

Heisey Knack For Reinvention Apparent In 359 Chesterfield Ash Tray & Match Stand

Ever had déjà vu? I bet the folks at Heisey did.

Heisey loved to make the same things over and over again, just a little different. You could find examples at every turn. (I guess that would be a glassmaker's pun, wouldn't it?)

If you aren't a glassmaker, a turn is one session of making glass, usually about four hours in the way Heisey operated. If you aren't an aficionado of puns, well, there I can't help you.)

It made sense. (See how I avoided making another pun there? You know, sense vs. cents? Sometimes I can restrain myself. Not often. But it happens.) Why start from scratch when you could adapt a piece, a mould, or a design you already had lying around? Take a piece while the glass is still soft. With a tug here, a push there, a pickle tray becomes a bon bon or a spoon tray. Flatten a bowl, and there's a plate. Got a mould that isn't being used any more? Send it back to the mould shop and let them re-work it a little. Suddenly, that Narrow Flute with Rim marmalade has become a piece of Ridgeleigh. See a way to revise a current design to get a new piece? That brings us to this month's ash tray.

In about 1928, Heisey introduced the 359 Chesterfield ash tray and match stand. As with nearly all the ash trays of this period, Heisey did not name it. One look and you know the design was cribbed from the 353 Medium Flat Panel match stand, introduced a good 15 years or more earlier. (Don't go looking for my article on that one—it hasn't been written yet.)

If the early catalog pages are all you have to work with, you could easily mistake 359 Chesterfield for 353 Medium Flat Panel. They do look a lot alike in the drawings. Those black backgrounds obscure details. Both are colonial paneled ash trays of about the same size surrounding

a match stand in the middle. Real examples, however, are easily sorted out so you wouldn't make that mistake.

The tray portion of 359 Chesterfield seems to be nearly identical to the one for 353 Medium Flat Panel. It consists of a shallow bowl with 10 panels, blunt and slightly concave from the outside. They curve underneath to meet a ground rim base. Unlike many with ground rims, the base is not just slightly concave, but deeply concave, going up into the inside of the match stand portion. That saved on glass, but it also represents a move away from making ash trays such heavyweights as earlier ones sometimes were.

The main difference is in that match stand. The older Medium Flat Panel piece is designed for boxed matches; the solid block of glass in the center tells you that. Chesterfield is for book matches. It has a slot in the center block, something that is hard to see in the first drawing used for it in Cat. 109. Later catalogs show the slot more clearly and point out the difference in the captions. The match stand is larger in Chesterfield and more splayed out. Medium Flat Panel has a ribbed striking surface beneath the stand. Chesterfield does not. The idea seems to be that if you were using a match book, you'd already have the striking surface in your hand, so wouldn't need to go back to the ash tray, but if you pulled the match out of a box, you'd rather strike on the more substantial ash tray than on the flimsy paper box that might come flying off its stand.

I don't think Heisey actually altered the Medium Flat Panel mould to

make Chesterfield. Both were available at the same time. The 353 piece didn't disappear from the catalogs until after 1935, about seven years after Chesterfield came into them. (Chesterfield itself was dropped sometime around 1945.) But it was clearly easy to take the design of the older piece, make a few changes on paper, and let the mould shop work up a new one from that revised design.

Chesterfield is another one of those that does not have a cigarette rest. I wrote about 1180 Trefoil recently, which really has nothing about it that tells you its intended purpose. Here, at least, there was a match book holder to tip you off. But it is curious how the cigarette rest came to be seen as unneeded. We'll encounter it (or the lack of it, I guess I should say) many times again before all is said and done.

Clearly, Heisey was appealing to as many tastes as it could. Think of it. In just the first three items in this late 1920's series of ash trays, we've had a quirky take on Art Deco in 357 Duck; the very plain, Arts & Crafts look of 358 Solitaire; and now 359 Chesterfield, paneled in a classically colonial way. Some might call it ambivalence. More likely, Heisey recalled something about eggs and baskets.

It is said that the 359 Chesterfield ash tray is marked. If the example in the photograph was marked, I could not see it. Unfortunately, I haven't seen other examples, so I don't know if this is typical or not. I suspect a mark would be found either in the bottom of the match holder or in the concave area underneath, although those aren't the only possibilities, of course. Perhaps some of you readers can help me out on this one.

Despite being made through nearly the entire second color period, Chesterfield is known only in crystal, Moongleam, and Flamingo, and that may well be the end of the story.

Considering that several other small ash trays were made in Marigold or Sahara, however, I wouldn't rule them out, even though they have not been reported. As though "ruling them out" would do any good. Heisey constantly reminds us that rules are made only to be broken. Other colors made during the production period of Chesterfield, such as Alexandrite, Stiegel Blue, or Tangerine, are highly unlikely.

That's your cue to tell me all about how you have one of those.

Decorations are probably sparse to non-existent.

Ever had déjà vu? I bet...wait a minute, haven't we been here before?

Eric Tankesley-Clarke



Vital Statistics

359 Chesterfield ash tray & match stand

- Diameter across top of bowl, 4½"
- Diameter of ground base, 3¼"
- Height at rim, 1"
- Height to top of holder, 2"
- Holder portion is 1" wide x 2" long at top
- Ground and polished bottom
- Reported to be marked, but this example is not marked.

Marked? Unmarked? Does it matter to you, if you know it's real Heisey? Lend me your thoughts, at heisey@embarqmail.com. Your thoughts will be returned posthaste.