

## 1500 BULL'S EYE ASH TRAY

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One of the advantages in writing about the Heisey ash trays is that I think about things I hadn't bothered with before. Oh, sure, I do some research on every piece I get. But when you have to write about one, well, that's a different thing. Sometimes, I may have already done all the research I'll need for a decent stab at an article. (You'll have to decide my success on that point.) Other times, just looking closely at the piece provokes questions I never knew I had. You need to learn enough to know what you're talking about (or at least seem to). No matter how simple the piece, you can always turn up something interesting.



Here's an interesting little piece, this 1500 Bull's Eye round ash tray. This ash tray is all alone in the

world, with no other pieces in its pattern line. Whether salesmen didn't take up its cause, or whether customers just didn't go for it, the little Bull's Eye ash tray lasted only a short time in the Heisey sales line and is uncommon today.

1500 Bull's Eye appears to have been introduced about 1938. It was dropped by 1941, or maybe even earlier, since it doesn't appear in a price list of that year or any time after that. The only original illustration of which I'm aware is in Cat. 212, which is fairly easy to find in reproduction, even though it has been out of print for a long time. We should be thankful for that (for being easy to find, not for being out of print). This illustration was not one picked up in any of the Vogel books. Nor is the piece mentioned in either of the big Bredehoft books that most collectors have. The point is that even researchers have given this ash tray the cold shoulder. And that's too bad.

For an individually sized piece, there is a lot going on in the design. You can't really tell that much looking at the one factory illustration we have. Those white line drawings may have looked elegant, but they weren't very good at showing detail, especially in the reprints. The general profile of 1500 Bull's Eye is gently rounded with a flattened bottom, much like a small nappy. You could be forgiven if you assumed at first glance that this was a piece of 1506 Whirlpool. The two patterns did come out about the same time. The sides of Bull's Eye feature six large eyes, and a seventh one, deeply concave, stares up at you from the bottom. Whirlpool ("Provincial" for you fans of the name used in the 1950's) had no round ash tray, so it could well be that Bull's Eye was intended to complement that pattern. However, the "eyes" of 1500 are larger and deeper, more crisp and separated, than the ones on comparably sized Whirlpool pieces. Around the rim, alternating with each eye, the Bull's Eye ash tray has six three-dimensional diamonds, clearly visible in front in one of the photos with this article.

The glass is thick, over half an inch in some places, so the bowl of the ash tray is quite a bit smaller than the outside diameter. Because of the way the diamonds interrupt the edge, what would have been a broad, flat rim at the top becomes three plain ledges alternating with three cigarette rests. I'm calling it an individual ash tray because

of the size, despite the number of rests. Heisey didn't specifically label it that way, but I suspect that had more to do with either their lack of consistency or its size — perhaps it was just a wee bit larger than the sizes they preferred to call individual.

As you may be able to see from one of the photos, the ash tray is clearly marked, beneath the bottom in the center. At least this piece is. I haven't seen any other actual examples, so I can't say whether they came both ways or not. Being made over such a short time, though, I'm guessing that there wasn't much variation in 1500 Bull's Eye. The entire piece is fire-polished. This was the trend in the 1930's as Art Deco began to give way to sleeker Art Moderne. While fire-polishing seems more appropriate to the style of many pressed patterns in the numbers ranging from 1400 and up, the frequent lack of ground bottoms may just as well have been a cost-saving measure.

The puzzle is why more of 1500 Bull's Eye wasn't made. Its style was much in the same spirit as successful Heisey designs offered at the same

time. Yet it was sufficiently distinct from them to be marketable on its own. That makes it seem unlikely that the public rejected it. Was it too much like some competitor's design? Was it not promoted by salesmen? Being so heavy for its size, did it have too slim a profit margin, or was it priced over the market? The onset of the war is the go-to reason when we find things went out of production around that time, but Bull's Eye had been dropped at least three months before Pearl Harbor. Could it be as simple that Wils Heisey, president of the company at the time, just did not like it?

Just because 1500 Bull's Eye didn't gain popularity 70 years ago is no reason for you to pass it up now. Find one if you can and enjoy.

#### Vital Statistics

1500 Bull's Eye Ash tray: Outer diameter, 3 1/2". Inner diameter, 2 1/4". Base diameter, 2". Height, 1 1/4". Marked. Fire-polished. Crystal only.

What Heisey puzzles you? Let's see if we can put the pieces together, I will be glad to hear from you at [heisey@embarqmail.com](mailto:heisey@embarqmail.com)