

April 2014 Chamber Article
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What is Gold Filled?

In 1817 John Turner, an English craftsman found that gold could be permanently fused to copper by the “Old Sheffield” process originally developed by a silversmith, Thomas Bolsover in 1743.

This process was the beginning of layering or ‘filling’ a base to a strong supporting metal. In order to add strength and economy to products such as watches, jewelry, writing instruments, eyeglass frames, and many other accessories for men and women this technique produced long-wearing results.

Today, many of those items are examined in appraisals that often are mistaken by some for karat gold due to the thickness of the ‘filling’. In fact, so prevalent was the gold filled method that recently a beautiful necklace and brooch from 1845 with the original sales receipt crossed my desk. The buyer paid the Philadelphia jeweler \$100. for a suite of the same – missing a companion bracelet? With limited testing the items appear to karat gold. However, upon careful inspection under the microscope, the material is gold filled!

Gold filled by definition is a layer of at least 10 karat gold permanently bonded by heat and pressure to one or more surfaces of a supporting metal, rolled or drawn to a prescribed thickness. The karat gold must be at least 1/20th by weight of the total metal content.

Easily observed on antique pocket watches that show signs of wear, gold filled cases are sometimes marked: Guaranteed to wear for *TWENTY FIVE YEARS* along with the manufacturer’s trademark. In as much as many of these can be restored to run mechanically, some cases only need a polish to look nearly new due to the remarkable gold filled bonding techniques of the day.

For more information about gold filled visit Eichhorn Jewelry, Inc. in the heart of downtown Decatur. 724-2621 or www.eichhornjewelry.com.