

View from the Salt Box - #20

At the last OSCAR meeting we showed a piece of “sick” glass that Judy Lacasa had loaned us. If you recall, it was a blue VULCAN salt, H&J 420. Because too much lime had been used in the batch it had a rough surface and was slowly falling apart. “Magical” treatments with oil or careful polishing could hide the decomposition process temporarily, but there is no way of stopping it. This kind of “sickness” has been around for years, and was even found on glass made centuries ago. There is another kind of “sickness” that we’d like to discuss today - that resulting from a visit to the “Glass Doctor”.

Many antique shows feature a “Glass Doctor” booth. The person doing the work has grinding and polishing equipment with which he can remove some of the glass to hide flakes and chips. A good example of his work is shown in the H&J book - the PICKET pattern salt, #2792. The rim of this salt is supposed to be toothed, like the top of a picket fence. The one in H&J has a flat rim, and we are sure it was ground to remove chips. This particular “doctoring” is easy to spot because the rim shape has been changed. When the salt has a flat rim to begin with, the changes are not nearly so obvious. If the salt is cut glass and the “doctor” a skilled cutter, he can restore the dish so that even an expert cannot be sure that anything was done.

Since grinding lowers the value of a piece, you should always examine the rim before you buy any expensive pressed salt. You are probably safe on the inexpensive ones - they aren’t worth the money it would cost for repairs. Look at the rim to see if it is polished. Pressed rims don’t reflect light like a mirror, while polished ones do. If you find a repaired salt, make sure that the price reflects the lower value before you buy. This goes for pressed pieces - remember that cut salts and old ones blown into a mold will always have polished rims, because that’s the way they were made.

A more extreme type of “doctoring” can be done by cutting down a larger piece that has major damage. We have seen cut-down tumblers, juice glasses, salt shakers and Avon jars. Our favorite is a cut-down wine glass shown at the right. It is the KING’S CROWN pattern, and makes a lovely pedestal salt. We found out its origins after we got it home. Our other rare find that turned out to be doctored is a cream pitcher base in the PALACE (MOON AND STAR) pattern, also shown. We thought we had found a rare salt we had seen in the old Adams catalog until we examined the bottom closely and studied the original pattern shapes.



There is nothing wrong with repairing glass to remove damage. For a salt that was originally cut it does little to change the value of the piece. When a pressed salt is doctored, or when the basic shape is changed, the resulting dish is worth substantially less, and the price you pay should reflect this.