
"The Thumper Rabbit to the Burkam Bunny Story From 1978!"
by Preston Ver Meer

I have been investigating this story for 5 years and, turning up tidbits of information, finally think I have enough information for an article.

The BB Bunny was created from the Original Barth-Art Glass Company Mold!

I will show all the colors I have at this time but it is by no means all of the existing colors! Because there are so many I am going to mix them in the story as they were produced. I will break into the story and identify anything special about a certain color.

As Example;

The Crystal "Thumper" on the right is the Original Crystal Barth Art mold. Side by side you can not tell the difference from the BB Bunny.

I am writing this article in the order I found the information so it will seem like I am going back and forth to start with. I had a base knowledge of the Barth Art Mold but started making random calls out East to track down information on the BB Mold. By tracking names and searching threw different people I was able to track down the Burkam Bunny! So here is how the story progressed.



Some of the Bunnies were irrized to give them the "Carnival" look and the Custard Bunny on the Right is an example of the irrized look. Less than 50 Bunnies were irrized in any given color and not all colors were irrized.

Shortly after the Miller's article was shown in the Rainbow Glass Review some entrepreneurs decided to take the old mold with modifications and reissue "Thumper" with a new base and the BB mark!

Edward and Ruth Maidel of Newark, Ohio had the theses BB Bunnies advertised in 1978. I spoke with relatives of Ruth and Edward Maidel, known as "BUS". They told me the Maidel's partnered up with a gentleman name Jim Burkam and had the Bunnies made. That is where the "BB" mark comes from. The mark is under the Right Foot.



The first sign of the New "Thumper" was a half page advertisement in the July, 1978 Glass Review Magazine. The ad reads;

THIS IS A COLLECTORS ITEM!

It is a solid glass 6 inches high 4 inches wide at base. These are made in a limited amount, not over 500 of each color. The colors are: Vaseline, Milk Blue, Cobalt, Custard, Clear, Sapphire Blue, Green.

\$15 Each 6 or more \$8 each

RUTH MAIDEL'S
ANTIQUES 7 GIFTS
68 W. Stevens St
Newark, Oh 43055

The next identical advertisement appeared in the September, 1978 "Glass Review" with only the addition of the color Lime Green. Every other color listed was the same as above. Prices were also the same.



The "Vaseline" colored Bunny above and the Vaseline Satin one to the right Glow Brilliantly under Black Light!

Another twist was added to the production of these Bunnies. SATIN or FROSTED finish which ever word you prefer. The Satin version was made by dipping the original color in acid. Very few of the Satin finished Bunnies were made, like a dozen or less in each color dipped, because it is a labor intense process.

The same half page advertisement ran in the October, 1978 "Glass Review" with new colors of Pink, Lime Green Slag, Lemon Custard Slag, Blue Milk Slag.

Price and Seller were the same. By December, 1978 the advertisement was reduced to a 1/8th of a page and no photo of the Rabbit. Colors were the same but prices were reduced to \$12 each or 6 or more for \$8 each.



The only other Advertisement I found was a Half Page Ad run again in the April, 1979 "Glass Review". This was the last advertising I have seen for these BB Bunnies.

SPECIAL SALE FOR EASTER

Limited Edition of less than 500 of each color!

The old colors were selling for \$12 each or 6 for \$48

Same seller and new colors were Green Slag, Red, Red Slag, Milk Blue Slag, Shrimp and Shrimp Slag! The new colors were selling for \$15 each or 6 for \$54.

The Blue Milk Glass pictured on the left and Blue Slag Milk Glass were 2 early colors. I do not have the Blue Slag Milk Glass yet.

The Rest of the BB Bunny Story!!!



The Jim Burkam Story!

Jim Burkam heard about an auction not to far from his home, back in the 1970's, so he went to buy some Glass Animals that he was collecting at that time. Up for auction was this Rabbit Mold that was all rusty and it was missing the plunger so it sold for under \$25. Jim became the new owner.

Jim took the mold to a gentleman he knew to clean it up and make a new plunger so it could be used. The new plunger left the Pontil mark in a Rosette Shape and the BB was added. These Bottoms were not ground smooth like the Old Viking Thumper.

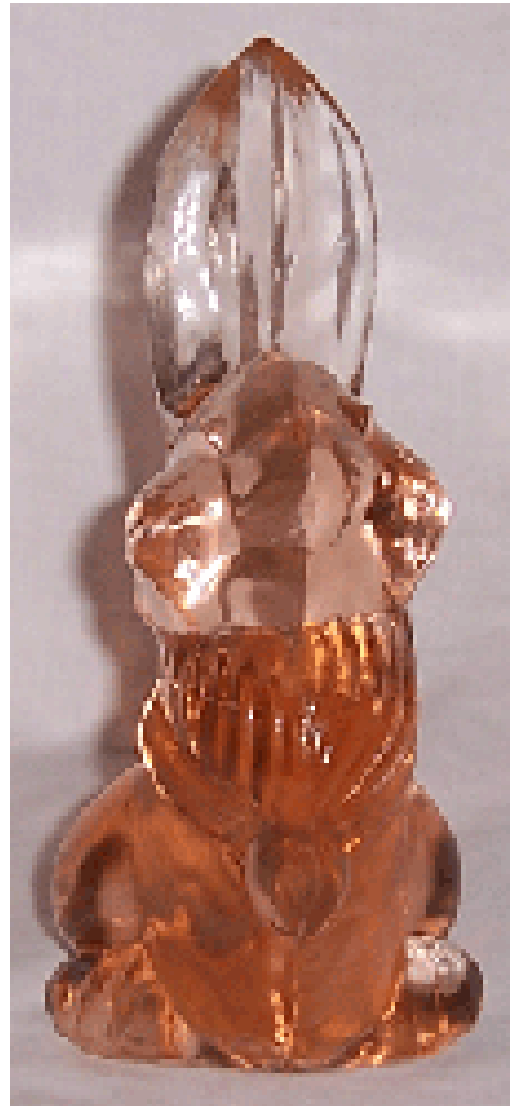
The Bunny on the Right is the Green Swirl Slag color. There is also a Green Milk Glass color.



He took the modified mold to Mosser Glass in Cambridge, Ohio one afternoon at about 2:30 and asked them if they could dump some glass in the mold at the end of the day and make him a few gifts for friends and relatives.

That was the start of a passion. One pour late in the day made about 50 Custard Bunnies. The "Burkam Bunny" was now a reality. That is why the "BB" was molded into the base so no one could accuse him of reproducing the old Viking Mold. As time and the thought process takes shape the idea to produce and sell the Bunnies began to take shape.

The Pink Bunny on the left was listed as a 1978 color. This was also one of the Bunnies that was dipped to make "Pink Satin Frost"!



The Edward "BUS" and Ruth Maidel Story!

The story continues to Edward and Ruth Maidel of Newark, Ohio. I spoke with relatives of Ruth and Edward, Edward known as "BUS". They partnered up with their cousin Jim Burkam who had the Bunnies made. Ruth and Bus went to Glass Shows and Flea Markets after they retired and they sold the Burkam Bunnies along with other collectible items.

It is always sad when people pass on before all the information is recorded about their passions. Such is the case here as Ruth and Bus have both recently passed on.

The "Crystal" Bunny on the right has a very light ice blue tint to it. Crystal was a 1978 color but no mention was ever made of ice blue!

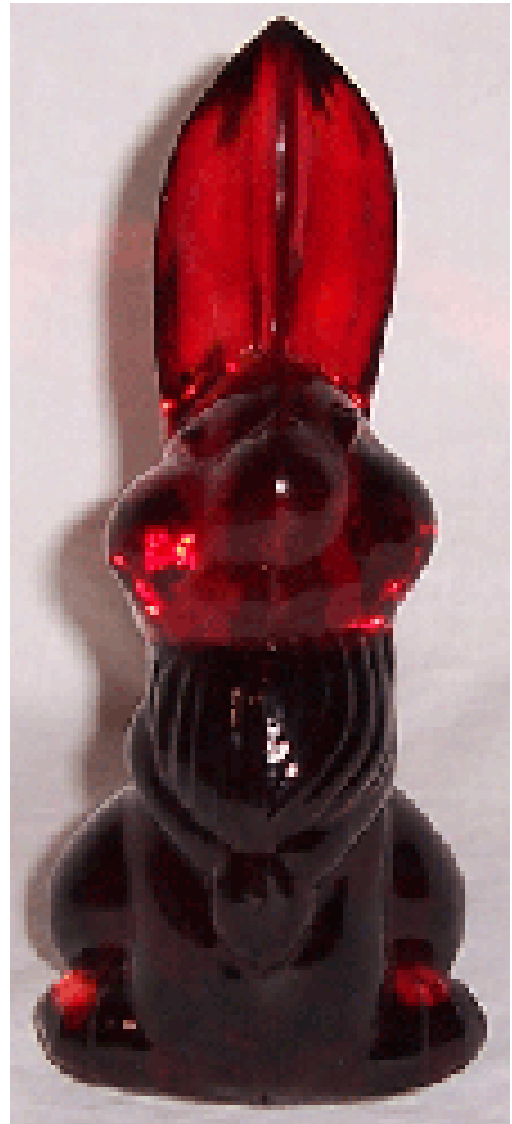


In a phone interview Jim said "the first Bunnies made that afternoon were 50 Custard Bunnies. The next day they made another Turn of 50 more but the colors were darker, so there are 2 Custard colors."

Jim Said, "The advertisements said less than 500 of each but there were never more than 300 made of any color, some were way less, as low as 50 or 60." There are 28 or 29 colors. "I frosted the Vaseline, Green, Yellow, Red and Lite Blue ones and only did a dozen or so, it was too much work."

There are actually 3 different colors of the Ruby Red Bunny on the right. I will show the photos of the Ruby Slag and the Ruby Carnival seperately.

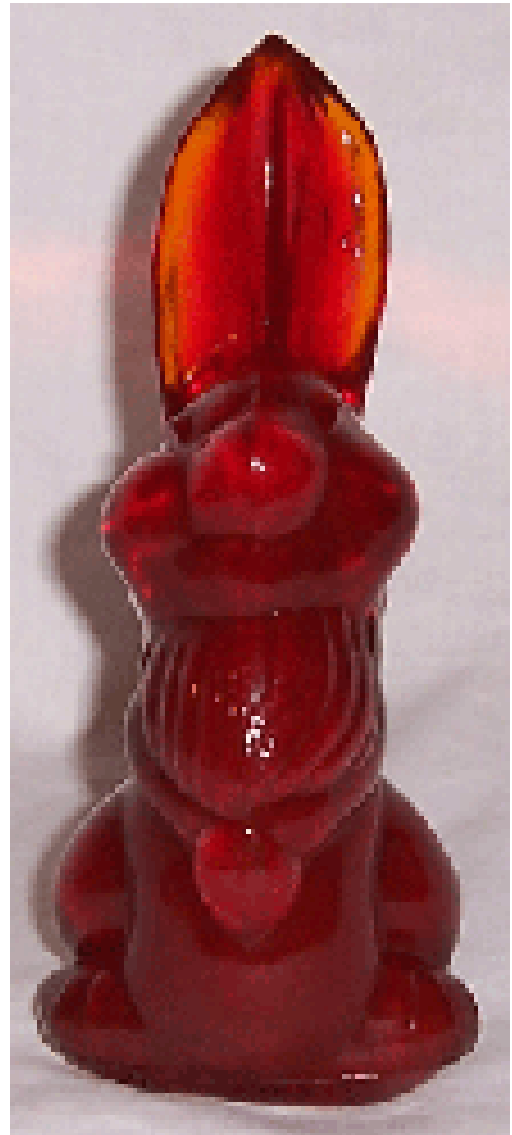
Jim said, "there were probably only 50 of each of the Ruby Bunnies made because we had problems".



Jim said "They made a pour of 50 Ruby Bunnies late one afternoon and the colors turn out too dense, sort of a creamy look." The Bunny on the left is the Dense Creamy Red Look.

It is not transparent like the Plain Ruby Red colored one above. No light will come through the base when you hold it up to a light. I call it the Ruby Slag but it was not poured as Slag Bunny. **There were less than 50 of this Ruby Bunny made!**

There are many little side stories like this Ruby Bunny Story and that is what makes collecting them so interesting. The value of these BB Bunnies will escalate once people begin to absorb all the information available in this article. Compiling a complete set of 29 different colors is going to be tough to get accomplished today!

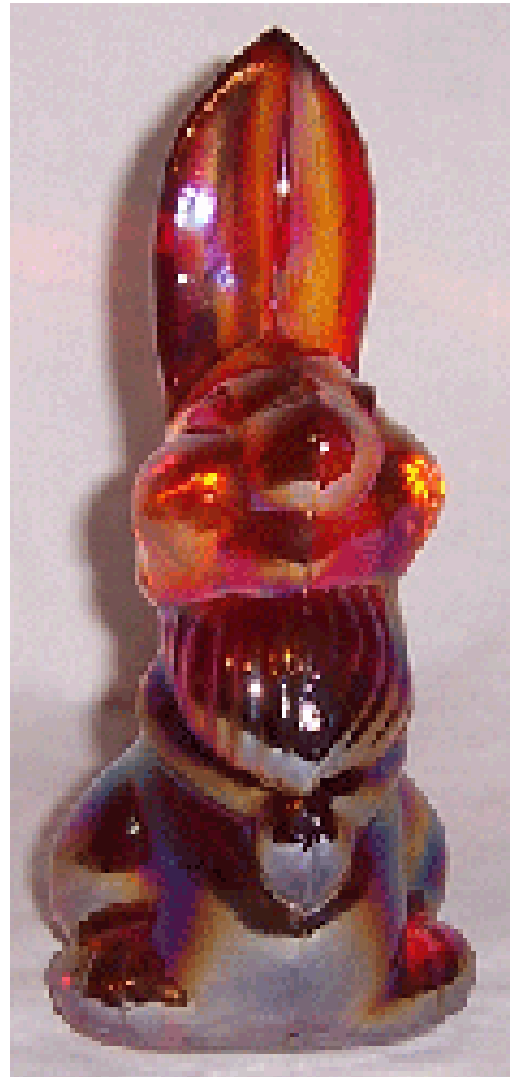


Only 50 or less of the Irridized Carnival Bunnies were made!

I cut and pasted this explanation of "How Carnival Glass is Made" from the www.ddoty.com website.

Making it Carnival. After the glass has been removed from the mold, any additional shaping, such as ruffles, is done then. Usually the glass has cooled so much prior to taking it out of the mold, that it is reheated so that the glass is malleable enough to shape. While still hot, liquid metallic salts are sprayed onto the surface, giving the piece the iridescent lustre that makes it Carnival.

The glass must be cooled slowly to prevent stresses, so it is placed in a lehr--an enclosed conveyor belt that allows the temperature of the glass to reach room temperature over the course of 24 hours.



Yellow Carnival is another Carnival Color Jim had made!

There were only a few colors that were made irridized and this Yellow Bunny is one of them. You can have a Plain Yellow Bunny without Carnival but not vice versa. I do not have the Yellow Bunny in the Gallery at this time.

The irridized Bunny would be the rarer of the two so I am glad to show you this example. I showed the irridized Custard Carnival Bunny earlier.

The Amber and Amethyst BB Bunnies were also irridized but I am also missing them.

Again I am going to point out that Jim said, Less than 50 Carnival Bunnies were made in each of the colors that were irridized!



I am trying to confirm this color but I think Jim called it "Fawn". I will confirm this in the near future.

The Fawn Bunny, on the left, is the only other Irridized color that was made. There numbers are very low.

Jim said, "none of the irrized Bunnies were sold we, my wife Carol and I, had them made to give as gifts to friend and relatives".

This really narrows the field of these irrized Bunnies. Not only because very few were made but the people they were given to would probably hold them longer for sentimental reasons. They would only reach the secondary markets through Estate Sales. This Bunny may be very RARE!



The "Fawn" colored Bunny on the right was never mentioned in any advertising back in 1978 or 1979.

Jim said, "Many of the later colors had a lot less items poured, some may have been less than 100". So we really don't know for sure how many of these are still in circulation today.

While I am talking about numbers Jim said, "After my wife passed away I lost interest and sold over 800 of the Bunnies to a dealer friend on mine. His friend, shortly there after, had a building fire and all the Bunnies were melted by the heat, in the fire, and totally destroyed."

WOW! Now try to figure out how many and in which colors went up in Smoke! Getting a full collection put together is going to be tough!



Green was one of the colors listed in the 1979 Advertisement and it was also one of the Rare Satin Colored ones!

The Green color was mentioned in the 1979 advertisement. This Green color is almost exactly the same color as the Viking Spring Green "Thumper".

Jim made no colors the same as the "Thumper" Bunny made earlier and later by Viking Art Glass. Viking made the Spring Green Thumper Bunny in the 1980 - 1981 time period and it has a smooth Polished Bottom. This is a scarce color in the Viking "Thumper" Bunny.

I have both Bunnies and side by side I can't tell the difference except this Bunny had its ears trimmed. It's a hair shorter than the rest.



Who knows what Rare is? Who knows what Scarce is? This Green Satin Frost is another one of the Burkam Bunnies that might qualify for this title!

Remember what Jim said earlier about "only a few of the Satin ones were made". BUT you have to bear in mind that anyone can dip a Green Bunny and end up with a Satin Green Bunny even today!

Look back in the article and you can see the various colors Jim dipped. If I saw another color in the Satin Finish, that I did not show here, flags would go up! Buyer Beware at that point!

Who can say what is Rare and Scarce! I say them words all the time when I sell on Ebay. To me an item is Rare if I only see one or so a year. I call them Scarce if I only see three or four a year. What do you call an item if you never see them come up on Ebay?



Sapphire Blue BB Bunny is just a Shade Darker than the Spring Blue made by Viking in 1980!

This Sapphire Blue BB Bunny was made by Burkam in 1978 -1979. In the 1980 - 1981 Viking Catalog they introduced the Spring Blue Color. The Viking "Thumper" Rabbit was made in Spring Blue and is just a shade lighter than this Sapphire Blue. Obviously the Bases are different so there is no problem telling them apart. This is just one of the BB Bunnies that is close to Viking colors.

This may also be one of the colors Jim dipped to give the Satin Finish.

When the Viking Thumper Rabbit and the BB Bunny are sitting side by side you can see that the Viking Rabbit has a better polished surface. They have a sharper and smoother finish.



Aqua Milk Slag is a tough color to separate from Blue Milk Slag when looking at a Photo!

Unless you have the Aqua Milk Glass and the Blue Milk Glass Bunnies sitting side by side it will be tough to tell them apart. Obviously together you can see the slight green color in the Aqua Bunny. If you are trying to tell this color from a photo off Ebay Good Luck! I really don't think the public will be able to separate them. The camera flash brings out the Blues more than the Aqua color.

There were very few Slag Bunnies made!

Jim said, "The Slag Bunnies, like the Carnival Bunnies, were made mostly for gift's to friends and relatives".



This Aqua Swirl Slag Bunny is a lot easier to separate from the other colors, the Aqua is more prevalent!

When you have all these different Bunnies displayed they give you a good selection of the color depth the Glass Craftsmen had. Just a touch of something made a big difference.

I would hate to guess how many different color combinations are available. I would imagine the numbers would be in the 1,000's. We know these Bunnies were made in 29 different colors, not counting the Satin Finished Bunnies as part of the colors, they were a dipped color made earlier.

I added the name "Swirl" to separate the solid "Milk Glass" look from the white swirling in the Blue and Green Swirled Bunnies. I have only found 2 colors in the "Swirl".



Blue Tint Milk Glass is another color that is almost impossible to separate from Milk Glass in a photo.

Side by side you can see that the Blue Tint Milk Glass has a definite darker look. The fact that there is Blue in the Glass is hard to determine. Some time in the future collectors may combine these 2 colors but for now they are 2 separate colors.

Mosser Glass is now (2008) making what they call the "Standing Rabbit" in Milk Glass. It is the old Viking Glass "Thumper" Mold and all these Rabbits have the Ground Bottom with the Mosser Sticker on it. They also have the Mosser M molded in the glass on the left hip.

Now you know what I meant earlier in this article about this Bunny have more lives than a Cat!



Milk Glass is a very White Colored Rabbit! I am putting these 2 Colors close together so you can just barely see the difference. Milk Glass is much Sharper White!

Side by side you can really tell the difference in the 2 colors. If you set the Custard one in close it is really obvious. This is just another kink in the collector's chain. I guess that is why we call our selves collectors, we need all colors, to complete what we call a collection!

The Mosser colors are all different except this Milk Glass Standing Rabbit which was made also in Carnival by Mosser!

I will do a separate article on the Mosser Standing Rabbit in the near future. They will also be highly collectable because I have the numbers that Mosser is casting on each color and they are low.



Lime Green Milk Slag is a very distinct color. It is close to Vaseline but it has a definite Green tint!

WOW! The interesting thing about this Rare and Scarce colored Bunny is -It Glows Under Black Light! If the Slag Bunnies were only made for friends and relatives the Green Milk Slag must be Scarce!

Mosser must have used Uranium Salt to make this color. This will add to the value of these Lime Green colors because of demand from "Vaseline" collectors. The "Custard" Bunny also glows Under Black Light!

So the Vaseline, Satin Vaseline, Custard and Lime Milk Glass all have uranium salt in them. The Custard Carnival does not glow under black light.



This Amethyst BB Bunny has his head tipped back just a hair. It just goes to show these Bunnies are hand made and can be unique in some ways!

There always seems to be little differences in American Hand Made Art Glass. That is what makes each piece unique. It can also be considered a flaw by some. I much prefer to have all the Bunnies with their heads up high. The head tilted back makes this Bunny shorter than his little buddies!

I do not think Viking ever made the Amethyst Thumper but it really makes no difference. This little guy has the BB base.

Viking made the "Plum" color in 1972 so it could be possible that a "Plum" Thumper is out there and it would be very darker purple color like this Amethyst BB Bunny. It would have the smooth polished base.



Cobalt Blue is a Very Dark Blue Color and as for the BB Bunnies I did not get any insight as to how many were made in 1978!

Having said that I mean this 5 inch molded Bunny. Viking did not make "Thumper" in Cobalt Blue but they did make the elusive Bluenique Blue that I am missing in the Gallery. I have not seen another Cobalt Blue but I have to assume there were probably 50 to 100 or so made.

There are a lot of people who collect Cobalt Blue Glass so that may give this Rabbit just a little edge in popularity.

Cobalt is an old color and was made by Viking and other Glass Companies way back in the early 40's.



Orange Milk Slag is a color I assigned to this Bunny at this time. I will confirm this color later!

I am still a little in the dark as to the color Jim called "Fawn". I am working with him and relatives to get a photo of the "Fawn" colored BB Bunny. I do know the "Fawn" Bunnies were only made for gifts to friends and relatives, only 29 were made.

This Bunny is not irridized and all of the "Fawn" Bunnies were irridized so I think I am right on this color. No matter what the color is this is the only one I have seen in this color so far.

**These are all the BB Bunnies I have at this time.
I know I am missing the Amber, Amber Carnival, Amethyst
Carnival and Clear Yellow at this time.**

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