT BOX - #10

One of the speakers at the National Convention last May was Harry Rinker. As many of you know, he is the editor of Warman's Price Guide and a columnist and lecturer on the subject of antiques. We enjoyed his talk immensely, and the wide range of ideas and opinions he presented. We especially liked his analysis of the "reproduction" situation, and are trying to remember to use his terminology when we talk about the subject.

There are a number of cases in which a salt is sometimes called a "Repro". Harry believes the term should not be used so widely. He suggests substituting a list of terms which will define the situation more accurately. According to our note, the terms he prefers are:

Period Piece - The dish is made in one of the original molds, by the company that originated the shape. This can be something that dates back to the 1800's, or something like the New England Anniversary salt whose design is less than 10 years old.

Restrike - The original mold is revived, either by the company who originated it, or by another company who bought the mold from them. Examples of this are the salts being made by Summit Art Glass today, using old molds from Cambridge and Westmoreland. (shape of H&J 865, 911, 922 etc.)

Repro - A new mold is made, copying the old piece as exactly as possible. Good examples are the bird with seed that Degenhart and Kanawha copied from McKee (H&J 932), the Mosser bird on a branch (H&J 940), or the squirrel on a tree trunk made by Guernsey Glass (H&J 929). Each is an attempt to make an exact copy, but each has tiny details that differ from the original.

Copycat - A dish using the general design of the original, but with significant changes. In this case, there is no attempt to deceive innocent buyers. One example is the WILDFLOWER pattern salt. The original had a boat-shaped dish riding on the back of a turtle (H&J 506). L.G. Wright copied the size and shape of the bowl, but used a ribbed oval base (H&J 899). Another example is his PANELLED THISTLE salt (H&J 900). This has the same design as the Higbee original (H&J 3050), and even has a bee in the bottom, but it is twice as large, and the bee doesn't have the HIG initials in it.

Fantasy - A dish using the same patterns as the original, but in a completely different shape from the original. Wright's JERSEY SWIRL (H&J 869) is like this. It is a flaring bowl on a ribbed base, using the same swirls and diamonds as the original. The genuine salt has an entirely different shape - a small round dish with a collar base (H&J 426).

Using these definitions makes the discussion of contemporary open salts much easier. It confines the "repro" term to dishes which can be passed off as an original piece, either deliberately or by self-appointed "experts" trying to make a sale. It recognizes some modern salts as genuine originals, and confines the derogatory "repro" term to dishes which are intended to deceive. If everyone would adopt the terminology, it would be much easier to communicate what each of us does and doesn't collect. In our own case, we strongly condemn all unmarked "repros" or "restrikes", and buy examples of them only to identify differences from the originals. On the other hand, we accept the validity of modern open salts which fall into the other categories. We would be tempted to collect all the colors of some, if only there was more room on our shelves.