



*Milaeger's*

## What's New in Old Christmas Ornaments

Kevin Milaeger

**Great News!** Since my last blog about our genuine vintage Christmas ornaments, we have added over 500 more of these ornaments in our stores. Your response has been phenomenal. We are adding more ornaments every week, so stop in to see what's "new" in old ornaments.



Two interesting aspects of vintage ornaments are their caps and hooks. Most of them have their original caps; a few are missing so we replace them with newer caps, or sometimes old caps from ornaments that have broken. Some caps are imprinted with the manufacturer's name, or the country of origin, so we can learn a little about the history of the ornament, and possibly a clue to its age. When we are lucky enough to have the original hook, we see how heavy duty they used to be. Like many products from previous eras, the hooks were much stronger

than necessary. I can hardly bend some of them. It's as if they were meant to hold a twenty pound ornament. Even more curious are the hooks that were homemade by some Christmas lover, the ornament's original owner. Oftentimes these homemade hooks are haphazard looking, but they do have their own kind of charm. We have seen wire that has been bent and twisted every which way, yarn, string, paper clips, pipe cleaners, wood (!), and in the case of the gold ornament pictured here, a nut and bolt. As long as the ornament is secure, I like to continue to use the



handmade hook, even if it does seem a bit quirky. It's a bit of history that belongs with the ornament. It shows the hard times some people had---how they would improvise their own ornament hook, rather than spend ten cents on a package of new hooks.



Occasionally we are fortunate to have some World War 2 era ornaments. As you know, there were many shortages of raw materials during the war. Ornament makers were unable to use aluminum for their ornament caps, and the most common replacement was paper, or thin cardboard. Here you see two versions of paper "caps." Also restricted was silver, which had been used to coat the inside of the ornaments. The war time ornaments are usually referred to as "unsilvered" ornaments.

Manufacturers often used colored glass to compensate for the lack of silver. Sometimes they used clear glass, and painted the ornament with stripes or other decoration. To add some sparkle, they often inserted a sprig of tinsel in the ornament. Another trend in ornament decoration that evolved around that time was stenciling. The stenciled message could be as pedestrian as "Merry Christmas," but we often see titles of Christmas carols, or images such as winter scenes, reindeer, toys, stars, and many others.



We know you appreciate treasures from past Christmases as much as we do, so stop in to see what's new, as well as what's old.