



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

Stripes are In This Year

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To those of you who say "Christmas ornaments---already?" I say Bah Humbug! My Christmas interest is already kindled and so is that of any Christmas enthusiast, I am sure. At least I waited to send this until after our first frost. But is this really rushing the season? Christmas is only about two months off. I'll bet some of you will be poring over garden seed catalogs in January---I've never heard of anyone complaining about rushing spring!



Striped ornaments seem to be a mostly American innovation, as far as I can tell. An American company called Shiny Brite began making ornaments



in the 1930's. Prior to that time, most glass ornaments were imported from Europe, by companies like Shiny Brite, who began as an importer. Shiny Brite felt that the political situation in Europe was unstable and the ornament supply might be interrupted. They started looking into manufacturing ornaments in the USA, and made a deal with the Corning Glass Company. Corning would

do the manufacturing, and ship them to Shiny Brite's New Jersey factory, where the decorations would then be applied. The striped decoration quickly became a favorite. Of course there were endless



combinations of colors, and variations in the stripes so there were many different ornaments available. A few of these ornaments are decorated with "sugaring"; white



"sugar" that adds another texture, and some sparkle. The "sugar" is actually crushed mica. Shiny Brite was not the only American company to



make ornaments, but they dominated the marketplace. Many of the ornaments that we now offer bear the Shiny Brite imprint on the ornament cap.

Before wartime shortages, the ornaments were lined with "silvering" (actually mercury), to make them reflective.

The ornament caps were metal. During the war, manufacturers were forced to eliminate the

silvering and turned to clear glass, or colored transparent glass, and also paper or cardboard caps (because of aluminum rationing.) We'll be featuring some of the war ornaments in a future blog, but some of the ones we are offering now are transparent, so they could have been made during the war (but before aluminum was restricted.)



In addition to the striped ornaments, American companies began producing stenciled ornaments. These were not as popular as the stripes, but

probably millions were made.

There are a variety of colors, sizes, and designs. Many have phrases such as "Merry Christmas," or "Noel," or sometimes a song title like "Silent Night." Other designs include a variety of winter scenes and also children's subjects such as teddy bears, trains, and other toys. Occasionally we see other Christmas subjects such as bells, holly, reindeer, and so on. Whatever design or style interests you, it's time to start gathering new ornaments---the





snow will be flying soon enough.
Maybe if you start early you

won't seem so rushed later.

Please [email me](#) if you have any questions or comments.

