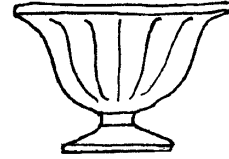


VIEW FROM THE SALT BOX - #17

At the recent convention in California we made an interesting discovery. In the past we have seen several shapes of open salts made by Steuben, all very expensive. During the Buy and Sell session we saw one that was new to us - a pedestal shape with ribbed sides. We have a similar one with plain sides, no ribs.

The most interesting part is that the dish looks just like the Fostoria ribbed nut dish shown here. At first we thought that it was one of them, but then the seller showed us the Steuben mark on the bottom which we are sure was genuine. We quickly bought a Fostoria version from another person at the Buy and Sell so we could compare the two. The top diameters were exactly the same, but the Steuben glass was a little thinner and the foot was a little bigger. Since Fostoria used a glass press while Steuben did all their work freehand, this thinner glass made sense. Still we were amazed to see that the two were so close. Just which one came first we haven't been able to find out. Did Fostoria copy from Steuben, or vice versa? We suspect the former, though we haven't been able to prove it.



How can you tell the difference if you find one at a flea market? We have studied about a dozen copies of the Fostoria one, and think there is a way. Since the Fostoria version is pressed glass, it was made in a mold. There are 3 mold lines on it, but they are hard to find. In the bowl they are hidden in the design and further disguised by fire polishing. On the foot the lines have been removed by swirling the glass after pressing. They are still there on the short stem, however, but are hard to see. Some are vertical, but some show the effect of the swirling operation. They have not been completely removed on any of the copies we examined.

This knowledge can help you in two ways. If you see a dealer selling a Steuben version, first ask to see the mark. If it is not there, examine the salt carefully for mold lines on the stem. If there is even a hint of them, close your pocketbook quickly and move away. Even if the dealer insists the dish is genuine, don't take a chance. One of the speakers and sellers at the convention was a dealer in art glass who had a ribbed Steuben for sale which had the mark. He also was selling an "unmarked Steuben" which matched the Fostoria version exactly. He rationalized the differences in foot size and glass thickness by the fact that Steuben was hand made, which is not unreasonable. We didn't know about the mold lines at the time, so we cannot report on them. We showed him the match with the Fostoria nut dish and he was amazed. Dealing in art glass he was unfamiliar with the Fostoria dish.

In the future we are going to be looking at the ribbed pedestal dishes very carefully when we see them for sale. If an art glass dealer can mistake one of them for Steuben, a pressed glass dealer can do the reverse. Maybe we can find a real bargain if we keep our eyes open.

Ed Berg
401 Nottingham Rd., Newark. DE 19711

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