



Kevin Milaeger

*Milaeger's*

## Architectural Christmas Ornaments

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**Most Christmas ornaments** are round or roundish in shape. One type of ornament that I like to use to vary the textural quality is what I call an "architectural"

ornament. These often represent houses and cottages, but the most familiar subject is a church. There are many styles and colorways of all these subjects. Remember, ornaments such as these were produced by a "cottage industry." In rural central Europe, "cottagers" would manufacture the ornaments in their



**churches**

homes---from the glassblowing to the finished product. Although there were no doubt specifications that they had to follow, many variations exist. The possibilities are almost endless. I could see forming a collection featuring the color variations of just one mold, for example. We have



**large bells**

acquired a few of these fragile treasures that we are now able to offer you. One point of interest is the caps on these ornaments. You will note that a number of these ornaments are made with the same mold--- thousands of any given mold were used throughout Europe. In this case, these identically shaped ornaments have three different countries stamped on the cap---Czechoslovakia, West Germany, and Poland. Of course, the caps can be changed, but still, I find it

interesting that the same mold likely crossed several borders. (This same mold is still being used today!)

And what is a church without bells? Before the age of electricity, the local bell was the principle sound for alarm in every European community. So it was used by churches but also as a public



service instrument. Despite those origins, most of the bells that we have found are American made, that is, manufactured in the late 1930's, at the earliest. Of course, they are still being made even now. One way to help determine the age is the cap. If the cap is



**small bells**

decorated (by decorated, we mean stamped or embossed with a design) in some way other than a simple scallop, it is probably less than 30 years old. Or at least the cap itself is from that period. I particularly like the "unsilvered" bells. Due to wartime rationing, mercury was in short supply



**fish**

and ornament manufacturers were not allowed to use it to coat the inside of their ornaments. So they used colored glass, and they sometimes inserted tinsel for some added dazzle. Perhaps a fitting ornament to coordinate with the churches is the fish, a familiar Christian symbol. Being a common symbol, there are once again numerous forms, sizes, and colors. We have sold quite a few in our stores over the past few years, but right now I have a fairly modest "catch" to offer you.

Yet another way to contrast the many roundish ornaments is with vertical ornaments. There are a number of different vertical ornaments, such as icicles, that can enhance your tree. The icicles we have now range in size from just under four inches to about seven inches, so we have something for a variety of tree sizes. Some are swirled, and there is a good range of color.



**icicles**

A few of you have asked about the tree at my house. [Here is a link](#) about how I made it. And [here is a link](#) to a video of it that we made a couple of years ago.