

# *St. Nicholas Eve and WWII Era Vintage Ornaments*



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**Those of you who've been reading** my blog for a while may recall that my favorite night of the year is coming up soon. St. Nicholas eve, the evening of December 5. I think of St. Nick's eve as the true kickoff for the Christmas season. It's after Thanksgiving, and in Wisconsin, many days are chilly now, and that helps get me in the Christmas spirit. Growing up, it was always a big night for us, making sure our stockings were hung up on the fireplace. Nowadays, we hang our stockings elsewhere in the house, but I do put up a string of vintage electric novelty lights that have light covers that look like stockings. These are from my collection, and not for sale—I just thought you might get a kick out of seeing them. I don't recall any special meal associated with the evening's festivities, but if my mom asked us what we wanted we would have answered "spaghetti." It was great. She made the sauce from scratch, with tomatoes she had canned the summer before. In those days, spaghetti sauce in jars was unheard of. Lately I've started a new tradition— I've been making borscht for my family. The hot, stew-like soup seems just the thing on a chilly evening. Maybe this year we'll be able to get my granddaughters to try it. But it'll be a special evening no matter what.



**Vintage Stocking Set**



**Kevin Milaeger's White  
Twig Tree with Assorted  
Vintage Ornaments**

I always have the Christmas tree up by St. Nick's eve. I have a new tree this year so that is taking some getting used to. But it looks great to me. It's a white twig tree, with no needles. The old ornaments show up really well on this type of tree. For traditionalists, it may take some getting used to. But I've been using a white twig tree since at least 2006, and I don't plan on going back to a traditional tree.



**Paper Cap**



**Assorted Unsilvered**



**Large Unsilvered**



**Largest Unsilvered**

Since this holiday falls so near Pearl Harbor Day, for the past few years we've been featuring WWII era ornaments. Some of these war era ornaments are identifiable due to wartime shortages of certain materials, namely aluminum and silver nitrate. Most ornament caps were made from aluminum, but since aluminum was needed for the war effort, ornament manufacturers made caps out of cardboard and other materials. All of the ornaments in one of the pics have cardboard caps. You will also notice that all the ornaments in this blog are transparent. Before the war, silver nitrate was used to coat the inside of the ornaments to give them a silver, reflective exterior. The silver was frequently painted, and the reflective character remained whether the ornaments were painted or not. With no silver nitrate available, manufacturers used transparent colored glass. These are often referred to as "unsilvered." To further dress up these ornaments, they painted stripes or other designs on them, or added tinsel inside, sometimes both. "Sugaring" was also used. The "sugar" looks like white sand, but I believe it's ground mica. It makes for a wintry look.





**Unsilvered with Tinsel**



**Unsilvered with "Sugar"**

Rarely, ornament manufacturers used regular paint, so the ornaments have an opaque appearance rather than transparent. We have a few examples here. I prefer the transparent ones, because of the way the light plays through the glass, but I do have a few opaque ones on my tree. The wartime raw material shortages affected European manufacturers too. They also made transparent ornaments. No ornaments were exported to the US during the war, but some of the European transparent ornaments found their way here in the years following the war. All of our ornaments in these photos are American made (Shiny-Brite being the most common manufacturer), except for one that is European. Can you spot which one?



**Opaque**

Please email me ([kevin@milaegers.com](mailto:kevin@milaegers.com)) with your questions and comments!