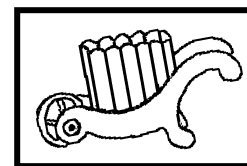


Salty Comments

Facts and Opinion about Open Salt Collecting



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HEISEY URN, POTTERY SALTS

Before getting to the main subject this time, we'd like to report on an exciting discovery for Heisey salt collectors. In the URN pattern, we knew of 3 shapes – an individual, a master and a 6-sided mid-size. We first saw the mid-size in an old catalog reprint. Years later we found one, and it was flared so the top was as big as our master size. It is shown as the middle dish in Figure 1. Recently Rikki Cornett found a set of mid-size URN salts marked diamond-H with 8 sides! We had not even seen these in the catalog, so they came as a complete surprise. She graciously sold one to us for slightly more than her cost. It is the middle one in Figure 2. The width at the top for all 4 URN salts is: individual – 2", 8-sided mid-size – 2-5/8", 6-sided mid-size flared – 2-7/8", master – 3". She put another one in the Ebay Internet auction, and it brought \$175. A rare one indeed.



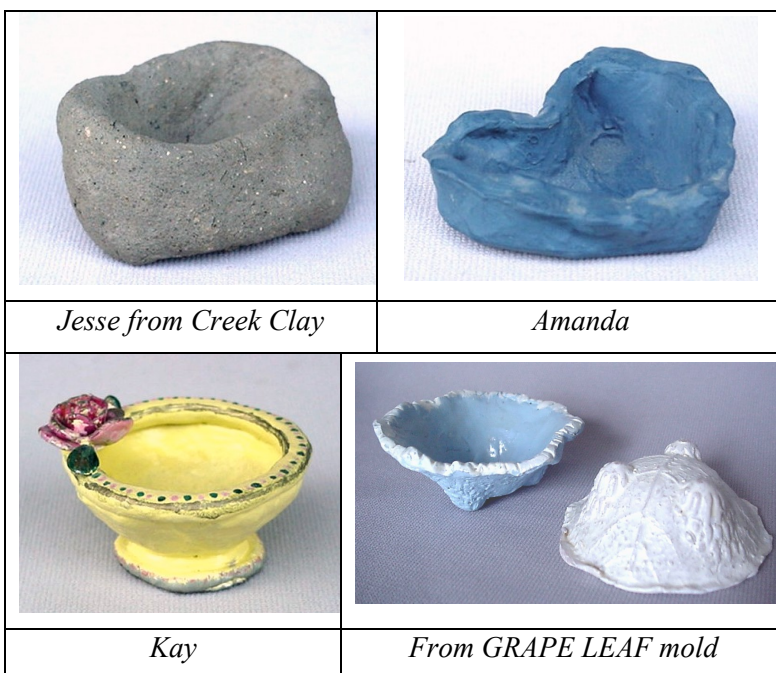
*Fig. 1 – Heisey URN
6-Sided Mid-Size*



*Fig. 2- Heisey URN
8-Sided Mid-Size*

Pottery can be defined broadly as any material made from clay. This would encompass everything from bricks to porcelain, with semi-porcelain, bone china, jasperware and a dozen other things in between. For our purposes today we're limiting our focus to the soft, porous ceramic often formed by hand and fired at relatively low temperatures. The result is a fairly thick salt which is relatively light in weight and which chips easily. It can be shaped by hand, on a potter's wheel, or in a mold. It must be glazed to keep it from absorbing water or any other liquid placed in it. Pottery like this is relatively easy to make and usually inexpensive when originally sold.

The simplest pottery salts in our collection come from the grandchildren. Jesse made one from clay from the creek behind his house, and Amanda made a heart shape from modeling clay. Not to be outdone, Kay created one from modeling clay and painted it. We also tried making a mold from a Smith GRAPE LEAF glass salt and forming a pottery copy with it. Each was "fired" in the kitchen stove to harden it and painted. We have yet to serve salt in one, though. All of these occupy a special spot in the salt collection.



Once we started looking at our collection we found more pottery salts than we expected. The earliest is a redware salt made from red clay and glazed with black. Professor Steve Nutt of Wagner college, who spoke at an OSCAR meeting years ago, identified it as an early one from the eastern Pennsylvania or Delaware area. He makes redware as a hobby, and we have two of the salts he has made. The first was inspired by our old redware one.. The second is smaller, and we wonder if he was really thinking “salt” as he made it.

On old dish that may not even have been a salt is spongeware. It is the right size for salt, but may have been one of the old handle-less cups they used when you poured your hot tea into the saucer, set the cup on a cup plate, blew on the saucered tea to cool it, and then drank from the saucer. This is the origin of the term “saucered and blown” which we think means “ready to use”. Our dish is old and the size is right for serving salt, so it is in the collection.

In the early 1800’s copper luster pottery became popular. There are quite a few salts that have survived, though many are chipped and show their pottery origins under the glaze. They look like the shapes were made by hand with a potter’s wheel. Some of them were decorated with pink color, which was made using a gold wash. Similar salts were made in Sunderland luster, which was all pink with spotty “bubbles” in it. The same shape was used in later years for yellow ware This is made from yellow clay, and will show yellow all the way through when broken. The salt shown in the picture has a “mocha” decoration. Dishes with this type of decoration are collected by people with money to spare, because prices have gone into the hundreds of dollars, an unreasonably high level in our estimation.

	
<i>Old Redware</i>	<i>New Redware</i>
	
<i>Steve Nutt Salt</i>	<i>Spongeware</i>
	
<i>Copper Luster</i>	<i>Sunderland Luster</i>
	
<i>Mocha on Yellow Ware</i>	

We believe that some of the early Staffordshire transfer print salts are pottery, though later ones seem like more refined china. The salt shown has the light weight and dull “ring” that pottery exhibits, and also has marks that show it was made on a potter’s wheel. Transfer prints were an early method of decorating. A design was engraved in a copper plate, filled with a paste, and the paste lifted out with a special paper. By pressing the paper against the dish, the colored paste was transferred to the dish to be decorated. If you look closely at salts like this , you can see the joint in the design where the transfer began and ended.


<i>Staffordshire Transfer Print</i>

A number of the well-known British china factories started out making pottery. Perhaps the best known is the Royal Doulton company, which originally made industrial items like sewer tile. When they went into the tableware business they made many nice pottery salts. We like them because they are usually well marked with the company name and often the date. The kind we most often see have a hunting scene embossed on the sides. Less common but more desirable to Royal Doulton collectors are the ones shown in the next two figures. The first of these is marked 1879, and the second 1882. The former has a silver rim with Sheffield 1879 hallmarks on it. Each has initials of the potter and decorator scratched on the bottom. A later Royal Doulton dish is shown in the next figure. We have been told this is called the “Slater’s Patent” design, which refers to the swirls impressed on the sides. The mark on this dates 1882-1902.

One special category is majolica. This is defined as pottery painted with colored tin-based glazes. It has been made for centuries, though the salts we have seen are late 1800’s.. The one we have positively identified is the “Lily Salt” by Griffin, Smith & Co. of Phoenixville, PA. It appears in their 1884 catalog. A second majolica salt we bought is 6-lobed with a flower embossed on each lobe. It looks like the clay was pushed into the mold by hand.

	
<i>Royal Doulton Hunting Scene</i>	<i>Royal Doulton Silver Rim</i>
	
<i>Royal Doulton Plated Rim</i>	<i>Royal Doulton Slater's Patent</i>
	
<i>Griffin, Smith Lily Salt</i>	<i>6-Lobed Bowl</i>

Another category of pottery salts is French faience. There have been several books written about this type of ware, and there is a lot of information about it. Rather than summarize it here, we are choosing to leave it for another time. We do want to recognize that much of it belongs in the pottery class, however.

Several pottery salts in our collection look like they are sculpted by hand. The Italians seem to like donkeys. We have two of them, shown at the right. The short one with the two bowls is marked Italy, while the pair of donkeys is marked Etrusca Deruta. Both have rather crude decorations, and might have been made in the same factory. We have an Italian hen on nest with majolica type decoration and a round dish with raised fruit figures on the sides. Both have the colored clay showing through on the bottom and are marked Italy.

	
<i>Italian Donkey</i>	<i>Donkeys marked Etrusca</i>
	
<i>Hen marked Italy</i>	<i>Raised Fruit Figures</i>

One of our sculpted pottery figurals has no marks. It is a camel lying down, with a basket on either side. The bottom shows clearly that it is made in pieces from a brown clay. The animal's body may have been made with a mold, but the rest has been made piece by piece and attached. We wish we knew more about its origin.



Camel

One very special pottery salt is shown at the right. It has a dark brown glaze, with one side of the dish raised and unglazed on the outside. In the unglazed side is carved a delicate tree with a grotto behind it. In the grotto an old bearded man is sitting across from another person, with a table between them. We can't help but admire the skill it must have taken to do the delicate carving in such detail. The dish is marked Japan on the bottom.



Grotto

American companies don't seem to have made many open salts in pottery. Earlier firms like Lenox made them in porcelain or other higher grades of china. The pottery companies that are well-known today operated mostly in the 20th century when open salts were not so much in demand. We do have a salt that the dealer said was Rookwood, shown at the right. It has the initials AN on the bottom, but no company identification. The dealer wouldn't lie to us, would he? A second U.S. pottery salt has the same shape as one of the common glass ones. The folks we bought it from found it in Red Wing, MN, and the dealer there identified it as Red Wing pottery. The glaze is green, and the clay is red. A clearly marked salt in the next picture comes from the Peter Pot pottery, which is still operating in New England. The last one comes from Matthew Brod, of Lockport, IL, who made the 1999 Convention salt. It qualifies as majolica, having colored tin glaze over pottery.



Rookwood?



Red Wing?



Peter Pot Salt



Matthew Brod Salt

We hope you have some interesting pottery salts in your collection. Better yet, we hope we have inspired you to make a few pottery salts yourself. The process is simple, and if you want to try your hand at sculpture you could even go into business. Let us (and other collectors) know what you create -- we might even buy one.