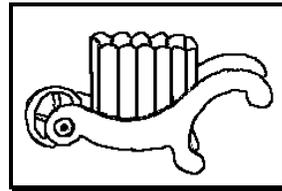


Salty Comments

Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting



Number 59

September 1997

Sandwich Lacy Salts

When we wrote about the Boston & Sandwich Glass Co. in issues #44 and #45 we left out all the lacy designs they made. Guess it's time to bite the bullet and tackle this subject.

The subject of Lacy Salts is complicated because they have received so much attention in the past with relatively little hard data to work from. In the first place, not all of them have the fine stippling on the flat surfaces that is considered the mark of lacy glass. Some without the little dots are also included because they were made during the years 1825-50. Glass from this period became a popular collectible in the 1930's when Ruth Webb Lee wrote her landmark book, "Early American Pressed Glass". That and her later book on Sandwich glass brought them to people's attention. As a result the supply dried up and prices rose. The results can be seen today in museums where some of the early collectors willed or donated impressive groups of lacy era salts. The Corning Museum in Corning, New York, the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, VA and the Bennington Museum in Bennington, VT have large collections of these, including covered and colored ones. It's worth a visit if you are ever in one of these areas.

If you are going to study lacy salts you first must find a copy of Neal's "Pressed Glass Salts of the Lacy Period", the standard reference that collectors use. It is out of print, but with deep enough pockets you can get a copy from a used book dealer. The Book Exchange in Corning, NY often has one in stock. The last time we asked they wanted \$145 for it; that is the ballpark you are playing in if you want to get involved. The book was the result of an 8-year project by the authors in which they visited all the lacy salt collectors they could find. They used dental casting material to acquire the design on each one, and then Dorothy Neal, who is an industrial artist, made full-scale drawings showing all the detail on 3 views of each one. You can find examples of their work and some details in the Heacock & Johnson book at the bottom of page 226. There are 465 different lacy salts in Neal, quite a few of which have only minor variations in the bottom design, but we think they found about 95% of all the shapes in existence.

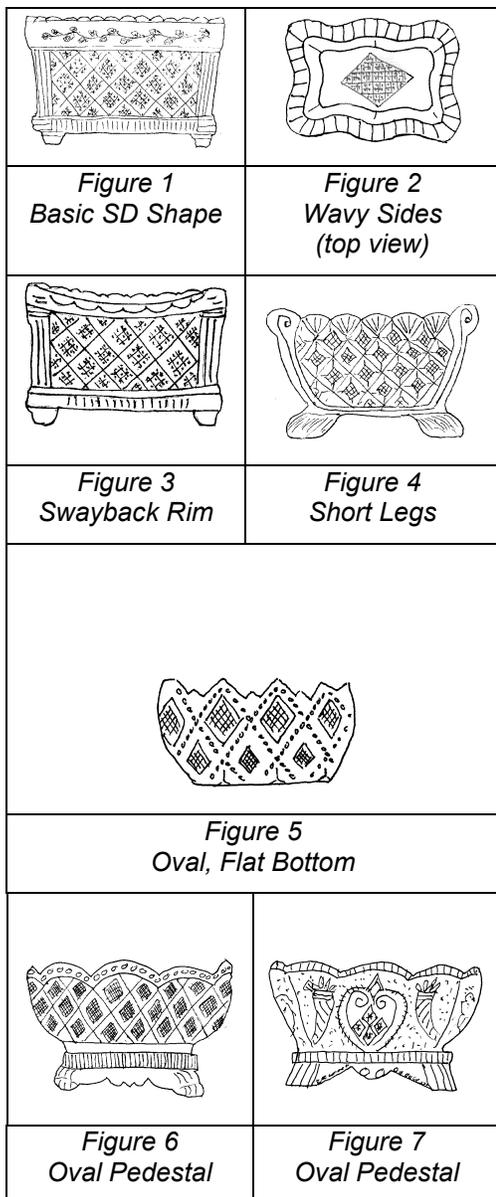
The recent book by Barlow & Kaiser (B&K) which covers the Sandwich salts pictures 41 lacies, all but one with Neal references. In this issue we will cover most of them to give you an idea of the Boston & Sandwich Glass Co. products during this period. The price guide that goes with the book also gives an idea of the cost of a lacy collection. The average B&K price for 11 clear salts is \$120, over \$25 higher than in the Heacock & Johnson (H&J) book most of us use. The average B&K price for the colored versions is \$600 with a range of \$150 to \$2000. They also show a few covered lacy salts, which they list at \$1200-1600 each. These are the prices that Sandwich glass collectors are willing to pay, and they are our competition when lacy salts are involved.

In considering prices for most open salts, condition is always a factor. For those made after 1850, edge flaking or small chips will reduce their value drastically. The lacy salts are a different story because of their age and scarcity. Rough edges and small edge chips are usually expected on the rarer ones. It takes a crack or a disfiguring chip to have much impact on the price. If a scarce one gets broken, it is often worth fixing if the pieces are large enough to permit it. We have a Beaded Scroll salt like Figure 10 below that cost us \$200 even though it was broken in two and professionally repaired. It is emerald green!

Since the Neals identification system is the standard that collectors use, we need to explain it briefly. It combines the general shape of the dish with a number, followed by a lower-case letter for designs with very minor differences between them. For example, OO-4a is the 4th salt in the Oval Oblong grouping. It has minor differences from OO-4, the previous listing. In the table at the end of this write-up we show the Neal number along with the H&J and Smith references. We have been liberal in correlating them – there are sometimes small differences, but the pictures in all three places are at least very close.

The number of lacy shapes that Sandwich made will probably never be known exactly. The ones in B&K have been authenticated from shards found at the factory site, but they do not cover all documented ones. An example is the Lafayette boat salts, where the word “Sandwich” is embossed on the glass. Neal shows 11 versions of this, while B&K includes only 2. Altogether Neal has 209 Boston & Sandwich attributions. They admit that their sources are not perfect, but it gives an idea about just how important open salts were in the glass business during the period 1825-50.

In the following discussion, we will focus mostly on the Sandwich salts identified by Barlow & Kaiser. There were several other American firms that made lacies, and also some companies in France, Belgium, Sweden and even Finland. Several of these latter made salts that resemble their American counterparts – who copied whom may never be known, since imitation was common in those times.



The first group of Sandwich salts is the Strawberry Diamond design – Neal’s SD category. This must have been one of their most popular types, because there are many variations and many have survived. The basic shape, with square corners and flat sides is shown in Figure 1. There are 7 salts like this in Neal. The first variation of this theme is shown, top view, in Figure 2. This one looks just like Figure 1 from the side, but it has wavy sides when viewed from above. There are 6 like this in Neal, all attributed to Sandwich. Our salt of this type has a gallery around the inside rim, indicating that it might have had a cover originally. Another SD variation was made with a swayback rim (Figure 3). It looks like the glass sagged after it came out of the mold, but it was a deliberate shape because there are 7 types of this one. The varieties have either different rim decorations, different feet or different bottom designs. The fourth SD type has short legs at the corners (Figure 4). This shape must have a low survivability rating because the legs can easily be broken off in the dishpan, but there are still some around.

The second Neal category shown is OL – the oval group. There are 47 listings, with about half of them attributed to Sandwich. Only one is shown in the B&K book – the oval shape in Figure 5. It was reproduced for the Metropolitan Museum of Art gift shop a few years back. Like all Museum reproductions it is marked MMA so it cannot be confused with the original if you are careful. We were fooled once, but have learned to look for the mark on the inside bottom of the bowl.

Separate from the OL category are oval salts on pedestals or feet – the OP group. There are 28 of these in Neal, almost half called Sandwich. The two shown in B&K have the same shape as Figure 6. Fostoria reproduced one like this in a variety of colors for the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, MI. It is marked HFM on the band below the bowl. Fostoria collectors are looking for this one too, so you won’t see many for sale. Avon copied this design for a candleholder, but gave it a round bowl instead of oval and marked it underneath in one corner. The other type of Sandwich OP salt in B&K is shown in Figure 7.

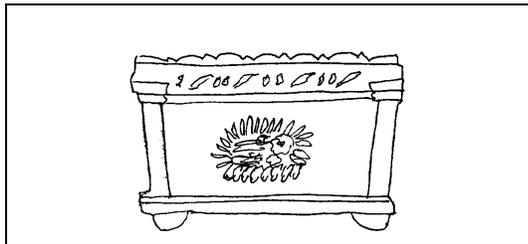


Figure 8
New England Type

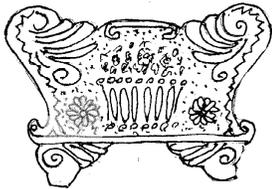


Figure 9
Basket of Flowers

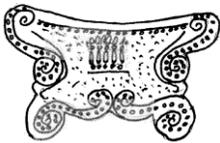


Figure 10
Beaded Scroll



Figure 11
Beaded Scroll with Cover

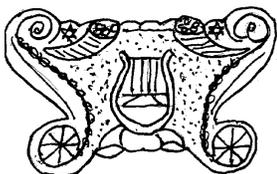


Figure 12 - Lyre Salt



Figure 13
Side Panel Eagle

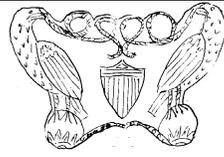


Figure 14
Eagle Corners

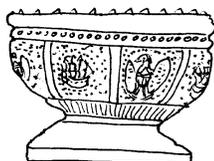


Figure 15
Eagle & Ship

During the lacy era there was much copying of designs by the various glass companies. An excellent example of this is the salt shown in Figure 8 Neal's NE type. Most dishes like this have the maker's name, "New England Glass Co." embossed on the bottom. Shards dug at the old Sandwich factory site show that a similar one with a star bottom was made there. As in most instances like this there is no information as to which Company produced it first.

The first variety shown in the Neal book is the Basket of Flowers group – their BF category. There are 7 of them with only minor differences on the bottom and ends, and they look like Figure 9. This design is susceptible to damage on the scrolls that stick out on lower part of each end. We seldom see one of these with the scrolls intact –often all 4 are broken off, perhaps in the hope that a potential buyer won't miss them. Be careful if you find one like this for sale! B&K pictures this one in color, like many of the other ones they show. We wish our collection had as many colored lacies as they do.

Another equally ornate category is Beaded Scroll (BS), shown in Figure 10. Neal has 8 of these, with half attributed to Sandwich and the rest to "New England Area". They are not uncommon in clear, so a lot of them must have been made. The colored ones are, of course, scarcer. This type was also made with a cover (Neal designation CD, Figure 11), and there are ledges at either end of the inside of the bowl to accommodate it. A complete one is extremely rare today - covers have a way of getting broken or lost,

A similar salt had a lyre on the side (Figure 12), and earned the Neal LE designation. They show 5 variations of this one, all attributed to Sandwich. It also came with a cover, but ours lacks the end ledges inside for cover support. Perhaps they made 2 different interiors – one for covered ones and another for regular. It would be easy enough to do – 2 different plungers for the mold would take care of it.

One popular design motif of the early 19th century was the eagle. There are 15 different ones shown in the Neal EE category, all but 2 attributed to Sandwich. B&K show 3 different shapes, Figures 13-15. The first has the eagle on the side – we're telling you in case you think the drawing looks like a buzzard or something worse. The basic shape is the same as the NE series shown above. The second type features an eagle at each corner, holding a rope in its bill. The shield on the side makes it a very patriotic item. The last one has alternating eagle and ship medallions around the side. There is some debate as to the identity of the ship – some say the Constitution, others the Cadmus, the ship that brought Lafayette to America. In any event, it is a square-rigger with 3 masts. The salt is rare, and ours leans to one side just like the drawing. Since some people collect any glassware with eagles on it, these salts are relatively expensive when you can find one for sale.

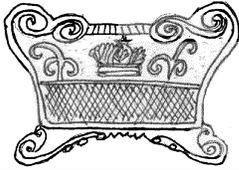


Figure 16
Crown Type

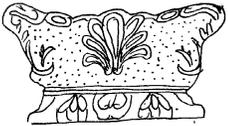


Figure 17
Shell Type

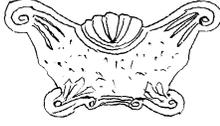


Figure 18
Shell Type

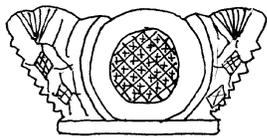


Figure 19
Octagonal Oblong

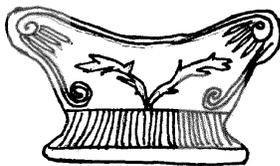


Figure 20
Staghorn

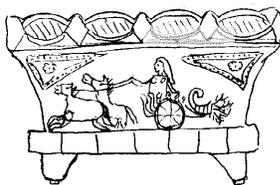


Figure 21
Chariot Salt

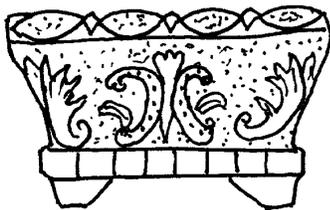


Figure 22
Mount Vernon Salt

A less common design is Neal's CN or Crown category. They show four salts, with only minor differences between them. If you see one like Figure 16 you've seen them all. They have the same "feet" at the corners which can be chipped or broken off readily. It's a type that is hard to find undamaged.

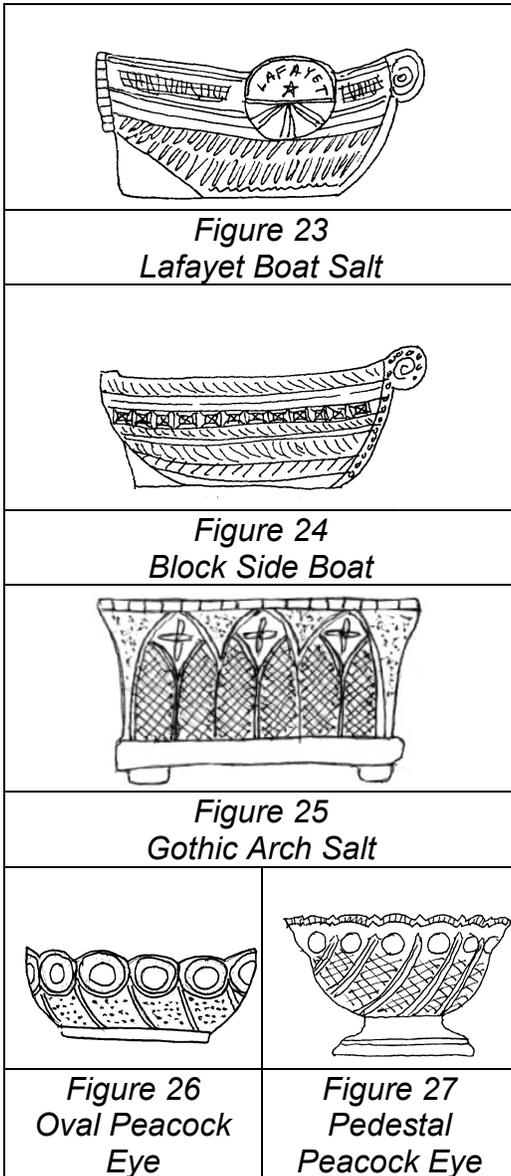
The SL or Shell category is a fairly large one, with over 20 Neal entries and 3 basic shapes. The first of these is shown in Figure 17. It rates the designation because the design on the side qualifies as a "shell". The second is the same way – it has a "shell" at the top of each side (Figure 18). This type was reproduced by Imperial in several colors for the Metropolitan Museum, and has the "MMA" mark embossed in the bottom of the bowl at one end. The last of these shapes shown in Neal is a pedestal version, with a bowl something like Figure 18 on a massive foot. This is an extremely rare one – we have never seen one for sale. B&K did not show it, although Neal says it is Sandwich.

An even larger category with 30 entries is the OO one – Octagonal Oblong. This seems to be a catch-all for salts that are sort of rectangular with rounded or cut-off corners. We will not try to cover all the shapes here, but Figure 19 shows one of them. Looking down, the bowl appears to be oval. Looking up from the bottom, the shape is definitely 8-sided. B&K shows one other OO listing, but speculate that it might have been part of a toy set because of its small size.

The SN or Stag's Horn category (Figure 20) has another shape that has been reproduced. L.G. Wright made this in a variety of colors, but the design on the sides was a bunch of cherries. There is no mistaking his reproductions – the old salts never had cherries on them.

One popular design in its day was the Chariot salt, category CT, Figure 21. This can be found in clear and white and powder blue colors. The latter of these must have been looked on as a keepsake because a number of them have survived in good condition. They are expensive, however, because they still are treasured items.

The salt shown in Figure 22 leads to a dilemma. It is called the Mount Vernon (MV) type, presumably because the Mt. Vernon Glass Co. made the shape originally. Neal shows 5 versions of this design, all attributed to Sandwich, but mentions that the greenish colors were probably Mt. Vernon. The problem is that we can find no record of there ever having been a glass company with that name. The Welkers' encyclopedia includes a compilation of "all factories including small and/or short-lived ones where there is reason to believe pressed glass was produced". Theirs was an exhaustive study, and it uncovered no Mt. Vernon Glass Co. Is the name fictional and passed down through the years? Some day we would like to find out.



The BT category includes two types of boat salts made by Sandwich. Whether these were salts or novelty pieces for advertising purposes is still an open question. The Lafayette boat (Figure 23) is the best known and the most sought-after. It is the only glass known where the Sandwich name was embossed on the piece. What it is supposed to represent is still debated – the most common guess is that it copied the steamboat “Lafayette” which operated in Massachusetts Bay about that time. The shape was reproduced at Pairpoint for the Sandwich Museum several years ago, but it had “Sandwich” on the paddlewheel so there is no confusing it with the old one. We have heard that the Museum mold is being rerun at Fenton so there may be more of these for sale in the future. Sandwich made one other boat shape – Figure 24 – but it has no marks on it.

The GA or Gothic Arch category salts look like Figure 25, the one shown in B&K. Neal also shows another one they call Sandwich, like the figure but with shorter arches and a row of 4 hearts above. Both types have the same overall shape.

A design popular with Sandwich collectors is the Peacock’s Eye, Neal categories PR (round ones) PO (oval ones) and PP (pedestal ones). It appears in Ruth Webb Lee’s book on Sandwich Glass and is in B&K, but the salts are not in either H&J or Smith as far as we can determine. There are 12 of the oval ones in Neal, like Figure 26. Some of them have protruding “eyes” and others have thumbprints. There are 5 round ones, which look similar and have only protruding eyes. The pedestal version is like the round ones with a round foot added, shown in Figure 27. There is one PP salt attributed to the Pittsburgh area; the rest of the Peacock Eye versions are labeled Sandwich. Neal also shows a covered round one sitting on a plate, attributed to Sandwich. Needless to say this is extremely rare.

We mentioned earlier that foreign companies also made lacy salts. Most of the ones we know about do not resemble Sandwich ones, but we have seen an 1840 French catalog that has two of the SL series, like Figures 17 and 18. Neal shows the French version of the one with 4 feet, but not the one with the flat base.

A lot has been learned about the Sandwich open salts through the work of Ray Barlow and his colleagues. More information may come to light in the future, but it will probably be in bits and pieces. There is enough known already that we can get a modest collection of Sandwich lacies and be sure of where they came from. We’re not interested in trying for one of each – we’ll leave that to the Museums. We hope you already have some of them on your shelves and that the information we have given here will help you appreciate them more.

