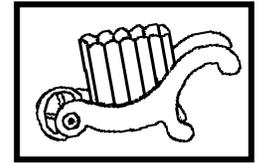


Salty Comments



Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting

Number 75

June 2001

Bakewell and Riverside

One of the two oldest major glass houses in America was Bakewell. Though they had a variety of names as various partners came and went, Bakewell was always there and is the name it is remembered by today. They began operations in Pittsburgh in 1807, in the days of hand-blown glassware. They advertised salts as early as 1807, but we saw no mention of later ads showing any.. Evidently bottles, decanters and drinking glasses were more important to them commercially, since they predominate in later advertisements. We expect that the early salts they did make were of the Stiegel type or the blown-into-a mold kind. Very little of their early glass can be identified, however, and what little there is does not include any salts.

In 1810, Bakewell added cut glass to their line, and we believe some of our Anglo-Irish style salts may be theirs. They undoubtedly made some pedestals with blown bowls and hand-molded feet. The idea of pushing glass into a mold was certainly familiar to them, since one of the Bakewells took out the first patent for a mechanical glass press. This was used to make knobs for dresser drawers, and some of those knobs have the Bakewell name embossed on them.

The firm was evidently prosperous. By 1814 they were operating with 26 glass pots. The factory was destroyed in the Great Fire of Pittsburgh in 1825 and was promptly rebuilt. They were one of the two plants out of 13 who operated through the 1877-79 glassmakers strike in the region. They finally went out of business in 1882, and their building was eventually sold to a firm of wire manufacturers.

When we looked for Bakewell salts, we found only one old catalog page. It is from 1875, and is reproduced in H&J p.13. You can see from it that some woodcuts are not very clear. When we looked in the collection for salts that match, we were often disappointed. Our old problem still haunts us – if a salt looks ordinary, we often don't buy it. Later we find it is not common, appears in an old catalog and can be identified by maker and name. The first is an example of this. Bakewell calls it their Mellon salt. The woodcut is shown in Figure 1, and the closest match we have is in Figure 2. We're not completely happy that they are one and the same, but it's the closest we could come. If you have a salt that matches better, please let us know.

A second shape which is more common is the one they called "Imperial" (Figure 3). This is a capstan type that was made by several companies, but the Bakewell one seems taller than others of its kind. Another fairly common master is their Lotus salt (Figure 4). We've never seen the design in any other company's catalog, so we think that Bakewell made a lot of them.

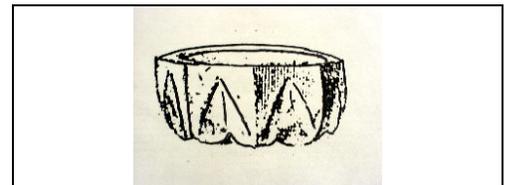


Fig. 1 - Mellon Salt Drawing



Fig. 2- Mellon Salt?



Fig. 3- Imperial

Fig. 4 - Lotus

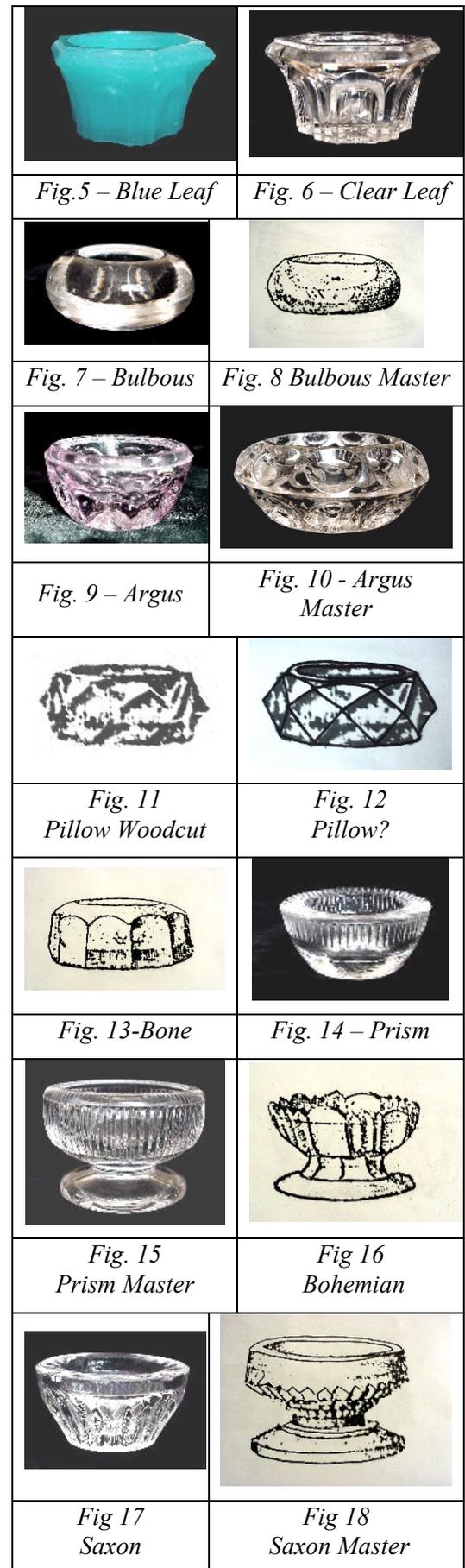
The Bakewell Leaf salt is one we've had for years. I first brought one back from a business trip to upper New York State about 25 years ago. It is milky blue, and the dealer assured me it was Sandwich glass. One of our early experiences learning the hard way – buying an education. We have the clear mate along with it now – the two are in Figures 5 and 6.

Bakewell made some of the common shapes that nobody will ever be able to attribute to them with any certainty. The individual and large size bulbous ones (Figures 7 and 8) are an example. There is no way of telling theirs from similar ones made by other glass companies. The pictures are all we have to work from, and we can't even tell what the design is on the bottom. The ARGUS pattern has the same problem (Figures 9 and 10). We have salts that match for both sizes, but we have catalog pictures from other companies that match them too.

The Pillow(?) salt is another enigma. The illustration is blurred, and so is the name. We show the catalog illustration (Figure 11) and what we think it represents (Figure 12). We started out thinking that each of the sides was a projecting point, but gradually came around to thinking that there are 8 flat diamonds on the sides, and that the horizontal line on the front is the artist's view of the bottom of the interior bowl. We don't have a salt that matches either of these concepts. If you have one, please enlighten us. The name is equally wishy-washy. We went through Fillis and Pillis and finally settled on Pillow. None of these words seems the least bit descriptive of any interpretation of the picture that we could imagine.

The Bone salt is in Figure 13. The name has no relation to the shape that we can see, but the word "Bone" is clear in the catalog. It is probably one we've walked by and sneered at. We're sure it must be out there somewhere if we can keep an open mind when we look.

Bakewell made a number of sets of pattern glass that are recognized by collectors today. The first, and maybe the most common among salt collectors, is the PRISM design. It comes in both individual and master sizes – Figures 14 and 15. It is not a very spectacular one, but there are other pieces of tableware that match. A second pattern is BOHEMIAN, Figure 16. We don't remember ever seeing this particular salt, but again we may have passed it by as too ordinary. Now we'll be on the lookout for it. The SAXON pattern has both an individual and master size. We have the first of these, (Figure 17), but need to find the larger one (Figure 18).



The ROCHELLE pattern master, Figure 19, is called PRINCESS FEATHER today. The picture in the book shows the shape, but the pattern details are blurred. The matching celery vase shows the pattern clearly, so there is no question about identifying the salt.

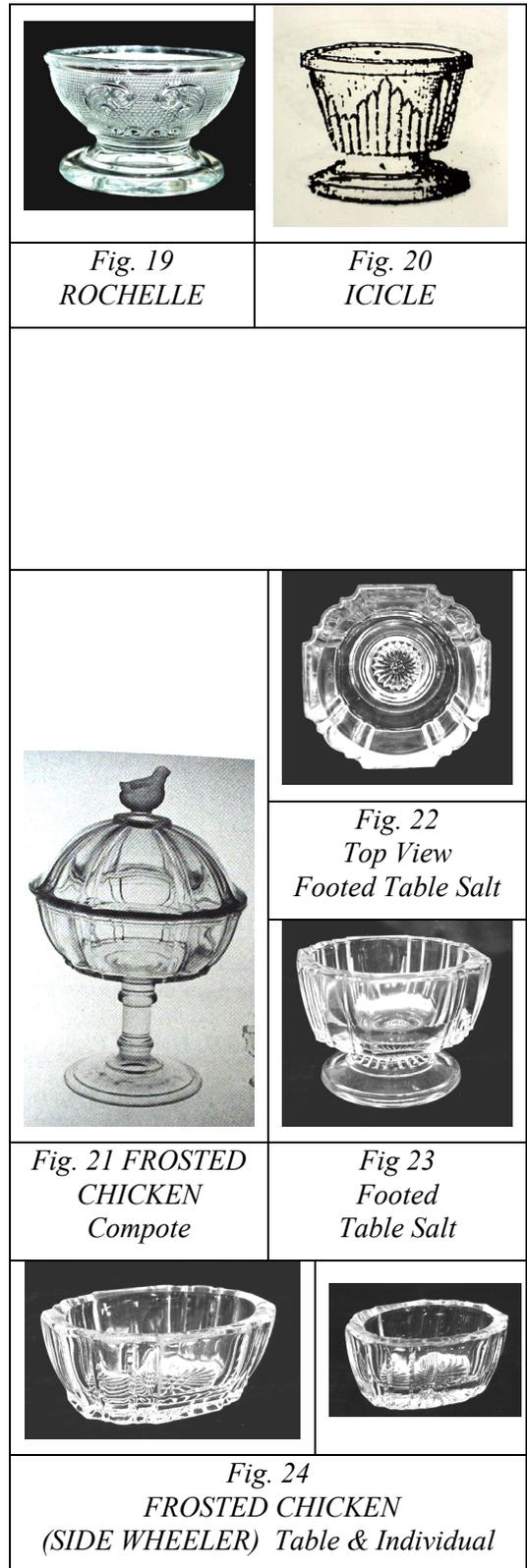
An elusive and confusing pattern is their ICICLE. It resembles the BLAZE and STEDMAN patterns, in that it has groups of vertical ribs clustered together. The shape of the pedestal salt does not resemble the usual goblet type, however (Figure 20), so it should be easy to identify, if you ever see one.

Finding a complete set of these Bakewell salts should be a real challenge. We have just over half of them now, and will be looking hard for the rest. We hope you are further along than we are.



Switching to the Riverside Glass Company, John Ragsdale, a collector from Oklahoma, kindly gave us a copy of an 1883 Riverside catalog. It has recently been re-published by Cliff Gorham, the man who wrote an earlier book on this Company. The new information adds to what we said earlier in Salty Comments #40 and 61, including several salts whose origin we didn't know.

The most intriguing new design is their #76 Ware, which Riverside collectors have christened FROSTED CHICKEN. The name appears in the Jenks and Luna book, but not in the "standard" books on pattern glass. It comes from the design of the compote lid, which has a frosted chicken finial (Figure 21). The design features 4 flat panels separated by large ribs, with a prism on each side of the ribs. This shows up clearly when viewed from the top (Figure 22). Riverside later added zippers alongside each rib, and this version is called SIDE WHEELER. The salt is shown in three sizes – an Oval Individual, an Oval Table and a Footed Table (Figures 23 and 24). Our pedestal master is FROSTED CHICKEN, but the flat bottom ones are SIDE WHEELER. We need to find 3 more salts to make our sets complete. The smallest size is common, so finding an unzipped one should be easy, but the two larger sizes will take some hunting and some luck.



The Riverside #74 salt is the one we call “Figure 8” (Figure 25). This is shown in both Individual and Table sizes. The smaller one is “cute” and not uncommon. The larger one is much harder to find.

Riverside’s #4 Ware is the GRASSHOPPER pattern. The catalog shows 14 different pieces, including the Table Salt, Figure 26. It was offered both plain and engraved.. The name comes from grasshopper insect figures which appear on the sides of some of the larger pieces.

Another shape whose source was previously unknown is their #1. We have christened it “Michelin Man”, since it looks like the character in the old Michelin tire ads. It is round with three “rolls of fat” around the sides (Figure 27). It was made in both Individual and Table sizes. We see the small one often, but haven’t yet acquired the larger one.

The last salt in the old catalog is somewhat controversial – Riverside #79, Figure 28. Never one to avoid taking sides, we now believe it is the one we’ve called VULCAN pattern in the past. It is shown in H&J #2877. The pattern glass books attribute the VULCAN to McKee about 1900. Since the Riverside catalog is from 1883, since their #79 salt has 9 sides, and since the VULCAN pitcher (the only shape shown in our pattern glass books) has 6 sides, we think this salt is not part of the pattern. We’re changing our call on it to Riverside #79. Would VULCAN PRECURSOR be better?



Fig. 25 – “Figure 8” Salts



*Fig. 26
GRASSHOPPER*

*Fig. 27
Riverside #1
“Michelin Man”*



Fig. 28 - Riverside #79

It seems there is always something new to be discovered in the world of pattern glass and open salts. Each time an old catalog comes to light we learn a little more. If you ever discover an old catalog, please treat it with respect and let the world know what is in it. Cliff Gorham did that with the Riverside catalog, and we have all benefited. In the meantime, look at your collection to see if you have a Riverside FROSTED CHICKEN (SIDE WHEELER) or a Bakewell “Mellon” salt hiding there.

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Riverside Glass Works Catalog (ca. 1883) published by C. W. Gorham
“Early American Pattern Glass 1850-1910” by Bill Jenks and Jerry Luna
“5000 Open Salts”, by William Heacock and Patricia Johnson