

SALTY COMMENTS #4

"Is this salt old?"

"It came from grandmother's attic and was covered with dust. I'm sure it is."

How many times have you held a conversation like this? We encounter it frequently. Of course it is never mentioned that Granny was buying things until the day she took sick, and that dust forms very rapidly, as everybody who cleans house can attest. A salt may be shown in a catalog dated 1912, but it could have been continued for several decades afterwards if it was a popular pattern. Even if the Company went bankrupt or the plant burned, some of its shapes can turn up later in another maker's line. Unless the mold is ruined or scrapped, a glass dish can be revived easily by any glass company with a hand pressing line. The key to the situation is the mold.

Pressed glass is made using cast iron molds in which the hot glass is formed. These are quite expensive, costing several thousand dollars for small, simple ones and over \$10,000 for better ones with lots of detail in the design. If you have an idea for a shape, it is first made up in clay, wood, plaster or some other material. This is the pattern which is used to make a plaster cast in the shape of the mold you need. Many details such as the parting lines of the mold and hinges to open and close it must be worked out at this stage. When everything is just right, the plaster forms are used as patterns to make iron castings. These castings are carefully finished by a master engraver. When assembled, they can be used to make thousands of copies of your special dish.

In use, the molds must be cleaned regularly to remove scale that forms on the inside. Over many years the cleanings can make subtle alterations in the details, blurring some of the sharp lines and giving the shape somewhat rounded edges. If this gets too bad, a re-engraving can be done to sharpen up the shape, but there will be some small changes in the final product that can be seen on close examination. Similarly, a new mold which copies an old design will usually have some tiny details which are different from the original, no matter how carefully the old design is copied. Usually you need a genuine old copy to compare with the new one to find what the difference is.

Once a mold exists, it can survive for many years. The main reasons we have heard for loss are excessive rusting from storage in a wet place, wear-out after a great many uses, or donation to scrap iron drives during World Wars I or II. Most molds are given good care, since they are quite valuable. They are normally kept until the company goes out of business, and are then sold along with the other assets. Since they bring only a small fraction of their replacement cost at auction, other active glass companies are willing to buy them.

Old salt dish designs seem to be revived in three different ways: (1)using the old mold, (2)making a new mold as close to the old design as possible, and (3)copying the idea but making some changes to the shape. In either of the last two cases, close examination can almost always reveal some clear difference between the new and the old. In the first case where the same mold is used, there is no way of telling the difference unless the maker uses a new color or puts his mark on it. Since it is important that collectors know whether a dish is new or old, we have been keeping a list of the revived designs that we know of. As of today, our list is as follows:

OLD MOLDS RE-USED These dishes often cannot be distinguished from earlier production since they use the same mold, and in some instances retain the old marking. Where there is a difference, it is noted below. Colors are usually different than those originally used, but not in every case.

<u>Smith</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>H&J</u> <u>No.</u>	<u>Design</u>	<u>Revived by</u>
11-3-3	2676	Star and feather panels by Westmoreland	Summit Art Glass
17-4-2	329	English Hobnail pedestal by Westmoreland(1)	Summit Art Glass
21-2-3	296	Round, zippered sides by Imperial	Summit Art Glass

Smith No.	H&J No.	Design	Revived by
36-3-3	2681	English Hobnail low by Westmoreland	Summit Art Glass
37-1-2	337	Lotus pattern by Westmoreland	Summit Art Glass
37-3-1	351	Lacy Daisy pattern by Westmoreland(1)	Summit Art Glass
40-5-1	498	Toy punch bowl by Imperial (2)	Summit Art Glass
205-5-2	3555	Mount Vernon pattern, Cambridge, Imperial (3)	Summit Art Glass
215-4-2	1019	Duck by Westmoreland	Summit Art Glass
261-2-1	394	Oval, 6-sided by Cambridge	Mosser Glass
462-6-1	937	Type 3 swan by Cambridge (4)	Mosser Glass
	336	Hexagonal, stars in panels by Cambridge	Mosser Glass
	448	Caprice nut dish by Cambridge & Imperial	Summit Art Glass
	627	Conical, 4-toed dish by Cambridge	Summit Art Glass

- Notes: (1) Summit production is marked with Westmoreland's WG - old ones are not
 (2) Recent ones have ANAHEIM 1969 on the bottom
 (3) Original Cambridge have C in triangle mark
 (4) Mosser swan has bumps on neck behind head, some are signed

NEW MOLDS COPYING AN OLD DISH - These can be distinguished if the new ones are signed, or if there is some significant difference between the two molds used. The degree of difference is shown in the Copy Quality column. S means that new ones are signed by their maker, 1 means that side-by-side comparison is needed to see the difference, and 2 means that there are clearly describable differences between new and old. In some instances both signed and unsigned new dishes have been made - two designations are given in these cases.

Smith No.	H&J No.	Design	Copied by	Copy Quality
23-4-1	401	Teutonic pattern by McKee	Guernsey Glass	1
36-3-3	399	English Hobnail, low	Mosser Glass	S 1
40-4-1	4482	Basket on pedestal by Atterbury	Guernsey Glass	S
44-5-1	931	Bird with seed by McKee	Degenhart, Kanawha	S 2
44-8-4	941	Swan pulling boat	St. Clair	2
56-1-3	4430	Three Face	Wright	S 2
85-5-2	3506	Lacy Sandwich round pedestal	Avon	S
90-5-1	929	Squirrel on stump	Guernsey	S
324-4-2	3504	Lacy Sandwich rectangular	Metropolitan Museum	S
325-4-1	4669	Wheelbarrow by Greentown	St. Clair	S
407-3-3	924	Lacy Sandwich oval, pedestal	Henry Ford Museum	S
	946	Bird with seed, master size	Wright	1

OLD DISH WITH MAJOR DESIGN CHANGE - There should be no problem distinguishing new from old in these cases, although all people may not be aware that a given pattern has been re-done. I have not listed all the differences, only one of the more obvious ones.

OLD			NEW			
Smith No.	H&J No.	Design	Smith No.	H&J No.	Design By	Change
15-5-2	3050	Panelled Thistle pattern		887	Wright	Larger
36-5-1	3387	Jersey Swirl pattern	180-1-1	869	Wright	Base added
37-2-2	909	Triangle pattern		876	Wright	Larger
45-3-3	858	Barouche		859	Wright	Larger

(3)

OLD			NEW			
Smith No.	H&J No.	Design	Smith No.	H&J No.	Design By	Change
204-3-3	364	Wildflower pattern	317-3-1	899	Wright	Different base
324-3-3	860	Thousand Eye carriage	397-4-3		Wright	Daisy & Button
	448	Caprice pattern	307-4-1	915	Guernsey Glass	Smaller
	489	Potty salt		581	Crystal Art Glass	Design around bottom
	841	Daisy & Button shoe			Guernsey	Pattern change, signed

In addition to the above, there are several about which we are currently confused. The Dewdrop and Star dish (Smith 362-4-2, H&J 890) comes in two sizes. The smaller one is being made today by Boyd using an old mold whose origin is unknown. The design dates back at least to 1937, since it appears in Brown's book which was published then. We have yet to find where Boyd's mold originated, or whether there was a mold like this prior to 1900. Perhaps there has been only one mold and it is still going strong. The same sort of thing applies to the Moon and Star dish that Wright and L.E. Smith have both made (Smith 28-3-3, H&J 870) - we can find no dish that is clearly different or unquestionably old. There are two other designs we refuse to try to untangle - too many people have made hens on nests and daisy and button pattern hats. We have also not commented on the mold copying that went on 75-100 years ago, producing many similar designs and many headaches for anyone researching open salt dishes today. Did you know, for example, that there are at least 4 distinctly different Octagon salt molds the shape of Smith 10-3-2, H&J 516?

Somewhat more detail on the above is given in two of our documents which the New England Society of Open Salt Collectors has distributed to its members. If you have not seen these and would like a copy, we would be happy to send one in your self-addressed stamped envelope (business size, please).

Many molds are in storage, and can be reactivated at any time. The Fostoria Company, for example, has stopped their hand pressing operation. If they should decide to sell their old molds, some of their designs would reappear. If this happens, and if the new dishes are plainly marked, they would be welcomed by a number of people. New production is often in attractive colors which can brighten up a salt dish collection at a cost far less than that of older colored dishes. New dishes are "bad" only when there is no way of telling them from the old originals.

Since there are many old molds, it is important for each of us to keep current about what is going on. Some people are being fooled by newly made dishes, and are paying "old" prices for them. As a collector, we believe that the best guideline is to buy only what you enjoy and to pay only as much as the anticipated pleasure seems worth. Later if you find that someone starts reproducing one of your dishes and its value drops below what you paid, your collection will be no less attractive for it. And you probably have another special salt or two that you bought at a bargain price to offset the misfortune.

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References: Ten books by Allan and Helen Smith, "Open Salts Illustrated"
"5000 Open Salts" by William Heacock and Patricia Johnson
"Salt Dishes" by Clark W. Brown, originally published in 1937