

Collecting Carnival Glass Salt Shakers

By Scott Beale

When I first heard of OLD carnival glass salt shakers, it was about 28 years ago when I first started collecting carnival glass. They were so hard to come by and I never had any in my collection. Back in 1994 I bought my first Victorian Art Glass salt shaker and 20 years later I'm still collecting.

My first exposure to carnival glass salt shakers was in the corn pattern. The first version is an iridized version of the Maize condiment set. It's probably not really considered carnival glass in the pure sense, but they are iridized and extremely rare with the iridized base holder. The second is what carnival glass collectors call the "Corn Bottle". I believe however, that the corn bottle shaker is not really be a salt shaker but a bottle that had a small cork for the top. I suspect that will be a point of discussion forever among shaker collectors. There are examples with 2 piece tops attached that fit rather well but I do not believe they are original.

Carnival glass salt shakers are hard to find due to the fact, in my opinion, that fancy art glass shakers fell out of favor about the time carnival glass became popular. This also applies to Toothpick Holders. There are a few patterns known in carnival glass and are difficult to come by. The patterns that I'm aware of are "Soda Gold" probably the easiest to come by, some other patterns are "Shell and Seaweed" and Challinor, Taylor "Square" shakers in various patterns. The patterns are, "Beaded Oval Mirror", "Seashell", "Horseshoe & Astor", "Crossroads Double", and "Square S". Some of the Crossroads Double are very convincing and others are rather obvious that they are contemporary.



Shell and Seaweed

Square Shakers

The Shell and Seaweed pattern is a mystery to me and I don't know of too many examples. The only colors I've seen are Marigold on Moonstone, straight Marigold, and Amethyst. It took me about 20 years or so to find those three examples!

The Challinor pieces are very rare and only a handful are known that I'm aware of. In addition, Challinor shakers generally come in opaque and slag colors. Clear colors are

very rare and seldom seen. The carnival glass Challinor shakers are all clear colors that I'm aware of!



Octagon

Some other interesting patterns are the Molded "Prescut" type patterns in "Octagon" and Aztec. Another interesting shaker is the "Xray" pattern and an enameled footed shaker in marigold as well as the Colonial pattern. I suspect others may surface too. These shakers come in many known carnival glass colors. There are examples of Marigold, Purple, Green, and Blue. With the exception of Marigold, which has a base glass of clear, all other colors are referred to by the base glass color it possesses. The color of the iridescence will vary.

I'm sure there are others and some other unknowns may show up in the future. The interesting thing about carnival glass salt shakers is that some of these shakers seem to show up in patterns (Victorian era patterns) by manufacturers that we thought never made carnival glass. That really makes you think where did these shakers come from and when were they really made? Were they made prior to the real production of carnival glass as we know it? (1907 to around 1920 or so) Or were these patterns made again by another manufacturer during the carnival glass period who may have acquired the moulds through glass company consolidation or even some of these pieces were iridized later on in their lives.

Many people are of the school that if a piece of carnival glass is iridized on the bottom it's not old. I'm not convinced totally convinced of that, because known old carnival glass shakers in the "Soda Gold" pattern (some) do have iridescence on the bottom of

them. I believe that carnival glass pieces are not generally iridized on their bottoms because they possessed a “collar” base. This base was designed to accept a “Snap”, a device that held the piece during production and when the piece was iridized, the snap prevented the iridescence from covering that area. Shakers however, were mostly mould blown and were held from the top during production therefore, the piece can be totally sprayed with the solution that produced its iridescence.

There seems to be one exception to this rule with shakers. The Shell & Seaweed shakers do have a collar base, very small however, but its there and the Marigold on Moonstone is not iridized on the bottom but the Purple and Marigold are. So, how does that figure into the theories.



Mason Jar

I recently purchased a pair of “Mason Jar” shakers with old zinc lids. They are iridized in a marigold finish. These are mention in and article by the Fry’s in their great carnival glass website as being iridized in “Mineral Bath” marigold which was done in Marlin Texas in the early 1900s. This was done by exposing the glass to a highly “Mineralized” water that would stain the glass a marigold color. I have seen a few sets of carnival glass shakers with this finish which tends to be a lighter honey colored iridized finish which is quite attractive. I would tend to lean towards the idea that they may have been iridized in Marlin, Texas.

Not to add further confusion to this subject, I recently purchased a mustard jar in a smoke iridescence, pattern unknown to me. I’ve showed it to many people for their thoughts and I’ve received feedback from everything from wow, I’ve never seen anything like that

before, that it was exposed to some kind of chemical, sat in water for a long time, to it was in a fire. Again, who knows and the mystery goes on. No matter what this mustard is, it is highly unusual to say the least! It's just food for thought and I'm sure many of you have different opinions. But whatever your thoughts are, it's an interesting subject.

One noted carnival glass researcher and author had this to say about the Challinor shakers.

“Challinor Taylor was one of the member factories of the U.S. Glass Co. combine. By 1900, Challinor Taylor was no longer operating. Their moulds were transferred to other U.S. Glass member factories still in operation. The first Carnival Glass was not introduced to the market until 1907 (by Fenton). The U.S. Glass Co. also made iridescent ware & most of theirs was produced in the 1910-1920 period, at their Glassport, PA plant and at the Tiffin plant. Any Carnival Glass examples of Challinor Taylor patterns & pieces were made there & not by Challinor Taylor themselves.”

Another interesting comment that was told to me was by a well known shaker collector and art glass dealer (the late) Bob Bruce pertaining to a couple shakers he had found.

“The first carnival shakers we bought were from Fay Crider. They were the Aztec Marigold. It was a long time ago and we had no idea if they were something or not. But Fay was a knowledgeable dealer so we trusted her as we had bought from her before in the Antique Trader. We took them to the first convention we went to thinking all would be excited to see them. To our surprise, no one was excited nor did anyone know anything about them. We contacted several carnival collectors and wrote to an author of one of the books at the time. We either got no response or no knowledge of them from anyone. So, we gave up, put them in the display and enjoyed them. Later we got the X Ray carnival shaker. We were concerned if it was real or not. Then we saw a table set in light marigold. So, then we felt it was indeed real. But, later, we heard that Terry Crider (her son, who you may know) would "carnivalize" a piece of glass for collectors. We never verified that story but thought we would write him to inquire if he ever did shakers. But, that never got high on our priority list so we never did it. After finding the Challinor shakers we felt more strongly that they were all real Victorian.”

Bob Bruce was a vast wealth of knowledge for me as I learned about shaker collecting. I will forever value the advice, education, and comments that he gave me and he is certainly missed.

The most interesting thing that I noticed, is that carnival glass collectors really don't come across them and really don't know much about them. I have asked a couple of old time collectors of carnival glass and they really had no information to lend. The only shakers that were mentioned in carnival glass by carnival glass collectors are the “Soda Gold” shakers, in my opinion the most common and the Imperial “Octagon” shakers produced in Marigold and Amethyst.

New patterns show up from time to time. The mystery is their age and examining them closely may give a clue to their age but it may not be definitive conclusion.



Colonial Panel

Dogwood

But one thing I think we can all agree upon and that is they are some of the rarest shakers to be collected. However, caution must be used when collecting these shakers and that there are a lot of reproductions out there! Knowledge is power and know what you are doing before looking for these rare little items.

This subject can generate a lot of opinions and discussion. There is much speculation as to where many of these shakers have come from. Many may say there are no real OLD carnival glass shakers. I really disagree with that, there are documented old shakers such as Soda Gold and Octagon. There seems to be no paper trail so to speak concerning most of these shakers yet, a lot of stories. Stories about shakers being iridized later in life from both original shakers and from new pieces made from original old moulds.