

View from the Salt Box - #41

There is a continuing discussion among collectors as to what is and what is not a real open salt. Often the decision is based on whether or not the maker called it that. This definition eliminates the nice little dishes where the maker didn't realize what he was producing, and includes some rather awkward ones where the name was used to sell a shape to collectors. There is one type of dish, however, that we believe can legitimately be called a salt even if it originally served another purpose.

When we grew up during the depression, we were taught that things could be reused. Milk came in bottles which were returned to the milkman, socks with holes were mended and re-mended until they fell apart, and flour came in cloth sacks which could be used as dishtowels. Our jelly came in glasses, printed with colorful designs, and they were used for milk or juice when the jelly was gone. There are several open salts that we believe were made with this same "use it for salt later" intent.

The first of these "reusable as salts" items are mustard pot lids. When the Westmoreland Company went into business, their primary products were condiments such as mustard. They made their own glass jars, and were in business for several years before they realized there was more profit in the containers than in the contents. One of these mustard jars is in Figure 1. It can be used as a sugar bowl when the mustard is gone, and the lid makes a good open salt when the bowl gets broken (Figure 2). The matching cream pitcher has a lid with a rounded projection to cover the spout opening, and could be useful for salt right away (Figure 3).

The next reusable items that make good salts are glass candy containers. The Officer's Cap (Figure 4) is a good example. We have seen it at a flea market with the original candy still in it, under a cardboard lid. It could also be used as an ash tray, but the choice between cigarettes and salt is left up to the buyer. Two other candy containers that could be reused for salt are the wheelbarrow which came with a glass lid (Figure 5), and the carriage which originally had a sliding metal cover (Figure 6). We doubt that either of these was refilled with candy when empty. The thrifty housewife used her imagination when the contents were gone.

The most recent reusable salt we recognize is one advertised as such. It is an adaptation of a lacy Sandwich design, and Avon sold it with a candle inside (Figure 7). They even included a salt spoon so the dish would be ready for the dining table when the candle was gone.

So this gives us another rationale for collecting almost any little dish we find attractive. There always is a possibility that somewhere, someone served sodium chloride in it, especially if it was made over 50 years ago. That's last century, man - the good old days.

Ed Berg

March 2000



*1. Mustard Jar
Sugar Bowl*



*2. Mustard Jar Lid
Sugar Bowl Type*



*3. Mustard Jar Lid
Creamer Type*



4. Officer's Cap



5. Wheelbarrow



6. Carriage



7. Avon Lacy