



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

1950's Christmas Ornaments

Kevin Milaeger

Every Christmas enthusiast has their favorite ornaments, usually for sentimental reasons. My own first ornament was a stencil ornament. Since I was only about two years old, I don't remember getting it. It was a Christmas gift from my sister, Kris. She got one for me and one for my twin brother. She bought them at Woolworth's on Wisconsin Avenue in downtown Milwaukee. My grandparents took her Christmas shopping. Even now, Kris vividly recalls the trip. In those days, it seemed like a real excursion, especially for a young child. Downtown Milwaukee at Christmastime was a bustling place in the 1950's.



Kevin's First Ornament

American Christmas ornament production began in the 1930's, but it really took off in big way when European ornament shipments stopped during



World War II. American tree decorating would change dramatically in the years following. The new ornaments were mass produced, with simpler shapes and different painting patterns. One technique that became very popular was stenciling. The stencils were used on ornaments of many different sizes. The subject matter varied widely. Toys and subjects that appealed to children were popular, and also winter scenes, religious scenes, snowmen and other figures, musical messages such

as "Joy to the World," and words in general, like "Peace on Earth."

I enjoy gathering these old stenciled ornaments so that we can offer them in our stores (scroll down for more images. Every year I find several that

I've never seen before. Especially appealing is finding unusual colors such as purple or copper, and some are even multi colored. I imagine there was more than one company that made these ornaments, but the only name I have ever seen stamped on the ornament cap is the Shiny Brite Company, which was based in New York City. Manufacturing was done by Corning Glass, and the painting and decoration was done at factories in New Jersey. The Shiny Brite



Company is long gone, but the name is now owned by another manufacturer and so Shiny Brite ornaments were reintroduced a few years ago, and continue to be available. Some of the old shapes are still offered, but they are bright and glitzy, so you would never mistake them for old ornaments. We have new and old Shiny Brites in our stores---stop in and see if they don't appeal to you as much as they do to me.

Please [email me](#) if you have any questions or comments. If you are interested in purchasing ornaments pictured in this blog, please contact Ann, who handles mail order sales, at 262.693.2040 x101 or ann@milaegers.com.







