

# Introduction to the Hobby of Button Collecting and to the National Button Society



This is an abridged version of the NBS Beginners' Booklet (available on the NBS website), written and compiled by Jocelyn Howells, updated & edited by Yessy Byl (July 2016). We hope you will find this information helpful.

## **CONTENTS**

	<i><b>Page</b></i>
<b>OFFICIAL NBS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM (BLUE BOOK)</b>	2
<b>SOME BASIC HINTS FOR BEGINNERS</b>	2
Sorting	2
Mounting	2
Some Basic Tools of the Hobby	2
As You Up-Grade	3
Join and Be Active	3
If You're on the Internet	3
Collect All Types	3
Build a Reference Library	3
"Question" Card	3
What About Repaired and Restored Buttons?	4
<b>CHECKLIST OF BUTTON MATERIALS</b>	4
<b>IDENTIFYING AND TESTING MATERIALS</b>	5
<b>CLEANING BUTTONS</b>	6
<b>STORAGE OF BUTTONS AND DETERIORATION PROBLEMS</b>	7
<b>PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR FIRST SPECIAL TRAY</b>	7
<b>"NO HARM" BUTTON CRAFTS</b>	8
<b>A WORD ABOUT VALUES</b>	8
<b>THE JOYS OF BUTTON COLLECTING</b>	8



### **OFFICIAL NBS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM (The Blue Book)**

The “Official NBS Classification System” handbook—now fondly called the “Blue Book” is provided to new members of the National Button Society. It provides a framework for organizing your buttons. The Blue Book gives structure to our collections, provides information and gives guidelines to button competition. Most importantly, it does give us a way to learn about our buttons, how they are made, etc. For more information about the Blue Book and for information on measuring, age, awards and button competition, please see the NBS Members Beginner’s Booklet available to you on the NBS website for members.

**Sorting:** Styrofoam trays from the grocery store, jewelry trays, muffin plastic trays (especially the mini muffins) and egg cartons are all useful for sorting buttons. With a marker you can label the styrofoam tray contents directly on the end of the tray and they can be easily stacked. Your labeling can be clearly seen during sorting, as well as when stacked. If you already have a nice variety and quantity, perhaps start with a labeled tray for each material section (see the Blue Book). If you’re already specializing in themes—say insects—you’ll want a sorting tray for each theme. Be sure to handle your buttons carefully so you don’t chip or otherwise damage them (especially the glass ones).

**Mounting:** You need to start as soon as possible mounting buttons on mat boards. This helps you to see at a glance what you have and gives order to your collection. As a beginner, you may start mounting on “work” cards made from any kind of cardboard but most people use acid-free mat board. These are available from framers as discarded stock and at art supply or craft stores.

Label your work cards at the top so you can quickly see what they contain. At first, don’t worry about special mountings following NBS rules of size and quantity—that can come later. The main thing is to get your buttons sorted and mounted as you acquire them.

The “official” size for a board is 9x12” to display buttons for competition. For your collection, you can use any size—a smaller size may make a nicer display—but most collectors find the 9x12” convenient as it fits in letter-size folders. When buttons are mounted on a 9x12” board, collectors call them a “tray.”

Mounting basically means punching a hole in the board and fastening the button to the card through its shank. You want to avoid metal-to-metal contact with shanks since this can cause corrosion. Plastic-coated wire is best and can be found at hobby stores or from other button collectors who have managed to find lots of telephone or computer cables full of plastic-coated wire. If you find some, hold on to it! It may soon disappear.

You’ll want to cut your wire in pieces about 1½-2” long. To mount, first run the wire through the button shank; then fold downward at the center, put through the hole in your card, open up and fold or twist down as necessary. To punch the holes, a short awl is best. You can get these in hardware stores in a couple of widths, or at sewing notions counters. You can back up your punching process with a Styrofoam board about an inch or more thick, or folded towels, or other protection against punching holes in yourself or other surfaces. Punch a large enough hole so that you do not force the shank into the board. That is an easy way to break buttons.

You’ll probably want to protect the cards from each other and possible damage from the wires on the backs. Some people use plastic bags but don’t seal them up — leave them open so air can circulate and your buttons can “breathe.” But a storage system allowing the maximum amount of air circulation is the best, for example, hanging file folders in file boxes or cabinets. Some buttons — particularly post WWI celluloid buttons — deteriorate quite quickly in the



absence of good air circulation. Learn to identify celluloid buttons and separate them from other materials for all but short term. Do not store celluloid buttons in plastic bags or holders.

**Some Basic Tools of the Hobby:** In addition to the tools already mentioned, you will need a magnet to test for steel buttons. Look in the hardware store (or hearing aid center) for the pencil style, the magnet end of it being no larger than the eraser on a pencil. It is handy to use, as you can test a small part of a button such as a shank, rim, back, or steel embellishment. You may also find it useful to have a pair of small needle-nosed pliers to use when pulling through stubborn wire fasteners, as well as other tasks. You will find it essential to have a good magnifying glass, preferably 10x. A 15x magnifier will let you identify some materials like vegetable ivory.

For a special tray, you may want to pick a mounting pattern and draw it on your card. Plastic templates are available through the mail or at national conventions from some makers. There are also sources for ready-made mat boards.

**As You Up-Grade:** You can start a “supply” card with your “second bests.” Don’t be in a hurry to discard damaged buttons, or pieces thereof. They are always interesting to study for construction, etc.— or to furnish a “spare part” to repair a similar button in the future. It’s a good rule to never dispose of any buttons until you thoroughly understand collecting. You might let go of some valuable, if not especially beautiful, buttons.

**Join and Be Active:** If you do live close enough to a local club, the best thing you can do is join and be active. Button collectors are a friendly group, and you’ll find one or more “older” collectors who’ll be happy to mentor you. Most state and area buttons clubs sponsor competitions. While it seems odd to compete with buttons, competitions provide us with a way of learning about buttons as we assemble a tray of buttons. It also provides us all with an excuse to show our buttons off so that others can see them too. Do attend any of the annual state or regional shows that are near you .(the National Button Society provides a list of button conventions on their website and in the NBS Bulletin.) The annual NBS (International) convention is the annual highlight which is truly worth attending!

#### **If You’re on the Internet:**

The most important reference online is the National Button Society website at: <http://www.nationalbuttonssociety.org> . Here you will find links to clubs in your local area or state and links to museums with button collections or displays. There is also a list of books and publications related to the hobby and resources for button collectors. One of the most often used resources is the link to “Button Country.” It is an excellent resource for collectors of all levels and includes links to “Articles and Worksheets.”

If you are a member of the NBS, there are many publications available on the “members only” part of the website. Past issues of the NBS Bulletin (and the Index) and Just Buttons, the Blue Book, and hundreds of articles from out-of-print magazines and journals available on the members only part of the website. It certainly makes membership worthwhile! You can also check out the National Button Society Facebook page to find current information about buttons and button organizations: <https://www.facebook.com/NationalButtonSociety>.

Consider joining the “ButtonBytes” blog by clicking on “contact the owner” and emailing the moderators: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!aboutgroup/Buttonbytes>. This is an on-line discussion group devoted to the subject of buttons, with many friendly, helpful collectors who are willing to answer beginners' questions — especially important if you live too far away from a button club to attend regular meetings.



**Collect All Types:** It can be worthwhile to collect and study modern buttons, as well as the older ones, to help learn how to tell the difference between the two. Many fabric and yarn stores today are a great source of modern buttons. They usually have seasonal sales at good discounts, so watch for these. There are many inexpensive ones to start with.

**Build a Reference Library:** Start now to acquire all the written information you can find on buttons: current books, back issues of NBS Bulletins and “Just Buttons” magazines, (if you prefer the print versions) and out-of-print books. These are usually offered for sale by dealers at state shows and the annual national convention. Also, many local clubs maintain lending libraries that contain some of these publications. The National Button Society offers several very helpful handbooks on various types of buttons, including glass, china, shell, overall/work, plastic, etc. These are available at very reasonable prices and may be ordered from the people listed on the inside back cover of each bulletin or from our online store. There is an extensive list of button reference books on the NBS Website under Resources.

**“Question” Card:** Keep an ongoing “question” card. You’ll inevitably find buttons that defy your classification efforts, or about which you have questions. Mount these on a card as you come across them, writing IN PENCIL next to the button what your question is. Take this card to every button meeting or show that you attend to ask more seasoned collectors what they can tell you. **Write their responses next to the button** for handy reference later on. It may be useful to note the name of the person giving the information. When you remount the buttons on their proper cards, you can transfer any comments you wish to keep with the button. As you empty your “question” card you can erase the comments to make room for more buttons and questions.

**CHECKLIST OF THE MOST COMMON BUTTON MATERIALS** (in alphabetical order)

Other materials can be found in addition to this list.

Antler	Feathers	Tombac	Jet (very rare)
Bamboo	<b>Glass:</b>	Zinc	Lava
Bone	Black	White, Other	Malachite
<b>Ceramics:</b>	Clear/Colored	Yellow, Other	Obsidian
China	Glass Mounted	<b>Metal Crafts:</b>	Onyx
<b>Earthenware:</b>	In Metal	Bidri	Tiger Eye
Barum	Gourd	Damascene	Turquoise
Norwalk	Gutta Percha	Niello	Shell (Non-Irid.)
Ruskin	Hair	Shakudo	<b>Synth.Polymers:</b>
Satsuma	Horn	Tintypes	ABS
Zia Indian	Ivory	Nut	Acrylic
<b>Porcelain:</b>	Leather	Paper	Amino Resins
Arita	Linoleum	Papier Maché	Casein
Dresden	<b>Metals:</b>	Pearl (Iridescent)	Celluloid
Kutani	Aluminum	Pine Needles	Cell. Acetate
Meissen	Brass	Pits	Nylon
<b>Stoneware:</b>	Chrome	Plaster of Paris	Phenolic Resin
Jasperware	Copper	Raffia	Polyester
Wedgwood	Gilt/Gold Plate	Rubber	Polymer Clays
Cinnabar	Gold	Seeds	Polystyrene
Coconut Shell	Iron	<b>Semi-Prec.Gems:</b>	Tortoise-Shell
Composition	Pewter	Agate	Vegetable Ivory
Cork	Silver	Amber	Vulcanite
Enameled Metal	Steel	Coral	Wood
Fabric	Tin	Jade	



## IDENTIFYING AND TESTING for MATERIALS:

Many button materials resemble other materials. There are many factors to consider when identifying materials, including: style, design, construction, shanks, color, luminosity, surface appearance (i.e., crazing, mold/saw/carve marks, unpolished inner surfaces as inside the self-shanks), etc.

**There are other ways to determine a material, such as the following basic tips:**

1. Glass and stone will feel colder on the cheek than other materials. To determine between **plastic, glass, china or stone**: click on your teeth. Plastic will give a duller sound than the harder materials. You can also use the tooth test to determine between cold plastic enamel finish and true enameled metals; just be sure to click on the enameled surface, and not the metal.
2. A magnifying glass, preferably 10x or 15x, is indispensable in determining many materials. Between **bone and ivory**, look for tiny black specks in bone, where the blood traveled, whereas ivory will be finer grained and often show undulating or crosshatch lines. Usually, the workmanship on ivory is finer than on bone.
3. **Composition** has been erroneously overused to cover various different molded materials. The term "composition" should be used for only those buttons molded of shellac or comparable binders that are filled with ground minerals, plant matter, etc. Surface impression inlays of pearl tesserae and metallic flecks are often found on composition buttons.
4. It is sometimes difficult to tell between **glass and china or porcelain**. Look at the backs. China will show a more granular or pockmarked back surface where it rested in the kiln. Porcelain may have unglazed portions on the back. Glass was molten when made into buttons, so will have a smooth surface on the back, and may show some mold marks. Old glass may have some slight surface "wrinkles" which occurred during the molding process, and are not defects. Otherwise remember to check the button books which may identify the button you are trying to classify.
5. **Horn** buttons may have a small hole gouged in the back of the button where it was picked out of the mold, called a "pick mark". That's just one way to identify horn. Some molded horn buttons have interesting backmarks, often French. A city in France – Caen – is often named. Another way to tell horn is to hold it to a very strong light. Many times you will be able to see the translucence of the material near the edge or in thinner places, even though it looks opaque black when not held to the light. The backs of some horn buttons show layering or flaking like old splintery wood. Most of these hints apply to the dyed (usually black) molded horn buttons. Besides black, horn can be found in blond, as well as dyed red, green, blue, etc. Natural horn is unprocessed and cut and carved from the horn tips.
6. A drop of water on the surface of **jade** will not spread out, but may draw in instead. However, on **glass** the drop of water will spread out.
7. True **jet** buttons are very rare. It is not unusual to see black glass being called jet, so don't fall into this trap. Jet is fossilized coal, and is carved – not molded. You may see individual carving marks. They usually have a self-shank. It may have a glossy surface if



polished. If chipped, you will see a conchoidal (a smooth rounded surface in the shape of a scallop shell) fracture. You may scrape the back of the button with a knife and get a very fine black powder.

8. Older **pewter** contains lead and will leave a pencil-like mark when drawn across a piece of paper. **Steel** will be attracted to a magnet. The back of the button may be japanned tin, which will also be attracted to a magnet. Be careful when testing with a magnet that you're not getting results from the back of the button when the front may not be steel. Metal buttons are usually classified by the material on the front when it is 2 or 3-pc construction.
9. **Hard rubber** buttons are back marked Goodyear, **N.R.C.**, **I.R.C.C.**, **D.H.R.Co.** or **A.R.Co.** and are usually black or dark brown, with tan and orange being scarce and desirable.
10. **Vegetable ivory** is made from the Corozo (also called Tagua) nut. Since dye won't penetrate deeper than the outside layer, the natural creamy color can be seen in the sewing holes unless the button was dyed after cutting the holes. With good magnification, vegetable ivory will show an overall grid of tiny dots, particularly on the back of the button where it is less finished.
11. **Wood** buttons are made from natural wood, or they can be pressed or molded wood, such as Syrocco, Burwood, ANN or GAP types. The wood fibers in the pressed wood buttons should be visible under a magnifying glass.
12. **"Plastic"** refers to all semi-synthetic (celluloid, cellulose acetate and casein), and synthetic (phenolic, amino, polyester, acrylic resins, polystyrene, nylon, polyclays, ABS, etc.) polymers. If you are interested in learning more about these buttons, study the synthetic polymers glossary in the NBS classification booklet. National also has available for a modest fee a "Synthetic Polymers Handbook" that will give you much more information to aid in your identification efforts and general plastics education. Look on the inside back cover of your NBS bulletins for ordering information.

### **Hot Needle Testing**

For some materials (particularly plastics), to be certain, the hot needle test can be very helpful. Hot needle testing is not everyone's cup of tea, and that is fine. If you decide that you want to identify materials yourself in this manner, here are some suggestions worth considering:

1. An electric hot needle gives the most reliable results because it has a consistent temperature that is hot enough to test all materials that can be so tested.
2. Any test should be performed in as discreet a manner as possible, so as not to leave a blemish on the button. This means that you should use the finest needle tip possible and touch it to an area that is the least visible. Normally this will be on the back of the button, under or as near to the shank as possible, but could be in a crevice or other hidden area. Do not test transparent materials if the mark can be seen through to the front. Try not to make more than one test mark, and use the same spot if a retest is necessary.
3. It is a good idea to practice testing the different materials using known examples of "junkers" to get used to the hot needle results.
4. Be very quick and careful. Remember that post WWI celluloid is **quite** flammable! Do remember to do the testing in a well ventilated area.



5. Here are some materials that can be tested with a hot needle and the odor you can expect. (More detailed information on testing plastics is available in the NBS Handbook on Synthetic Polymers.)

Horn – cooking meat or burning feathers

Amber – pitch/resin

Jet – coal gas

Bakelite – formaldehyde/carbolic acid

Lucite – nail polish remover

Casein – burned milk

Rubber – burning rubber/sulfur

Celluloid – camphor

Tortoise-Shell – stagnant salt water

Composition – shellac/lacquer

Vegetable Ivory – burning walnut shells

Gutta Percha – faint rubber but less acrid

Wood – burning wood

**Some people use various chemical products to test for Bakelite.** While these products may not be harmful to Bakelite if the button is immediately and thoroughly cleaned and dried, they can do damage to many other plastics. A test popular with some collectors involves dunking the button in very hot water to get an odor. We do not recommend either the chemical or hot water test, as they can damage some buttons being tested.

#### **What About Repaired and Restored Buttons?**

The goal of all button collectors should be to preserve and/or restore buttons to their original condition, if possible. Therefore, it is acceptable to repaint, repair shanks, replace pastes or cut steels, replace thread on thread-bound glass, etc. **if it is done as close to the original as possible.** For example, lacy glass may have repainted backs, but the work should be done in the original color(s) and design. Restored and repaired buttons are allowed in button competitions. However, it is the duty of the restorer/repairer to let future owners of the button know just what has been done. I suggest noting this directly on the mounting card and keeping that information with the button so when it passes into other hands, it will be documented. It should be noted that values of these buttons generally will be less than if in original condition, but more than if not repaired or restored.

#### **CLEANING BUTTONS**

1. Do not wash or clean any buttons unless you know what they are made of and how they are constructed. Many buttons have a cardboard inner piece, which, if it gets wet, will cause the button to oxidize. Furthermore, some materials and finishes don't do well being washed. Different materials require different cleaning methods. If you can't identify a button's material, **do nothing** or only lightly dust the button with a clean, dry cloth.
2. Don't over clean or over polish. Basic cleaning supplies include an old toothbrush and a good metal polish and/or a jeweler's polishing cloth. I have recently discovered and love the new small microfiber polishing pads, as they contain no chemicals or other cleaning agents – just microfibers which pick up the dirt; but beware of using on painted or tinted surfaces. If you use pastes polish, it is best to rub some into a terry cloth rag, let it dry, and then rub the button on the cloth. This helps to avoid getting paste in the crevices of the button that makes it difficult to clean out thoroughly. If you don't, the residue paste will start a corrosion process worse than if you had left it alone. Metal buttons showing rust or corrosion need to be isolated until they can be properly cleaned. Ask seasoned collectors in your club for cleaning advice. Some basic tips follow:



3. **Bone:** Rub with a clean polishing cloth; cut a lemon in half, dip one of the halves in salt and rub over the surface. Wipe with a damp cloth and let dry.
4. **Celluloid:** Wipe with a polishing cloth, being careful of any painted surface. Recommended using NO WATER on celluloid.
5. **Ceramic:** Fired ones can be wiped with a damp cloth. Leave the unfired ones alone if they are unpainted.
6. **Composition:** Wipe with a polishing cloth. May be polished with mineral oil or furniture polish on a soft cloth.
7. **Enamels:** Wipe with a cloth moistened with household ammonia to remove dust and dirt. DO NOT do this if the button has painted portions, as it WILL remove the paint. You may polish the metal portions with a jeweler's cloth or metal polish. DO NOT try to clean Motiwala enamels, as this is a photographic technique that is not fired on; gently wipe with a soft, dry cloth only.
8. **Fabric:** Care must be taken to rub or brush old fabric buttons, as the threads may be weaker than they look! You may want to try a bit of cleaning fluid in a small glass jar. Put the button in and gently shake it for a couple of minutes. Remove buttons and place on an absorbent cloth to dry, preferably outdoors. DO NOT use this method if there are any glued on embellishments, or wood centers that may stain the fabric.
9. **Glass:** Wipe with a polishing cloth. Be careful if washing not to remove any luster or paint.
10. **Horn:** Wipe with a soft cloth with mineral oil. Keep horn buttons dry and protected from infestation by parasites by adding a mothball where they are stored. New horn acquisitions can be placed in the freezer for several weeks to kill any parasites that may be living in them.
11. **Ivory:** Clean as for bone; may be rubbed with a soft cloth and baby oil after cleaning. Wipe dry.
12. **Leather:** Wipe with mineral oil or saddle soap.
13. **Metals:** There are several good metal polishes available. Polishing with a Dremel Tool is another possibility, as it is quick and easy and doesn't require paste or other chemicals. I recommend using *only the smaller cordless battery-operated Dremel*, as the electric cord version is much more powerful and difficult to control on delicate buttons. Best Dremel results are on yellow metals, and some whites with high fancy embossed surfaces or filigree type designs. Avoid buttons with a lot of smooth shiny surfaces, or with original tint or paint.  
**Steel:** Handle these as little as possible, as the oils and moisture on the skin can lead to rusting when the buttons are stored. To remove rust, you may rub with the lead of a pencil or an ink eraser, but the rust may return. You may use a commercial rust remover such as WD-40. Steel wool (000) is good to remove rust on backs and shanks of steel cups.
14. **Plastics:** Wipe with a damp cloth. Do not wash, dunk or apply chemical products, as some plastics can be damaged this way.
15. **Rhinestones:** Never use water – just a gentle brushing and polishing with a soft cloth.
16. **Rubber:** Wipe with a polishing cloth.
17. **Shell:** Rubbing with a cloth moistened with mineral oil, then carefully drying can usually restore the luster. Don't wash with water.
18. **Vegetable Ivory:** Wipe with mineral oil on a soft cloth.
19. **Wood:** Wipe with mineral oil on a soft cloth.
20. **The "Green Meanies":** Green corrosion means that the metal beneath is damaged, at least to the extent that it has lost its plating and will not polish up the same as before. Catsup is a favorite of many people to clean off the green stuff. It is thick enough to stay just where you have very carefully put it with a toothpick. Leave it for 5-10 minutes, but keep checking it. If the green corrosion is very heavy, you might try briskly brushing or scraping before you use catsup, but there are no guarantees as the button may already be





damaged beyond restoration. Carefully remove all traces of the catsup and wipe dry. It is the vinegar in the catsup which works, so you may use straight vinegar, but it is harder to keep it off the rest of the button.

21. **Cleaning Metal Shanks:** A gray eraser block with a groove cut into it is an effective way to clean rusted metal shanks. Just fit the shank into the groove and briskly move the button back and forth.

### **STORAGE OF BUTTONS AND DETERIORATION PROBLEMS**

Generally speaking, it is best to store similar materials together. Celluloid should be stored alone as should other plastics. Never store any buttons in closed containers. If you use plastic bags, do not close them up. Buttons need to be aired and kept in a constant temperature and humidity environment. It's a good idea to review your buttons periodically, looking for signs of corrosion or other deterioration.

Metalized plastics can show the green signs of corrosion and should be stored alone. Some plastics don't do well being stored with metals. The transparent yellow Celluloids are particularly susceptible to self-destructing (cracking, off-gassing harmful fumes, or oozing a liquid that will "eat" your mounting card), which can hurt other buttons nearby. Especially watch out for those with metal parts or shanks. When they show the first signs of cracking/fracturing, I throw them out, or at least completely isolate them.

### **PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR FIRST SPECIAL TRAY**

How do you get started putting together your first special tray or card of buttons? Even if you don't have a lot of buttons, you can review what you do have and see what you have a good start on. It could be a material – a color – a subject, etc. ..or even "just pretty buttons"! After you have decided what kind of button you want to make a nice tray of, then decide what size of button (small, medium or large) you will concentrate on. To begin with, putting together a 9" x 12" card of 25 buttons of any size is a good project. It of course depends on the kind of buttons you are wanting to put on your card or tray. Some buttons come almost exclusively in one size (e.g. swirlbacks are typically small). You might just want to fill a shadow box with buttons and family photos or other memorabilia.

You may want to mount all one material, for example black glass. You can visit Button Country to see all the different types of black glass there are. You may want to display a certain type of black glass or as just your favorites. After you've mounted your best selection from your collection, make yourself a checklist of all the other types you want to look for to complete your tray. Are you missing a color? Or a particular subject matter? Carry it with you as you go button shopping, especially at state shows, and even at club meetings. A photocopy of your tray might also be helpful.

If you want to do a topic, for example, "Birds, Assorted Materials," what should you put on this tray? It tells you in our handbook under "Complete Representation" and "Assortments, Pictorial Designs Assorted". This tells you to have as many different kinds of birds as possible, various activities, multiples, etc. followed secondarily by as many different materials as possible. The section to which the award is written carries the most weight in competition. A competition award can be written to emphasize materials rather than the subject matter.

After you have completed your tray, you can begin the almost never-ending process of upgrading it – to your own satisfaction, of course. As soon as you are far enough along in putting one or more special trays together, ask a more advanced collector to look them over, and give you suggestions on how you can improve the tray. Eventually when you are ready, you may even decide to compete at state and national shows. But this is only possible if you



start out following NBS rules in the blue handbook. (In principal, all state button societies follow national rules.)

### **“NO HARM” CRAFTING WITH BUTTONS**

The National Button Society encourages “*no harm*” *button jewelry and crafting*. This means that buttons and buckles will not be intentionally damaged in the creative process, but previously compromised examples or parts can be used. Buttons can be used in framed button art, decorative arts, needlework, quilts or jewelry. Crafting ideas will be available on the NBS website to members and non-members alike. Please share your ideas with the National Button Society.

### **A WORD ABOUT VALUES**

One of the questions most asked by beginners is: “How much are my buttons worth?” There are no quick, easy answers. If you were to ask a roomful of dealers what is the value of a particular button, you would get a wide range of answers, depending on such factors as: regional differences; how much the person knows about or likes the button; was the evaluation for resale, for a collection, or insurance purposes; etc. One collector says “a button is worth what you want to pay!” Having said that, it is still always a good policy to check out prices before making big purchases.

THE BIG BOOK OF BUTTONS, originally published in 1981 was reprinted in about 2011 and has a useful price guide (sold separately in the new 2-volume edition).

### **THE JOYS OF BUTTON COLLECTING**

As you progress, many joys will be yours. To name but a few: (1) the pleasure of possessing these bits of art and beauty, for many of them are of wonderful workmanship; (2) the enjoyment you get in completing cards of different types; (3) the fellowship you enjoy in knowing other collectors; (4) the actual education you absorb from studying and finding out about the buttons and related topics; and (5) the pride you feel in showing them to your friends and exhibiting them at the shows. There is nothing quite like it, believe me!

### **FINAL WORDS**

Buttons are usually beautiful ..... wonderful ..... works of art that are a joy to collect. Even the ugly buttons and the “what-the-heck-were-they-thinking” buttons are fun! And that is the point of button collecting – to enjoy those fascinating little buttons. They can enrich our lives by creating new circles of friends, by leading us down interesting research paths (like mythology or history), by appreciation of art and craftsmanship and providing fun! Enjoy!

