

Shipwreck of the American merchant ship, the Baltic

.... shipwrecks might be another aide for use in identifying and dating glassware....

by Modene Murphy

You might think a shipwreck a strange topic for The NewsJournal until you notice the butter dish.

A couple of years ago we received an email from Tim Brodie asking if we could identify certain pieces of glass. They had recently recovered objects from the shipwreck of the Baltic.

The Baltic was an American merchant ship that sank on the reefs off Eleuthera, Bahamas, October 1, 1866. After clearing customs in New York, she was headed for Galveston, Texas, when she was caught in a hurricane and sank. The entire story is a fascinating one that can be found at www.historicsitesandshipwrecks.com/artifact-site/baltic.

One of the first pictures Tim sent us was the butter dish you see on the right. Notice the rainbow colors made by the ocean over the past century. We identified the pattern as "Hamilton with Leaf" made by Cape Cod Glass Company around 1860. This fit right into the time line for the Baltic which was built in Camden, Maine in 1854.

It struck us that perhaps cargo recovered from shipwrecks might be another aide for use in identifying and dating glassware. If the Baltic was built in 1854 and shipwrecked in 1866, then any glass found on the Baltic was made on or before 1866. Mostly likely no piece was made before 1854.



Historic Sites and Shipwrecks have identified several glass manufacturers from the artifacts; Cohansey Glass Works, F&JN Bodine, Cape Cod Glass Co., and J.J. Mapes. Three of these factories manufactured bottles and/or fruit jars. The Baltic carried food products which were stored in glass containers. Cape Cod Glass Company seems to be the only manufacturer of tableware. Although one butter dish isn't conclusive proof that the other pieces of tableware were made by Cape Cod Glass it would certainly suggest that Cape Cod made most if not all the tableware.

Besides the butter dish, Tim sent us pictures of goblets, tumblers, mugs, and a salt as pictured here. The numbers on the items relate to Tim's reference notes.

Consider #118, if you agree that the pattern is Wedding Ring then we can nail down a date for Wedding Ring between 1854 and 1866. That would also add to the likelihood that Wedding Ring was made by Cape Cod Glass Co. thus giving us a date and manufacturer for Wedding Ring. Some of you may recognize other pieces, such as the salt or one of the goblets.



Many of us spend hours trying to identify patterns, manufacturers, and dates. We search through manufacturers' and wholesalers' catalogs looking for information. Tim Brodie has opened another door for us when he sent the picture of the butter dish. Shipwrecks may prove to be another resource for us.

We would like to thank Tim & Adrienne

Brodie of Historic Sites and Shipwrecks for giving us permission to print this article and supplying us with the pictures. Be sure to check out their website at

www.historicsitesandshipwrecks.com, where you will find pictures of more artifacts recovered from the Baltic as well as other treasures.

