China button SPECIALS
C. 1850-1960. Actual Size

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From the Editor

China buttons are featured in this issue, which includes a proposed revision to the china section. The classification committee began this lengthy process more than two years ago. As they worked on it, newly discovered buttons from France, kiln-testing at lower temperatures than expected, created a dilemma for proper classification. Were these newer ones even made of china? Should they be included with the more traditional types? A vote in 2006 was postponed. China collectors pondered the possibilities at a special meeting at the 2006 convention. The china vs glass issue did not seem to be as important as their common “china” attributes. Last we have a revision which will include all “china types.” It was a group endeavor. Various individuals aided the classification committee over the 2-year evolution. Judy Stewart, Kathy Buckhardt, Jane Quimby, Erma Juergensen, and several members of the China Exchange online button club offered their help and advice. The committee sends special thanks to Janet White, who stuck with the lengthy process from beginning to end. Read the proposal carefully. You may vote on it at this year’s convention at the general business meeting on Friday, August 17.

And there’s more. You will be amazed at the exotic beauty and variety of obidome shown and explained in Jocelyn Howells’ article. Connie and Bud Weiser have given us a fitting memorial tribute to John Gooderham. The Junior News features castles. Texas has sent us the agenda and many more details on the convention. There are important inserts in the front and back of this issue. Each requires your attention and action.

—Judy Stopke

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Deadlines for the submission of articles are 8 weeks prior to the first day of the month of publication. Submitted articles may be edited and may be held for future consideration. Send typed articles with source credits and photographs to Judy Stopke, Editor, 4800 Park Rd, Ann Arbor MI 48103-9546 or e-mail jstopke@comcast.net. Electronic text files must be in MS Word, InDesign or PageMaker—or preferably, copied and pasted into an email.

About our Cover Buttons

Imagine being on the last wagon train heading west, following the Oregon Trail or any of the other many trails of the American pioneers. If you were very clever, your eyes would be scanning the ground for buttons! You’d likely find china buttons. These sweet little utilitarian buttons may be white shirt or shoe buttons or like some of the very special chinas on our cover.

Cover and china article buttons are from the collections of Denver Elliott, Shirley Hurson, Erma Juergensen, Pete Nelson, Tender Buttons, and Janet White.
About the Cover, continued from page 3

Key to Cover Buttons

1. Dome gaiter, bull's-eye, banded with luster
2. Dome gaiter, bull's-eye, double banded
3. Smooth top oval eye, Snouffer stencil
4. Pattern-eye, lustered
5. Whistle, unlisted design
6. Gaiter, banded, imitation sew-through
7. Unlisted body style, elongated holes
8. Smooth top oval eye, stripe over calico pattern
9. Dish, stripe over calico pattern
10. Fish eye, two-color, two-pattern calico
11. Whistle, painted floral design
12. Tire type variant, banded with spatter design
13. Whistle, banded
14. Dish, two-color calico pattern
15. Whistle, banded and laurel wreath design
16. Smooth top oval eye, transfer pattern with luster
17. Smooth top oval eye, unusual gingham pattern
18. Fluted bird cage
19. Smooth top oval eye, stencil
20. Saucer, banded with luster
21. Mounted in metal (drum), calico pattern
22. Aspirin gaiter, calico pattern
23. Aspirin gaiter, calico pattern

Attention STATE PRESIDENTS !!

Please refer to your state’s listings in last year’s Directory. Send any updated information to Miss Lois Pool, Secretary, National Button Society, 2733 Juno Place, Akron, Ohio 44333-4137.

Report of the Nominating Committee

We, the members of the Nominating Committee, have selected the following persons to serve as directors of the National Button Society for a period of three years:

- Gary Brockman of Wisconsin
- Shirley Clark of New York
- Janet White of California

Respectfully submitted,
Evie Renz, chairperson
Millicent Safro and Freda Knight
A Fresh Look at CHINA BUTTONS

A Proposed Change to the NBS Classification System
For Vote of the Membership August 17, 2007

Submitted by the Classification Committee:
Barbara Barrans and Pat Fields

The classification system underwent a major revision in 2004, which consisted mainly of reorganizing existing information. At that time, the membership voted to add a section for china buttons, separate from Ceramics assorted, since they are often the focus of awards. (They are also still appropriate for use in Class 2-8, Unlisted, under Ceramics.)

For many years, the reference book on chinas has been the 1970 NBS publication, Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons, a comprehensive study of these popular and varied buttons. A recent trip to France by a group of china enthusiasts, however, uncovered (literally) some new information related to chinas. This discovery, along with other previously uncatalogued examples of china type buttons that have surfaced over the years, reinforced the need for a fresh approach to categorizing these buttons.

Chinas are a unique type of button, and this proposed revision features classes and sub-classes that provide opportunities to group china buttons in visually exciting ways. The class framework addresses traditional china attributes while paralleling other material sections in the classification system. The accompanying images illustrate examples of china buttons and how they fit into each of these classes.

It has recently come to light that it may be difficult to determine whether the buttons we have come to regard as “chinas” are made of a ceramic base (porcelain) or a form of glass. Kiln tests on some of the china type buttons found at Bapterosses factory site reveal that some were indeed china (ceramic), but others melted under firing temperatures consistent with glass. Since it is obviously not practical to test every china button as to material in this manner, we must decide where to class these china type buttons. Consensus is that in either case, this family of buttons, with similarities pointing toward kinship, will be treated as a single type classed as Chinas.

The identity of an individual button in a china award will ultimately still fall on the judges, the same as in any other material determination. As usual, benefit of the doubt (BOD) is recommended. The following glossary is offered with this in mind. A vote will be taken at the NBS show in August 2007 to determine if this is the direction desired by the membership.
SECTION 3 – CHINA

3- 0 China assorted

3- 1 Back types assorted (*indicates complex construction)
   3- 1.1 *Inserted self shank (including bird cage)
   3- 1.2 *Metal shank (including inserted metal, pinshank, plate and loop)
   3- 1.3 Sew-throughs assorted (including three-hole)
       3- 1.3.1 Four-hole
       3- 1.3.2 Two-hole (including *igloo)
       3- 1.3.3 *Whistle

3- 2 Body styles assorted (includes unlisted ones as well as those listed below)
   3- 2.1 Hollow eye
   3- 2.2 Oval eye
   3- 2.3 Smooth beveled rim

3- 3 Color assorted (body and/or surface colors)
   3- 3.1 Body/base color
   3- 3.2 Surface decoration color

3- 4 Decorative designs/finishes assorted
   3- 4.1 Banded (including bull’s-eyes)
   3- 4.2 Calico
   3- 4.3 Lusters (all lusters)
   3- 4.4 Stencil

3- 5 Unlisted (mounted in metal, metal rimmed, shapes, etc)

GLOSSARY

Chinas are utilitarian buttons with distinctive body styles and designs. Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons (Guidelines) categorized all known china buttons at the time of its publication and is the main source of detailed information on these buttons. Information on additional body styles, colors and formulation has emerged post-publication. There is evidence that some button manufacturers utilized glass as well as ceramic formulas, and “china type” buttons were manufactured in both materials. These previously undocumented buttons share some china characteristics, such as design, pattern, back type or body style with the originals. This classification offers a basic framework to classify these buttons, including the later examples. Reference to the Guidelines is recommended for more detailed information on terminology and definitions as this outline is based on it. China awards are best written in Div. IX. Benefit of the doubt (BOD) is recommended for buttons showing typical china characteristics.
3-1 Back types assorted. All back types, including molded self shank. The asterisk (*) designates back types categorized as complex construction in the Guidelines. This category includes any china button with a metal shank or a shank attachment which is a piece distinct from the face/body of the button. Simple molded sew-throughs are not complex construction.

3-1.1 *Inserted self shank (including bird cage). Made of 2 or 3 separate pieces, the inserted back piece forms the shank portion of the button.

3-1.2 *Metal shank. Includes plain inserted metal shanks, pinshanks, and plate and loop shanks (shoe, smock, gaiters). Gaiters are characterized by a solid chunky body in a variety of molded shapes, commonly having a metal plate and loop shank.

3-1.3.2 Two-hole. *Igloos (considered complex construction) are included here since the hump on top of the button is not a shank, but simply forms a tunnel for the thread.

3-1.3.3 Whistle. Refer to NBS classification for definition of whistle. Unlike molded glass, most china whistles are constructed of 2 separate pieces fitted together. Note that whistles, although sew-throughs, are also considered complex construction.
3-2 **Body styles assorted.** This class separates china buttons according to basic body style as defined and named in the Guidelines. It includes those listed there as well as newer undocumented types. Award may specify a single body style (listed or not) such as hobnails, or an assortment of more than one type, such as radiating line rims and pattern-eyes.

3-2.1 **Hollow eye.** A sew-through button characterized by 2 holes contained in a circular hollow sewing well.

3-2.2 **Oval eye.** A sew-through with 2 holes set within an oval depression having either boxed or rounded ends.

3-2.3 **Smooth beveled rim.** A sew-through button characterized by a slightly concave center and a smooth beveled or sloping rim. Includes dish and inkwell styles.

3-3 **Colors assorted.** Includes all clay body colors, all lusters, black, white, mottled and marbled, with or without decoration. China color may be determined either from the overall appearance of the colored body/base, or from the application of an additional (contrasting) color or surface decoration onto that base. Awards may specify one or more colors(s) of focus, coming from either the body and/or the decoration. Any amount of a specified color may be present on the button. Other colors may also be present unless excluded by the award. Shades and tints of a specified color are included, unless excluded by the award. Color is not affected by metal in the form of OME, (a metal rim), a pinshank, or a mounting (china jewel).

3-3.1 **Body/base color.** (See color page 27.) Emphasis is on the body/base color. This color is uniform and may come from the clay body itself, or from an application of a luster or opaque glaze/paint completely covering the top surface. A plain white bodied china is white. A white bodied china with applied marigold luster is considered orange. Contrasting decorations may not be present. White and cream are not considered the same color. Award may specify one (or more) color(s) for focus.
3-3.2 Surface decoration color. (See color page 27.) Emphasis is on the surface decoration color only (regardless of the body/base color). The contrasting color(s) may come from an application of paint, stencil, transfer, or a luster (not overall coverage), etc. forming a design (dot, band, pattern, etc.). Separate inserted centers of a contrasting color are treated as a surface decoration. A button may have more than one surface decoration color. Mottled (color variation throughout the body), and marbled (an all-over finish similar to mottled) are also appropriate here. Award may specify one (or more) color(s) for focus.

3-4 Decorative designs/finishes assorted. (See color page 28.) Emphasis is on the surface design/finish. As with Surface decoration color, the Decorative design/finish may come from paint, stenciling, transfer, or luster, and may include multiple colors or techniques. Includes designs such as gingham (china buttons decorated to imitate woven fabric designs, typically plaids and checks) and finishes such as marbling, as well as those listed.

3-4.1 Banded (including bull’s-eyes). Decorated with a line or band (any width) circling the surface, edge, or side of a china button. Band(s) may come from luster, paint, glaze, etc. and must be continuous (solid), although additional decorative elements may be included in the design. Class includes raised (molded) bands only if decorated. A bull’s eye is a dome-shaped gaiter decorated to create a central dot and contrasting band(s) and/or border.

3-4.2 Calico. Surface decoration imitating printed fabric designs, typically floral or geometric in nature, covering the entire face of the button.

3-4.3 Lusters. Includes white (pearl), all colored lusters, opaque and translucent, metallic or not. Any amount of luster qualifies.

3-4.4 Stencil. Two-hole china button, typically white or cream colored, decorated with a single motif of a contrasting color.

3-5 Unlisted. Includes rare mounted in metal types such as china “jewels” and drums with china centers. Also includes rimmed (with metal OME) chinas.

All 3-5 Unlisted:

- Rimmed
- Mounted-in-metal (jewel)
- Realistic shape (head)
- Linear shape (scalloped)
- Realistic shape (shell)

Continues on page 79
3-3 Color assorted

3-3.1 Body/base color

- black hobnail rim
- cream whistle
- pearl luster (white) tire
- green concave jewel
- copper luster pattern-eye
- yellow painted top piecrust
- red painted top pattern-eye

3-3.2 Surface decoration color

- gold luster on tire
- red & green banded piecrust
- dark blue on light blue pattern-eye
- orange & gold luster on bird cage
- black transfer decoration on lemon luster smooth top oval eye
- green stripe over red calico on smooth top oval eye
- green mottled center on fluted bird cage
- green & blue marbled inkwell

All china buttons on the color pages are shown at 135% of actual size.
3- 4 Decorative Designs/Finishes

- Rose design transfer on self shank
- Colored knobs on hobnail
- Patterned shoe button
- Faux marbled whistle
- Gingham on oval eye smooth top
- Lustered design on whistle
- Snouffer striped design
- Painted design on 2-way self shank

3- 4.1 Banded (including bull’s-eyes)

- Blue band on hobnail rim
- Green band on saucer
- Pink band on bull’s-eye gaiter
- Blue band on concave jewel
- Tan band on cream self shank
- Purple luster band on bird cage
- Gold band on whistle
- Black band on igloo
3-4.2 Calico

Snuffer* pattern  striped pattern  mounted in metal (jewel)  2-color
unusual oval eye body

luster over pattern  dark body  gold pattern  pattern (often confused with gingham)

3-4.3 Luster (all lusters)

partial luster hobnail garter  lavender iridescent luster mound  pearl luster fish eye  two lusters radiating-line rim

3-4.4 Stencil

stencil #36  double luster stencil #17  Snuffer* stencil (uncatalogued)  stencil #29

* ‘Snuffer’ refers to previously uncatalogued buttons (in excess of 100) with definite china characteristics, discovered in 1991. Buttons such as these would be appropriate in the revised china classification.