

# *1606 Double Four Concave Ash Tray*

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When I was six or so years old, I decided to put together a little book.

For some reason, I thought that when you continued an article from one page to another, both pages had to have the same number. The resulting book had every page numbered. Never mind that some of the numbers were repeated, or that they didn't always follow consecutively. Remind you of anything? Say, the quixotic pattern numbering of a certain glass company?

By the middle 1920's, A.H. Heisey & Co. was using a more or less consecutive numbering system for their pressed patterns. Earlier years had seen a confusion of competing numbering schemes, with fits and starts of sequential series. But different lines of numbering kept colliding with one another, resulting in what appears a hodge-podge to us now. Taking the time to tease it all out helps make some sense of it, but the reasons for Heisey's various early numbering series often remain hidden behind the heavy velvet drapery of the Edwardian era in which they were first conceived. In time, the other schemes—300's, 400's, 600's, 800's, and others more obscure—were abandoned when a new pattern needed a number. Remaining was the 1100's, one of the schemes which had been around for quite a while already. Eventually containing such familiar patterns as Revere and Yeoman, Heisey used this series as a springboard for a more methodical approach by at least the early 1920's. While exceptions continued to be made and would be for the entire life of the company, major and minor pattern numbers assigned during and after the 1920's tended to come one after another in orderly fashion. Perhaps this was the influence of E. Wilson Heisey, who became president of the company after his father's death in 1922 and who had a reputation for a certain decorum (unlike his more rapsallion brother Clarence). However the measured numbering came about, pressed patterns soon used up what was left of the 1100's and swept across the 1200's. Abruptly skipping the 1300's with a few minor exceptions, by 1930 patterns were already numbered in the 1400's and reached the 1500's by the end of that decade. The war slowed things down, so it wasn't until about 1950 that Heisey had reached the 1600 series of numbers for their pressed items.

The 1950's were unkind to most of the glass companies. The war had forever shifted the way people lived. Elegance was no longer the goal of entertaining and daily living. As European suppliers regained their strength, imports competed for what business there was in the elegant glass market. A.H. Heisey & Co., as so many of the others, were nearing the end of their run and were searching for ways to survive the troubles. The items numbered 1600 and above often seem half-hearted attempts to broaden the appeal of elegant glass. Other than #1951 Cabochon, whose pattern number broke ranks anyway, there were no truly complete patterns in this range that attempted to meet all the needs of dining and entertaining in one coherent design. The strangely merged #1626 and #1632 patterns, Satellite or Lodestar depending on the color, and the Zeisel-designed #1637A Town and Country had several items each. Many of the 1600 series patterns, however, are represented by only one item each, and that single item can be difficult to find. Most are simple, rather plain pieces of glass intended for incidental use. Few could be called successful introductions and most probably had little effect in holding back the oncoming demise of the company. Occasionally a piece was absorbed into another pattern, such as the #1610 square mayonnaise that became part of the late Revere line-up. For the most part, though, each piece was left to its own devices for survival, suitable for the rarely lucrative knick-knack market and gaining no support as part of a larger, comprehensive glass service. There were the odd plates, a few candlesticks, some bar and smoking items. Which brings us to #1606 Double Four Concave.



Fig. 1: #1606 Double Four Concave ash tray

Double Four Concave, the name given to this pattern by Vogel, is another one-piece pattern, represented only by a single ash tray and produced in only one size. (Having said that, however, I should note that HCA owns the mould not only for the ash tray but also for a French dressing bottle with the same pattern number. I do not know whether the dressing bottle was ever produced and I could only guess its appearance. Regardless, it's an odd combination. Dressing together with ash tray? Some ask why. Heisey declared why not.)

The ash tray is mainly simple, lightly curved lines, no straight edges. The catalog drawing appearing in Cat. 31 of 1950 makes the ash tray appear hard-edged, but all the edges are softened in the real thing (fig. 1). The combination of square and circle, popularized with #1951 Cabochon, is even more striking in this piece. While the top of the ash tray is basically square when looked at from above, each side gently bows in toward the center.

Viewed from the side (fig. 2), the top of the ash tray is not flat, but is sway-backed, higher at the corners and slightly sagging toward the middle of each side. Short, tighter curves define the cigarette rests. With the four indented rests, the profile puts one in mind of the much earlier and completely unrelated #442 Maltese Cross ash tray, which has four cutouts that are purely elements of design, not functional rests at all. In Double Four Concave, at least, we have four very definite rests, making the purpose of this piece undeniable. The outer walls of the #1606 ash tray curve inward from top to bottom to converge on a circular base. The round base is lightly concave but lacks the broad, ground and polished rim found in older patterns. Such a sharp transition would be out of place in this ash tray. Sticking to fire-polishing kept production costs down and was also a smart design decision. The coveted Diamond H trademark appears underneath in the center of the base.



Fig. 2: View from the side

Only two catalogs show the #1606 Double Four Concave ash tray, Cat. 31 of 1950 and Cat. 32 of January, 1953. The ash tray was dropped by October of 1953 when the company issued a price supplement to Cat. 32. It does not show up in the 1956 Cat. 33. Double Four Concave was probably never made in anything but crystal. Sultana might be a remote possibility, but I've never seen any indications of that color being used for this ash tray, so don't get your hopes up. All examples of #1606 Double Four Concave were probably made by Heisey; Imperial is not known to have produced this ash tray. I have never seen an example with decorations; as far as I know, Heisey never applied any etchings or cuttings. Monogramming wouldn't be too surprising.

#### Vital Statistics:

#1606 Double Four Concave Ash Tray: 4 1/2" square at top, 3" diameter round base, 1" high. Fire-polished bottom. Marked beneath.