

# And the Camel You Rode in On

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Originally posted 2023

Over the past few years, we've acquired several gorgeous nativity sets, which we display throughout our home each Christmas. One of my husband's favourites is this large, beautifully detailed scene with figures standing approximately 12" high.



I wasn't really looking for additional pieces, but when I came across this beautiful camel, I grabbed him anyway. Our Kirkland brand nativity set already included a camel, but it's kneeling, and since this one is just the right style and size, I thought it would nicely complement the rest of the group. This one appears to have been produced by a company called Makers Mark, and I suspect the pieces may have been sold individually rather than in sets.

My second-hand camel was in almost new condition, apart from a couple of minor dings: one of the finials on the sedan chair was missing, along with some of the coloured tops on the decorative studs.



The coloured nubs proved to be an easy fix. I just filled in the tops with red and green fabric paint tubes, matching them to the existing trim.



Replacing the missing finial was a bit more involved. I decided to shape a replacement from polymer clay. I actually think that in this case, air-dry clay would have been a better choice, since it can be shaped in place and doesn't need to be baked, but I didn't have any on hand.

I'm not a skilled clay artist, and this finial is very small, so my replacement isn't identical to the other finials. Nevertheless, I hope it's a reasonable enough replacement that won't stand out too glaringly to a casual observer (!).

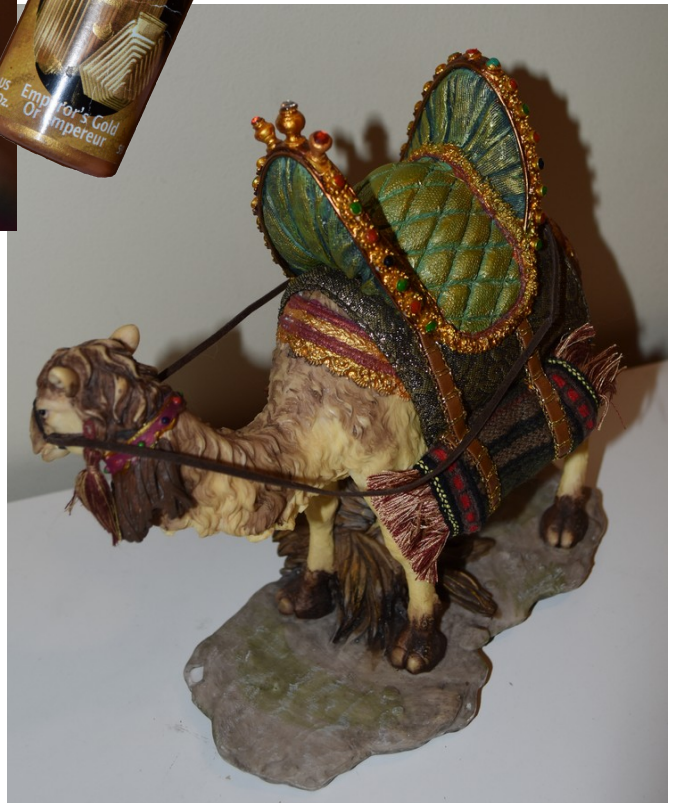
Once the clay had been baked, I glued the finial in place using five-minute epoxy and set it aside to harden.



I painted the finial with acrylic paint in metallic gold to match the rest of the trim, and topped it with a red acrylic rhinestone. My finial is not a perfect match, which can be seen when you look at the closeup photo, but in reality it's so small that the average onlooker likely won't notice the discrepancy.



I always feel I should comment on whether a thrift-shop find like this camel is worth the effort to repair. In general, my answer is yes, but in this case it's doubly so: I paid \$4.50 for this camel, but I discovered when I searched on line that these individual pieces are crazy expensive, ranging upward from \$120 USD (approximately \$164 CDN), not including shipping!



I suppose I could say then that I saved almost \$160 on my camel, but that's only theoretically true, because I would never have bought him at that price. On the other hand, the couple of hours that it took to repair my \$4.50 purchase enables me to have a \$164 item that I wouldn't otherwise own. I also very much enjoy the challenge (and fun) of doing a restoration like this. Good times all around!