

#362 Bermuda Ash Tray

This month I am going to do something I have long avoided. No, I'm not going into sales—I made that plain in my previous article on the #361 Irwin ash tray. Cleaning out the basement? Maybe another time. What I am about to do is write about a piece I have never seen. They always tell you to write about what you know. I'm not going to let that stop me.

It was inevitable. No one, I suspect, has a complete Heisey smoking gear collection. Anyway, what is complete? Every ash tray in all the colors and all the sizes? One of each pattern? What about variations in markings? Decorations? Do you include every big jar that might have been used for tobacco? Pieces that pass for smoking gear whether Heisey labeled them that way or not? Mountings of other companies? Where does it all end? As I've mentioned before, smoking gear has not been a focus of our collection. Whenever I can, I raid our own stash for examples, but I rely on friends, too, and there are times when I must, like Blanche DuBois, depend on the kindness of strangers. (With Heisey collectors, they usually don't remain strangers for long.) Now, faced with writing about the #362 ash tray—you thought I'd never get to the title topic, didn't you?—I've tried tapping some of those friendships. All to no avail. In my ignorance I am not alone.

Up until the mid-1980's, the existence of the #362 ash tray was only theoretical, not much more than a feeling. One could comb the catalogs and realize that the number 362 had been skipped; there were ash trays on either side for a few numbers. Wasn't there one here, too? No factory illustrations backed that up. Had Heisey only considered a #362 ash tray, but dropped the idea without executing the design? Suspicions might have nagged, but there was no evidence in the catalogs.

Catalogs aren't the only tools. There are the price lists, so the crafty researcher goes to those. Before World War II, price lists were quite a separate thing from catalogs. If you wanted to know what something looked like, you went to the catalog. If you wondered how much an item cost, or how many you had to buy to get the barrel price, or even how much that barrel would weigh, you went to the price list. To be fair, the rather bleak price lists had drawings sprinkled through them, but illustrations weren't the main focus, usually just one drawing per pattern, often not even that.

You also went to the price lists to find pieces that didn't win a place in the catalogs but still filled some need. To modern collectors' disadvantage, and with alarming

frequency, you'll come across things that never got illustrated in the catalogs. (Helpfully, many price lists even tell you which page of a catalog showed the piece. It's when that column is blank that optimism flags in the quest for a picture.) Looking for #362 ash trays, you may pin your hopes on one of these price lists. They may not tell you what a #362 ash tray looked like, but at least you could rest more easily knowing it existed. While we don't have all the old Heisey price lists, several survive from just the time of this series of ash trays, that is, starting from around 1928 and working out a few years either side of there. You look, from one list to another, and no #362 appears. Magazine ads? Trade journals? Still no luck. This ash tray seems to be nothing more than a will o' the wisp, a phantom.

That's where the moulds come in.

Back in the 1980's, Imperial was bankrupt and the Heisey moulds it owned were up for sale. HCA came along with a great fundraising drive—sound familiar?—to buy them up. One of the good fortunes of the purchase was the discovery that each mould was labeled, pattern numbers stamped right in. Before the massive loads of moulds were delivered to HCA, a small group of them were selected, only 30 moulds in the lot, in return for the earnest money put down before negotiations were complete. Among these 30 was a mould labeled #362. Opening it up revealed the form of an ash tray. So, yes, Heisey had more than just contemplated a #362 ash tray to complete the ash tray series, they had actually made a mould for it. But had the ash tray itself ever been made? Surely if you went to the expense of making the mould, you'd use it. Wouldn't you?

Tom Bredehoft made the lucky find of the mould. He shared the news with his wife Neila, who reportedly was less than impressed. Nevertheless, in only a couple of weeks, she trundled home a pink "depression glass" ash tray that perfectly fit the mould. It seems, then, that at least one was made. And if you went to the trouble of heating up the mould and getting it ready for a turn, you wouldn't stop after the first piece. Would you?

In Tom's report of the mould and the subsequent ash tray find, he notes that neither the ash tray nor the mould were marked. He remarks that this is even though "the ashtray is ground and polished on the triangular base rim." I take this to mean that there was a perfectly good place for the Diamond H we long to see but don't, namely, the center of a slightly inset, rimmed bottom; grinding would not have removed the mark if it had ever been there.

A photo of Neila's find accompanies Tom's telling of the story in the April, 1986, issue of the Heisey News. I've included a copy of that photo for this article. A lot of readers may not have that issue at hand. Most Heisey collectors do have, however, the Bredehoft's book, *Heisey Glass 1896-1957*. That's the one with the pink and green cover. Our topic of discussion is illustrated there in full color on page 21, although it is labeled as an unknown.

This is where I usually talk about decorations and other finer points of a pattern. With only one example ever known to have been uncovered, there isn't much to talk about there. Heck, this one hasn't even had a name. Given its nearly mythical existence and three-sided shape, I propose we call it Bermuda, as in Triangle.

I contacted the Bredehofts to see if they might still have this ash tray. I've mentioned before that nothing replaces seeing and handling a piece to get to know it, and I had hoped to get a close look at #362. But this was not to be. They no longer own this example and I don't know where it is now. The museum doesn't have one, either. Since they are apparently unmarked (I'm talking about the ash trays, but the Bredehofts may well be unmarked, too), my guess is that this example of #362 Bermuda is not unique and that its mould-mates have gone unrecognized and unappreciated. On the other hand, if it was made for such a short time that it didn't even hit any of the surviving price lists, perhaps so few were made that the rest have gone on to the Great China Cabinet Beyond and this specimen is itself a lone survivor.

There are a few other pieces of Heisey known only in Flamingo—not even in crystal—so it is possible that Flamingo was the only color for #362 Bermuda. But if I were you, I'd keep an eye peeled for unmarked crystal or green triangular ash trays, too. Marigold and Sahara are much less likely, but can't be ruled out altogether. Hawthorne or other colors are highly improbable.

If your candidate looks like a good Heisey color, see that it comes to three fairly sharp points, not rounded corners, with a cigarette rest at each point. Check that the inside is a rounded bowl, not triangular, scooped out of the center and about 2 1/2" diameter. Turn the ash tray over and see that there is a rim on the bottom, probably measuring about 3 3/4-4" along each side and probably ground. The ash tray should be about one inch high (a standard height, it seems, for Heisey ash trays of this period), and 5 3/8" from point to point measuring along the top; that's roughly the size of the triangular 1184 Yeoman cigar ash tray with which Bermuda might



at first be confused. Naturally, make sure it's hefty, brilliant glass, too, with a smooth, fire-polished surface.

If your find passes muster for color, measurements, and quality, you might, just might, have a #362 Bermuda. Will all your collector friends be envious? Probably. Will I be envious? You bet. Maybe I can channel all that emotion into basement cleaning.

Vital Statistics

#362 Bermuda ash tray

Height, 1". Length along each side at top, 5 3/8". Round, central bowl about 2 1/2" diameter. Ground and polished rim on base, probably about 3 3/4-4" along each side. Unmarked. Flamingo known; crystal, Moongleam, Marigold and Sahara possible.

You can always write about what you know — or what you don't — when you send me a note at heisey@embarqmail.com.

Eric Tankesley-Clarke