

Baubles and Buttons - Janet White

www.baublesandbuttons.com

INTRODUCTION

February 5, 2012 by Janet White



China Buttons are my Thing!

China buttons are a natural jumping off point for a beginning button collector— as the first mass produced porcelain button they can be found in a variety of great colors, patterns and shapes. And, rarities aside, they are usually affordable. *Guidelines for*

Collecting China Buttons, published by the National Button Society in 1970, has been THE reference for china collectors but is regrettably out of print. The text was the work of collectors Ruth Lamm, Beatrice and Lester Lorah, Helen W. Schuler, Lillian Smith Albert and Jane Ford Smith. Currently there are no plans to rewrite this essential book on china buttons—the volume of material to republish, and the additional information that should be included in a new text, seem overwhelming.

In this space I would like to offer excerpts from the original text and attempt to re-create and expand upon its black and white plates of button types, transforming them into bright internet-color. (Note: I am finding as I work through this project that I am: 1- inconsistent; 2-occasionally incorrect; 3- still enthusiastic).

Content of ***Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons***:

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Chapter Two: China Buttons with Complex Construction

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2. Shoe Buttons, Smock Buttons
3. China Bird Cages (Inserted Four-Way Self Shanks)
4. China Buttons with Inserted Two-Way Self Shanks
5. China Whistle Buttons
6. The Elusive Igloo Button

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Chapter Seven: Another China Button Sample Case Saved

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CHAPTER 1: THE ESSENTIALS

February 5, 2012 by Janet

Chapter One: Essential Data Concerning China Buttons by Lillian Smith Albert and Jane Ford Adams

Chapter one details the invention of the china button. To summarize: In 1840 in England Richard Prosser received a patent for a new process to shape a ceramic button. From *Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons*: “The material which Prosser used was not potter’s clay; it was, instead, a very fine, dry powder... The method consisted of placing the powder in a steel die of the desired shape and compressing it to about one-fourth its bulk. This operation produced perfectly shaped buttons ready for the kiln. Moreover, production was rapid and firing loss small.”

A quote from Thomas Prosser, brother of the patent holder is also included in the *Guidelines*: “The number which one woman can make of these buttons is almost incredible. Twenty-five buttons are often made in one minute, but the usual rate is from 12 to 18 per minute, the week round. The price paid for making is one cent per gross, at which rate the earnings of one woman vary from \$3 to \$4 1/2 per week. Twenty thousand gross of buttons have been made per week.”

Doing the math, labor costs for 2 million, eight hundred eighty thousand buttons, the week's production, would have been \$200. Contrast this rate with the traditional labor-intensive process of hand shaping and firing fine porcelain buttons, and the financial success of the humble china button is easily understood.

Production began at Mintons in England (1840-1846); Charles Cartlidge & Co. in Greenpoint, Long Island (1848-1856); at the factory of Jean Felix Bapterosses first in Paris and then south at Briare (1843-1900's); and in Germany under the brands R. C. and A.R.

China buttons sold for as little as 2c a dozen for plain, and 3c a dozen for decorated. The buttons came on cards that could be cut to give the purchaser the number of buttons needed.

It was Jean-Felix Bapterosses who aggressively dominated the industry. In 1844 he substantially increased production with a patent for a machine to strike 500 buttons at once. With a formula based on ground feldspar, unique to his area, the first shipment of what he termed "agate buttons," took place in September of 1845. In March of 1847 he had added lustered buttons to his production line and in the same year patented a kiln making it possible to fire buttons in 15 minutes. He continued to be innovative with the introduction of colored buttons and by 1849 was producing a full range of styles and colors at the rate of 1,400,000 buttons per day. He employed 150 people in the factory and 400 women outside the factory to put the buttons on cards. By 1850 he succeeded in manufacturing, firing and shipping his buttons to be carded, in less than 25 minutes.

A complete description of the manufacturing process of china buttons is included in *Large Factories of France* by Julian

Turgan, published in Paris in 1865 and found online in French. Matthew Brown has translated the text and it can be downloaded here: [M. Bapterosses's Ceramic Button Factory in Briare](#)

CHAPTER 2: CHINA BUTTONS WITH COMPLEX CONSTRUCTION

February 5, 2012 by Janet

Chapter Two: China Buttons with Complex Construction

Chapter two begins with an explanation of the system devised by Lamm and Schuler to provide uniform labeling for all china buttons. The system is used throughout the text, where appropriate. They first assigned a name to each body type and displayed each variation that they found in that one body type. Throughout the text, buttons of all types are labeled as follows:

“A” refers to an opaque white button; “B” denotes color trim on white body; “C” is a lustered body; “D” is an opaque body color other than white; “E” represents color trim on a colored body; “F” is marbled; “G” indicates a metal rim on the button. A lower case letter, “a” through “m” is assigned to each decorative pattern found on china buttons. Of course, not every button has been found in all of the possible treatments.

To illustrate the system, the photos show examples of dish type buttons, labeled according to Lamm and Schuler's system.

Dish Type



A



Ba



Bb



Bc



Be



Bf



Bg



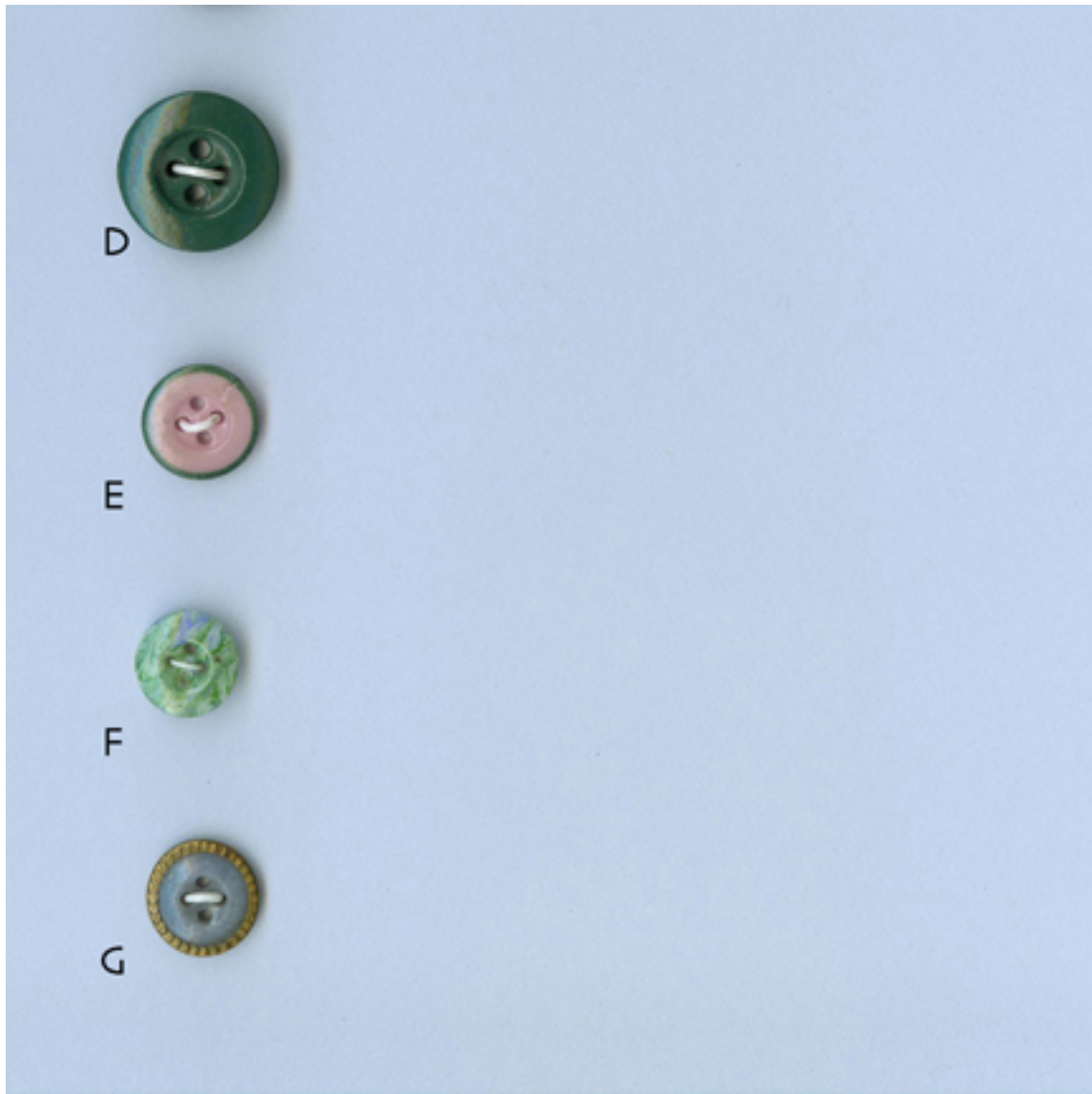
Bi



Bm

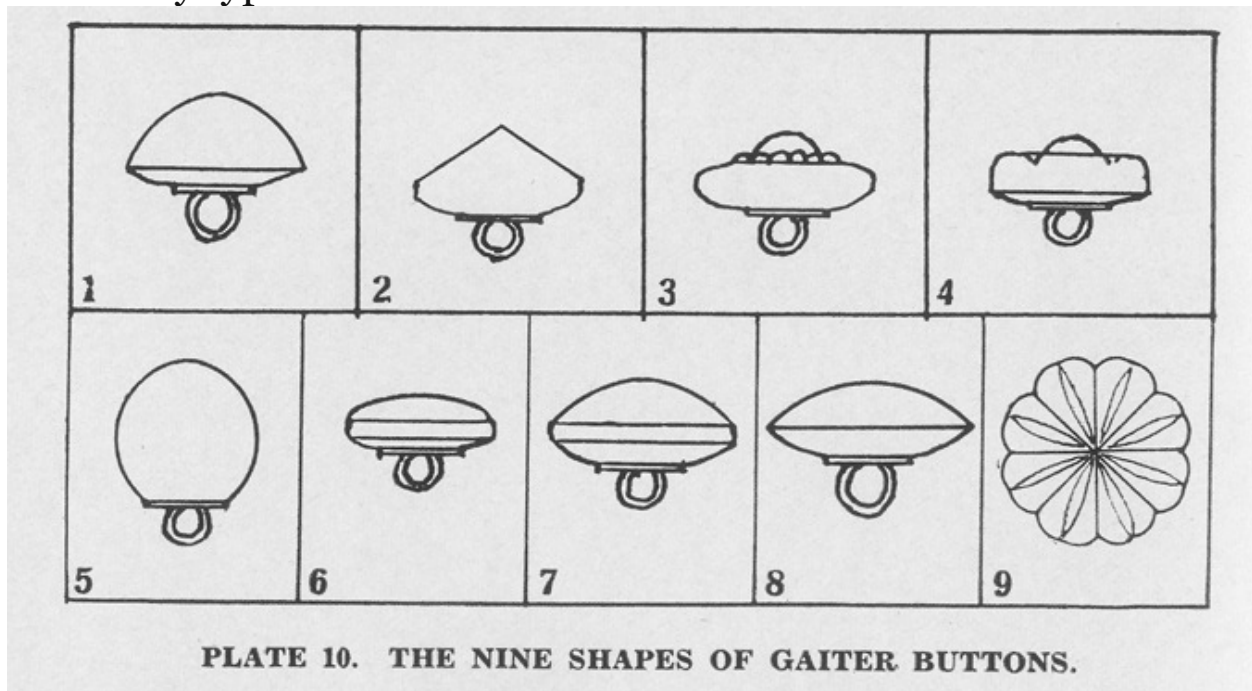


C



PART 1: Gaiter Buttons. Gaiters are found in nine shapes. The method of shank attachment is shown in Plate 9 and the profile of

each body type in Plate 10.



1. Dome
2. Cone
3. Hobnail
4. Shape 4
5. Ball
6. Aspirin
7. Shape 7
8. Shape 8
9. Shape 9 (Scallop)

The photo below shows an example of each body type. In a row below the nine shapes are two variations: a dome shape with tan center and a spatter pattern dome.



Shape 1, the dome button, is found in 15 different patterns of a round center, bands, and borders. (There are rumors of a 16th pattern also.) These are aptly named Bull's-Eye Gaiters. The body color is white, although dark colored bodies with a pattern in gold have been found. It is most difficult to distinguish between patterns 9 and 10 and 14 and 15. Pattern numbers 13, 14 and 15 are the most difficult to find. Colors are black, light and dark blue, brown, burgundy, green, orange, green and purple.

Bull's-Eye Gaiter Buttons

Dome shape

Patterns made up of round center with or without other bands and border



1



2



3



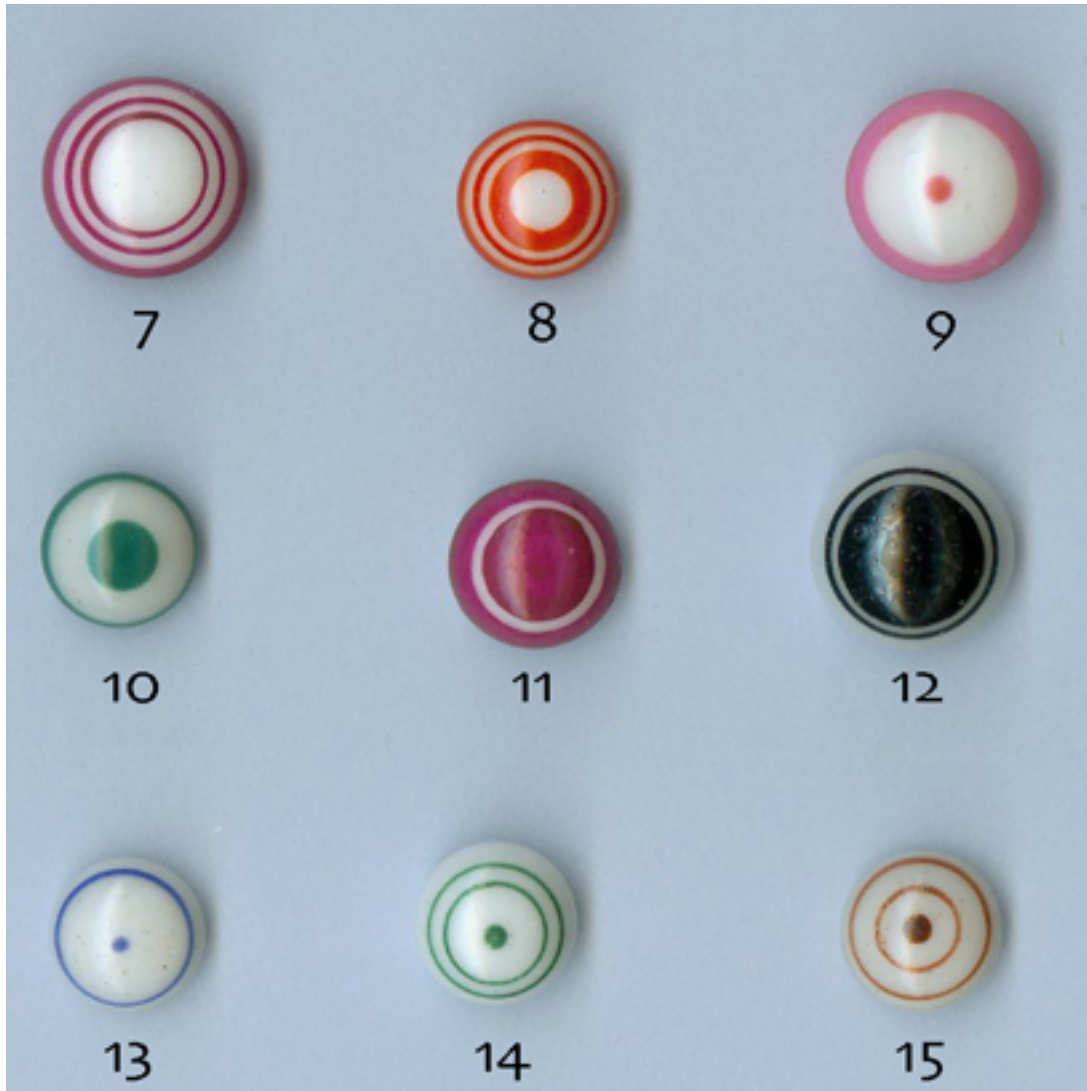
4



5



6

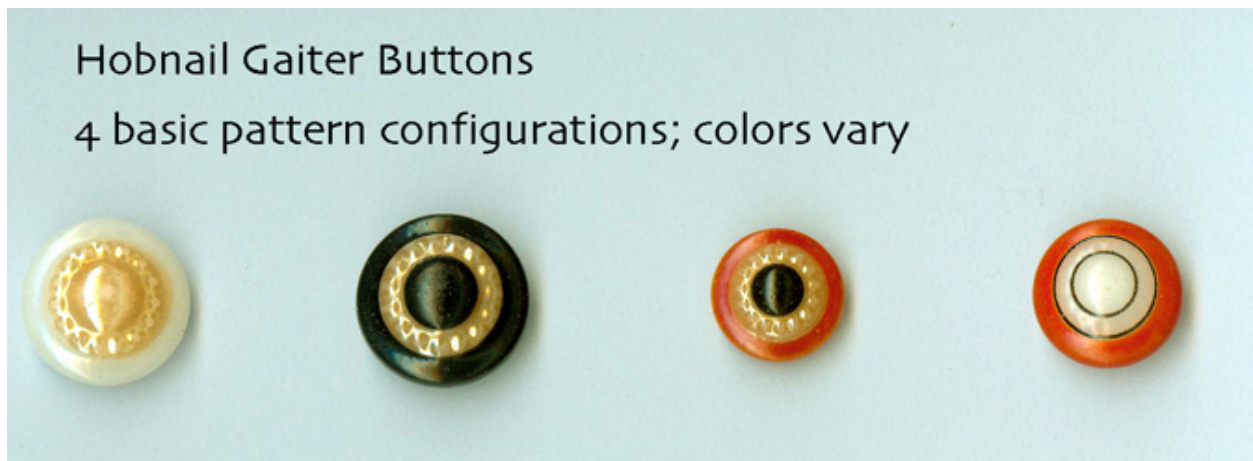
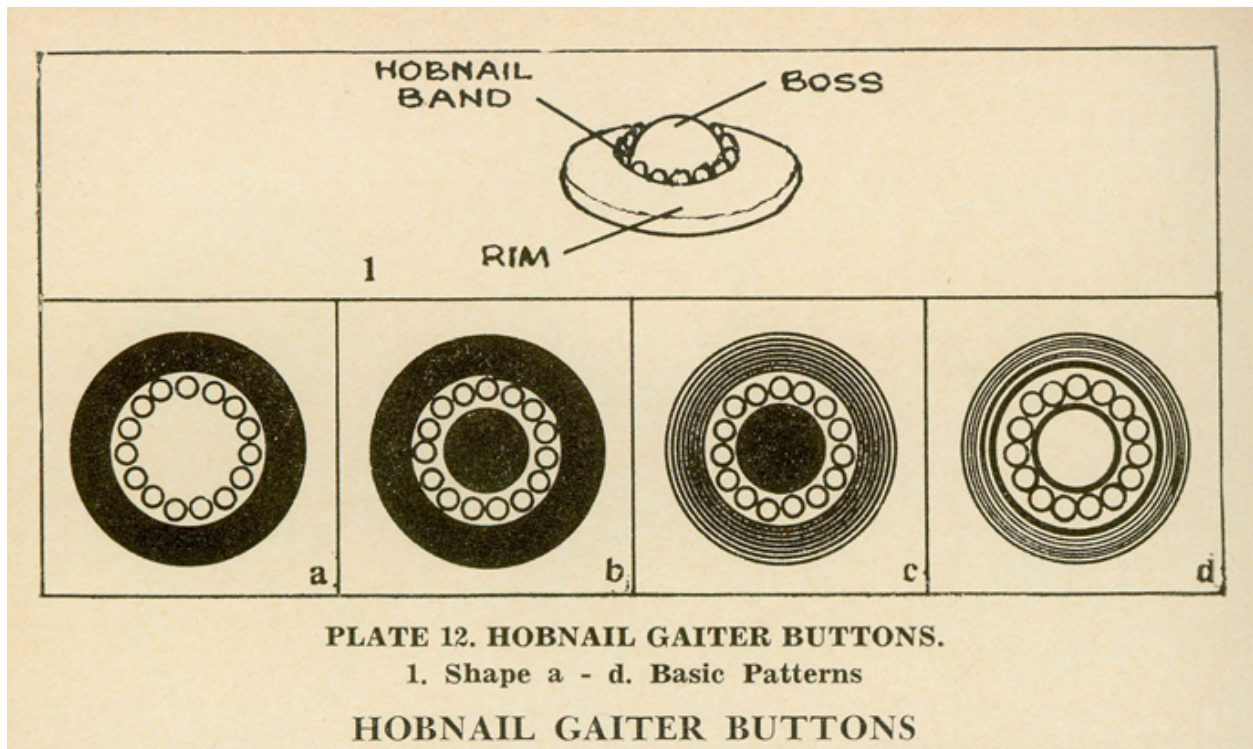


And here is an unusual dark blue bodied dome shape with a pattern #10 decoration in gold luster, found in France.



Shape # 2, the Cone, can be found in solid colors and lusters. One pattern is found: a solid colored tip with a contrasting band around the wider base of the button.

Shape #3, the Hobnail Gaiter button, quoting from *Guidelines*, “gets its name from a hobnail band that separates a smooth rim from a round boss which rises up to form the center of the button. The patterns are built up entirely in terms of those three parts, boss, hobnail and rim. Basically all of the patterns can be reduced to four: (a) boss and hobnail band alike with rim of contrasting color; (b) boss and rim alike with hobnail band of contrasting color; (c) boss, hobnail band and rim each of a different color; (d) boss and hobnail band alike but outlined by a fine line, rim of contrasting color.” In addition to the patterns, the body type is also found in solid colors.



Shape #4 has a convex center and a rolled rim. It is found in solid colors and centers of white, perle or orange luster and contrasting rims of solid colors.

Shapes # 5, 6, 7, 8 are found only in solid colors. or lusters.

Shape #9 is rare and found in white or perle luster.

Before leaving “gaiters”, I’d like to include two examples which are not shown in *Guidelines*.

The first is a drum shape calico gaiter. It has the traditional plate and loop shank. This example measures just under 1/2” and has a calico pattern covering the top but not the sides of the drum shaped china piece. It is found in a variety of calico patterns and in a slightly larger size. It can be seen at the China Exchange site as #s 26 and 27. <http://www.angelfire.com/tx5/chinaexchange/beyond.html>

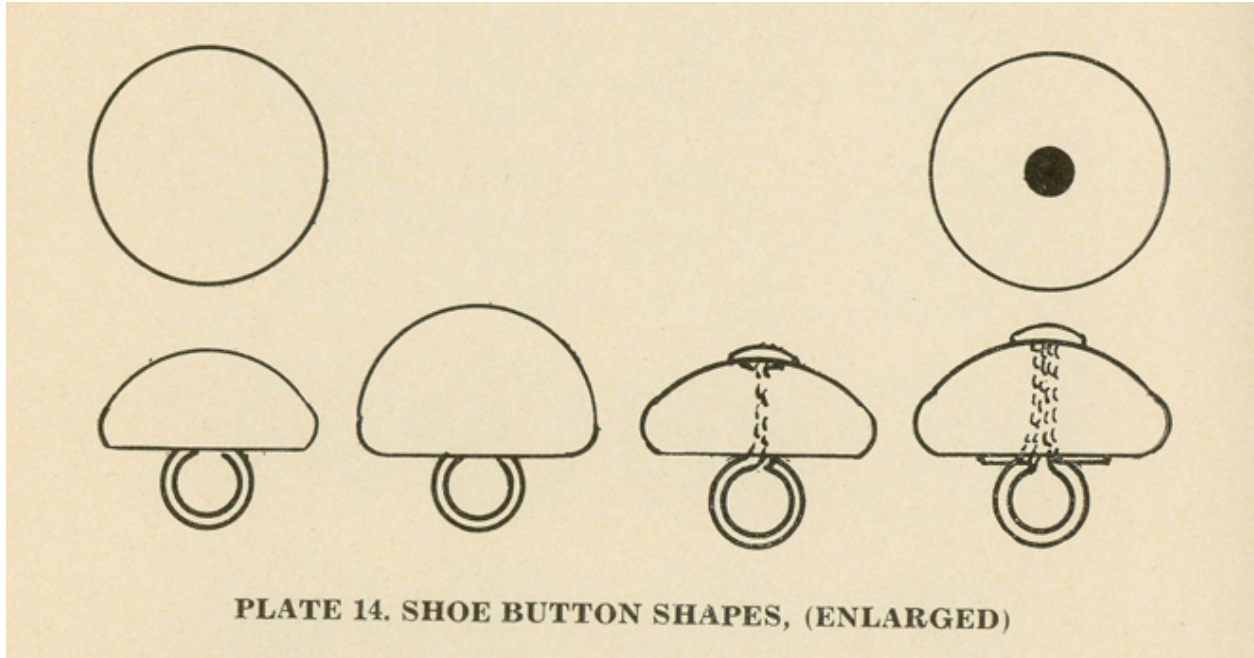


The second unusual type is larger, has a rolled rim and an impressed faux four-hole sew-through pattern. Unlike most of the other gaiters, it has only an inserted loop shank. You may see a variation of it with a calico pattern at the China Exchange site, as #28. <http://www.angelfire.com/tx5/chinaexchange/beyond.html>



PART 2 : Minor Classes of China Buttons Having Metal Shanks. Part 2 deals with china shoe and smock buttons. Shoe buttons are of two different styles. From *Guidelines*, “One group has a rounded top, a flat back, a metal loop shank inserted in the

body...The other group has a pin-shank passing through the body.” Smock buttons are those worn on uniforms. Our reference says they are only found in white, but black bodied smock type buttons do exist.



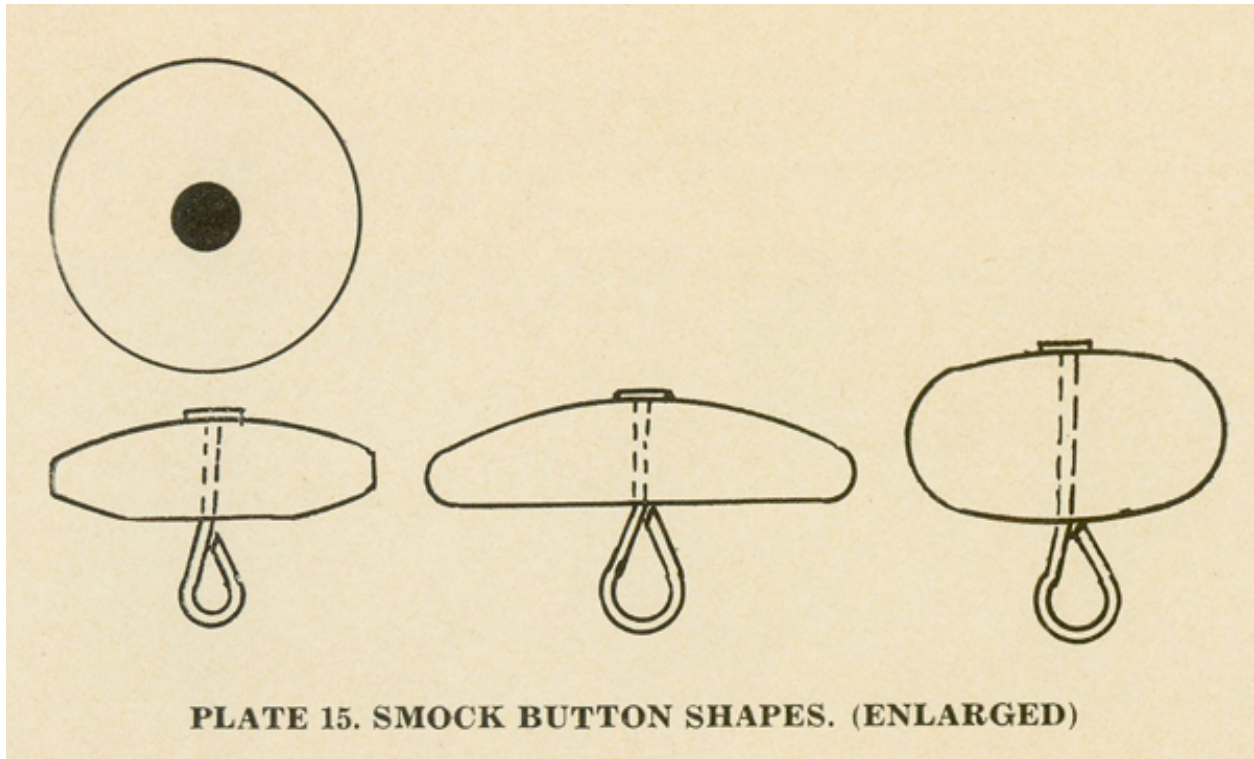


PLATE 15. SMOCK BUTTON SHAPES. (ENLARGED)

Minor Classes of China Buttons
Having Metal Shanks

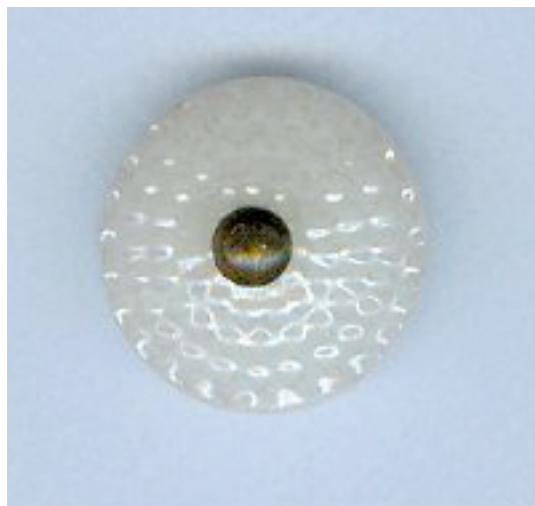
Shoe button shapes



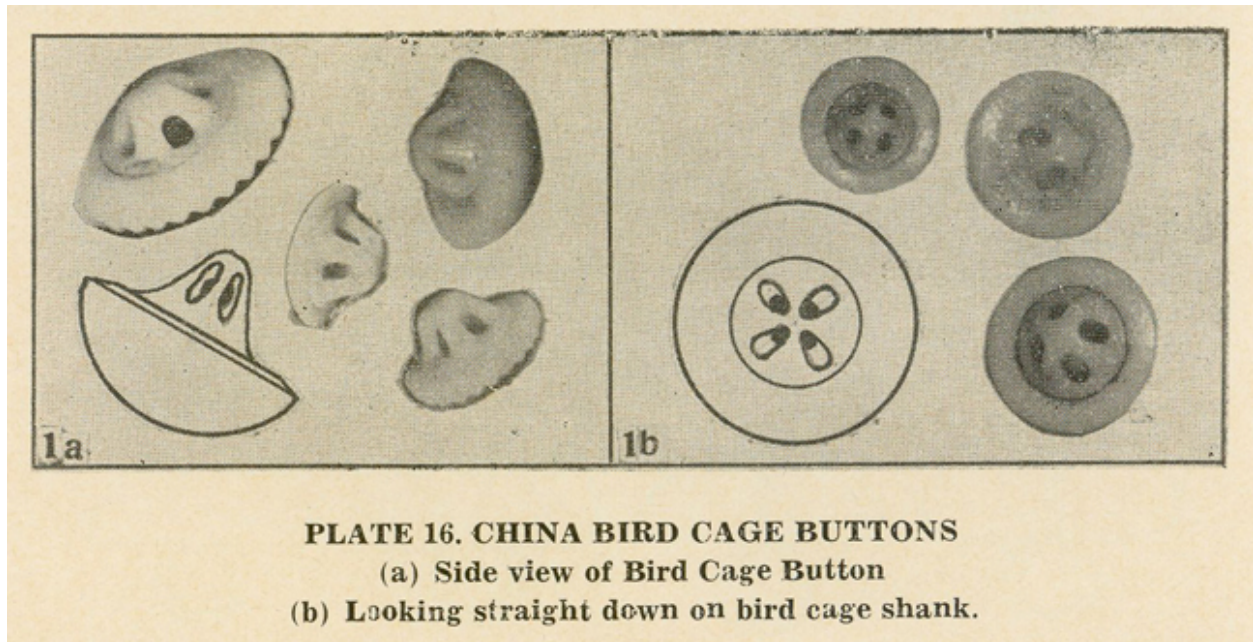
Smock buttons

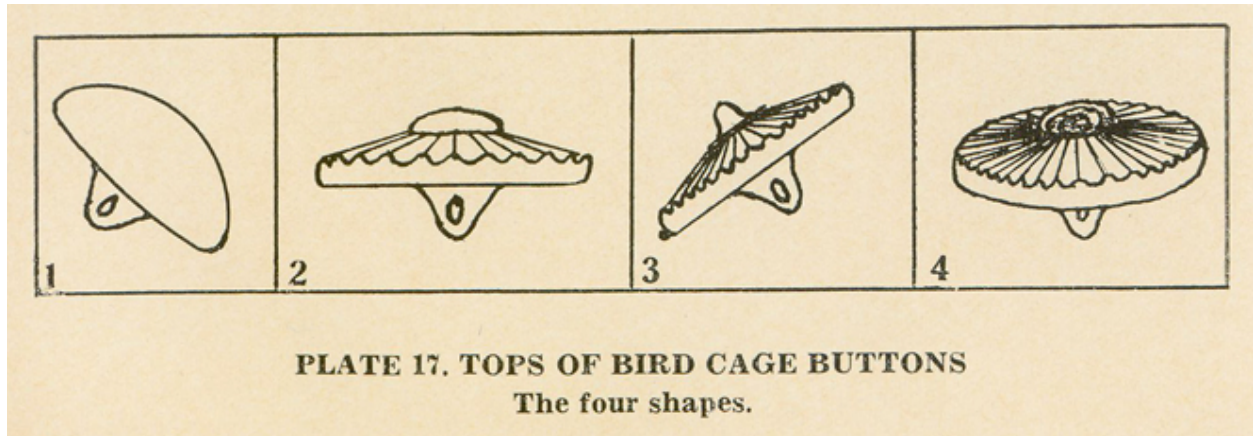


I'm inserting here two photos of unusual pin-shank shoe buttons.



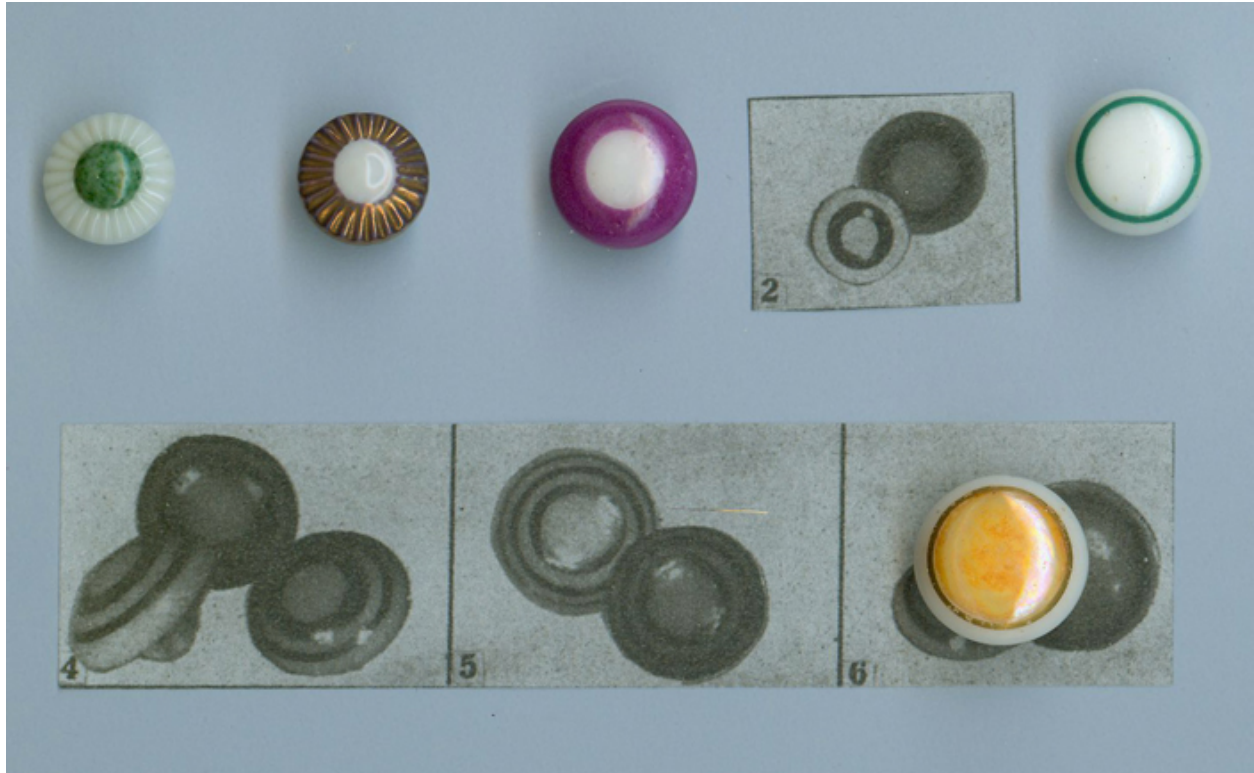
PART 3. China Bird Cages (Inserted Four-Way Self Shanks). This button derives its name from the reverse of the button and the resemblance of the shank configuration to a cage. *Guidelines* describes the construction: “The button is made of two (in some shapes three) separate pieces. The cap is dish-like with large mouthed opening on the under side. The shank portion (a hollow cone pierced by four slits) fits over the opening like a lid. Drawings No. 2 and 3 show three -piece construction, the knob or tip in center being an added part.” ”Bird cage tops are of four shapes: 1. a smooth convex cap; 2. a fluted border sloping down slightly from a small cap in the center; 3. fluted border like No. 2 but with a peaked cap inside; 4. the same with a concave center.”





A bird's eye view of the reverse of this type of china button (forgive me....I couldn't resist.)

Guidelines lists six patterns. My collection suggests that patterns 2, 4 and 5 are very rare. Pattern #6 was a gift and I have never seen another one.

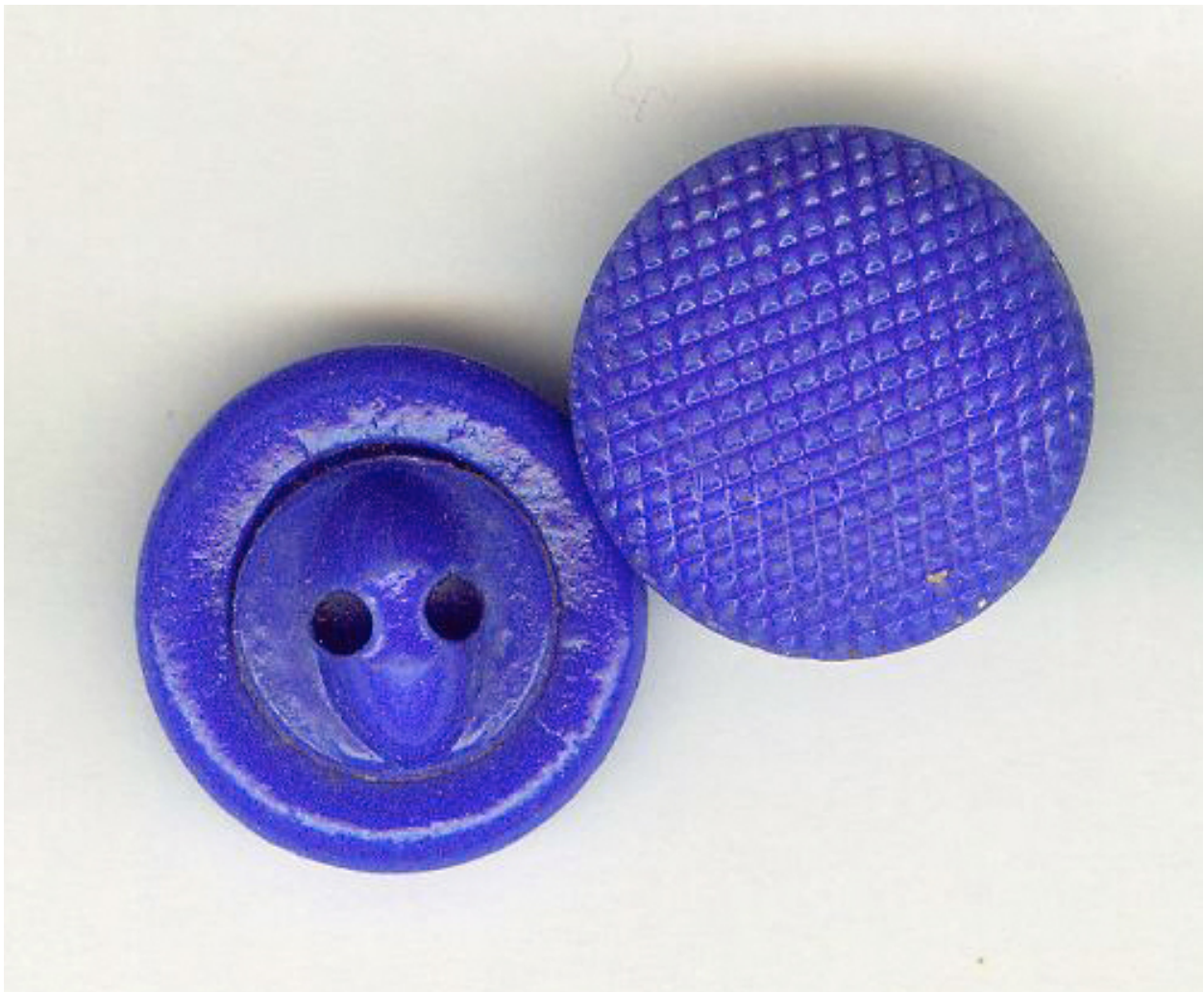


The fluted rim example is often found in solid white and may also be found with a completely lustered top. The center may be marbled or mottled shades or a solid color or luster. *Guidelines* says that colored flutings are much more unusual than colored centers.



PART 4. China Buttons with Inserted Two-Way Self

Shank. From *Guidelines*: "These china buttons are molded in two parts....The shanks are hollow disks rounded to fit into a molded well at the back of the button top. The slightly elongated shank has two holes at opposite sides, used for sewing the button to the fabric....There seem to be twenty different types of button in this class, each with individual characteristics, but all alike in shank construction."



Plates 19 and 20 depict a drawing and a black and white photo of the 20 original body styles. Pattern Number 1 is distinguished from 1a because of the differing application of paint across the

surface grooves. Number 11 is one of the scarcer shapes. It is found in the smallest ($3/8''$) and the largest ($7/8''$) examples of this body type. Number 12 is not pictured but is described: "It is bean-like with the shank where the bean would be attached to the pod."

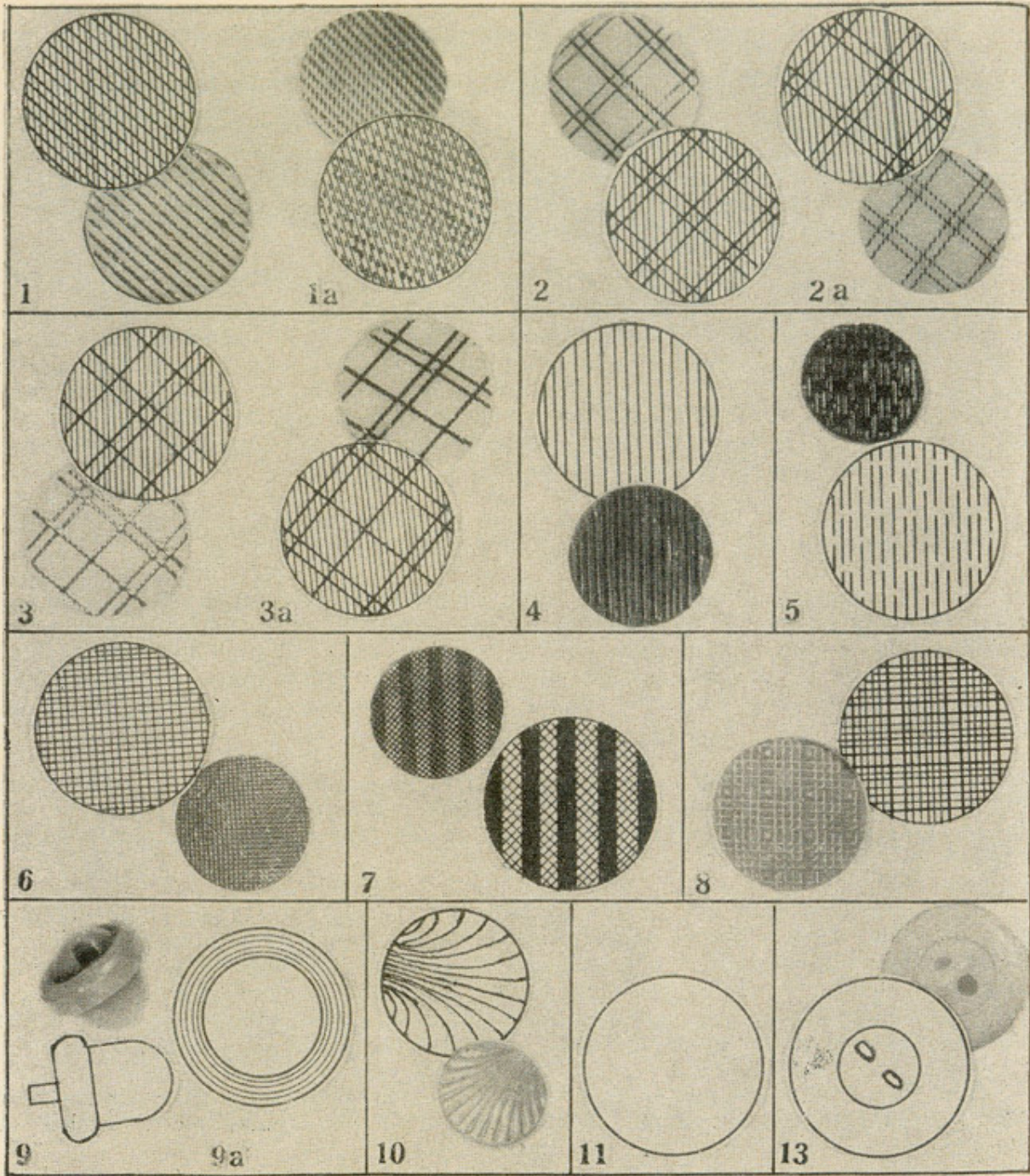


PLATE 19. CHINA BUTTONS WITH INSERTED TWO-WAY SELF SHANKS.
 Patterns 1 to 11

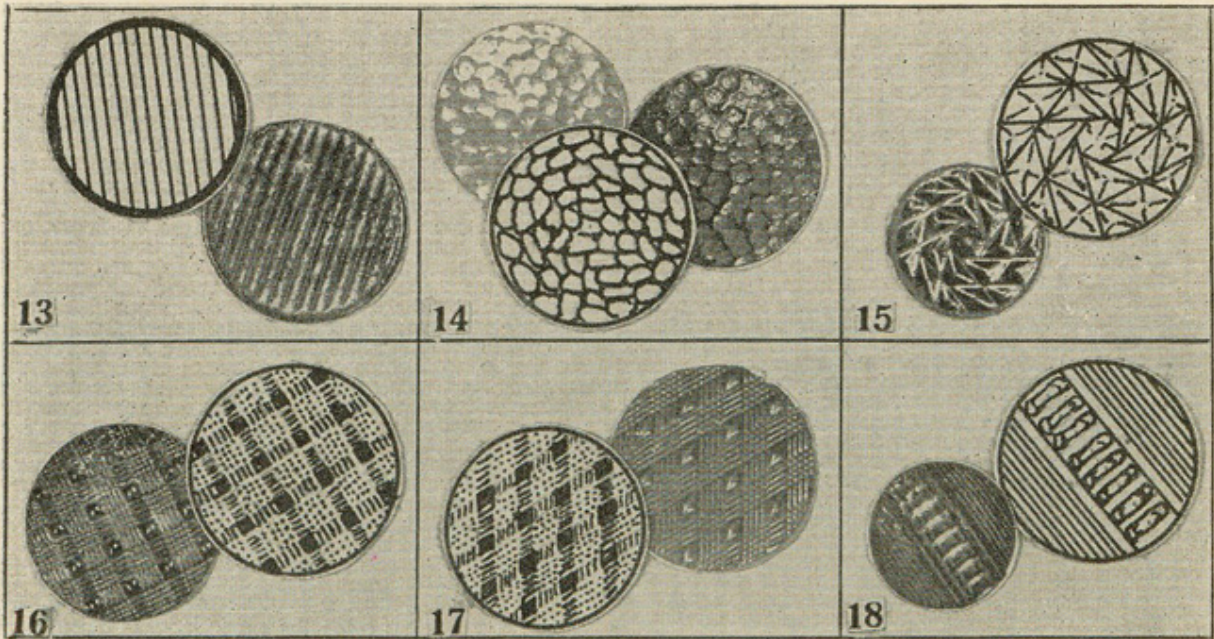


PLATE 20. CHINA BUTTONS WITH INSERTED TWO-WAY SELF SHANKS.
 Patterns 13 to 18

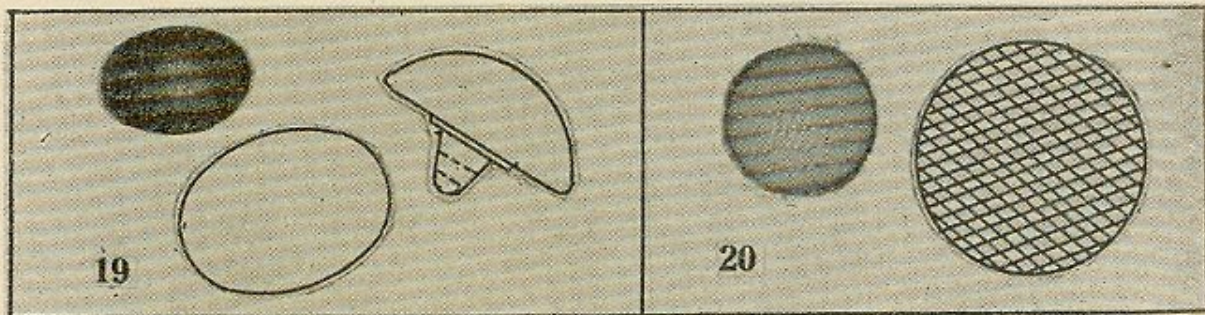
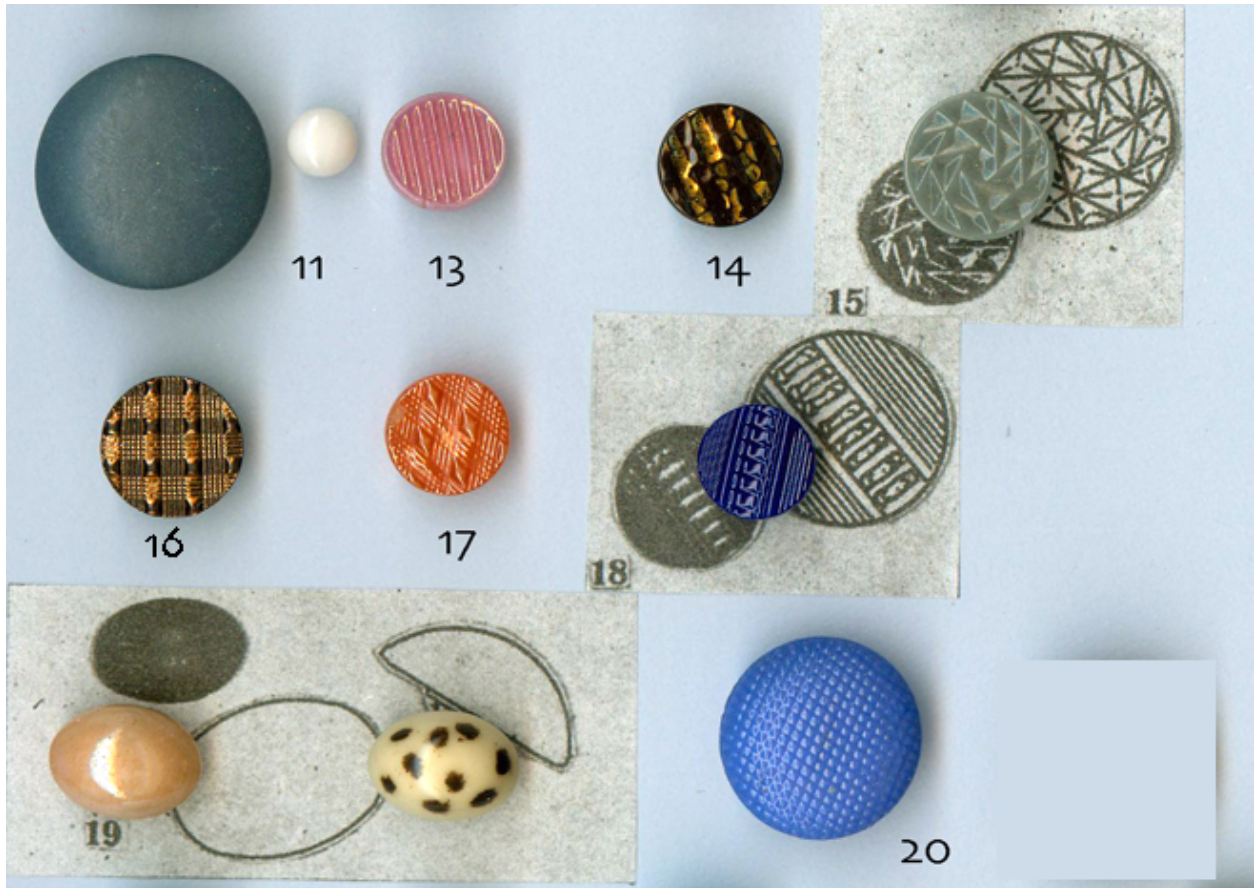
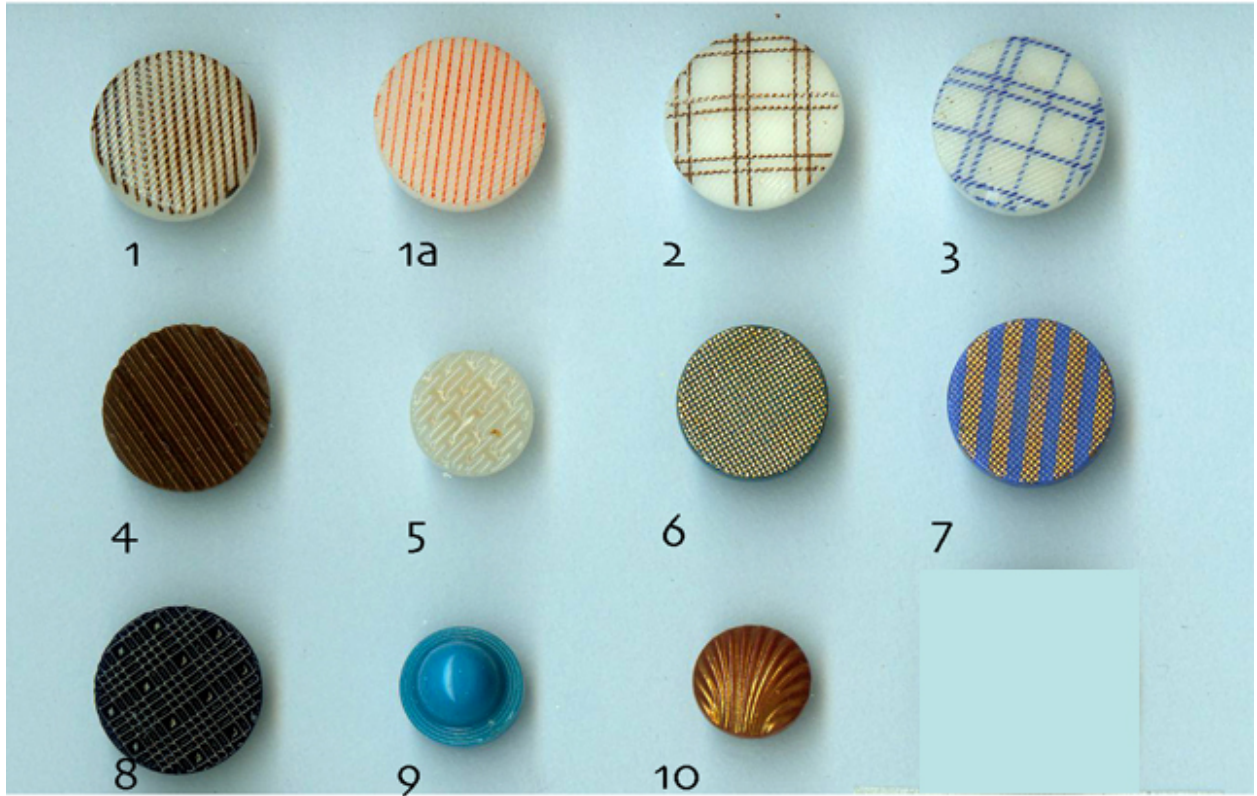
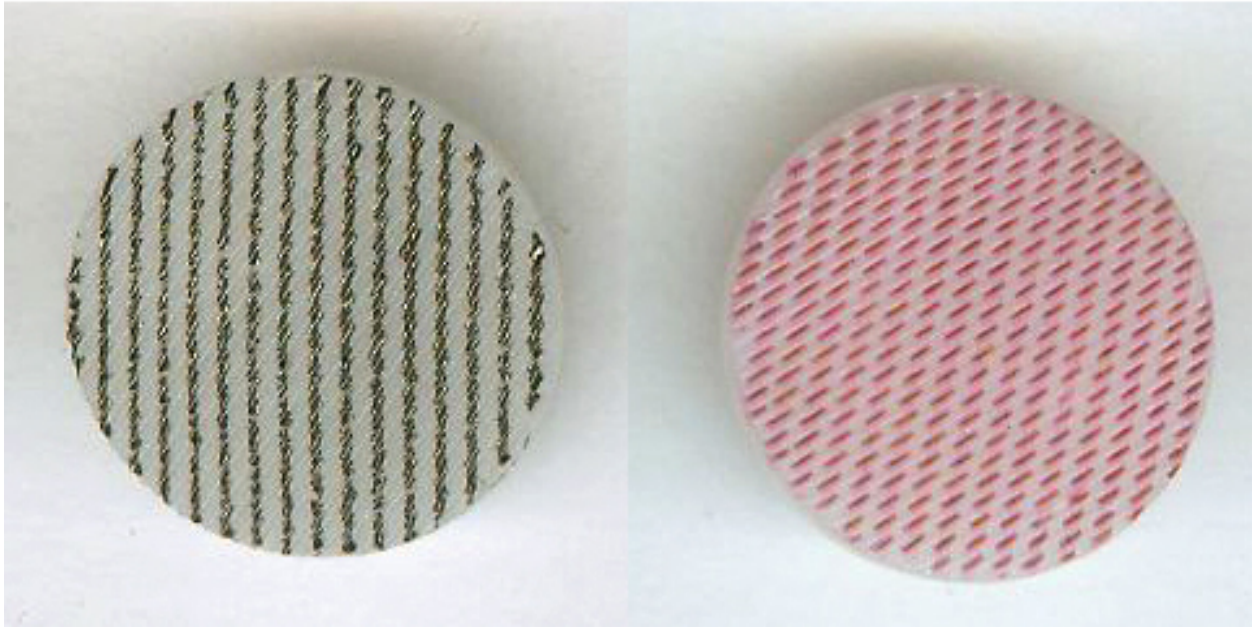


PLATE 21. CHINA BUTTONS WITH INSERTED TWO-WAY SELF SHANKS.
 Patterns 19 and 20.



A close up of the difference between #1 (black stripe) and #1a (red stripe) below:



Since 1970 when *Guidelines* was published, many more different styles of body tops, or patterns on known body types, have been discovered, all sharing the shank as described above. Matthew Brown has also contributed a nifty acronym, TWISS, which is finding acceptance in the china world. (Thank you, Matthew.) Matthew, Jane Quimby and Deb Hanson are responsible for discoveries of most of the new types shown in the scan below. There are many others!



PART 5: China Whistle Buttons

From *Guidelines*: “A ‘whistle’ button has been broadly defined as ‘any button with a single verticle hole at the top and two or more at the back.’” “China whistles have two (very rarely three) holes at the back, one on top.” “They are put together in four different ways.”

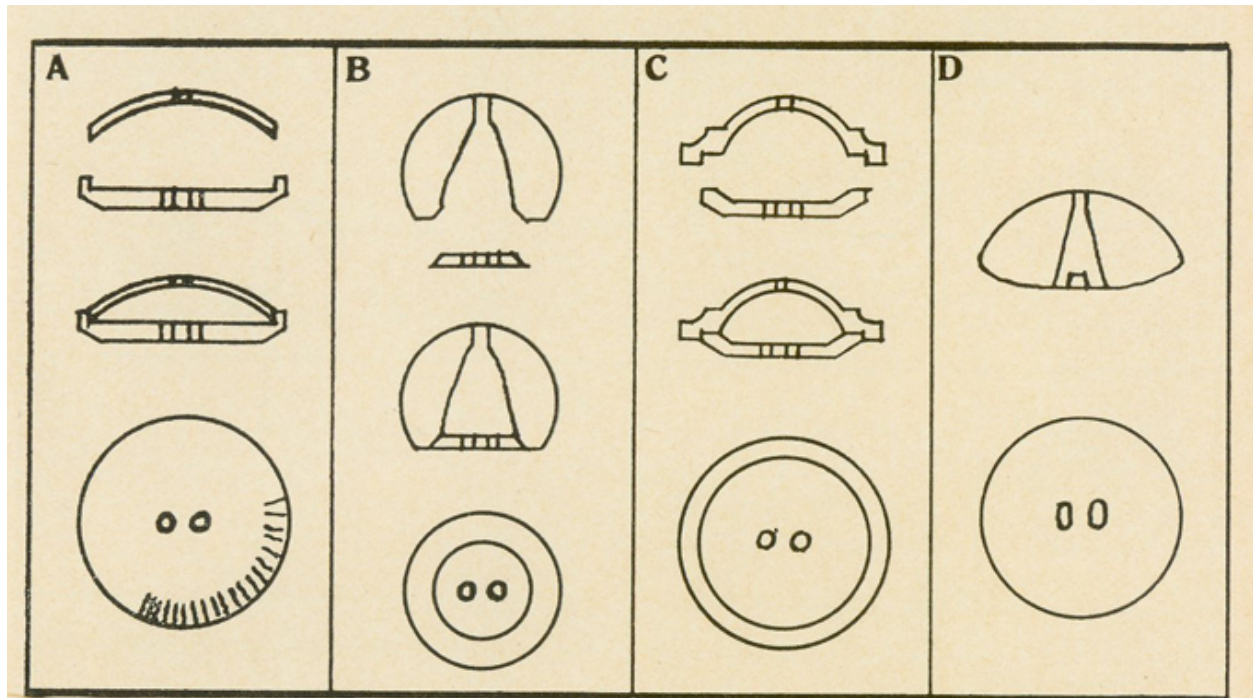


PLATE 22. CHINA WHISTLES CONSTRUCTED IN FOUR WAYS
(A, B, C, D)

Top row shows separate parts for each type.

Middle row shows completed buttons in cross-section.

Lower row shows completed buttons viewed from the back.



Guidelines mentions that the same shape and patterns can be found on both A and B construction types. The text says that only solid white D types have been found, making this the rarest construction type.

And the rarely seen china whistle with three or four holes on the reverse:



Notice the very fine coated wire holding the buttons in place? Try your local Radio Shack store, asking for 30AWG Kynar Wire. The

catalog number is (was?) 278-502. Use it for all your whistles, and smile.

Continuing from *Guidelines*, “A complete list of colors used on china whistles would be very long...it would include white, black, red, blue, green, purple, lavender, orange, brown, gray, and pink plus gold, silver and copper luster.” “...a single shade may have a matt, a bright or a lustered finish.”

20 shapes of china whistles are illustrated in *Guidelines*.

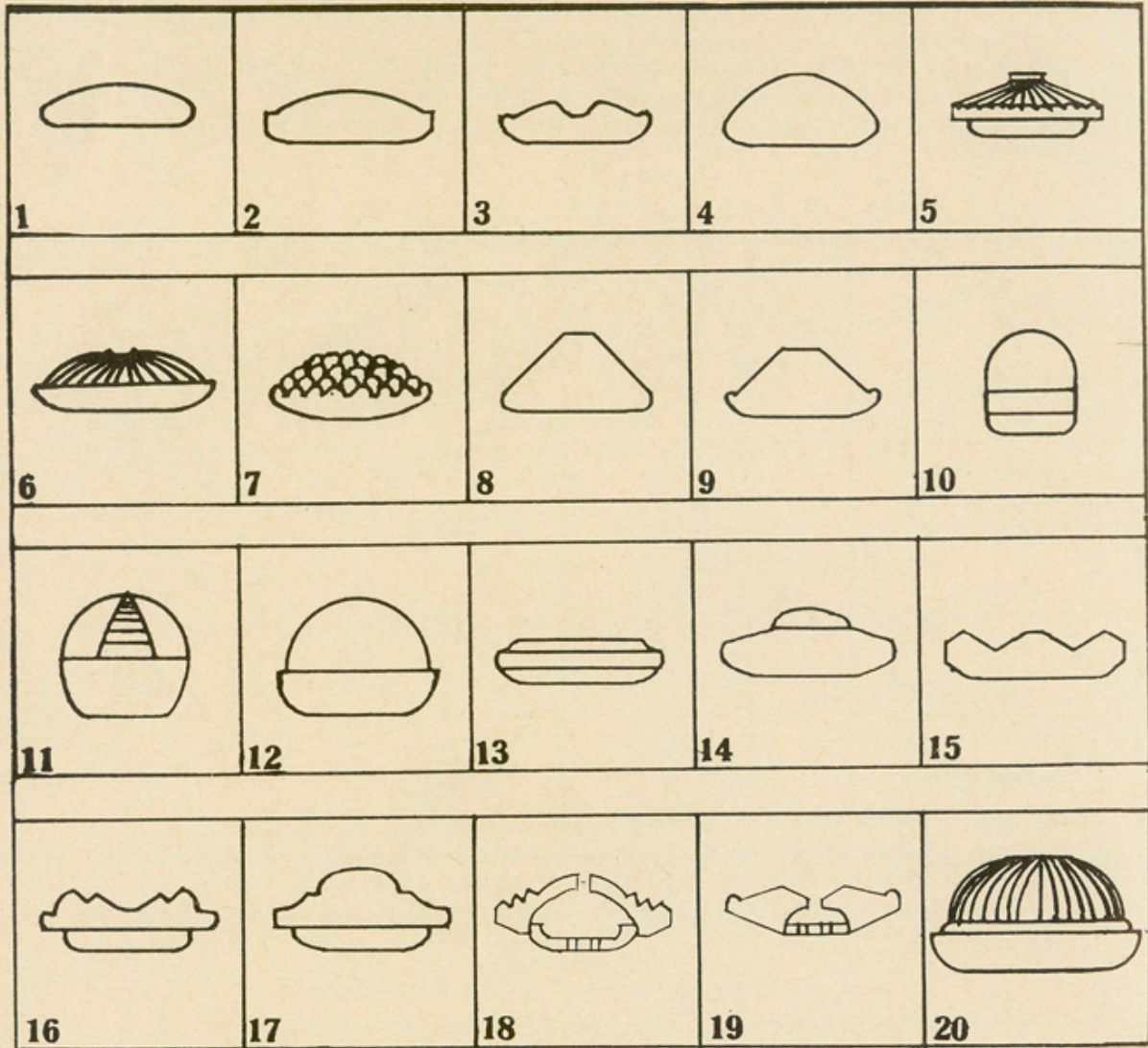


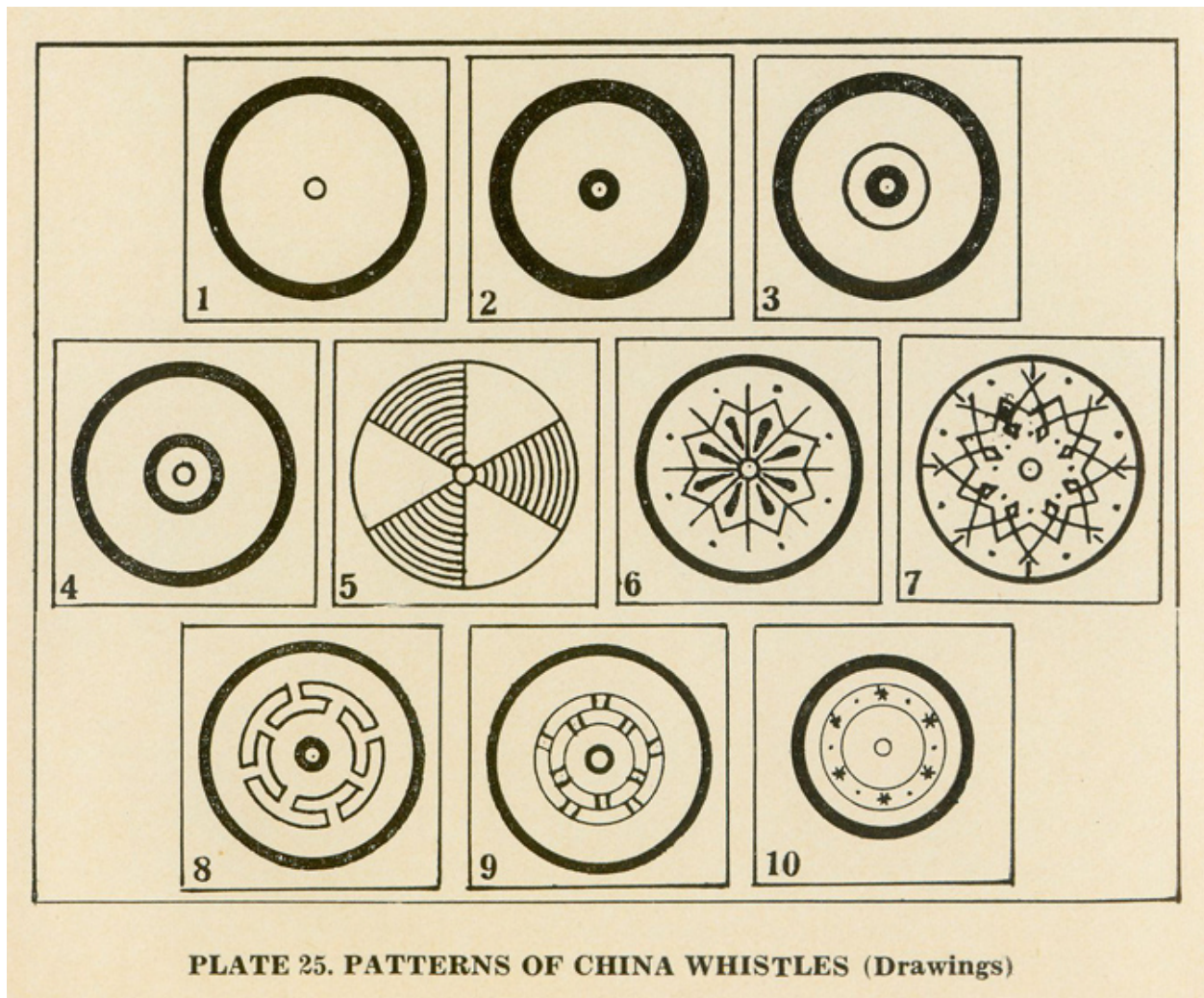
PLATE 23. SHAPES OF CHINA WHISTLES (Drawings)

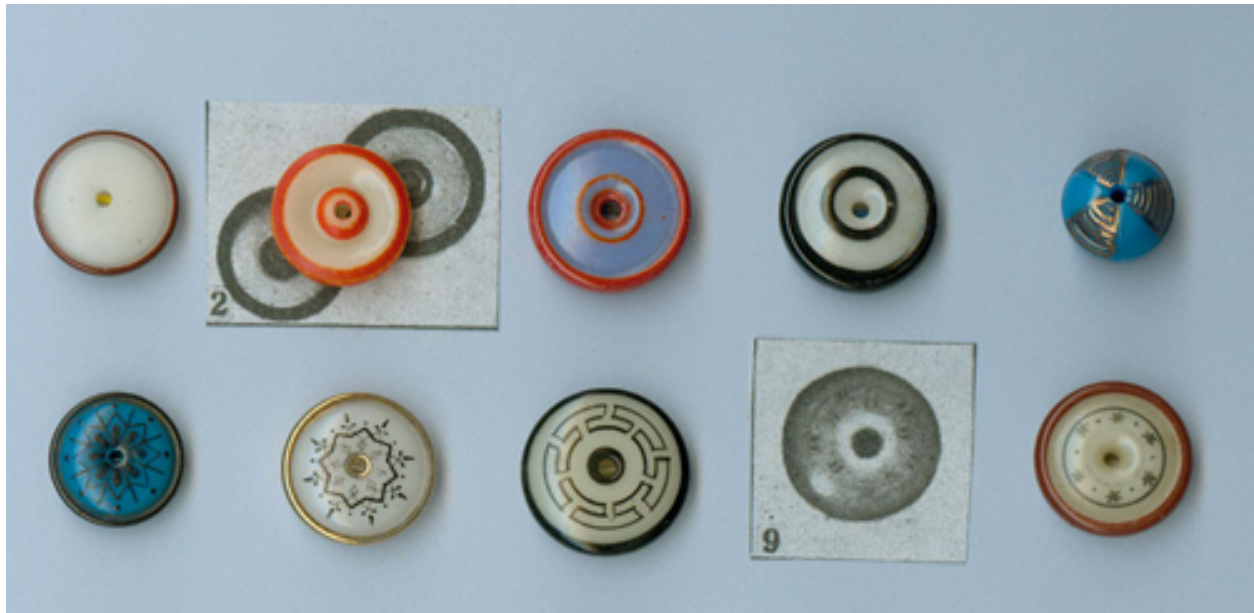


Of the shapes, I have found the scarcer types to be #s 5, 8, 11, 13,

14, 15, 19 and 20. And obviously, #s 16 and 18 are rare. *Guidelines* does not list “marbled” as a color, but it is common on body type #17.

There are 10 patterns illustrated in *Guidelines*. The statement is made that “no pattern comes on more than one shape” and the shape to which each pattern belongs is given in the text.





Pattern # 9 is elusive, but several patterns have surfaced which have not been included in *Guidelines'* list. Others may be seen at the China Exchange site <http://www.angelfire.com/tx5/chinaexchange/>



In the following photo the first row shows china whistles shapes which were not catalogued, but are legitimate examples. The second row includes from left to right: a marbled unlisted body type, a faux marbled finish on an unlisted body type and two unlisted patterns.



And

lastly, there are some glass whistles that are commonly mistaken for china whistles. Utilitarian china buttons do not have “D” shaped holes on the reverse.

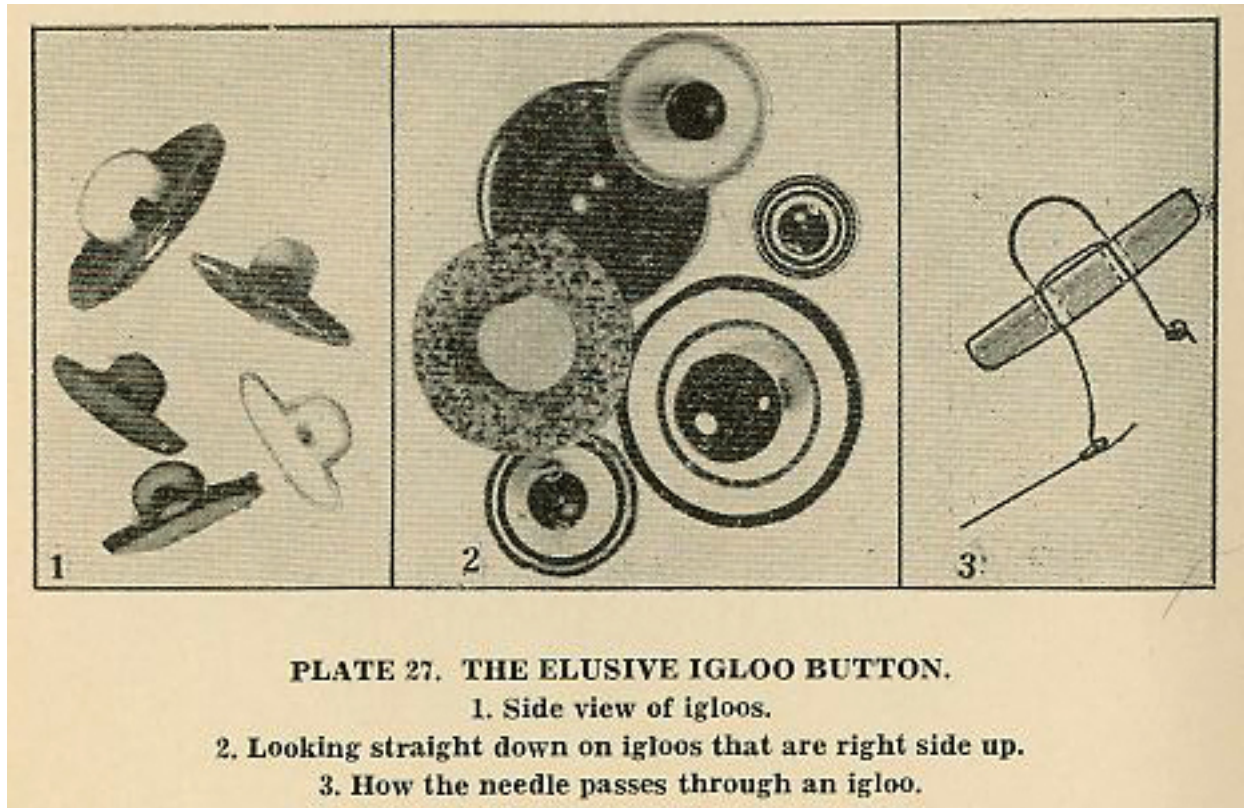
“D” shaped holes on glass buttons
often mistaken for china whistles



Part 6 : The Elusive Igloo Button

The igloo is the last button included under “Complex Construction.” There are both small (under 3/4”) and medium (over 3/4”) igloo buttons in approximately equal numbers. The

current classification lists igloos as two-hole sew-throughs. They are distinguished by their unusual construction, in which a flat disk with two holes is topped by a dome with side openings for the sewing-through process.



IGLOO TOP	DISK BASE
1. white	white
2. gray mottled	gray mottled
3. tan-&-white mottled	tan-&-white mottled
4. brown-&-white mottled	brown-&-white mottled
5. white	brown-&-white mottled
6. white	tan-&-white mottled
7. white	gray mottled, also brown mottled
8. white	green
9. white	blue
10. white	black
11. white with black cap	white with narrow black band near igloo and wider one at edge
12. gray	black-&-white mottled
13. black	white with black edge and band near edge
14. black	white with green edge
15. black	white with orange edge and ring near igloo
16. black	white
17. red	white

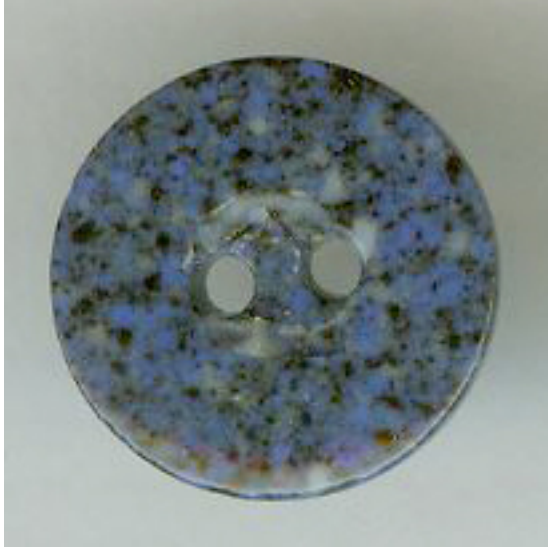
The pattern #9, a white igloo top on a blue disk base is considered rare.

Igloo Buttons

8 of the 17 patterns listed in *Guidelines*
in both size small and medium



The half igloo? While collecting chinas I have found three different examples of the bottom disk of an igloo missing the rounded dome. One day while browsing *Guidelines* I noticed Shape 13 listed under Two-Hole Hollow-Eye buttons and realized I had never seen an example of this button in a collection. Refer to pages 53-54—could it be the half igloo? The blue mottled example below measures 9/16" as referenced in *Guidelines* for Shape 13.



CHAPTER 3: TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS

February 5, 2012 by Janet

Chapter Three: Two-Hole China Buttons

Parts 1-9

Part 1: Two-Hole Hollow-Eye China Buttons

All china buttons included in this section have round circular sewing wells of varying size and depth. Twenty-four different shapes are catalogued.

I am going to copy here the introductory tabulation for color and pattern as this is the first time it is really put into use.

Chapter two begins with an explanation of the system devised by Lamm and Schuler to provide uniform labeling for all china buttons. The system is used throughout the text, where appropriate. They first assigned a name to each body type and displayed each variation that they found in that one body type. Throughout the text, buttons of all types are labeled as follows:

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Two-hole hollow eye buttons begin with shapes 1-5, termed “Ringers”. Three-banded ringers are more uncommon than the two-banded examples, and those with three bands on colored bodies are the most scarce.

TWO- AND THREE-BANDED RINGERS

First to be considered will be those with a deep tubular hollow enclosed by one or two raised bands. When (as has been the case with all we have ever seen) color has been applied to these molded bands and also to the raised molded rim, we have the popular type sometimes called two-banded or three-banded ringers.

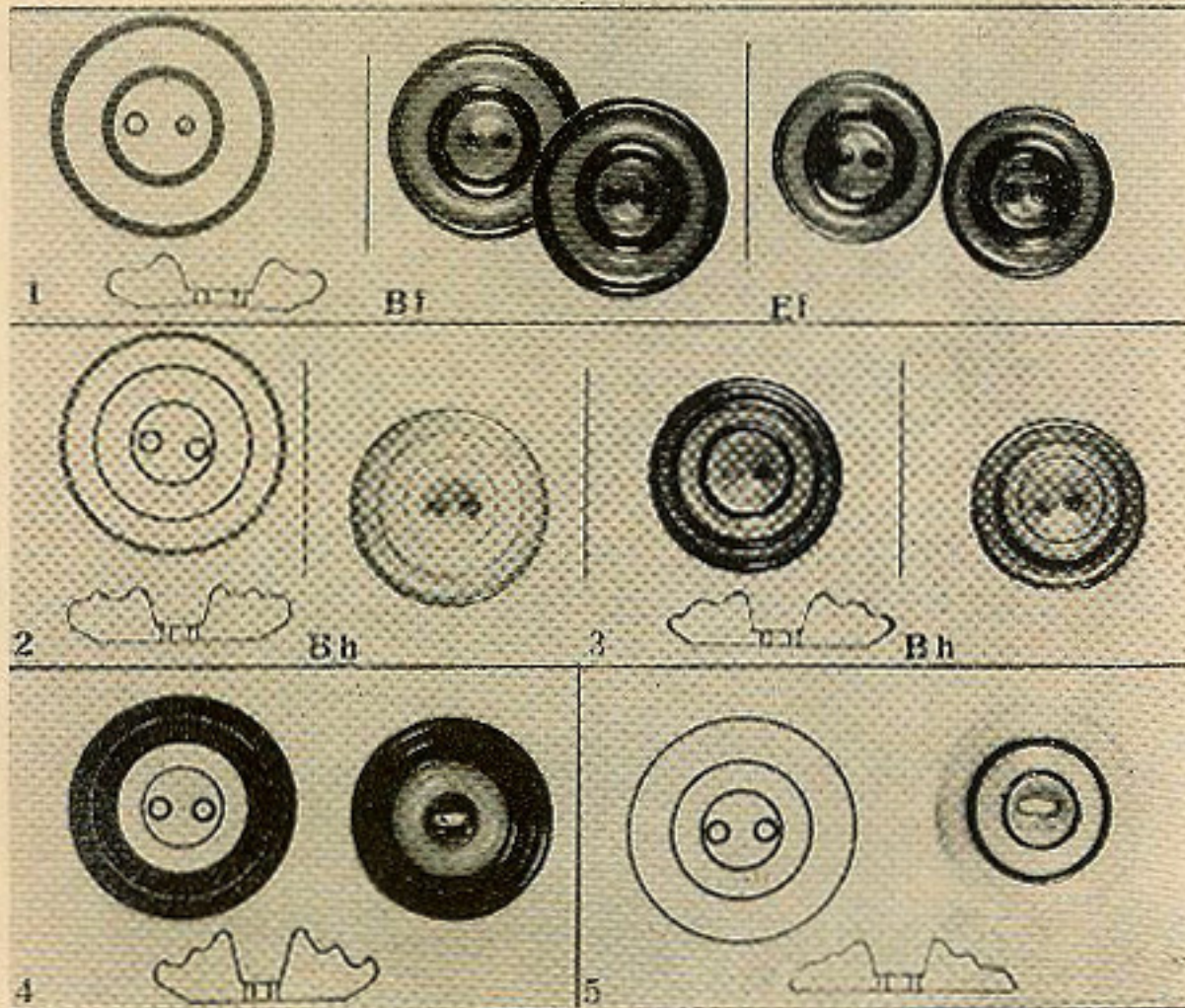


PLATE 29. TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTON SHAPES DISTINGUISHED BY A DEEP TUBULAR HOLLOW-EYE

1 to 3, two- and three-banded ringers;
4 and 5 other body styles.

Shape 1, the two-banded ringer is found with color on a white body, with a colored ring, rim and usually a tinted back (1B) and in opaque colored bodies with colored ring and rim (1E).

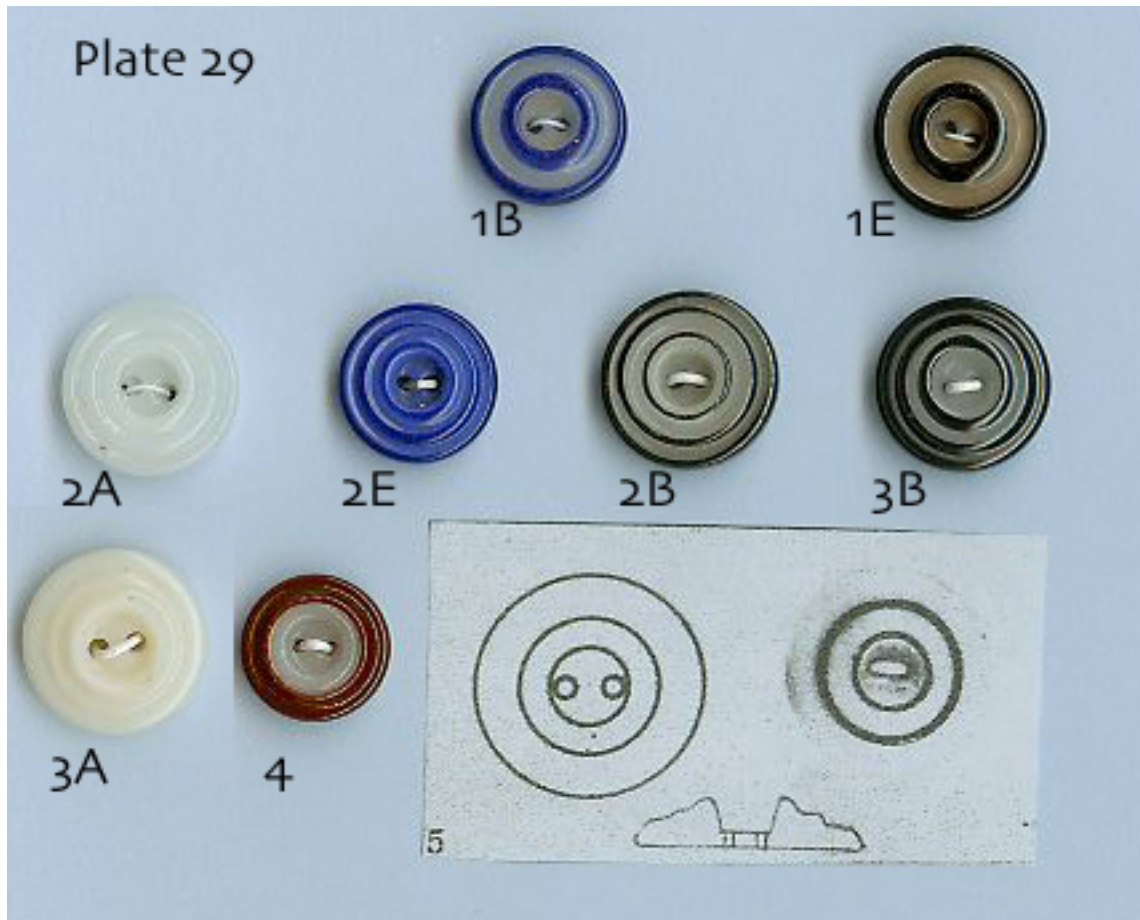
Shape 2, the three banded ringer is found in an opaque white body (2A), colored trim on a white body (2B) and colored trim on an opaque colored body (2E). Shape 2 is flat like Shape 1.

Shape 3 is decorated with three bands but the surface slopes up from the rim, rather than being flat as in Shapes 1 and 2. It is found undecorated (opaque white) and trimmed as in Shape 2. Ironically, the opaque white examples of both Shapes 2 and 3 are scarce, with Shape 3 being htf (hard to find).

Shape 4 is a variation, standing higher in the center as Shape 3 does, but decorated differently in that only the center band and sewing well remain white. Only one example, with brown trim and measuring 11/16" has been catalogued and it is htf .

Shape 5 is scarce, found in white with brown bands.

Somehow my examples intended to match Plate 29 are a bit scrambled. Good practice reading the labeling system?



Shapes 6 through 12 are shown on Plate 30 and are grouped together inasmuch as at the time of tabulation, none of these shapes were found with color trim. Introduced are two new body finishes: "C" for lustered, "D" for opaque body color other than white (and without trim), and "F" for marbled. The marbled/crockery appearing examples are very attractive but not especially rare. They are found in shades of green, gray, brown, tan, black and blue. These shapes are found commonly in both small and medium sizes.

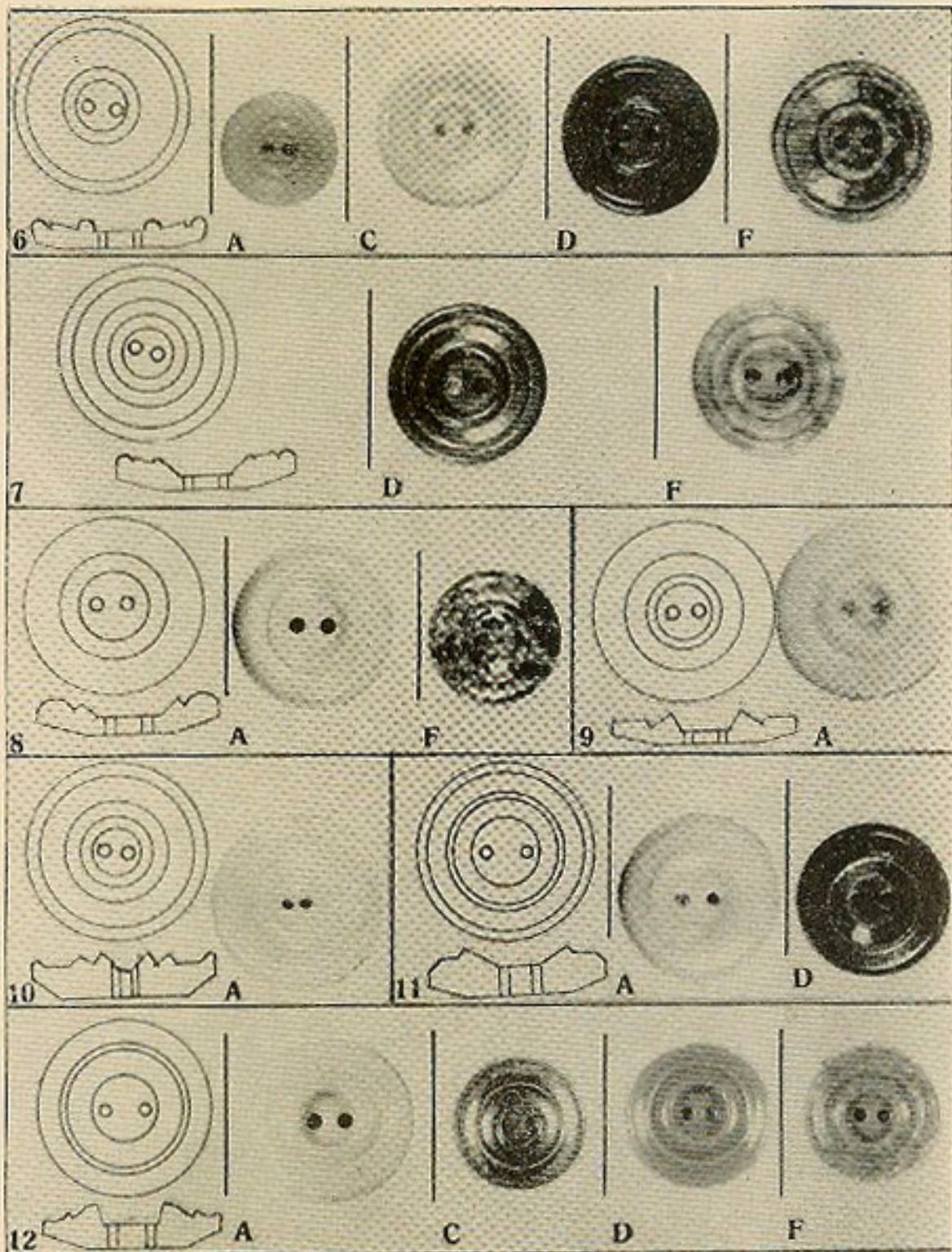
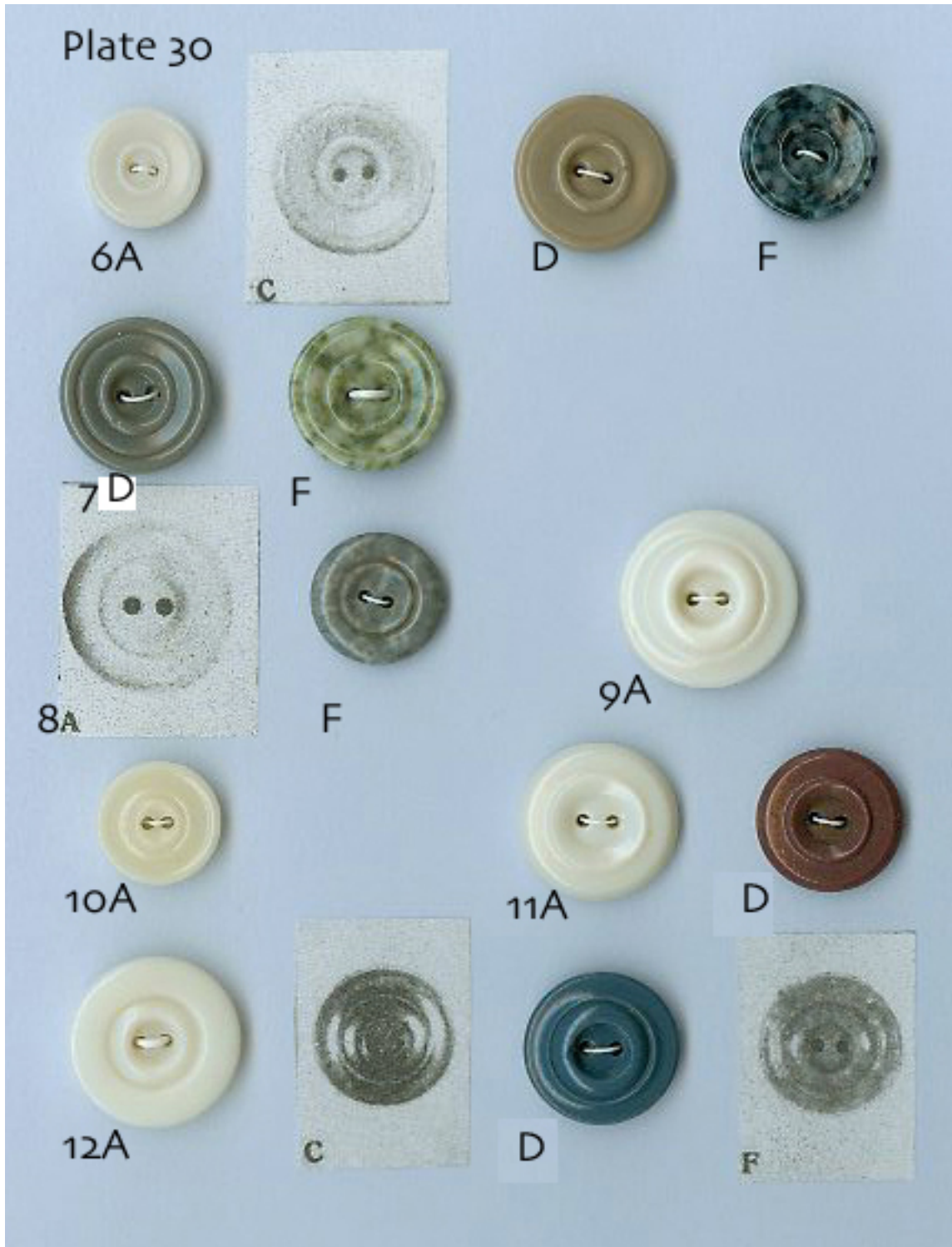


PLATE 30. TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTON SHAPES WITH RAISED BANDS OR RIDGES AROUND CIRCULAR SEWING WELLS, Nos. 6 to 12.



And Shape 6 as an exception to the rule of untrimmed bodies:



Shape 6 with
lustered rim

Plate 31 includes Shapes 13 and 14.

Remember my theory about half igloos and shape 13? I have another example of an igloo disk missing the domed top posted below the scan of these buttons. Of Shape 14 examples, A, opaque white is the most uncommon.

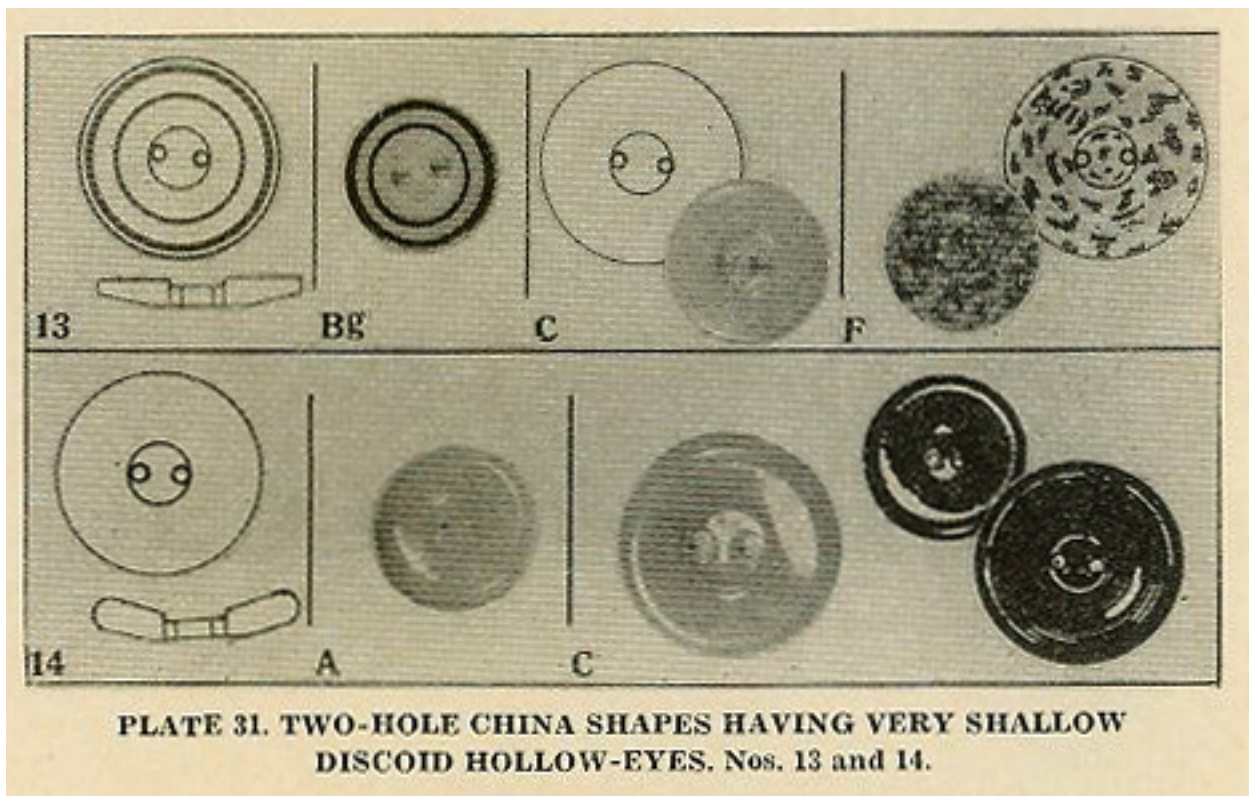
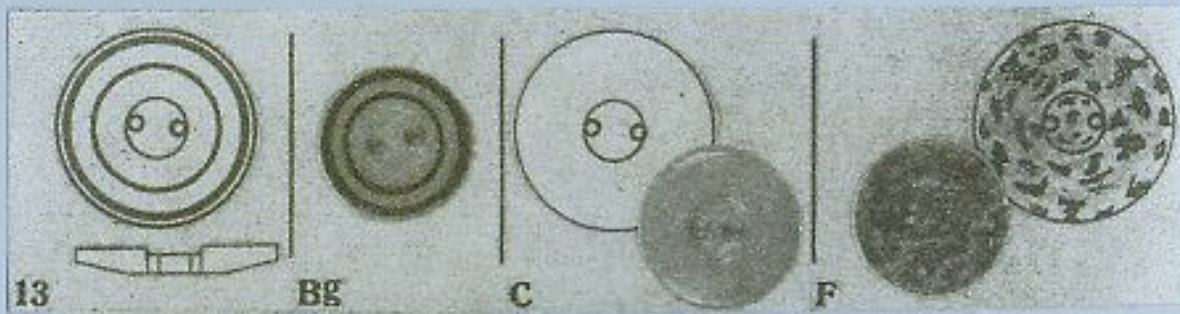


Plate 31



14A



C



C



Shape13
lookalike

Plate 32 continues with hollow-eyes termed “Saucer-like”. Here the colored buttons are in sharp contrast to the black and white plate, particularly shape 15. The plate also shows the three different backs found on this one shape, shown as “o”, “oo” and “ooo.” It is difficult to see the differences in the plate, but “o” has a slight depression around the holes, “oo” has a recessed ring and “ooo” is flat. Not shown in the plate but in evidence on my card is Bw (a dark body color—inasmuch as *Guidelines* distinguishes cream a dark body color in contrast to white—with a broken band).

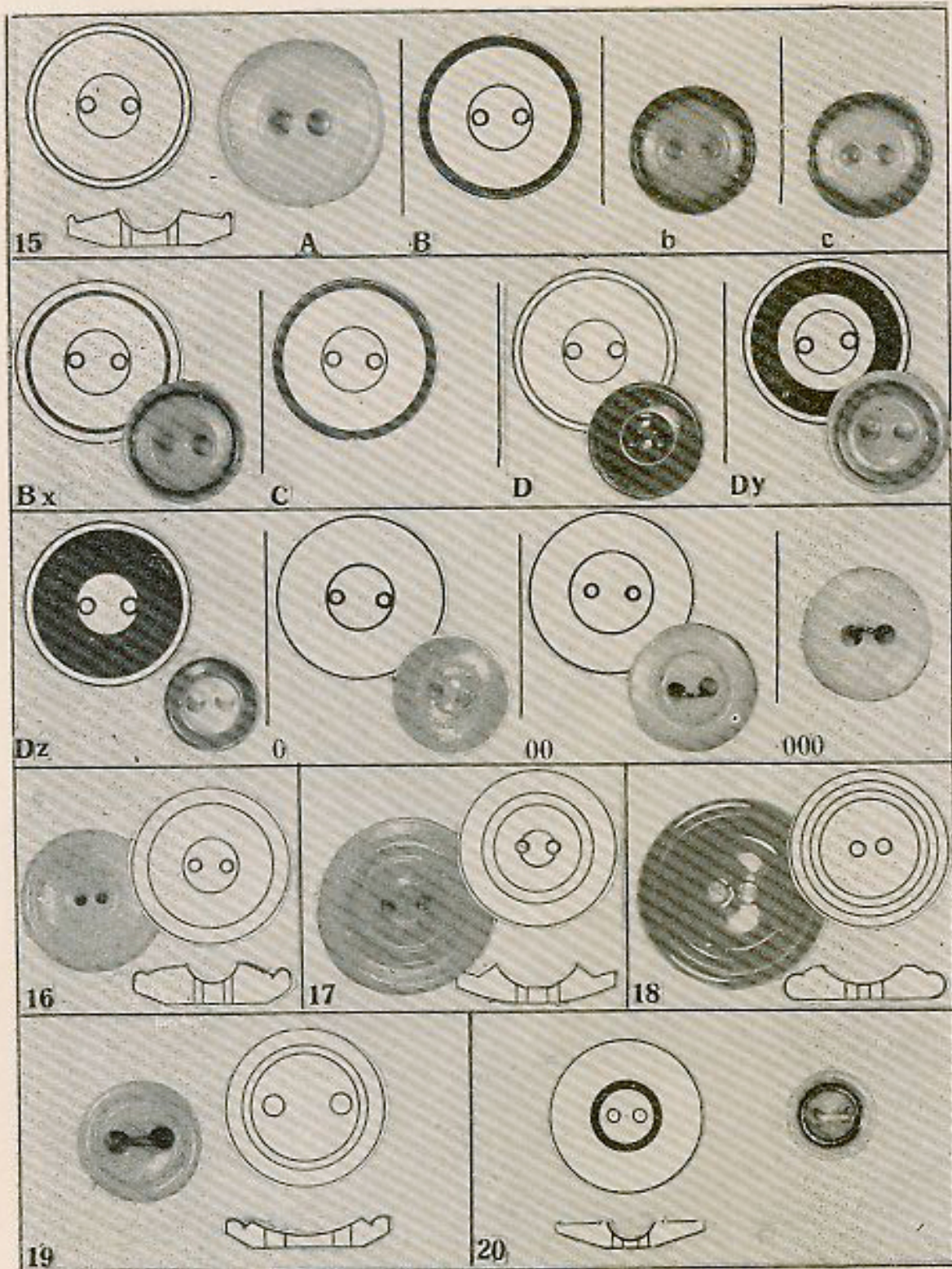


PLATE 32. TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS HAVING SAUCERLIKE SEWING WELLS. Nos. 15 to 20.

Saucer-like Hollow-eyes

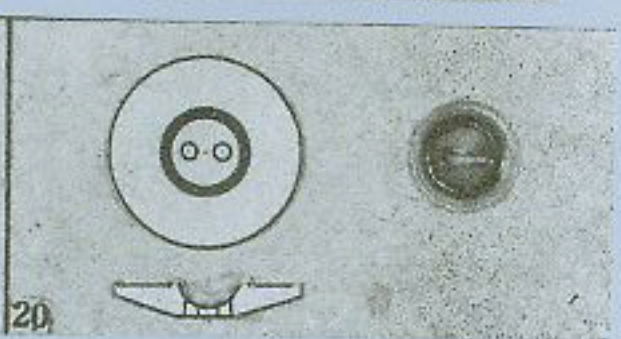
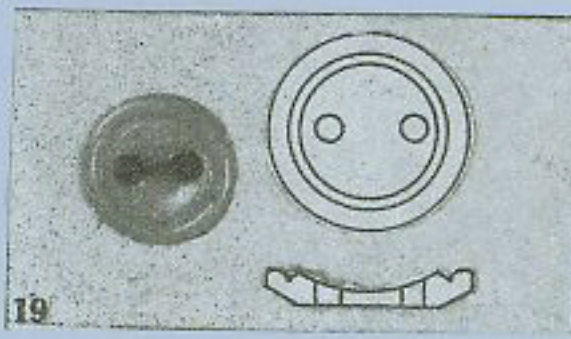
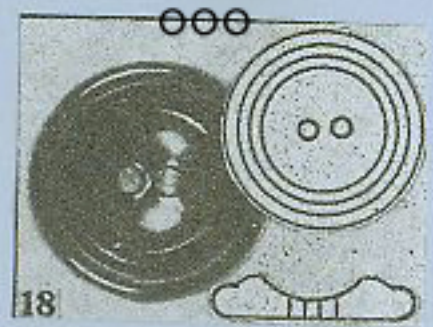
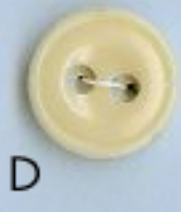


Plate 33 concludes the hollow-eyes with the remaining six catalogued shapes, grouped as “off-beat” shapes.

REMAINING HOLLOW-EYE CHINAS OFF-BEAT SHAPES

At the end of the series are six different kinds of hollow-eye chinas none of which has a name, none of which can be described easily. Fortunately we can depend upon the plates to show how each one is shaped and how the sewing-well curves. *Shape 21* can be tabulated:

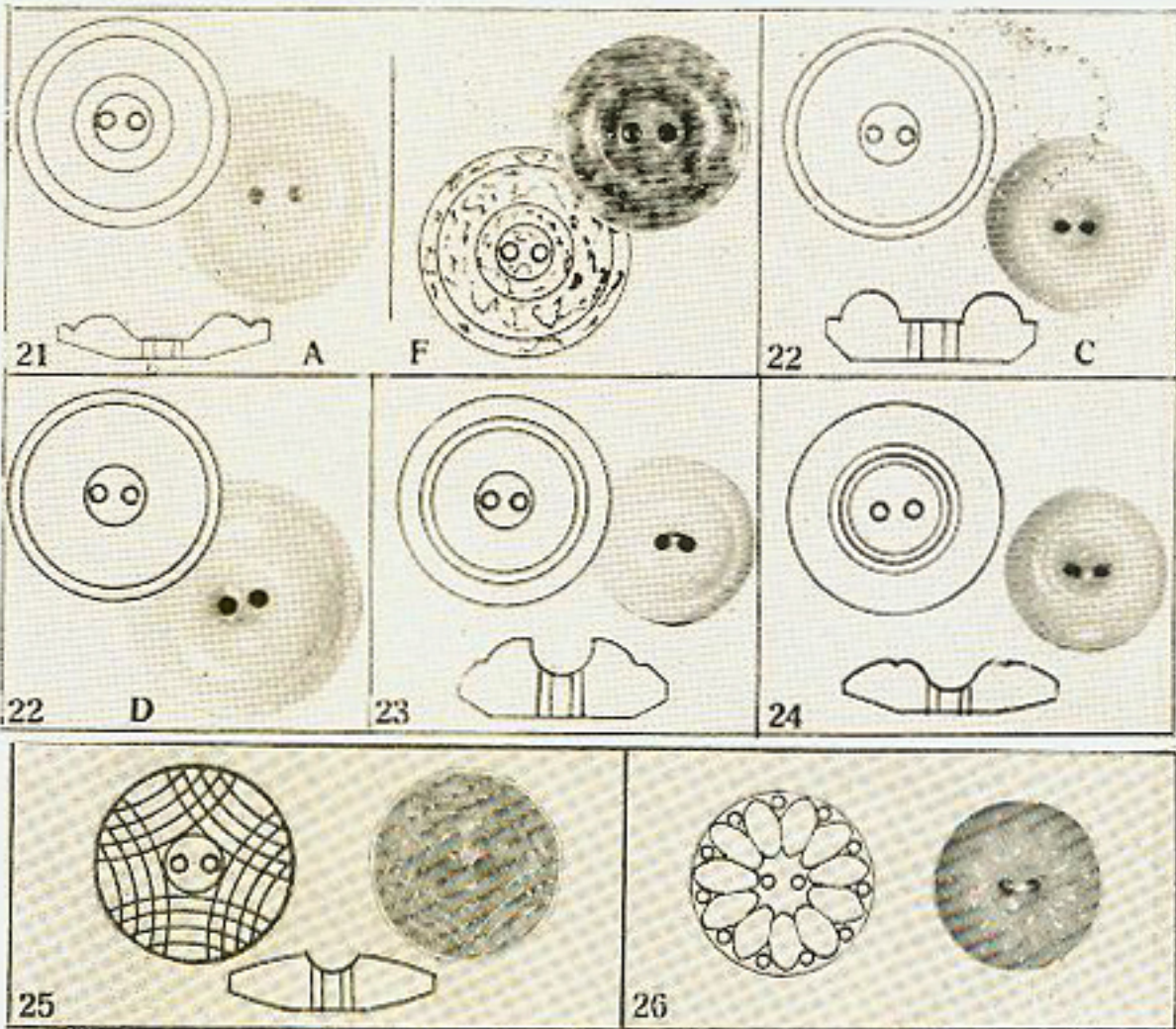
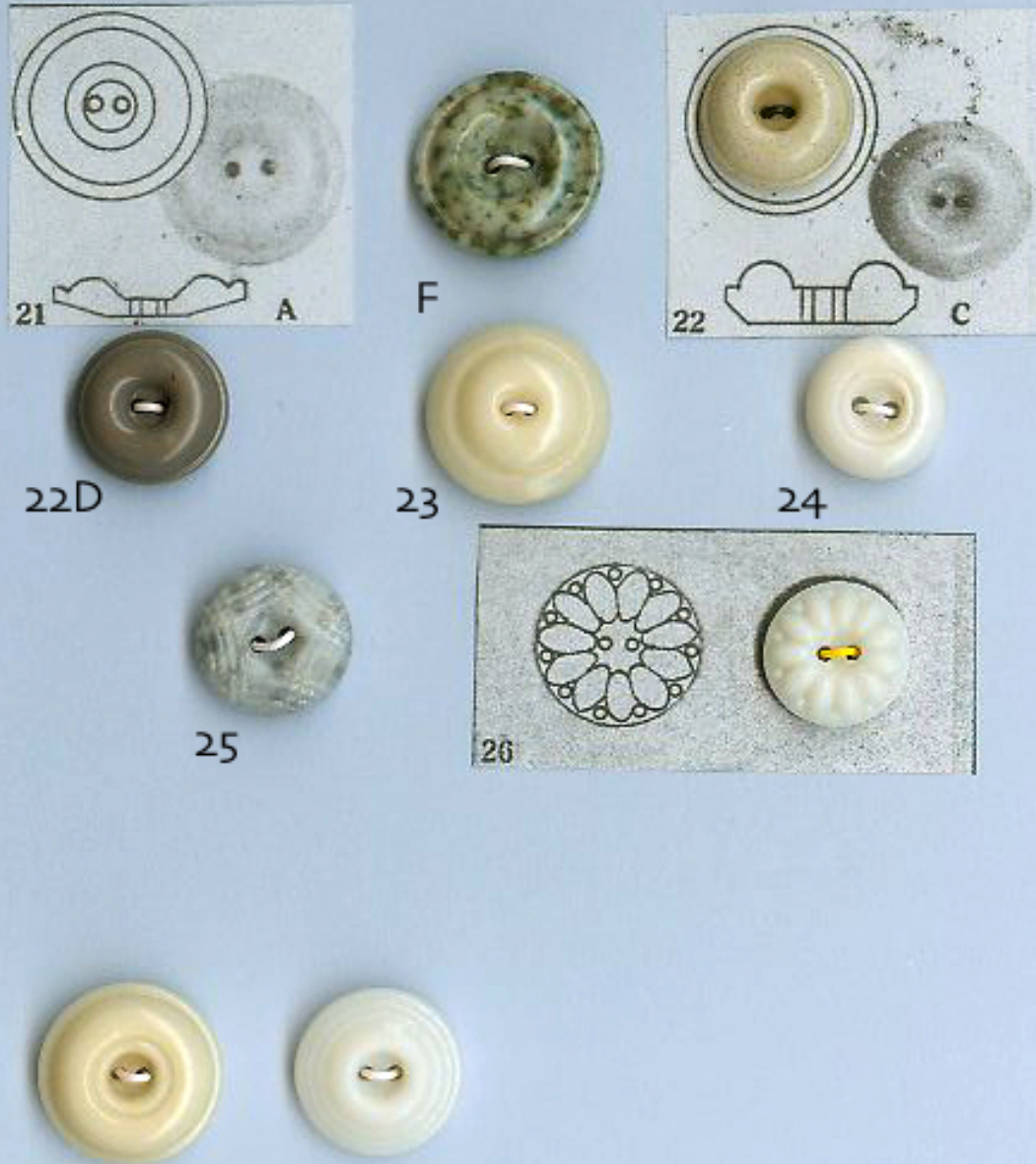


PLATE 33. OFF-BEAT SHAPES AMONG TWO-HOLE HOLLOW-EYE
BUTTONS. Nos. 21 to 26.

Plate 33 Hollow-eye Off-beat Shapes



Unable to find in Hollow-eye plates

Shape 26 has proved to be the most difficult for me to find.

I think it is reasonably difficult to identify these shapes, particularly without a copy of *Guidelines* which gives a bit more

description (usually the color and size found). I suggest using a fingernail to trace the surface of your button, while scanning the cross-sections shown in the plates.

PART 2: Deepwell China Buttons

DEEPWELL CHINA BUTTONS

The deepwell is one of the most practical of the chinas for use on clothing. As in the whistles, the sewing-well is sunken to protect the thread from surface wear. This shape is not easily broken for it has thick, solid construction. The colors are pleasing and they match a variety of fabrics used in clothing.

For the button collector, the beauty is in the variety of colors and color trims. There is very little variation in shape or size.

The deepwell is a rounded ellipse. Viewed from the side, the top and bottom seem the same, with equal thickness from the sides. The smallest we have seen measure 12 mm, the largest 16 mm. All pass through the small size on the NBS official measure. The height of the buttons varies from 5 mm to 8 mm.

The deep sewing well on top of the button goes almost half way through the body. Its sides are straight and the base on which the thread rests is flat. All deepwells have two holes.

The tabulation below follows the established outline for china buttons. Where none of a certain type is known, the letter is omitted.

- A. Plain opaque white body
- B. Color trim on white body
 - b. banded around edge and over side
- C. Luster finish
 - a. banded around edge and over side
- D. Opaque body color
- G. Metal rimmed

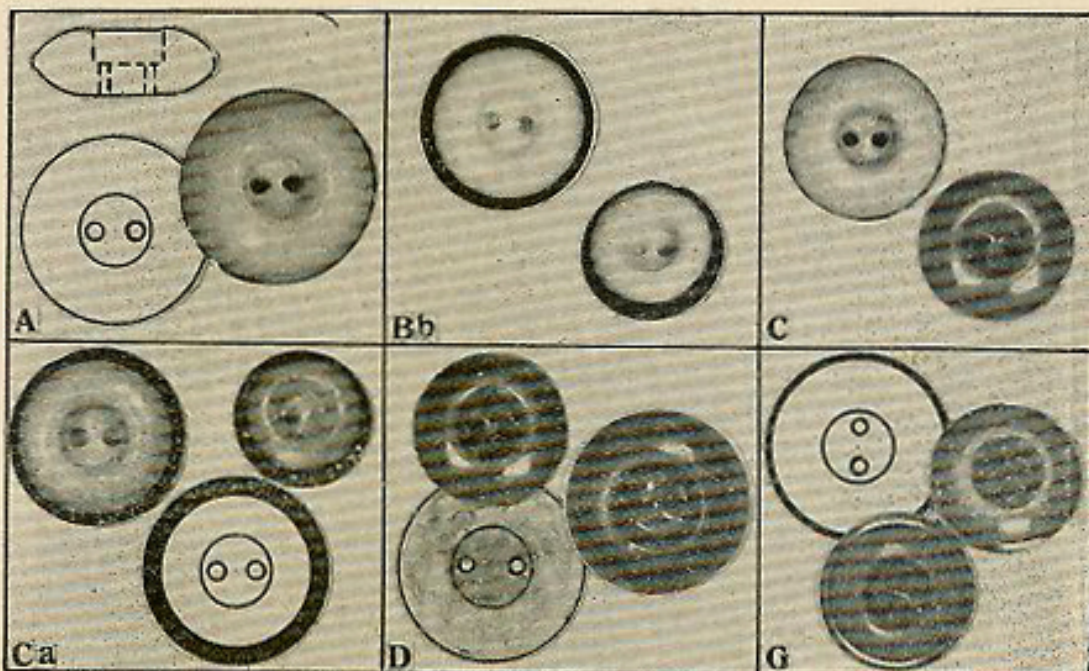
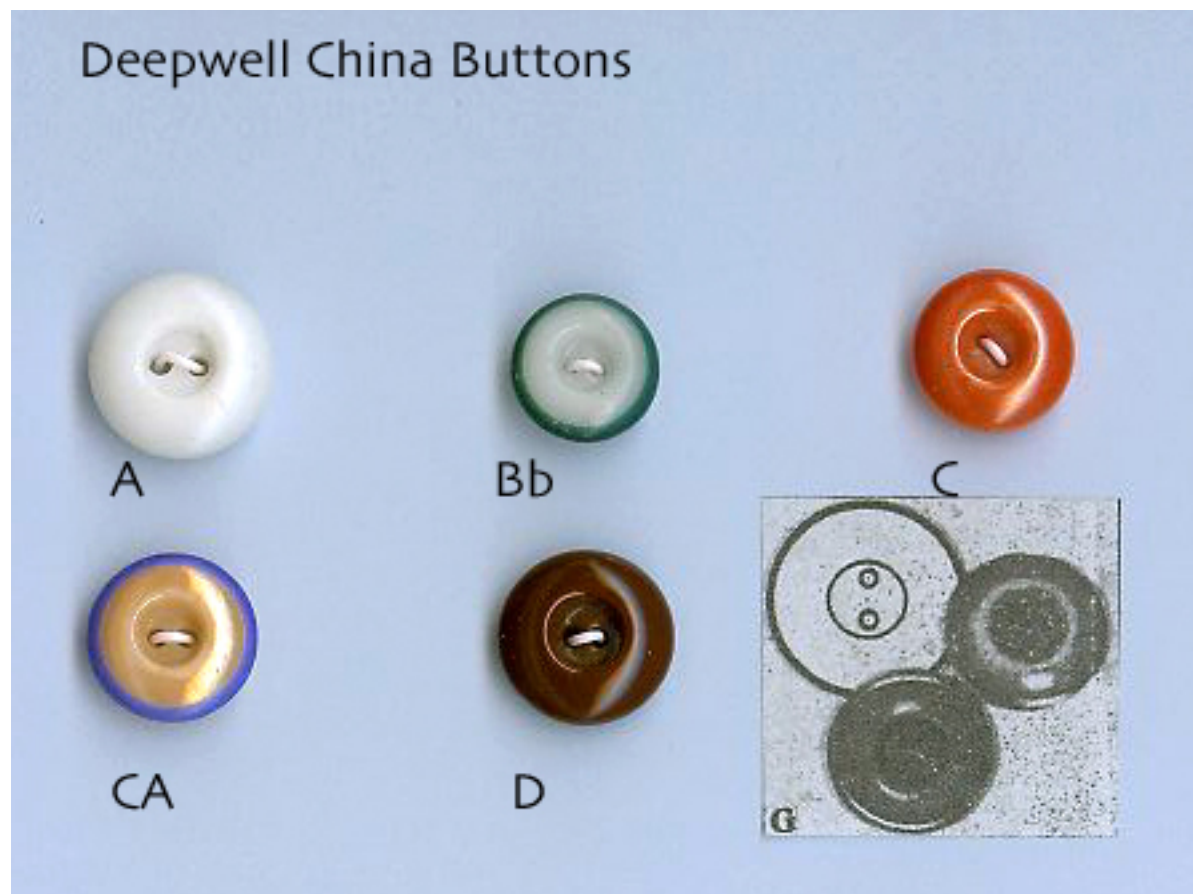


PLATE 34. DEEPWELL TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS. SHAPES AND PATTERNS



Strangely, the white deepwell is more difficult to find than the many colored and combination examples.

PART 3: Two-Hole China Button with Smooth Beveled Rim

The description of this button refers to the common four-hole dish: “As we shall see when four-hole buttons are described, one of the most plentiful shapes has a smooth beveled rim enclosing a ‘dished’ center. But when we looked for two-hole buttons of that shape, we were able to find only one single, solitary example. It is pearl luster, size 9/16”.”

There is no example shown and I am still looking for one.

PART 4: Tire Shape

From *Guidelines*: “This basic shape gets its name from the rim which is tubular. Plate 35 shows four examples all of which have a moderately heavy tire around a wide, flat center.” Examples noted are white, lustered, opaque body colors and one button with a spatter type calico pattern and another with purple spatter on the rim. Below I have a photo of a tire shape with a silver luster rim.

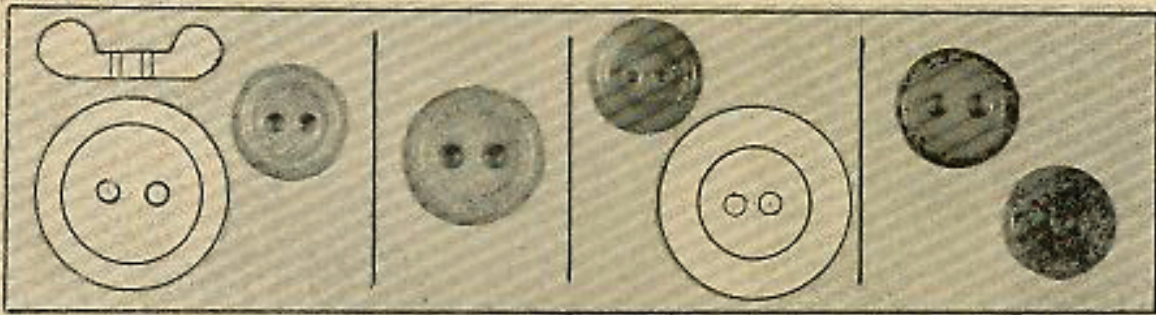
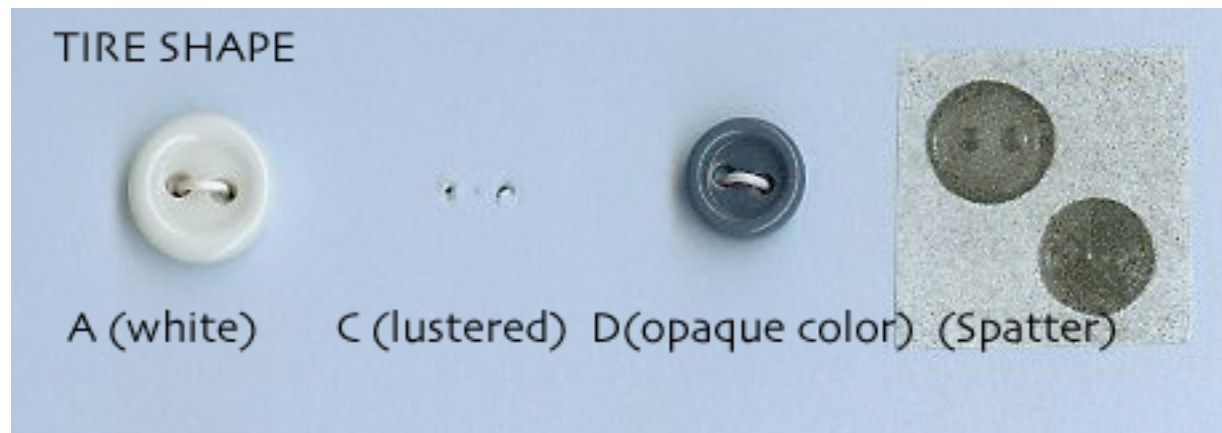


PLATE 35. TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS, TIRE SHAPE RIMS.



A (white)

C (lustered)

D (opaque color)

(Spatter)



PART 5: Two-Hole China Buttons with Radiating-Line Rims

From *Guidelines*: “All of the buttons in this group have rims molded with lines (ridges-and-grooves) which radiate from a center or encircle the edge.”

1. Pie-crust. This button is common in a four-hole type, but rare in the two-hole variety. White with pearl luster is the only type seen. (Rare)
2. Elongated holes identify this type, seen only in diminutives. (Less rare)
3. Called the sunburst type, this button is shown below in my scan, separate from the others. Before the china/glass controversy was settled, this button definitely exhibited glass characteristics and has no resemblance to its china relatives. All the examples I have seen have a silver luster center extending out on the rays.
4. Fluted-rim type, this button is a beauty, seen only in white. Two sizes are recorded: 5/8” and 11/16”. (Rare)

5. Concave shape with 21 radiating lines extending out from a flat center to a raised-ring edge. They are described as a cream body with black or pink edge measuring $3/4$ ". (Rare)

6. Quatrefoil (star or cross) center. (Common)

7. Eight radiating lines start from the center and extend out over a slightly rolled rim. Seen only in pearl luster. (Rare)

8. Small deep center with radiating lines covering a rolled rim. Seen in white, lustered, opaque colors and a painted top. Often called a "Plump". (Common)

9. Thirteen point rosette "with tips meshed to notches in the beveled rim." Brown in a $1/2$ " size is listed; mine is tan and $5/8$ " in diameter.

TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS WITH RADIATING-LINE RIMS

All of the buttons in this group have rims molded with lines (ridges-and-grooves) which radiate from a center or encircle the edge.

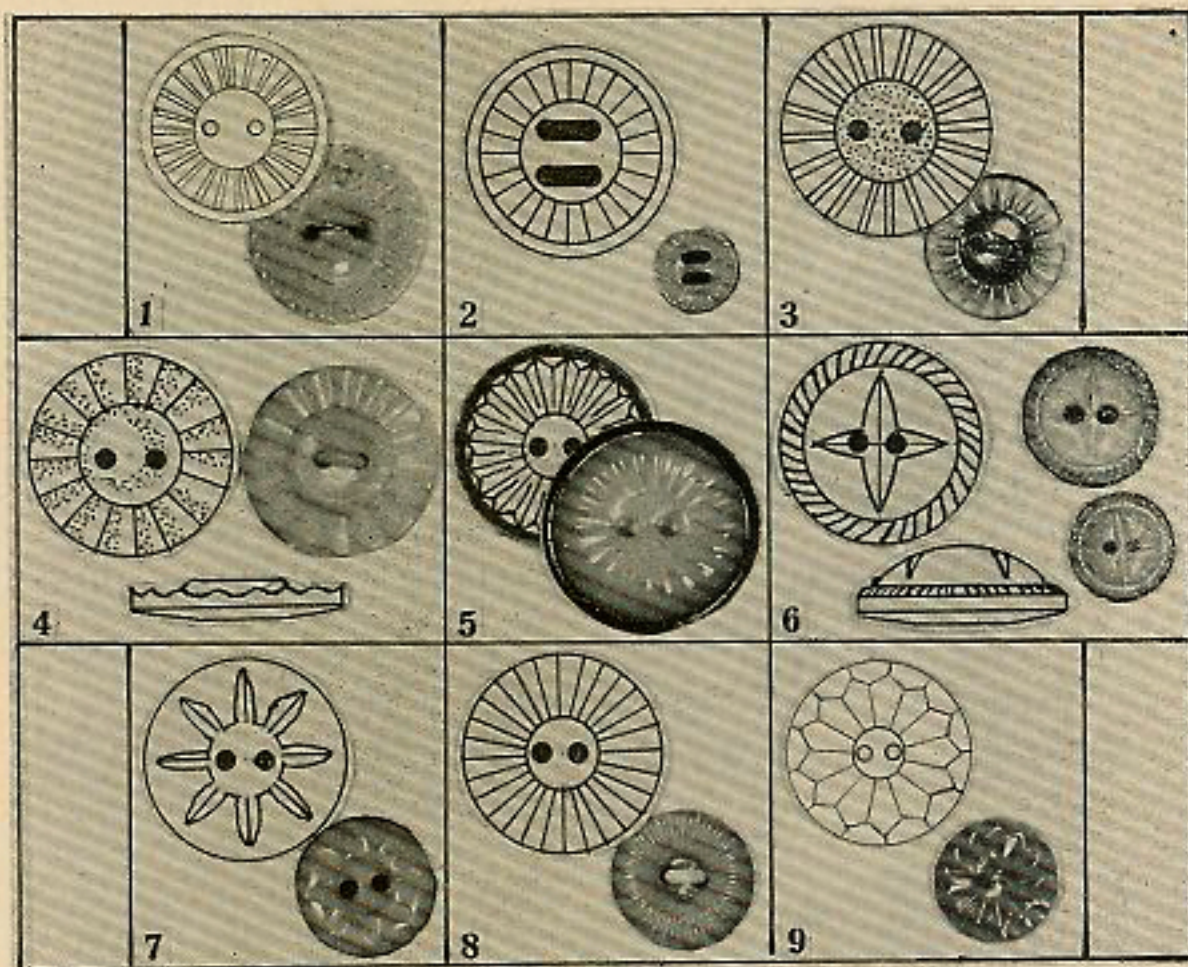
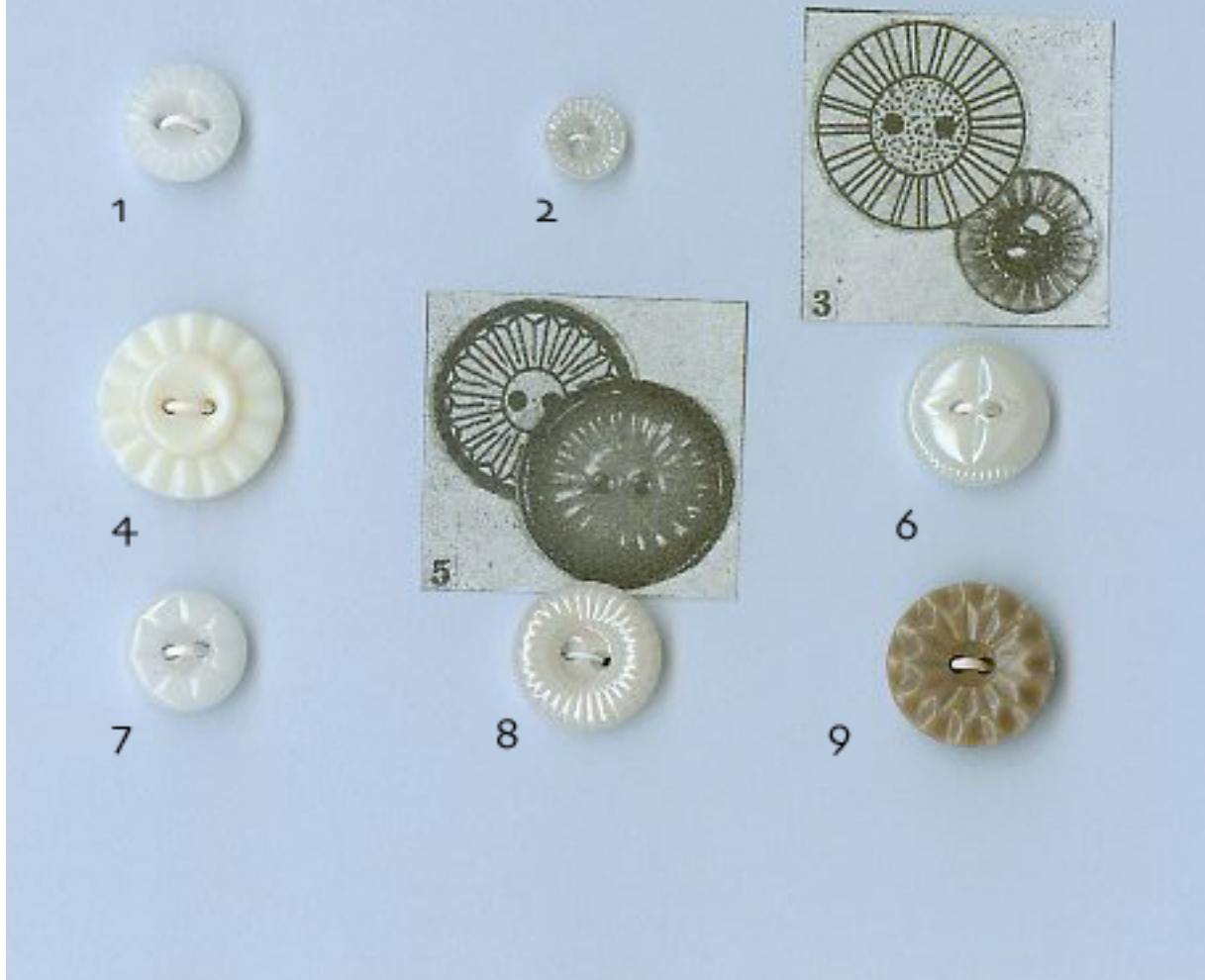
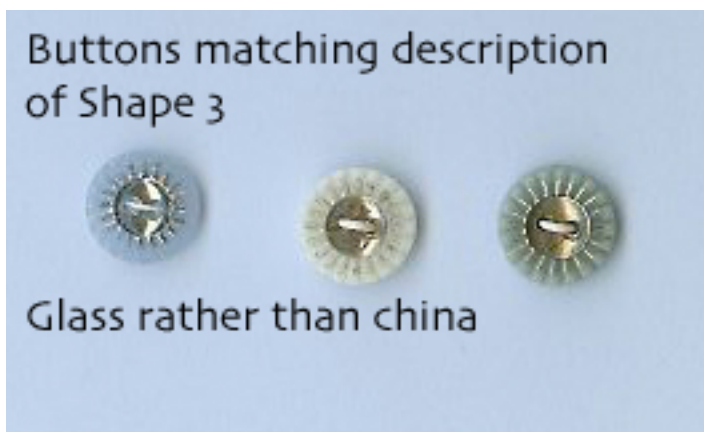


PLATE 36. SEW-THROUGH CHINA BUTTONS WITH RADIATING-LINE RIMS. TWO-HOLE VARIETIES.

Two Hole with Radiating Line Rims



Shape 3:

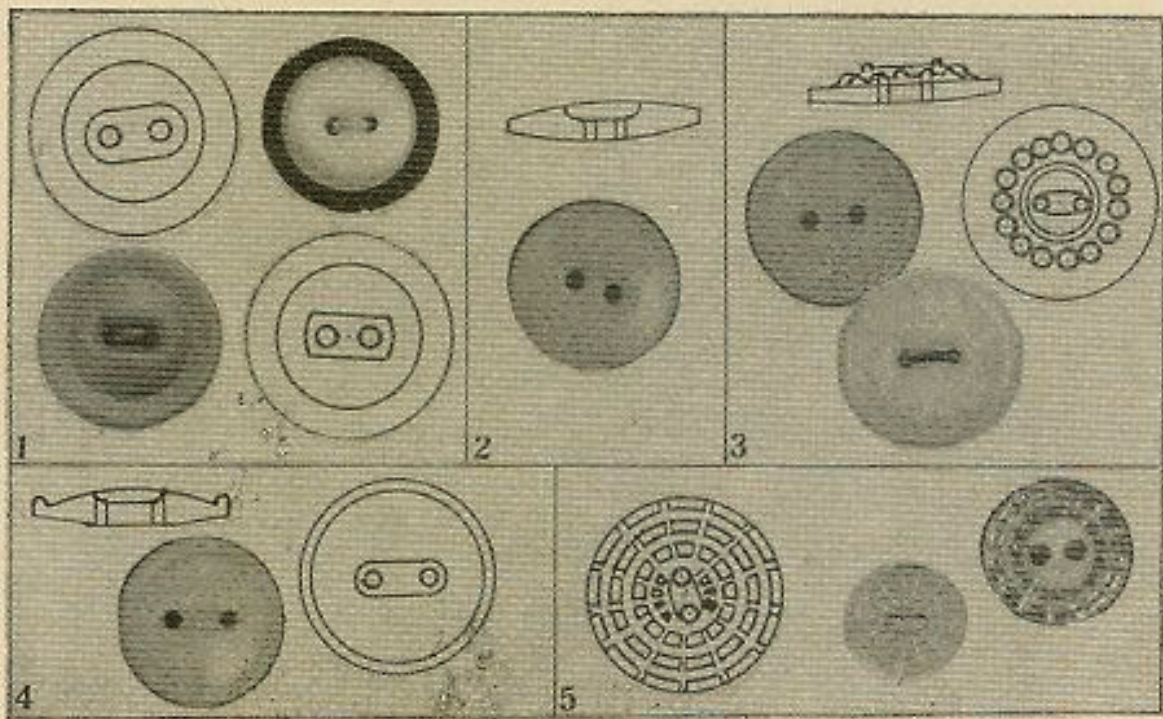


PART 6: China Buttons with Oval Eyes

From *Guidelines*: Oval-eye holes, always two in number, are set within an oval depression, which may have either rounded or boxed ends.

Oval Eyes are found in five shapes:

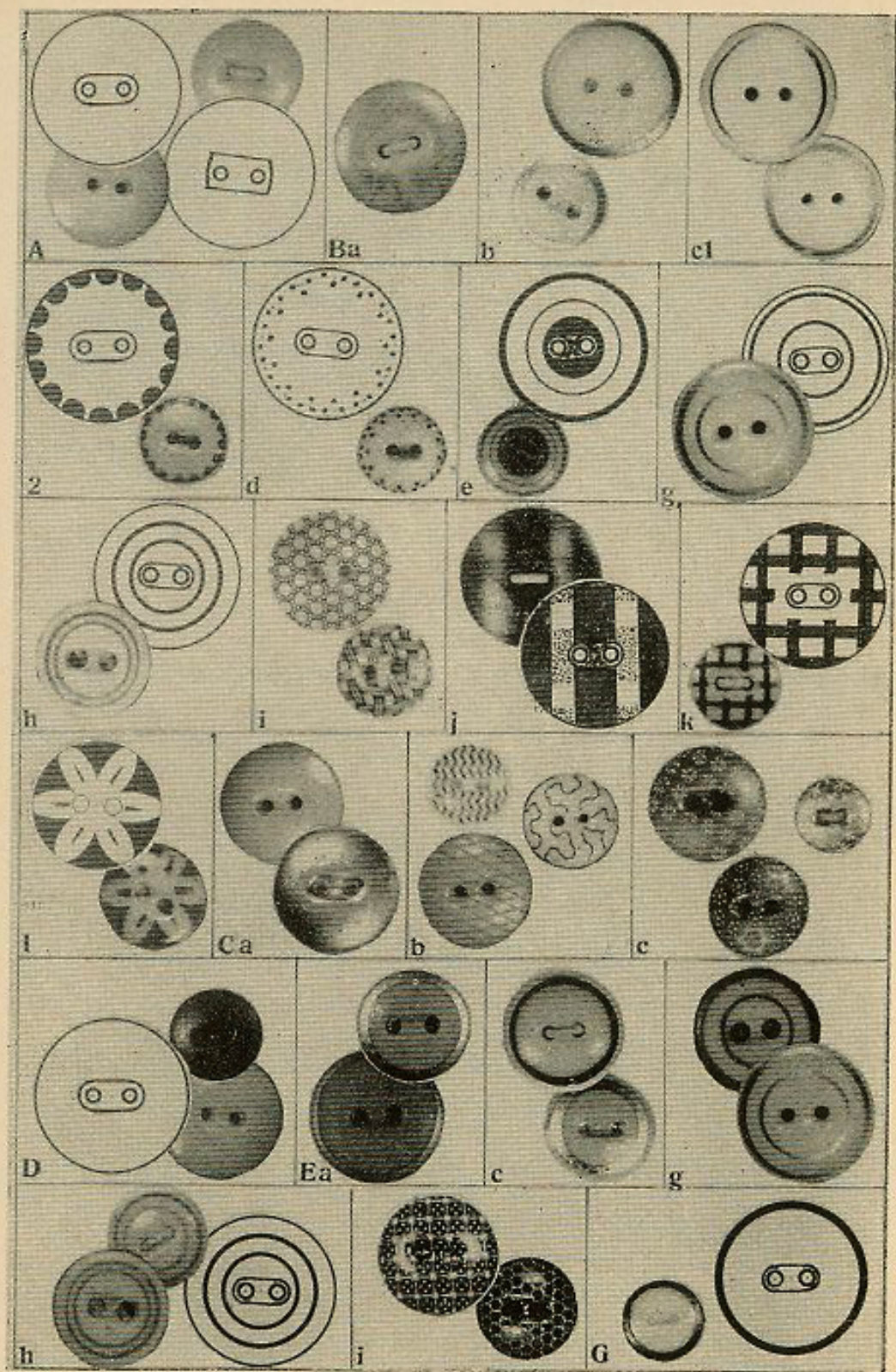
1. Mounds (Common)
2. Smooth top, low, convex, sometimes almost flat (Common)
3. Hobnail (Rare)
4. Low convex top with narrow molded rim. White, opaque color other than white and calico patterns. (Rare)
5. Czechoslovakia flat tops with spoke-and-circle (Common)



**PLATE 37. TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS WITH OVAL EYES.
SHAPES.**

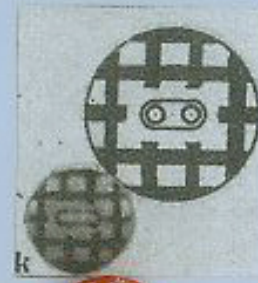
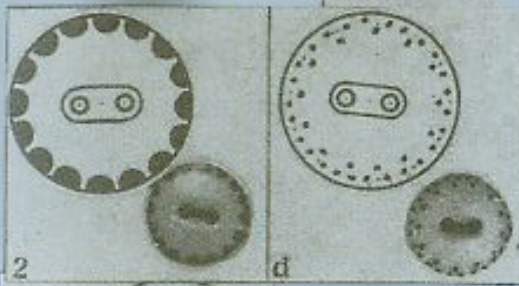
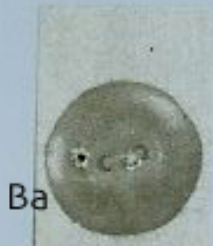


Plate 38 shows all the variations in color and patterns on smooth top oval eye buttons– it is my favorite group of china buttons! What do you think?



**PLATE 38. TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS WITH OVAL EYES.
 SMOOTH TOPS.**

Two Hole with Oval Eyes Smooth Tops



In the fourth row, Cb and Cc should be explained. The first is a luster (pearl) over a calico pattern (pink) and the second is a calico pattern (white) over a luster (orange).

Bi is an example of a calico pattern on a two-hole oval eye. Calicos are more often found on a four-hole dish type, and often the two-hole examples sport the less common patterns.

Bj is a gingham pattern which is discussed in greater detail later in *Guidelines*.

Stencils in the majority of patterns are found on oval eye bodies—some may also be found on both the smooth-top oval eye and the fish-eye body.

Missing from my collection are Ba (full cover on a white body; Ca below is full luster on a cream body—picky, picky these china collectors....), as well as two other patterns described as "scalloped band" and "dots around the edge in trefoil pattern". Also elusive is k: "Plaids other than gingham. Reported in blue, red." Another example I've yet to find is Ec, a colored body with a banded edge, side bare.

The metal rimmed smooth top sitting atop the photo from *Guidelines* is a late addition.

With all this variety, there are still other patterns accepted by china collectors. A few are shown below.



And then I found another lovely smooth top oval eye with a transfer pattern that is discussed in our National Button Bulletin July 1985. It was found by Diana Epstein and Millicent Safro, along with approximately 99 other examples, in an Albert Parent sample book. The buttons ranged in size from $21/32$ " to $27/32$ " and the bulletin describes them as "lustered and stenciled with a multitude of different patterns, some multi-colored. They cannot be classed with our well known stencils because the pattern is not medallion-like. Neither do they resemble our calicoes."



A second type of oval eye button is the Czechoslovakian flat top with spoke-and-circle. "A" the plain opaque white body is surprisingly difficult to find. "Ba" is missing from my collection, described as "Color trim on white body; rim fully covered. Gold rim with green or purple center band." Common are buttons with broken bands ("Bg1") and band in combination with broken band ("Bg2"). "Bl" is an example of the entire top painted/lustered. *Guidelines* documents only a blue example, but other colors have surfaced. "C", the final example is a lustered finish

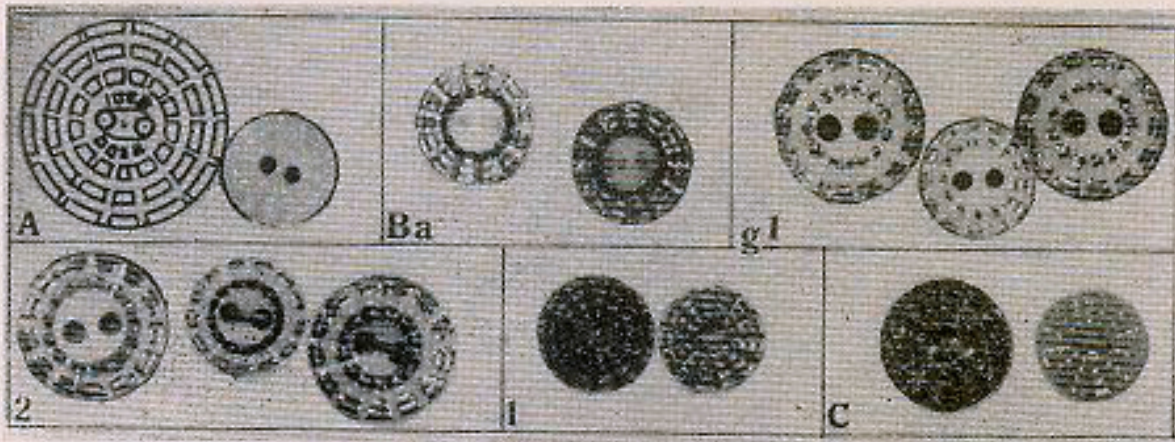
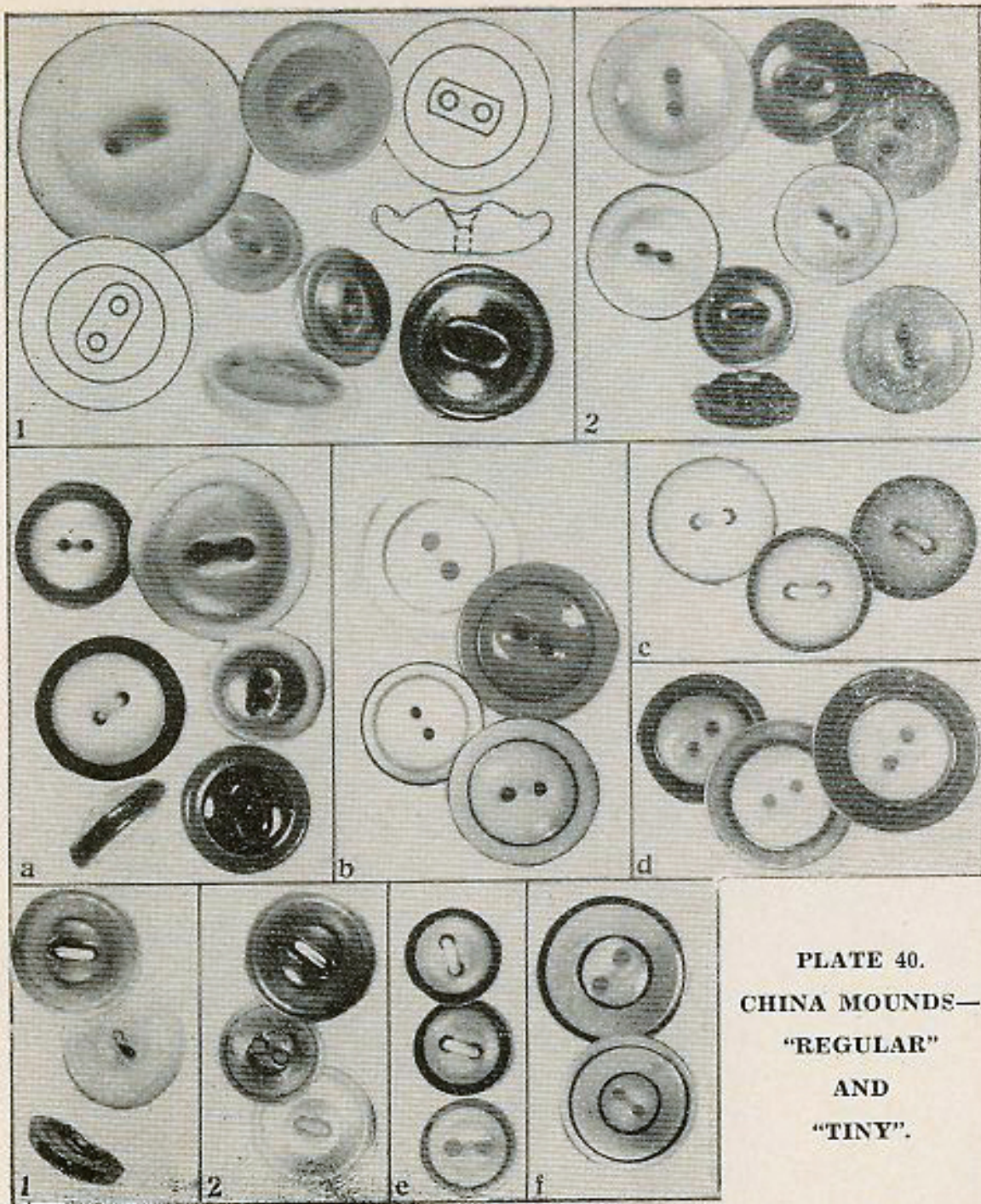


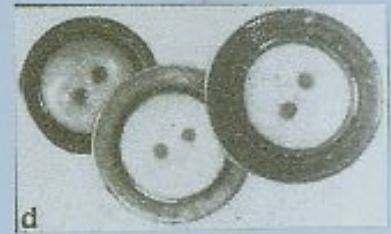
PLATE 39. CZECHOSLOVAKIAN FLAT TOPS WITH SPOKE-AND-CIRCLE



China mounds, a third type of oval eye button, demonstrate a tremendous range of color, color combinations, and sizes. Guidelines describes them: "a molded rim encloses a raised center having two holes in an oval eye. The shape is called a 'tiny-mound' when it has an incised line near the edge, a broad bevel sloping down to a mound just wide enough to hold the oval-eye.....A 'regular' mound is proportioned the other way around, its center being wider than its rim." (1) refers to white body examples; (2) refers to plain colored body examples. Patterns are given in the order of supply: (a) mound and rim of different color; (b) a narrow band or pin-line encircling the mound to separate it from the rim; (c) color around extreme edge covering the side of the button; (d) mound and rim of different color, metallic line around the mound." Continuing with tiny-mounds (e) heavy band around the rim and (f) matching bands around mound and near edge.



China Mounds - "Regular" and "Tiny"



The two variations in pattern shown at the bottom of the scan above are not catalogued in *Guidelines*. The wavy gold lined pattern is mentioned in NBB May-June 1972 and shown on saucer-like hollow eye buttons, but here seen on a tiny-mound. Far right lower line is a metal rimmed tiny mound of which I have found several examples, but again, it is undocumented.

PART 7: Fisheye China Buttons

Leaving oval eye china buttons behind, *Guidelines* says “fisheye is a trade name for two holes inside a spindle-shaped depression.” It continues with a misstatement that “fisheyes are never seen on calico buttons” – of which I will show you at least one a bit later. Size range is listed from 7/16” up to 1-1/8”. One example of a fisheye on a square button has been found. Color range is large, with pink the only color documented as a painted top rather than a solid body color (shown below as “1”). Lustered examples are found (shown below as “2”). The majority of fisheye china buttons sport a stencil pattern and these are catalogued separately later in *Guidelines*. Other patterns are (a) color trim in two depressions in button and enclosing the fisheye; (b) banded edge; (c) pin-line touching tips of fisheye; (d) two bands. Pattern “a” is not considered a stencil pattern because the surface of the button includes recesses and all other stencil patterns have a smooth surface surrounding the fisheye.

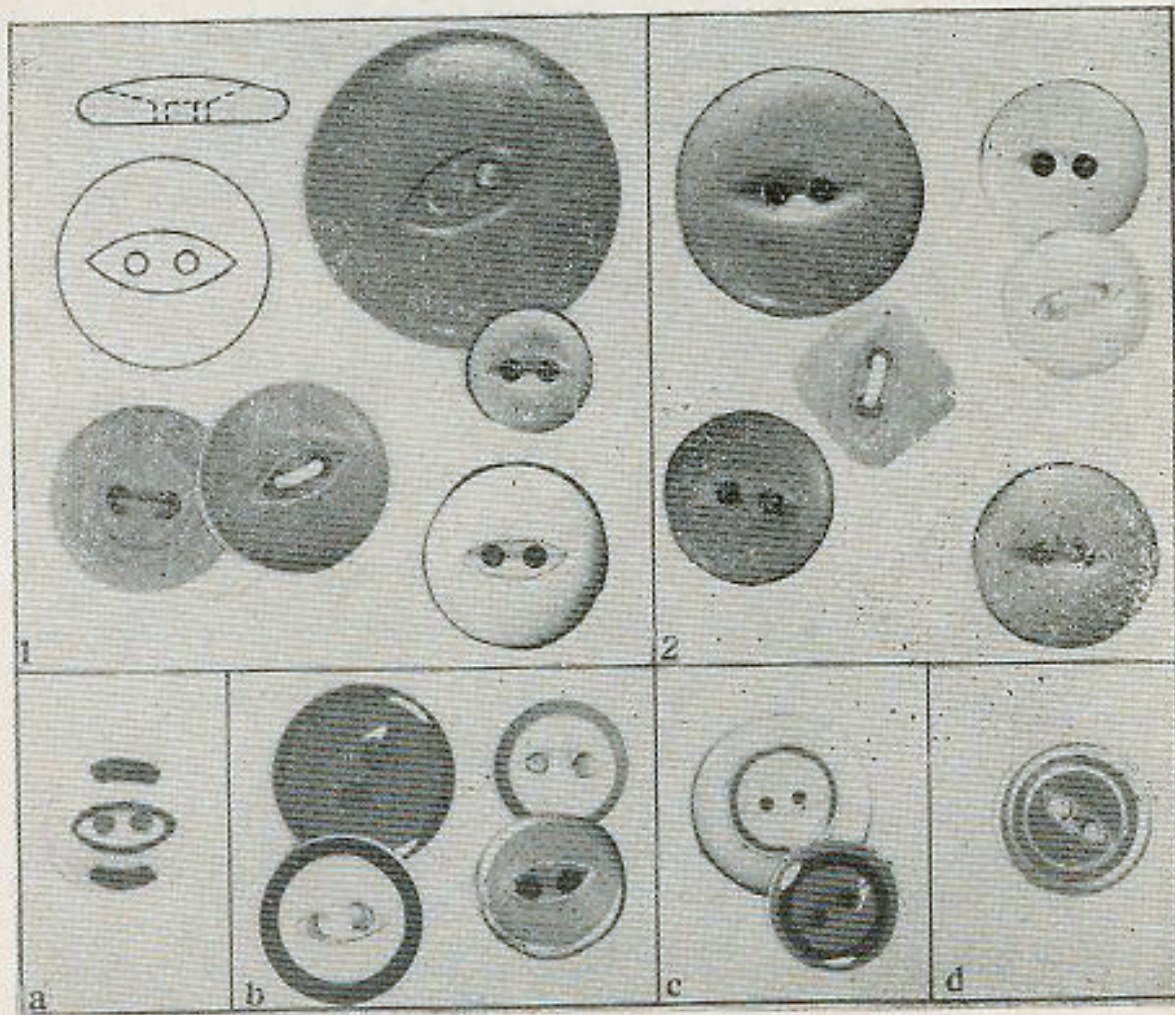
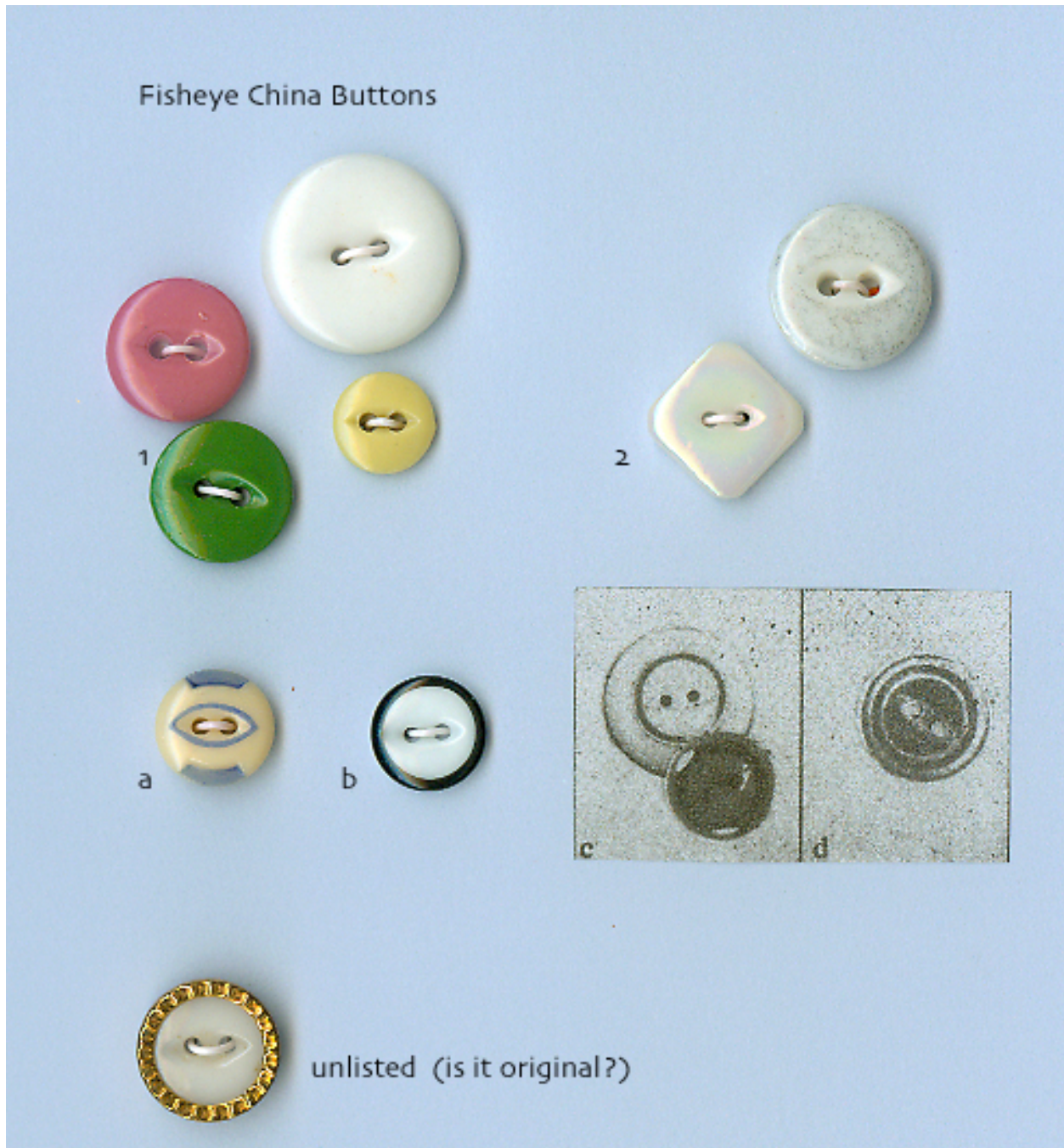


PLATE 42. FISHEYE CHINA BUTTONS.



PART 8: Panty-Waist Chinas

From *Guidelines*, “The two-hole china button, commonly called a ‘panty-waist’, is a plain little thing, about half an inch across, with a slightly convex top and a flat back. It is recognized by its extra large holes which differ from others by having no sewing-well of

any kind. It was made that way for a special purpose, namely, so that it could be attached to the child's undergarment from a loop of narrow tape. The large holes carried the tape and let the button hang free."

All of the buttons are perfectly plain except for one example with slightly incised small lines giving a rayed effect. (I've never seen an example of this button.) White and cream buttons (A) are plentiful; mother-of-pearl and cream luster (C) and gray and black (D) are more uncommon.

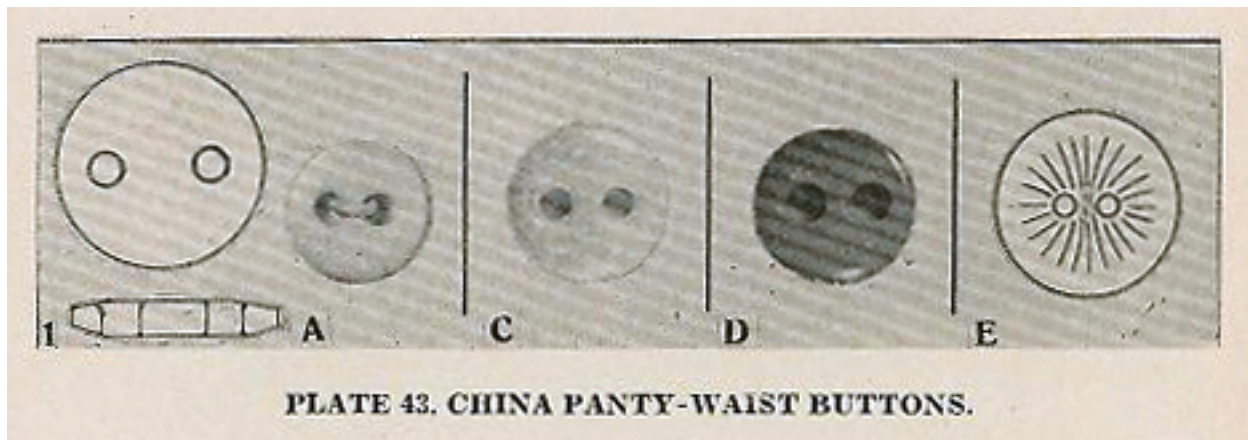
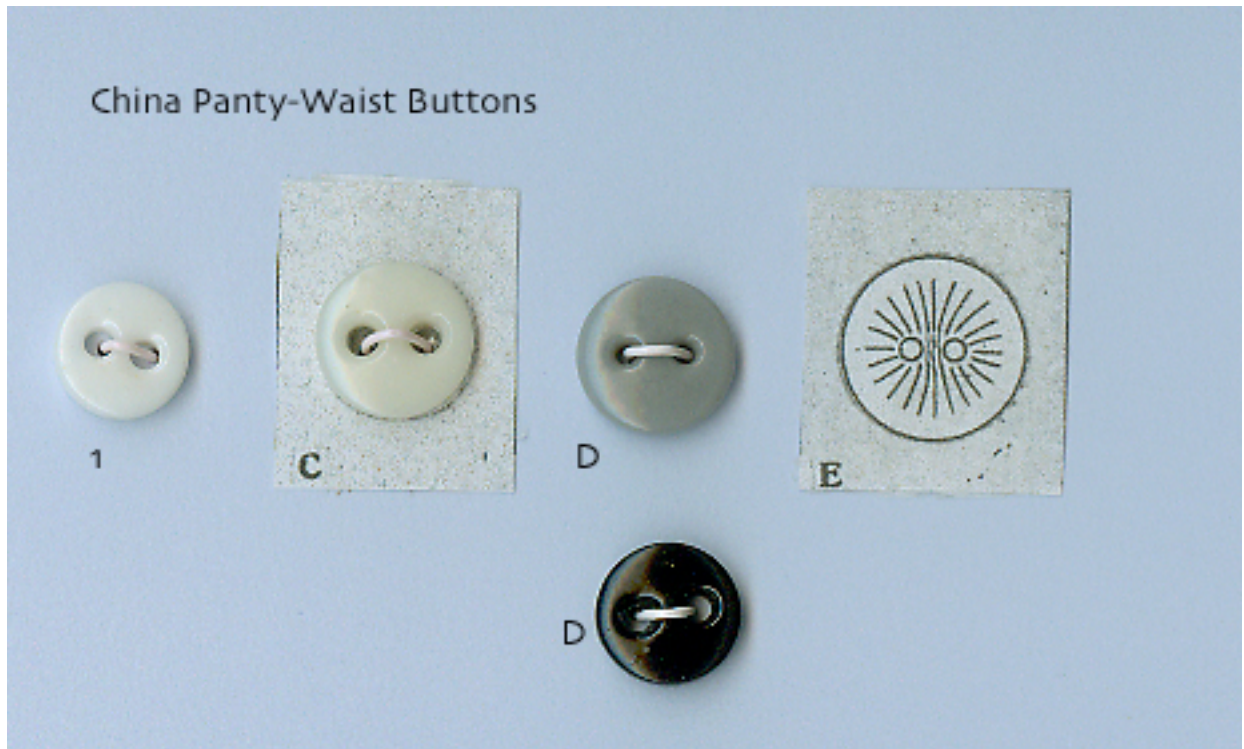


PLATE 43. CHINA PANTY-WAIST BUTTONS.



PART 9: Pattern-Eyes

Pattern-eyes are described by *Guidelines* as buttons having the two holes as part of the design or pattern molded into the button. Of the three patterns, the first, resembling a scallop shell, is by far the most rare. The second is regarded as a cross pattern and is found in plain white, a luster finish and many opaque body colors. The third button has an eight-pointed star in the center of the button. It is found in plain white (A) and also with a gold star and black or blue painted surrounding area on a white body (B). (C) is a luster finish: white luster with gold star center on a white body and iridescent luster on a black body. (D) is an opaque body color. *Guidelines* lists black as the only version of (D) but in the past few years variations of body and luster colors have been found.

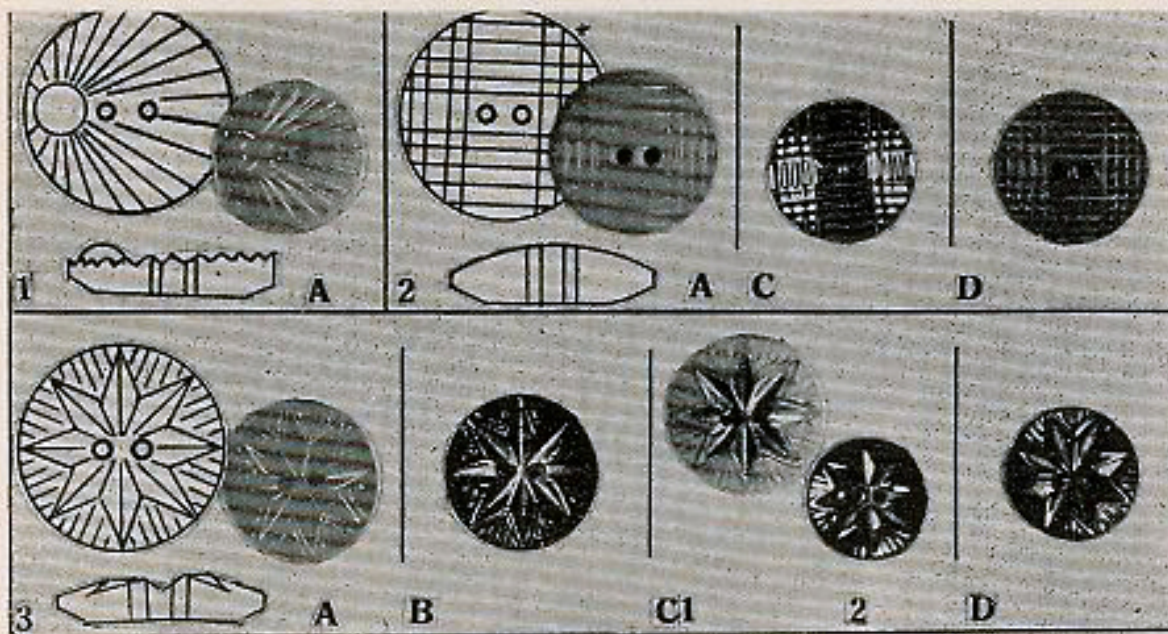


PLATE 44. TWO-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS WITH "PATTERN-EYES".



Lower buttons show variations in pattern eye cross button, a marbled body and opaque body colors with painted dots. The sample card shows pattern eye buttons and inserted two way self shank buttons in the variety of opaque body colors mentioned in *Guidelines*.



Two button types not addressed in *Guidelines* are shown below. The first is a two hole button with elongated eyes, rather like a low profile smooth top. It is shown in pink on the cover of the May 2007 *National Button Bulletin*. The other type has been seen in white on a china sample card and is shown here in both a mottled brown and mottled blue. It might be described as a two hole hobnail deepwell.



Category [China Buttons 101](#) | Tags:

CHAPTER 4: FOUR-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS

February 5, 2012 by Janet

Chapter Four: Four-Hole China Buttons

Parts 1 to 6

Part 1: Four-Hole China Buttons with Smooth Beveled Rims

This section includes Body Style 1, Dish Types, and Body Style 2, Ink Wells— both are named appropriately for the shape of their rim.

Dish Type – Body Style 1

Guidelines says that of all china button shapes the dish type is considered the commonest. There are however, patterns which are quite unusual. The dish type is further divided into two groups, according to the presence, or lack of, a variation in the center of the sewing well, A minority of the buttons have a small raised “knob.” Speculation is that this feature might have been added to by a manufacturer to avoid patent infringement allegations.

Guidelines reports that dish type buttons are found in a large range of sizes (5/16" to 1-1/16"). Collectors have also found a size large (1-1/4"+) white dish type. Ten different patterns have been catalogued on white bodies, including calico patterns which are treated separately later in *Guidelines*. Dish types also come in solid colors; one banded pattern is catalogued but no mention is made of calico patterns on dark bodied dish type buttons,

although they do exist. Additionally, lustered finishes and a marbled body are listed. Metal rims have been found on sizes 5/16", 7/16" and 15/16".

Dish types with knob centers are listed separately and include patterns called "ginghams." All four-hole gingham buttons found have a raised knob center.

Ink Wells – Body Style 2

The beveled rim of an ink well rises more sharply and has a center deeper than dish type buttons do. *Guidelines* here mentions a pearl luster two-hole ink well type button not listed in the two-hole part of the text.

Strangely, ink wells with many different colors of bands are more common than the plain opaque body examples. Inkwells are found with calico patterns as well as with painted tops and lustered finishes, and are catalogued in solid colors and in varying marbled colors.

Guidelines presents all variations of both body styles in one plate. I have separated them when organizing my collection as shown below.

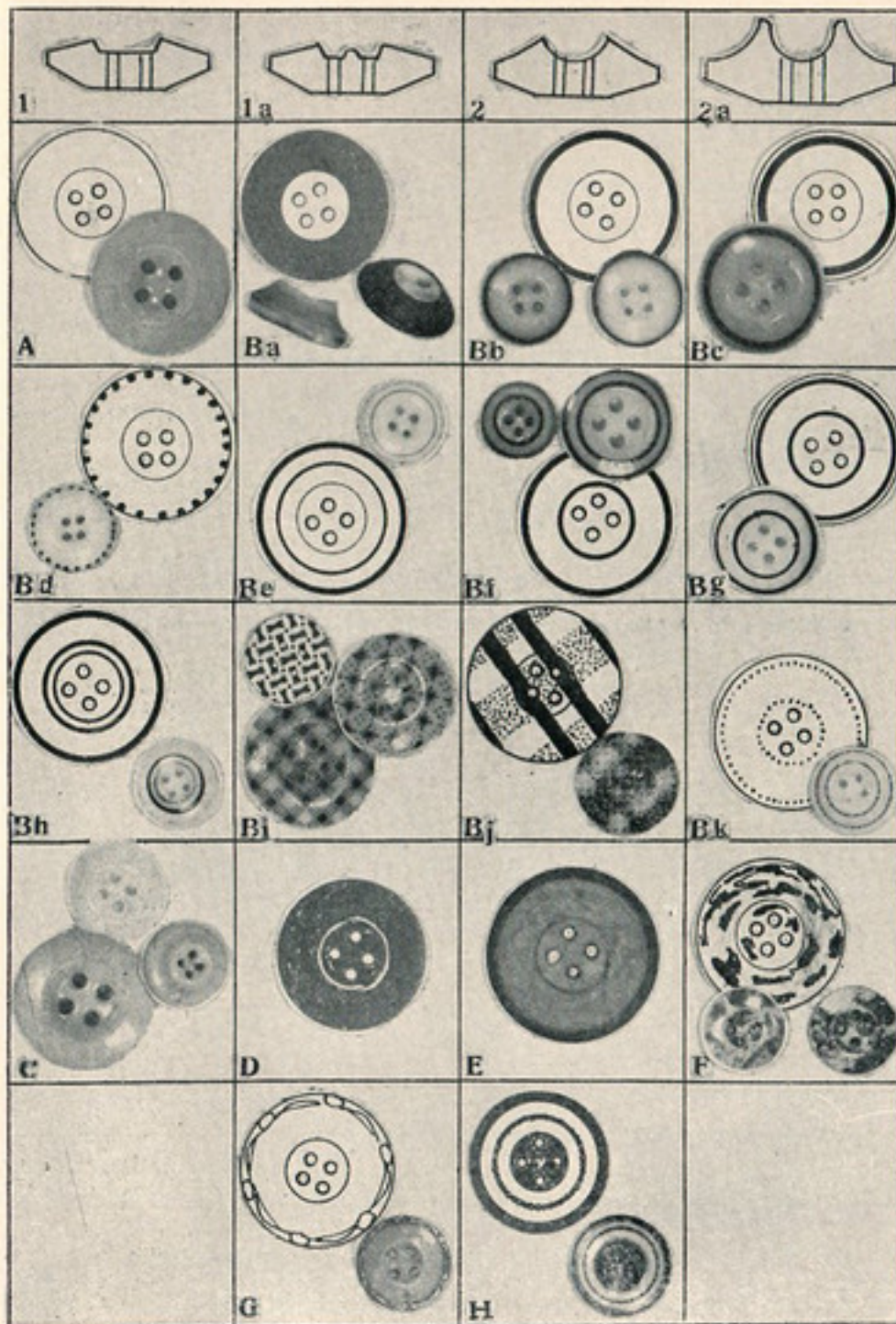


PLATE 45. FOUR-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS WITH SMOOTH BEVELED RIMS—DISH AND INK-WELL TYPES
BODY STYLES 1 and 2

Dish Type - Body Style 1



A



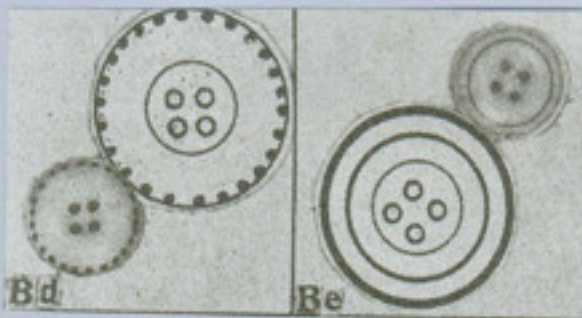
Ba



Bb



Bc



Bd

Be



Bf



Bg



Bh



Bi



Bm



C



D



E



F



G

Dish Type - Body Style 1
Knob Centers



A



Ba



Bc



Bg



Bi



Bj



D



E



G



H



unlisted

Ink Wells - Body Style 2



Part 2: Saucer Type – Body Style 3

Again, named for the shape of the body: slightly concave, rimless—china saucer types are less common than either the dish or ink well types. Four different banded patterns are found on a white body; calico patterns are uncommon. Lustered bodies in pearl, gold and bronze were noted. Colored bodies are more plentiful and are found in a wide range of colors. Marbled and metal rimmed (scarce) examples are also included.

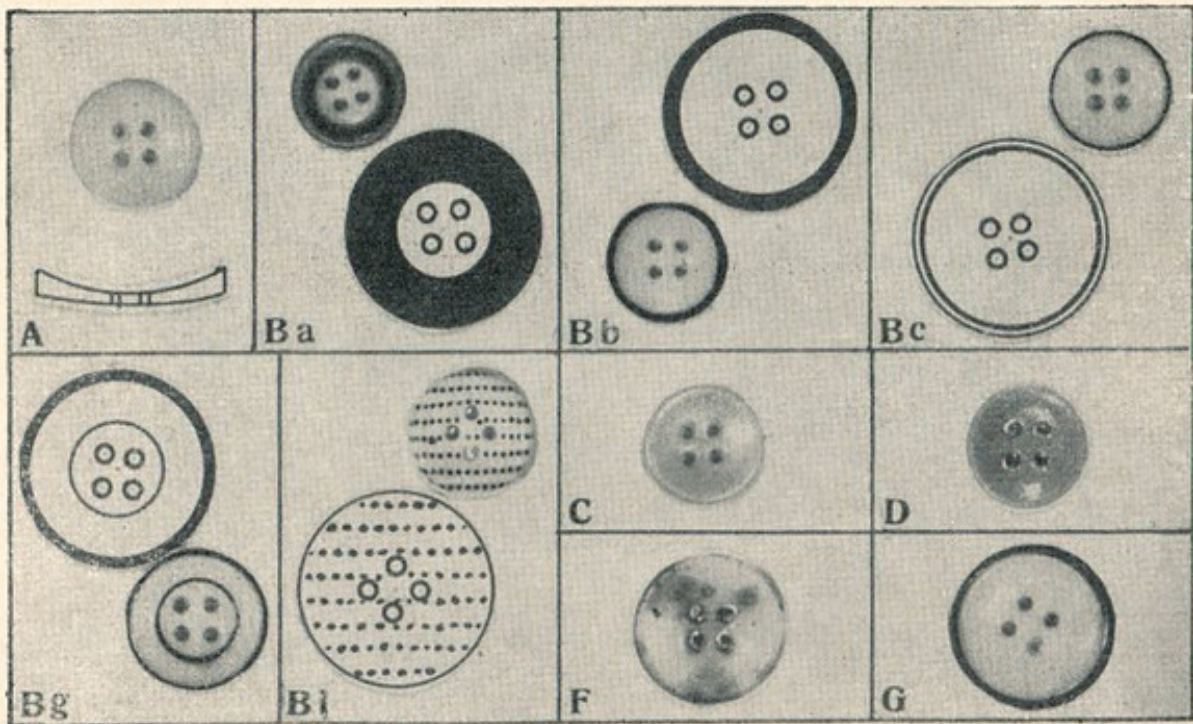
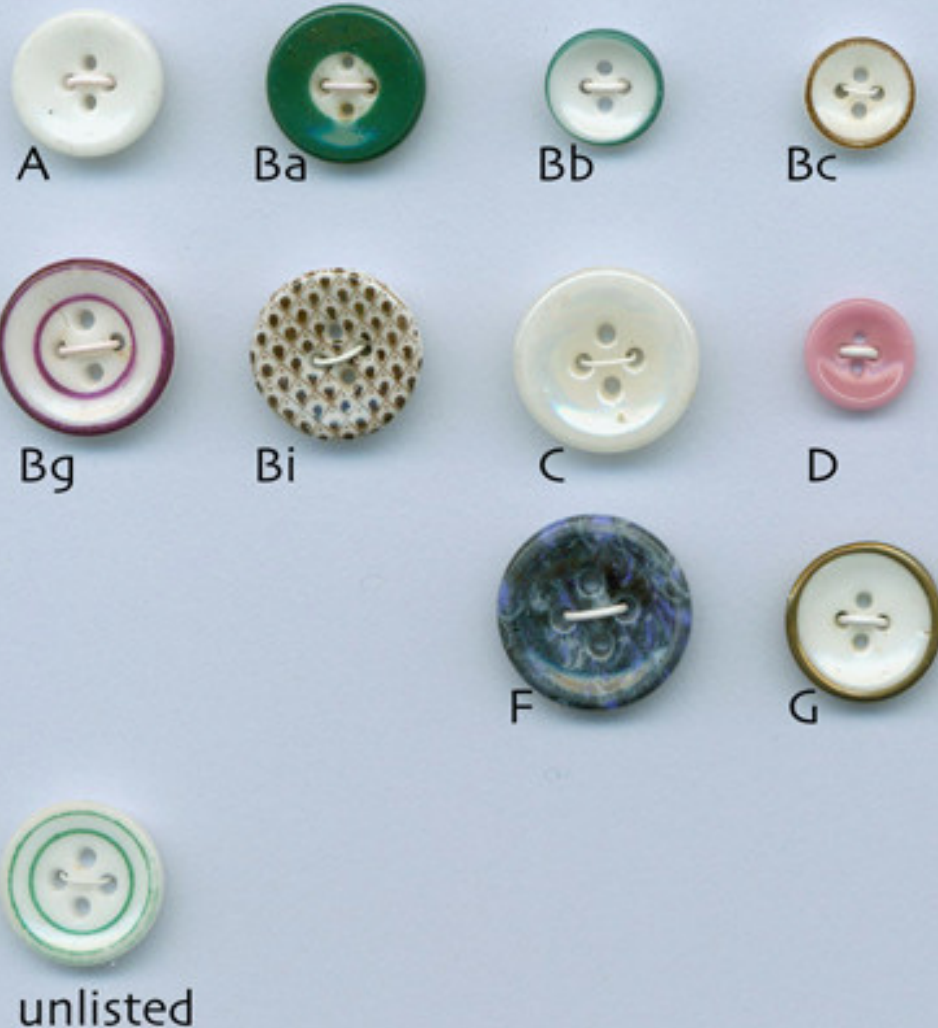


PLATE 46. FOUR-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS SAUCER SHAPE. BODY STYLE 3.

Saucer Type - Body Style 3



I have questioned the “unlisted” example as possibly not belonging with “utilitarian china buttons” at all, but remain undecided. Has anyone else seen this pattern?

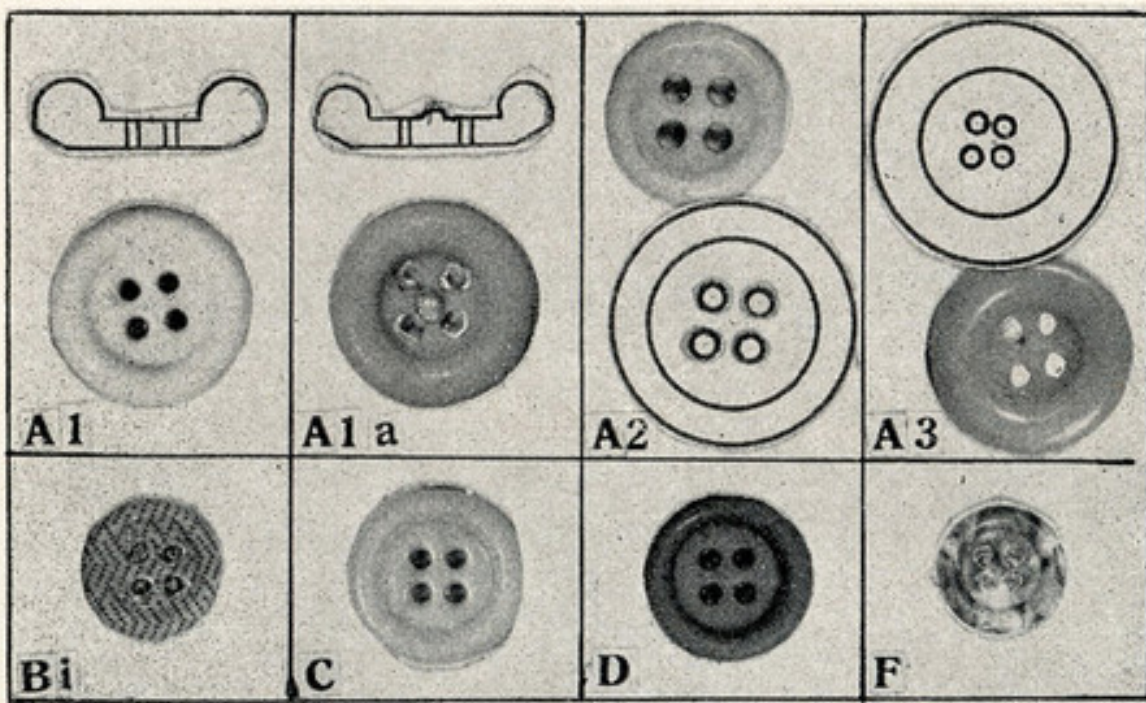
Part 3: Four-Hole China Buttons with Rolled Rims

This group includes buttons with a flat center and a rolled rim, aptly named “Tires”. The buttons grouped here vary in the depth

and width of the center, the width, height and roundness of the rim and the size and spacing of the holes. In photos for both plates below, the bottom buttons are not catalogued in *Guidelines*.

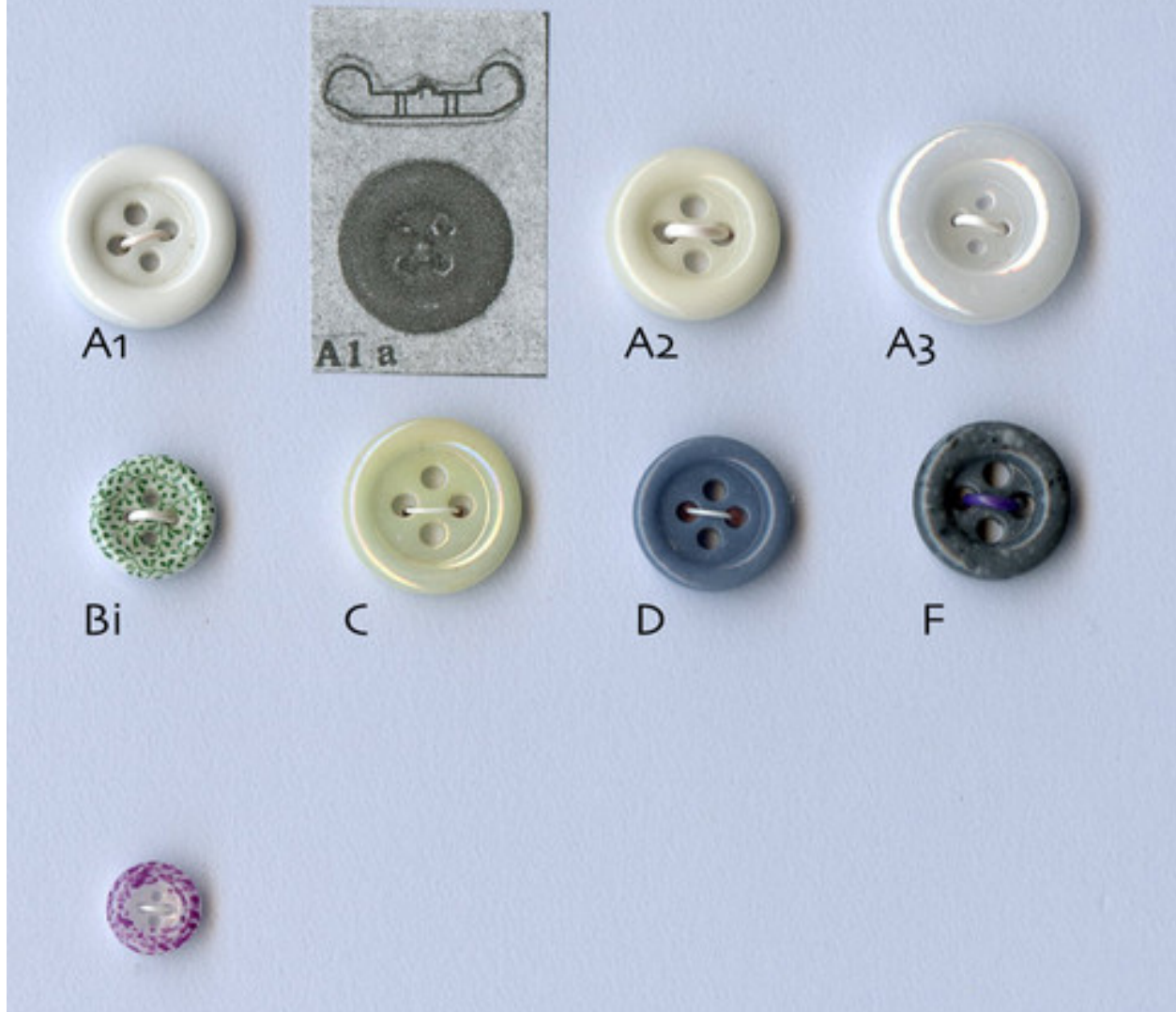
Tire Type – Body Style 4

Three shapes are described and diagrammed in plate 47. Tires are found in white and opaque body colors, luster finishes, calico patterns and marbled bodies.



**PLATE 47. FOUR-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS, TIRE SHAPE RIMS.
BODY STYLE 4.**

Plate 47. Four-Hole China Buttons, Tire Shape Rims
Body Style 4



Tire Type Variants – Body Style 5

As the name suggests, each button is similar to a tire but does not meet all the specifications above.

1. The center is not perfectly flat.
2. This button has no flat surface at all.
3. A flattened version of #2
4. Rim is not inflated.

5. A cross between a saucer and a tire

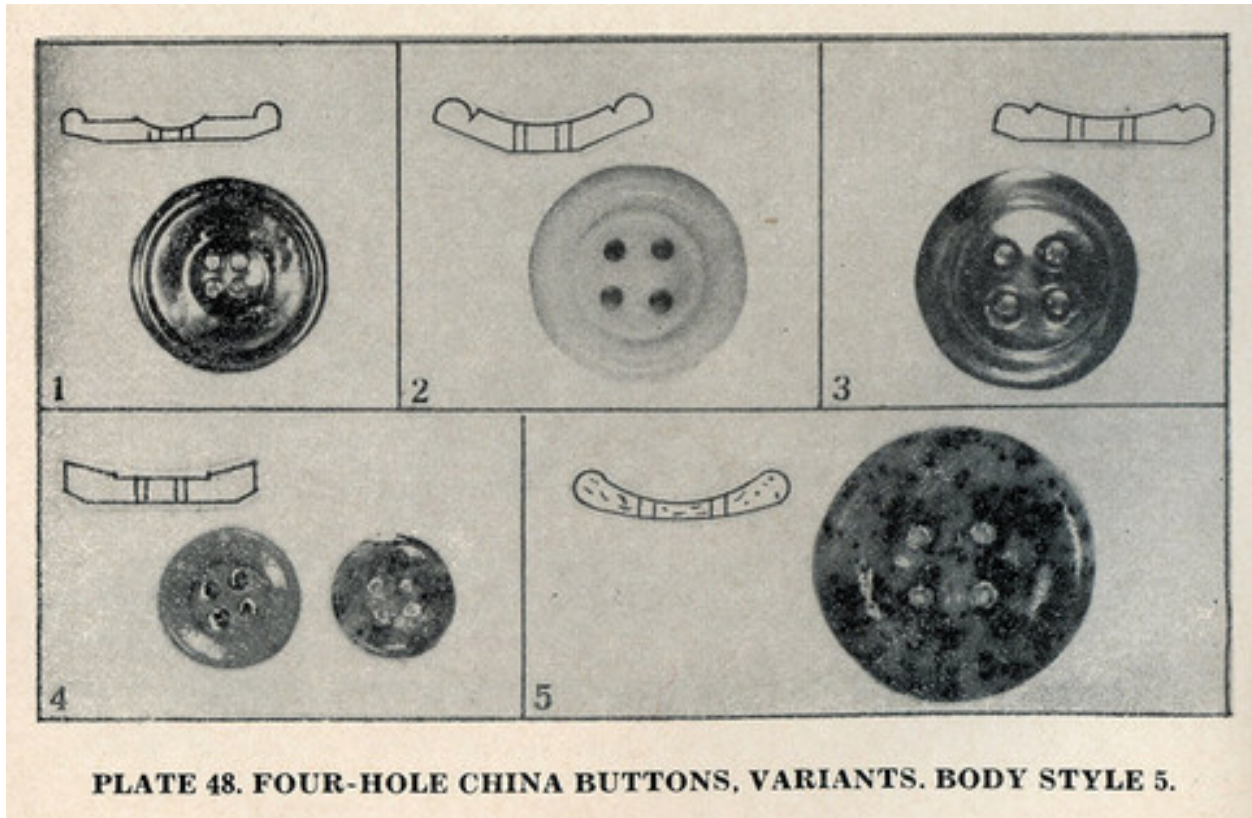
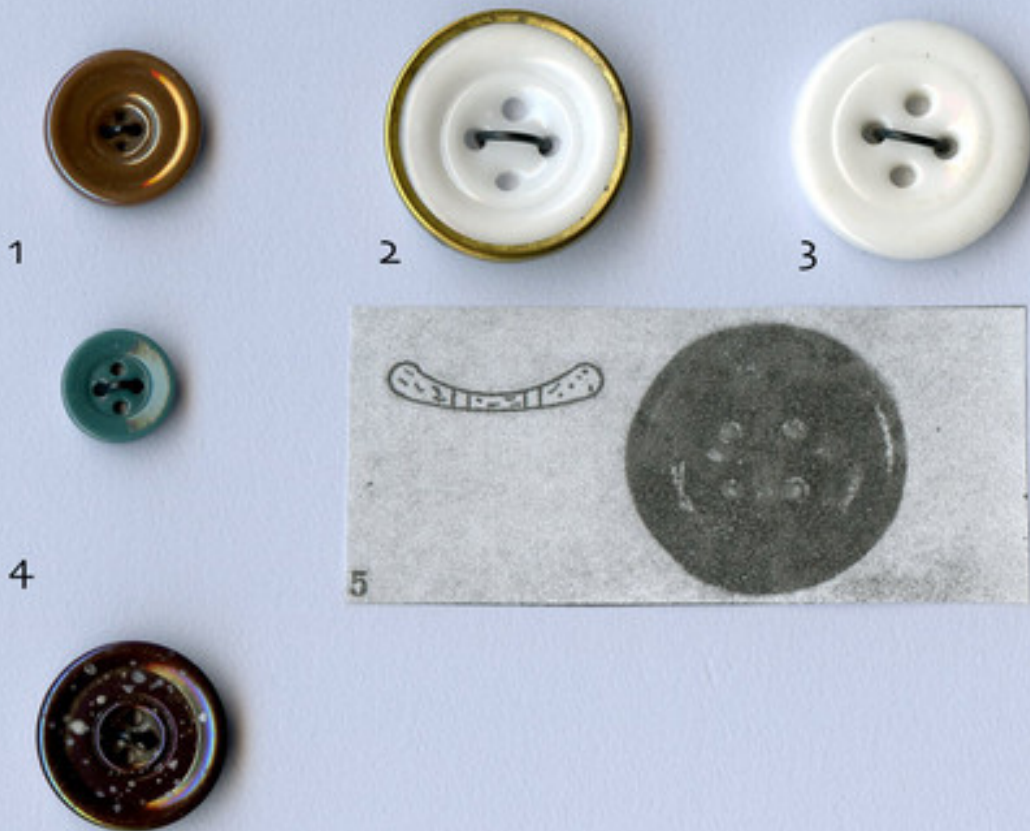


Plate 48. Four-Hole China Buttons, Variants
Body Style 5



Button at bottom of above photo is an unlisted spattered patterned version of button number 1.

Part 4: Off-Beat Types – Body Style 6

Buttons grouped under this heading have fancy patterns molded into the surface of the button. Five buttons were catalogued in Guidelines. They share a small size and a solid color. Number 4 is

the exception, found with a pattern—a mottled blue lustered surface.

Body Style 7

A rather common button found in a variety of colors

Body Style 8

Similar in shape to an inkwell, with the edges drawn out into a narrow rim. Found in white approximately 1" in size.

Body Style 9

Officially added to the Off-Beat Types in 1971. Its surface suggests a faux wood grain.

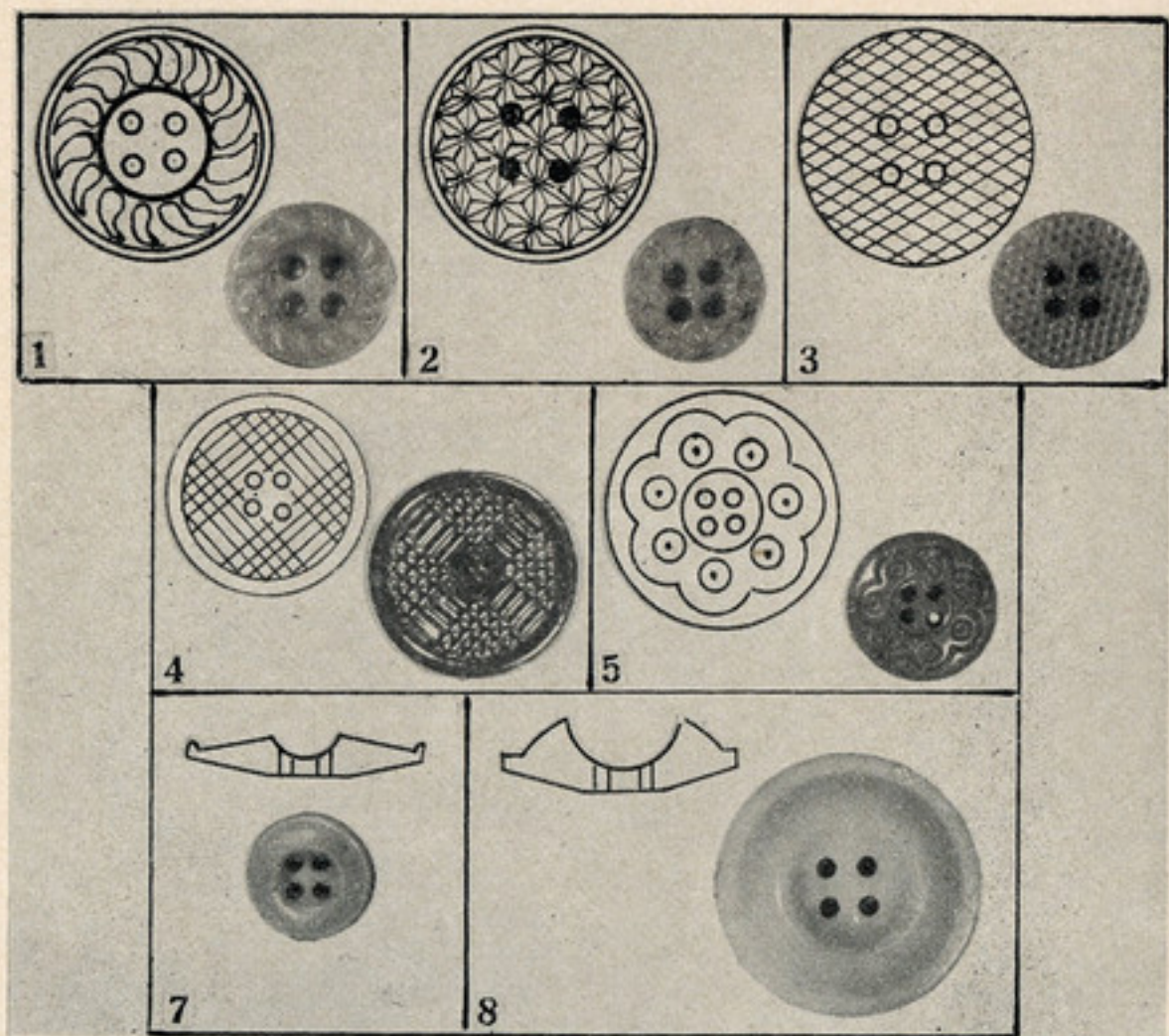


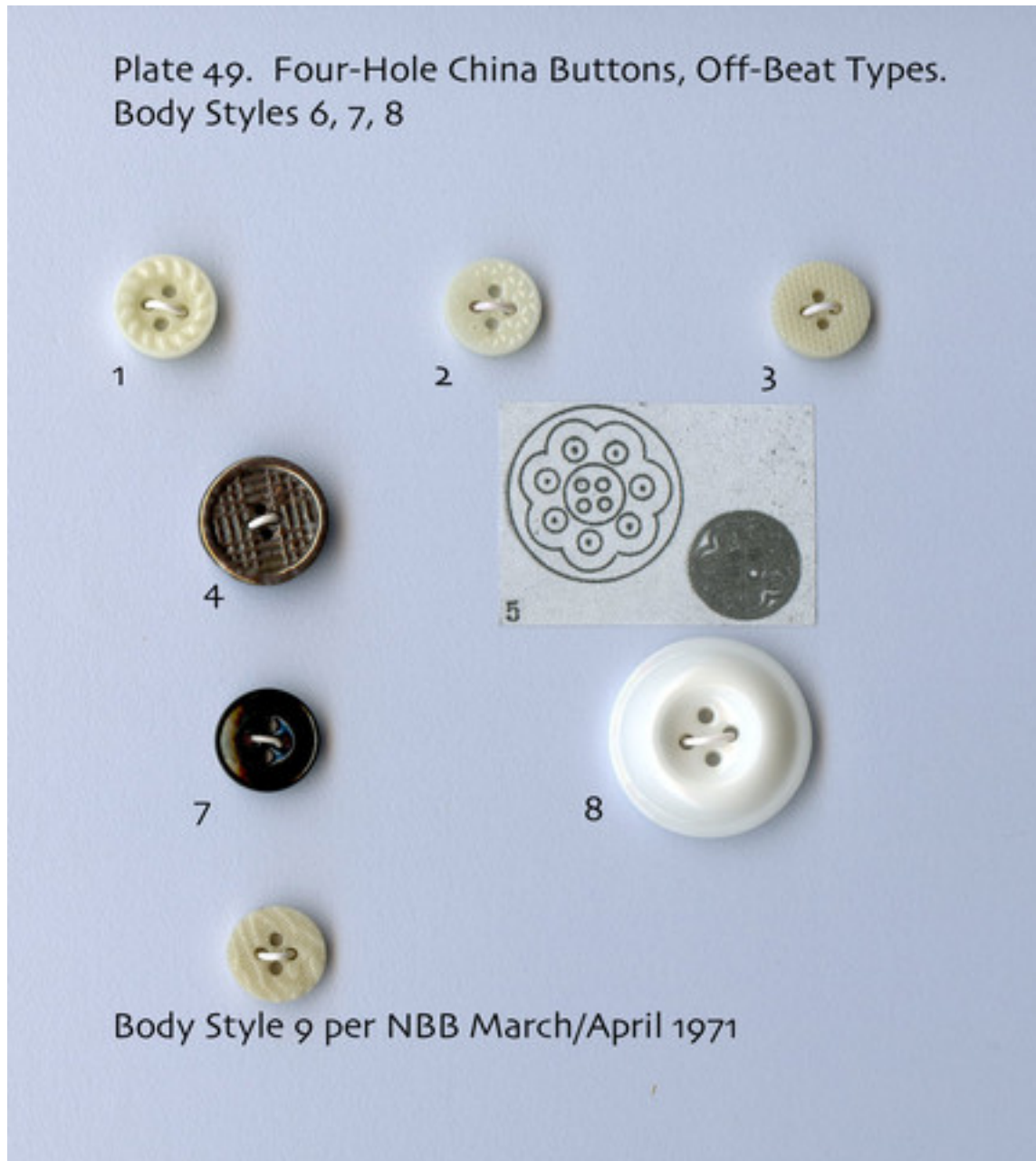
PLATE 49. FOUR-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS, OFF-BEAT TYPES.

BODY STYLES 6, 7 and 8

Style 6, see 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Rows 1 and 2.

Style 7, Row 3, left. Style 8, Row 3, right.

Plate 49. Four-Hole China Buttons, Off-Beat Types.
Body Styles 6, 7, 8



Body Style 9 per NBB March/April 1971

Part 5. Sew-Through China Buttons with Radiating-Line Rims

Differences in lines give each group a descriptive name: pie-crust rim, saw-tooth rim, bias saw-tooth rim.

Body Style 1: Pie-Crust Rim

Buttons exhibit a concave center and a rim of radiating lines, usually 24, extending to a plain narrow molded ring rim. They are

found in plain white and also with a variety of color, and in one case a two-color, trim patterns. Pattern "Bj" below has the entire surface painted with a color, in my example yellow. Size range is 3/8" to 11/16".

As before, "A" refers to white; "B" includes all variations in color trim on a white body; "C" is luster finish' "D" is opaque body color.

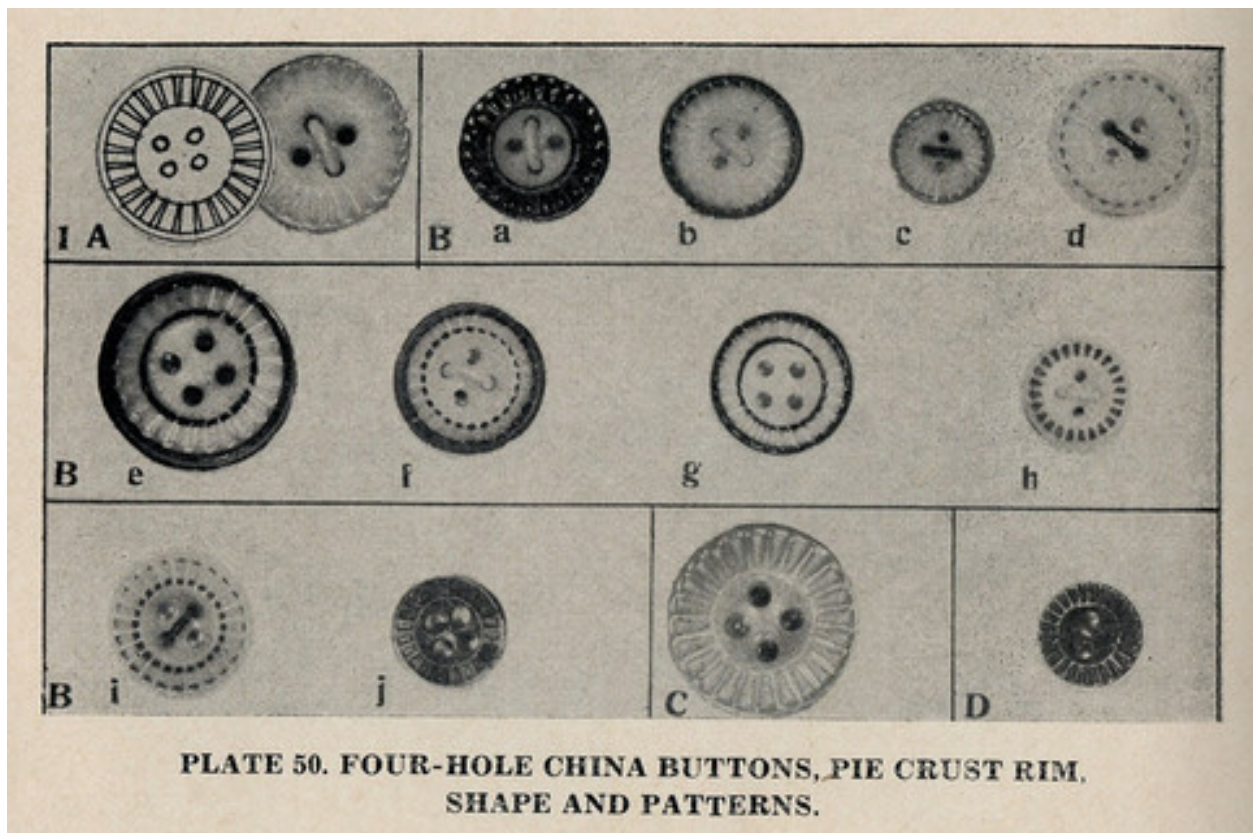
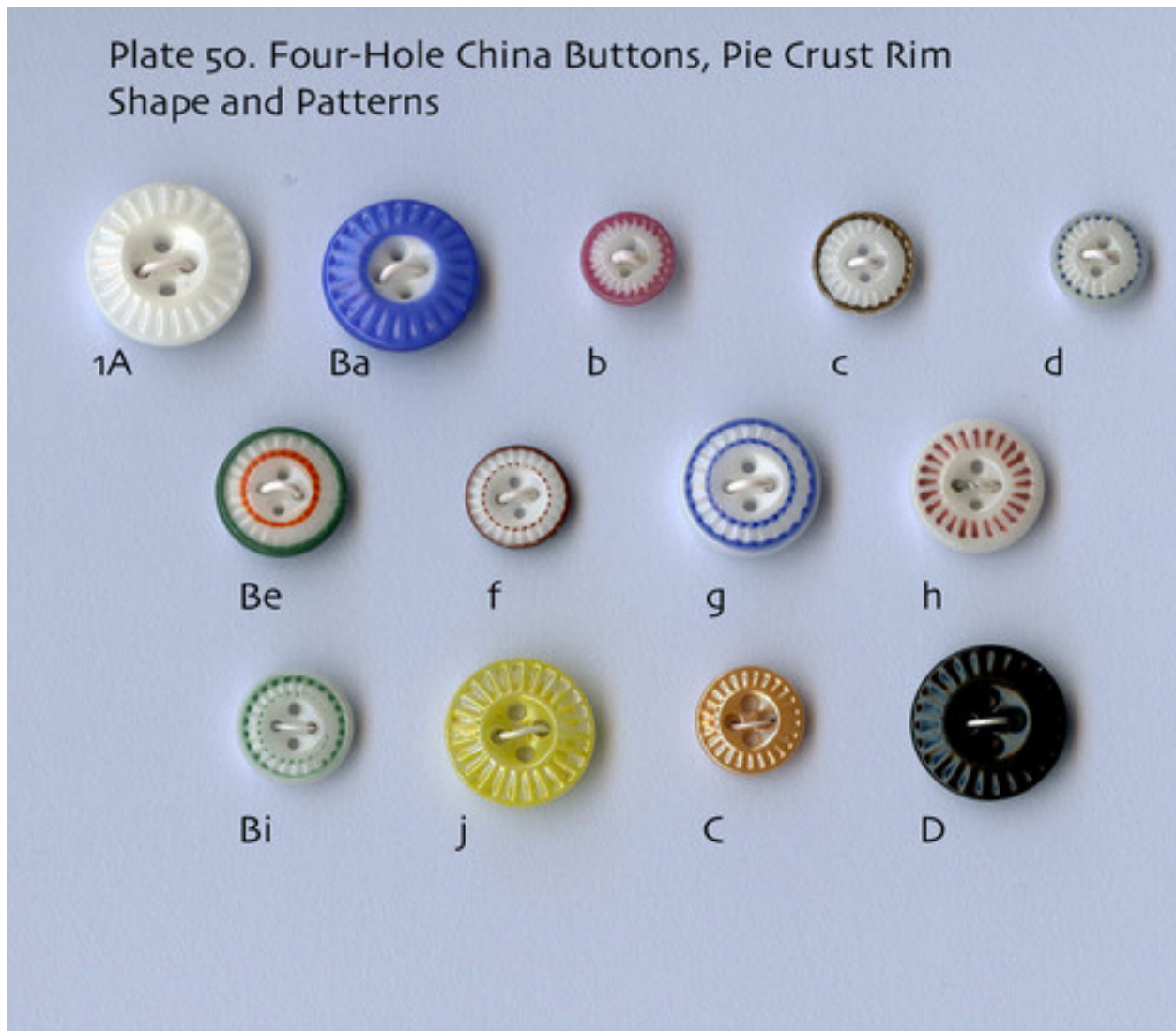
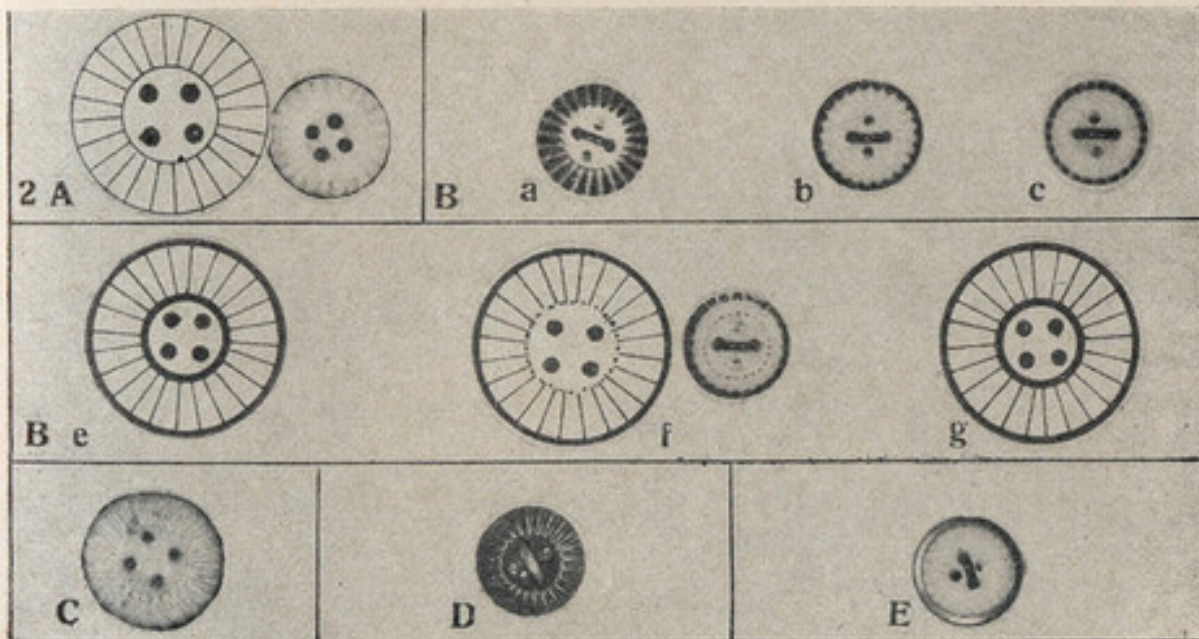


Plate 50. Four-Hole China Buttons, Pie Crust Rim Shape and Patterns



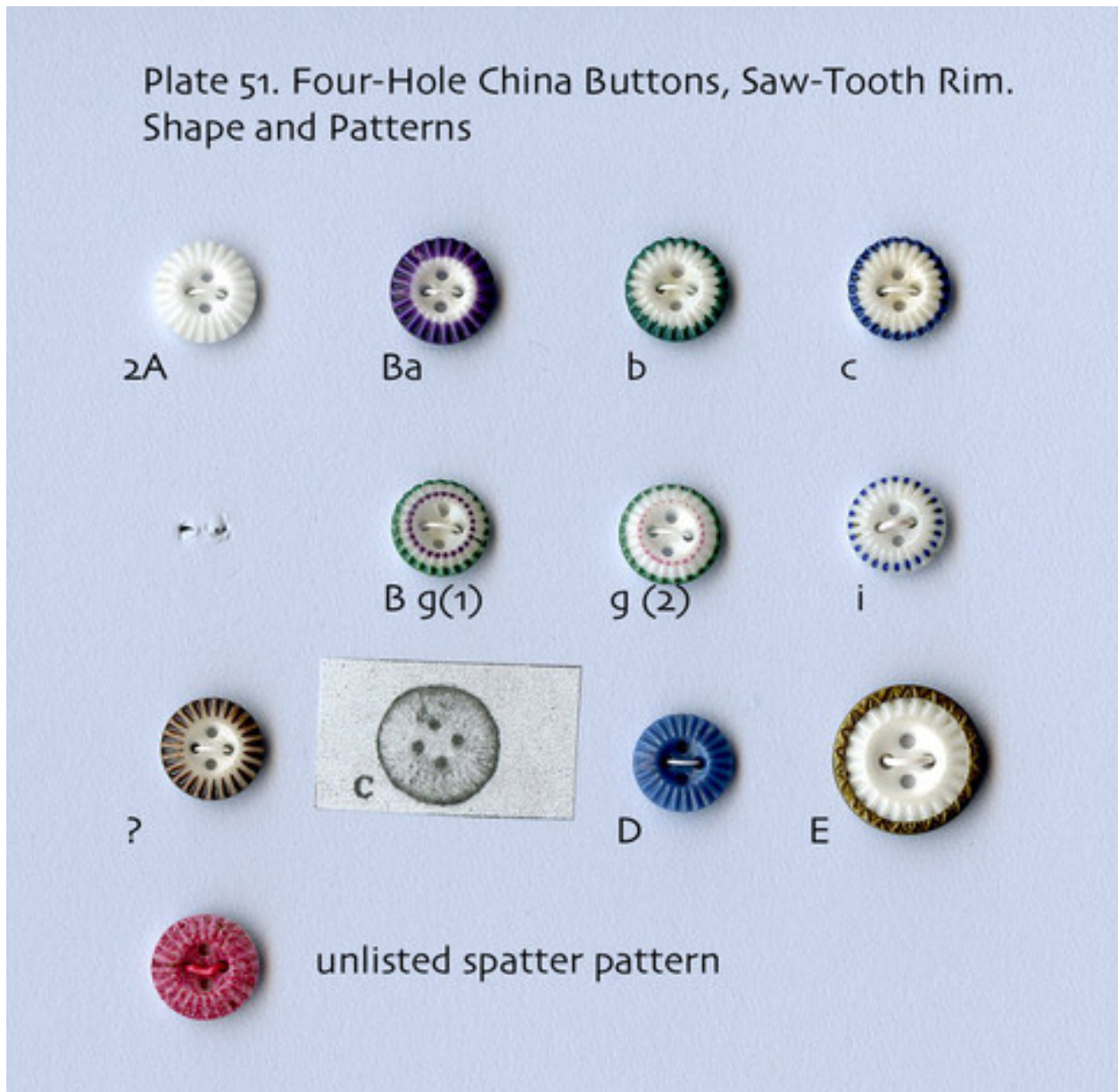
Body Style 2: Saw-Tooth Rim

In this variation, the 24 radiating lines extend all the way to the rim of the button. *Guidelines* says that they seem to come only in smaller sizes, $3/8''$ to $7/16''$. The rimmed example below, however, measures over $5/8''$. Several patterns are missing in both plates below. I am also missing a lustered body, suggesting that this is a rare finish. If you find an example with a metal rim and straight radiating lines, it will be a saw-tooth rim rather than a pie-crust rim button.



**PLATE 51. FOUR-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS, SAW-TOOTH RIM.
SHAPE AND PATTERNS**

Plate 51. Four-Hole China Buttons, Saw-Tooth Rim.
Shape and Patterns



Body Style 3: Bias Saw-Tooth Rim

The lines on the rim of this body type are slanted, turning counter-clockwise. The number of lines on the rim varies between 24 and 36. An additional unique shape is added, a “z” body type in which the lines end in a slightly raised molded ring rim. Again, I am missing a lustered example of the bias saw-tooth rim.

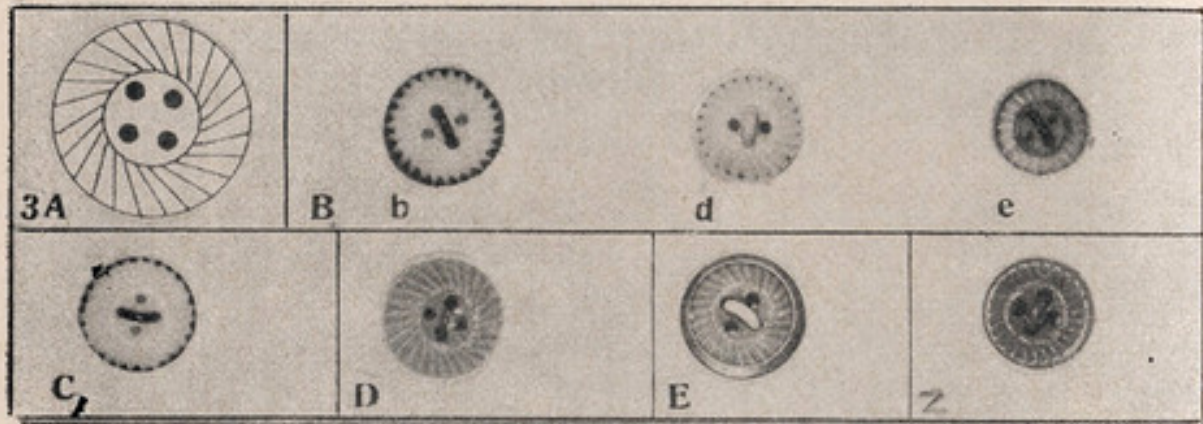
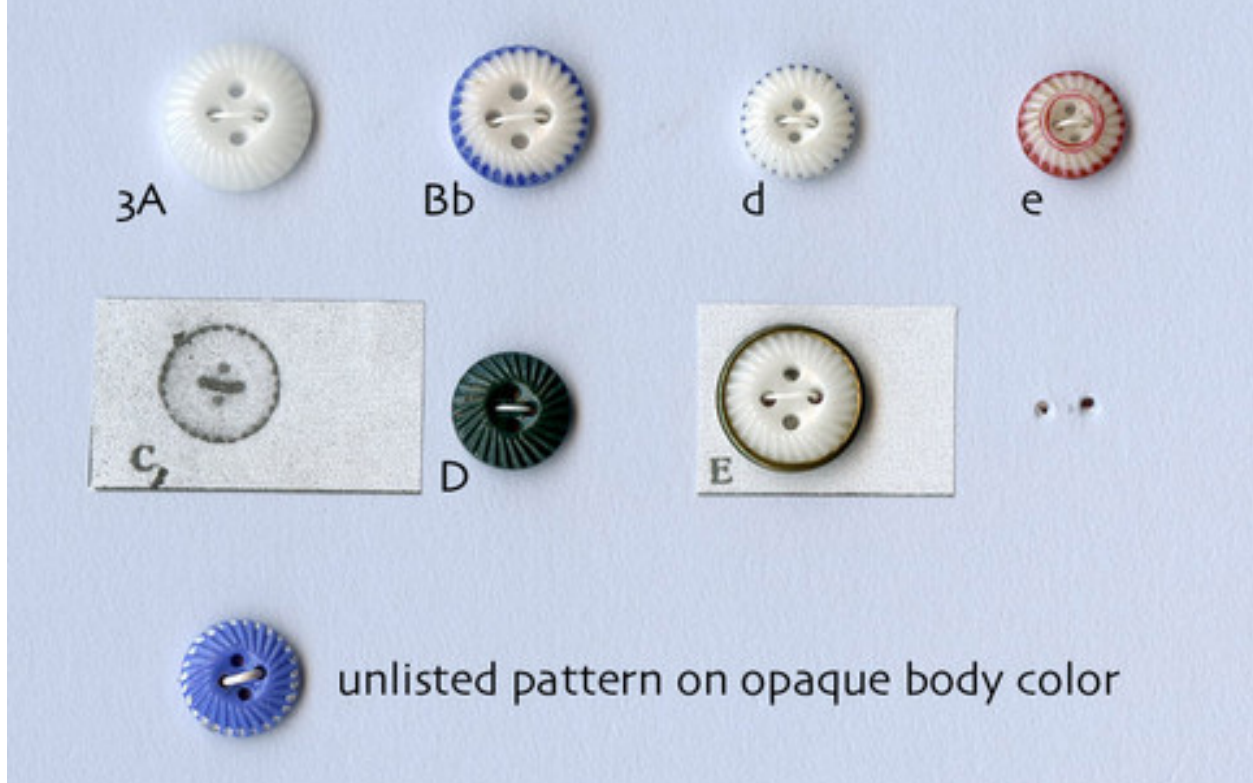


PLATE 52. FOUR-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS, BIAS SAW-TOOTH RIM, SHAPE AND PATTERNS

Plate 52. Four-Hole China Buttons, Bias Saw-Tooth Rim Shape and Patterns



hmmmm... my "z" has gone missing

Part 6: Four-Hole China Buttons with Hobnail Rim

There are four body styles with a hobnail rim: 1. Concave center and flat or slightly sloped rim into which are molded knobs, or hobnails; 2. Like No. 1 except that the rim has a raised rolled edge; 3. Like No. 1 in reverse, with sunken rather than raised knobs; 4. Like No. 1 but with a metal rim. Styles 2 and 4 have been found in white only. Shape No. 1 is found in white, white with trim and colored and lustered bodies. The number of knobs varies from twelve to sixteen. Shape No. 3 is considered scarce and includes the smallest example, a diminutive measuring 3/8".

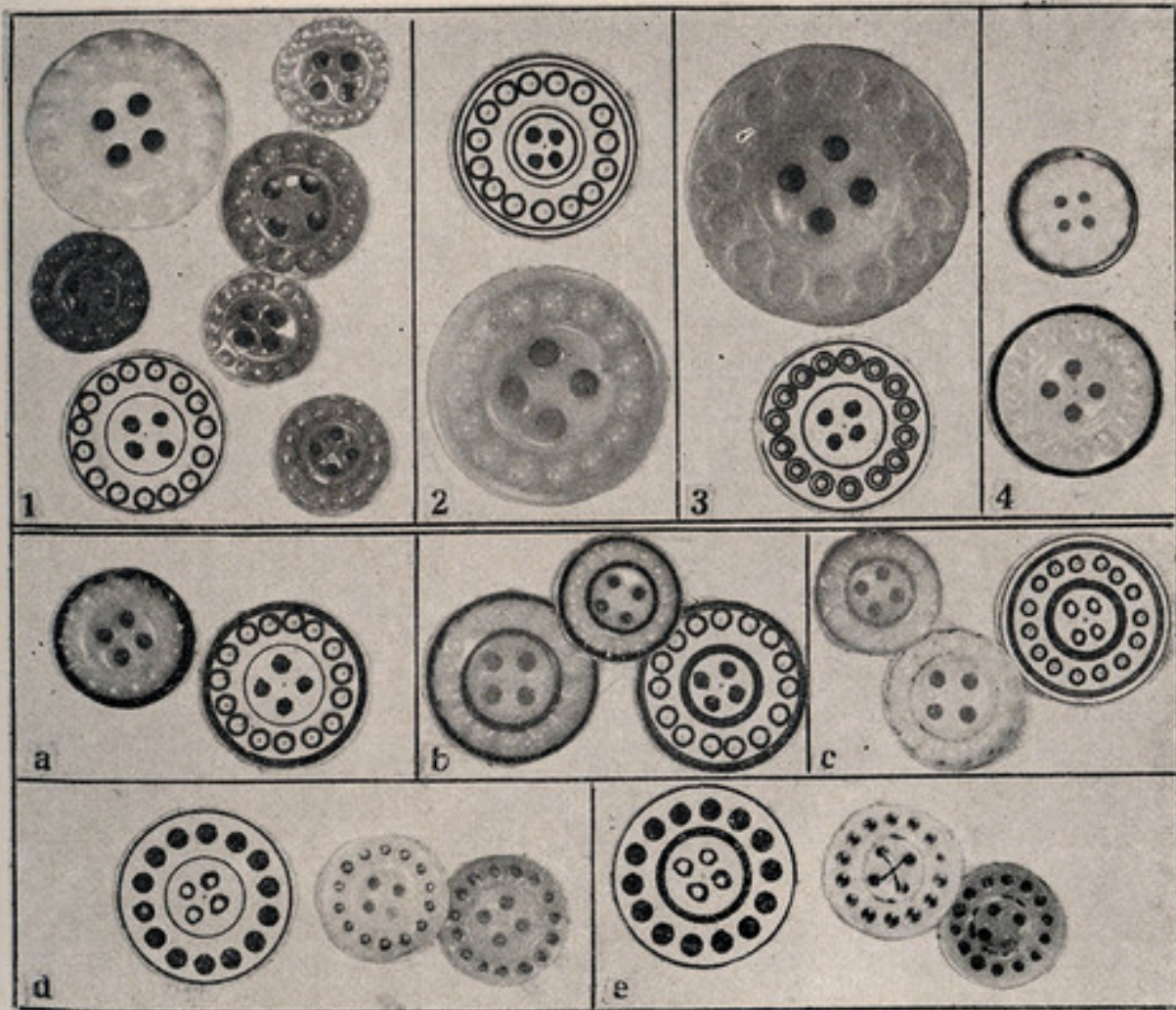
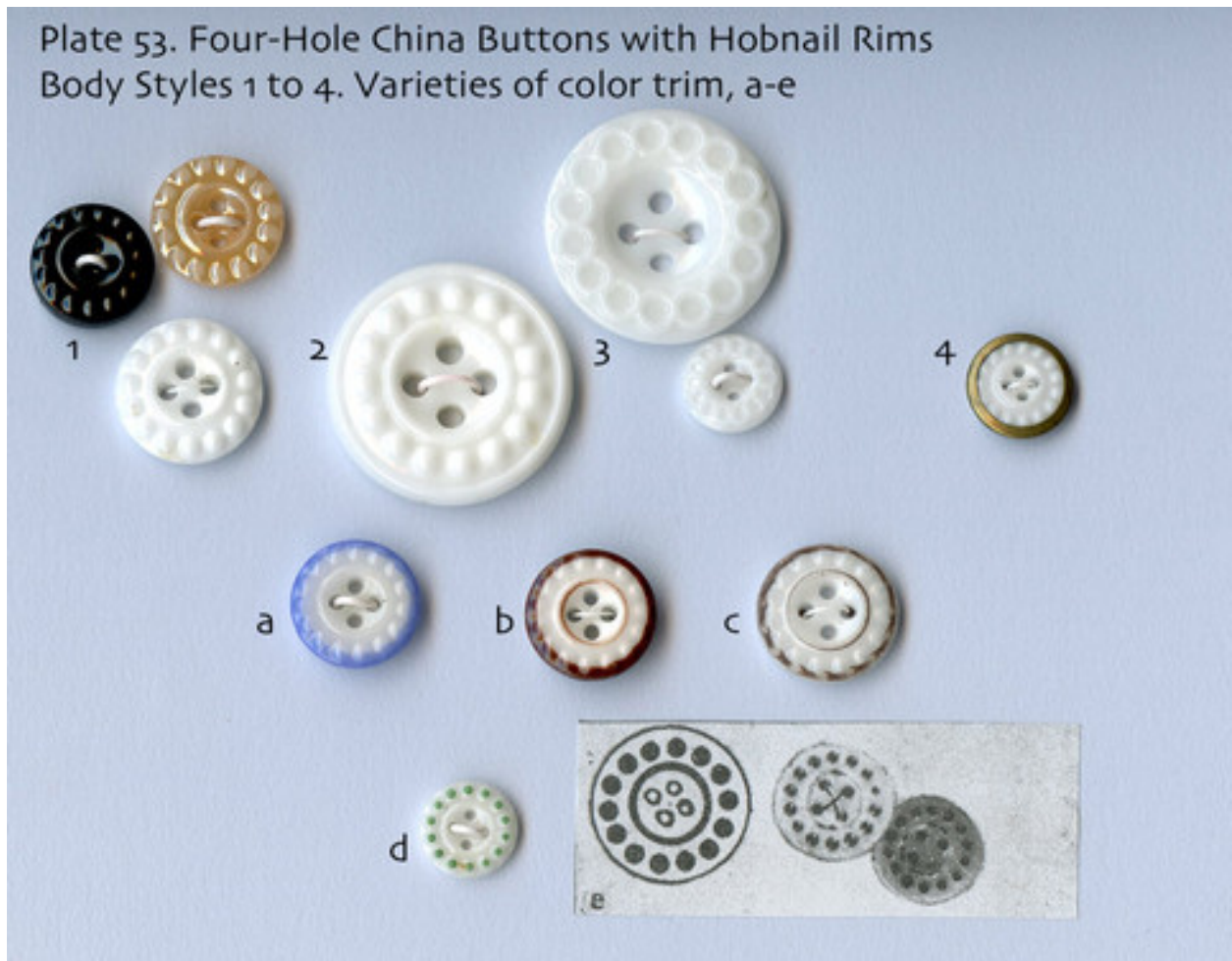


PLATE 53. FOUR-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS WITH HOBNAIL RIMS.
 Body styles 1 to 4. Varieties of color trim, a-e.

Plate 53. Four-Hole China Buttons with Hobnail Rims
Body Styles 1 to 4. Varieties of color trim, a-e



Category [China Buttons 101](#) | Tags:

CHAPTER 5: THREE-HOLE CHINA BUTTONS

February 5, 2012 by Janet

Chapter Five: Three-Hole China Buttons

There are seven plates of three-hole china buttons in *Guidelines*. The majority are diminutives (under 3/8") but there are several examples of size small buttons also. My card of these is not representative of the buttons available. A list of the nine groups in this chapter and a few notes on each follows.

1. Dish Type, Body Style No. 1: (Diminutive) Opaque white; 5 different banded patterns; calico pattern in both 1 and 2 colors; entire top covered in gold; entire top and side covered in gold
2. Ink-Well Type, Body Style No. 2: (Diminutive) Opaque white; 4 different banded patterns; calico pattern; pearl luster; opaque body colors; marbled
3. Saucer Type, Body Style No. 3: (Diminutive) Opaque white; 1 banded pattern; calico; pearl luster; opaque body colors
4. Tire Type, Body Style No. 4: (Diminutive) Opaque white; edge banded in gold; pearl; gold and blue luster; pearl with gold band; opaque body colors
5. Plate Shape, Body Style 5: (Diminutive) Pearl luster
6. Scalloped Edge (Small): opaque white
7. Back Interest (Reverse of button differs): opaque white and silver luster
8. Radiating-Line Rim Type: (Diminutive) Opaque white; 6 different banded patterns; pearl luster; opaque body colors
9. Hobnail Type: (Diminutive and Small) Opaque white; 3 different banded patterns; orange and pearl luster; opaque body colors



Here is a sample card from the Bapterosses Factory in Briare, France, showing the transition in size from the three-hole to the four-hole buttons in several different body types. From left to right: dish, saucer, tire, inkwell, hobnail, piecrust, smooth top. Size range is 7/32" to first four-hole at 11/32"

MANUFACTURE DE BRIARE							
PRIZE MEDAL 1851.		1855		1862		MEDAILLE D'OR 1840.	
TARIF PAGE 3						6	
N ^{OS}	BOUTONS PERLE						
	LENTILLE	CUVETTE	BOURRELET	BISEAU	PERLÉS	CANNELÉS	DEUX-TROUS
71							
72							
73							
74							

Probably the buttons in this group most attractive to collectors are the size small three-hole examples and the calico patterns. I believe there is a size small calico three-hole button, but it has completely escaped my grasp. Shown below are a few photos just for fun.



Three Hole Buttons
2



*With kindest thoughts and many good
for a prosperous and Happy New Year*







The triangular three-hole button in the photo below is part of a group of buttons originating in Briare, France.



Category [China Buttons 101](#) | Tags:

CHAPTER 6: CALICO AND GINGHAM BUTTONS

February 5, 2012 by Janet

Chapter Six: Calico and Gingham Buttons

Calico Buttons

The introductory article on calico buttons in *Guidelines* is written by Beatrice Lorah who explains “Calico buttons get their name from the word ‘calico’. This was derived from the word ‘Calicut’, which is the name of a city in western India. It was there that cotton cloth with printed patterns was manufactured and exported to England. Some of this cloth, we believe, was used in the making of covered buttons.”

She continues ” When we speak of calicoes today, we refer to china button with printed calico designs. These designs are repeated *over the entire surface*, whereas on the stencil there is but one pattern.”

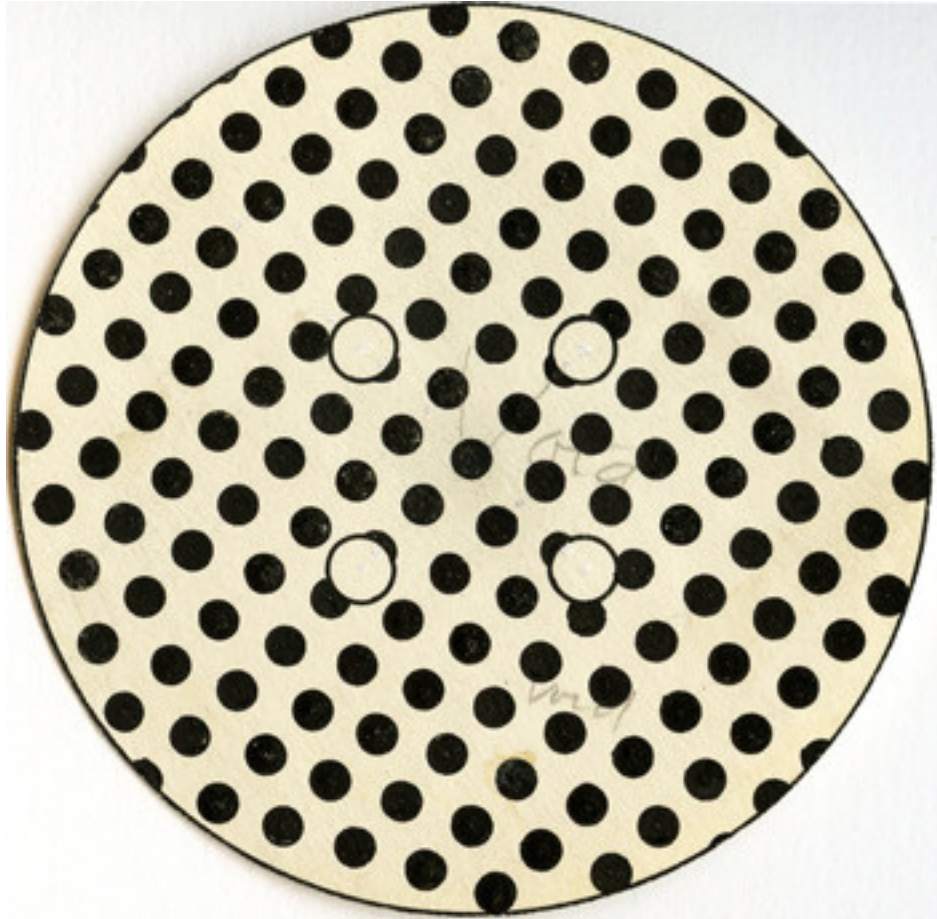
The text explains that the calico pattern was printed in ink on paper that was then laid on top of a tray of fired china buttons. As the tray made a second trip through the kiln, heat transferred the inked pattern onto the surface of the button and the paper was burned away.

Wilfred Morgan began the process of identifying and drawing china calico button patterns. In 1939 and 1940 he published three booklets illustrating the 293 patterns he had identified. His original drawings were executed in 4” diameter circles. Beatrice and Lester Lorah continued his work, adding more patterns, and compiled the catalog shown in *Guidelines*. You may access the

patterns [here](#), at the National Button Society website. Also published on line is collector [George Gauthier's system](#) for identifying calico patterns.

And just for fun, here is a photo of Mr. Morgan and a voided example of one his drawings.





Mr. Lorah provides information about calico colors, sizes and shapes, and draws body types.

PART 3

HINTS TO COLLECTORS

By LESTER K. LORAH

In collecting calico buttons, one must consider not only the numerous patterns, but also the different colors, various body styles, sizes and other qualities.

The patterns now known, as you see from my drawings, number 326. Of these 34 were unknown to Mr. Morgan; thus patterns numbered over 293 can be regarded as scarce. Of course some of the earlier numbers are also very hard to find. Some of the more plentiful ones are shown on page 108 Plate 61.

Colors are green; lavender; brown; blue; pink; red; orange; black; and multi-colored. Most have light and dark shades. The most plentiful colors are green and blue.

Sizes graduate from diminutive through small and up almost to large. Morgan recognized twelve sizes, but the actual number is greater than that. He used the line as his unit of measurement, forty lines equalling one inch. His Size 17 (17/40th of an inch) is the easiest one to find. Supply tapers off in both directions from that, though other small sizes are still plentiful. Diminutives are rare. Upper-mediums are very rare.

Knowing that our collection, with all its treasures, has only twenty-nine of them (the upper-mediums) in nineteen different patterns tells the story. The largest ever seen is a unique specimen in the Albert Collection. It barely passes through the 1 3/4" opening in the official NBS Measure.

Here are two more meaningful statistics. Our collection contains eighteen jewelled calicoes in eleven different patterns. Those lovely little buttons with a calico medallion set in a metal frame are much sought after. So too are metal rimmed calicoes. Of them we have thirty-one in twenty-six patterns.

Shapes are as important to calico buttons as to any of the other chinas. There are seven of them. Plate 75 brings all seven together from their earlier inclusion as inkwells, saucers, tires, etc. No. 1 is the commonest shape. No. 7 is the rarest, challenged by No. 6. No. 3 is scarce enough to cause comment. Four-hole calicoes are more plentiful than two-hole ones; three-holers are by far the least plentiful.

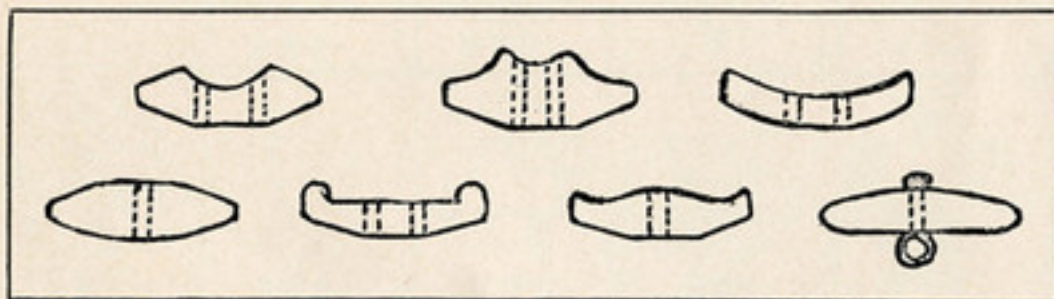


PLATE 75. THE SEVEN SHAPES OF CALICO BUTTONS.

(Drawings)

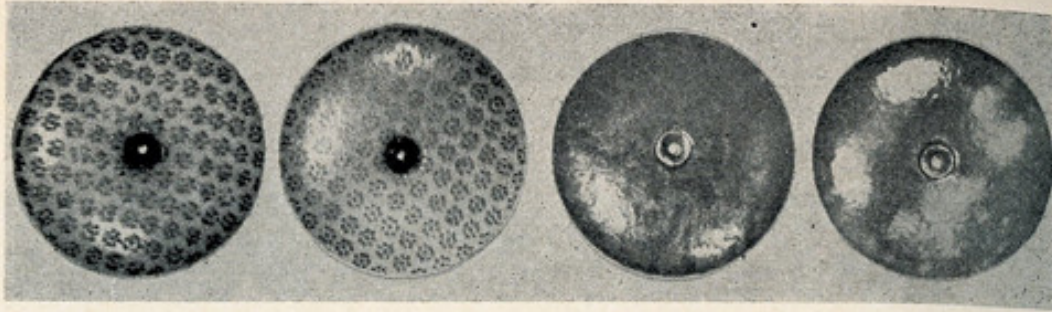


PLATE 64. PIN-SHANK CHINA BUTTONS WITH CALICO DESIGNS.

By courtesy of the owner Dr. Ruth Albert.

These four unusual pin-shanked buttons with calico and spatter designs are from the collection of Dr. Ruth Albert of Pennsylvania. No. 1 has a white body and a blue transfer print. No. 2 has a solid pink body with the same transfer pattern as No. 1 also printed in blue. Nos. 3 and 4 have solid color bodies in dark green; No. 3 has the vermiculated pattern in red color; and No. 4 has spatter trim in orange color. All buttons measure $15/16$ " in diameter and have white metal pin shanks.

Plate 75 above shows shapes (top row left to right) dish, inkwell, saucer and (bottom row left to right) smooth top oval eye, tire, what is referred to here as shape 6 but known as Shape 4 on Plate 37, and a pin shank example, considered to be the rarest. The article also refers to calico jewels, not drawn, but does not mention other body types which are shown below.

China Calico Body Shapes and Decorative Finishes



Dish



Inkwell



Saucer



Smooth Top



Tire



Shape 6



Pin Shank



Jewel
White Body



Jewel
Colored Body



Aspirin Gaiter



Drum



Knob
Center



Lozenge



Square Well



Silver Pattern



2 Color
4 Hole



Colored Body



Metal Rimmed



Spatter



Dark Body
4 Hole



Pattern Over
Luster



Pattern Under
Luster



Gold Pattern



Fisheye



2 Color Spatter



2 Color
2 Hole



Gingham Stripe
Over Pattern

Missing from the collection above is a faux sew-thru gaiter type calico pattern button. I've taken the image from the [China Exchange](#) website where you can see other examples of buttons not catalogued in Guidelines, and up close examples of some that are.



Jean-Felix Bapterosses in his factory at Briare, France, is credited with the introduction of colored china buttons in the mid 19th century. Colors for the more common two hole body calicos with a white pattern are shown below. Of those shown rarest are royal blue, teal green, dark gray, and orange. The pink variation is less opaque appearing, suggesting its possibly glass-like ingredients.



Matthew Brown has reminded me that at the museum at the Bapterosses factory, in addition to the calico patterns on dark body smooth tops,, we also saw calico patterns on dark body whistles. I've borrowed Deb Hanson's photo posted at the China Exchange site—thank you Deb.



Other calico rarities, not listed in the order of their scarceness, include:

1. Patterns on colored 4-hole bodies
2. Two-color calico patterns
3. Patterns on fish eye bodies
4. Pin shank, gaiter, drum (gaiter in metal setting) bodies
5. Lozenge (much thicker than dish examples) body

6. Luster as body color either under or over calico pattern
7. Gold calico pattern
8. Square sewing well on dish type body
9. Fancy metal rimmed dish body
10. Metal rimmed size medium





Gingham Buttons

Ginghams and calicoes share two body types but differ in the type of pattern and method of pattern application. From *Guidelines*:

“To distinguish the patterns by kind, one has only to look at the two textiles that the buttons copy. Cross-bars and plaids are typical of gingham. Tiny repetitive details is characteristic of calico.”

“Gingham patterns are placed on buttons in this way: The button is dusted over with colored powder after the design has been drawn on with a colorless sticky medium. The loose powder is blown off and the button fired. When more than one color is wanted, each requires separate firing.”

“The gingham patterns contained in the Bapterosses sample case range in size from just under 1/2” to 11/16”. The five four-holers all have knob centers. There are eleven basic patterns of line arrangement. Coloring is usually carried out with horizontal lines of one color and vertical lines of another. In a single instance, all lines are black.”

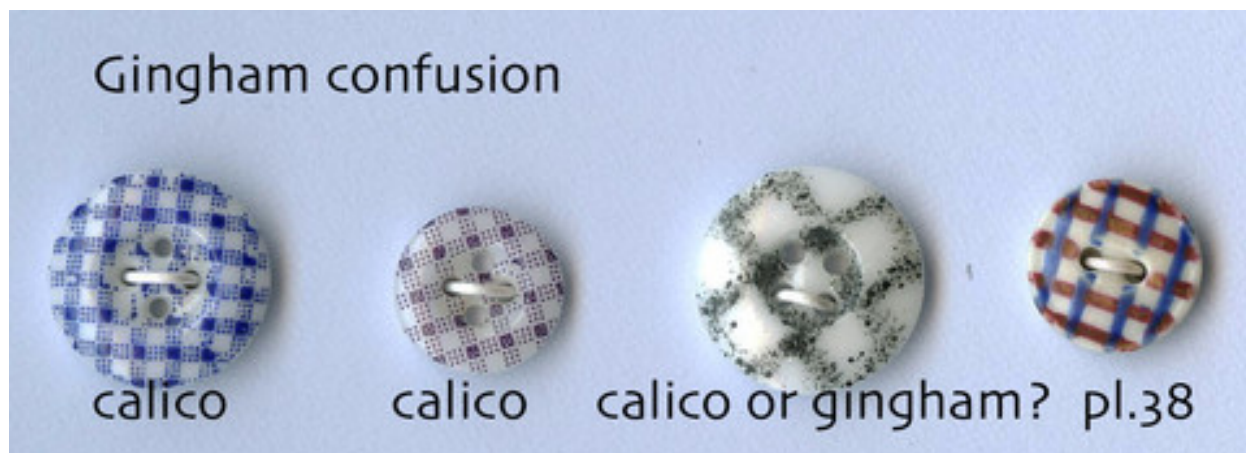
Courtesy of Millicent Safro of Tender Buttons, NYC, the [sample case buttons](#) may be seen at the China Exchange site.

Below are examples of the two body types exhibiting gingham patterns. The 4-hole version always has a raised knob in the center of the sewing well, as do some calico buttons. The 2-hole variety is a smooth top oval eye body.

Gingham China Buttons



Typically there are areas of confusion in distinguishing calico from gingham buttons. In one case (the two buttons on the left below), the method of application clearly places the buttons in the calico category. The black patterned button (third button from the left) is confusing because it is catalogued as a calico pattern, but appears to have been created using the gingham type method. It is found in a blue color also. The button far right is certainly a plaid, but the pattern appears to have been hand painted and this button is grouped with the oval eye button patterns on plate 38, chapter three.



On a personal note, I have been very fortunate to connect with friendly button dealers and other collectors who have facilitated my acquisitiveness—and it is my pleasure to share these delightful buttons with you in this blog.

Category [China Buttons 101](#) | Tags:

CHAPTER 7: A CHINA BUTTON SAMPLE CASE SAVED

February 5, 2012 by Janet

Chapter Seven: Another China Button Sample Case Saved

Photos of pages from a ten-page sample case showing the German brand “R & C” are shown in *Guidelines*.

Sample cards give us information as to the origin and relative time of production for the examples of china body types and colors we have in our collections. The older sample cards that I have found are from the Bapterosses factory in Briare, France. The most complete example consists of three approximately 9"X12" cards housed in a dark leather covered case.

AGATE



BUTTONS

50	40	30	20	150	2	3
150	140	130	120	11 1/8	11	12
250	240	230	220	21 1/8	21	22
350	340	330	320	31 1/8	31	32
501128	501126	501124	501122	501120	501118	501116
501227	501226	501224	501222	501220	501218	501216
49228	49226	49224	49222	49220	49218	49216
49328	49326	49324	49322	49320	49318	49316

43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1																																																																																
53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1																																																																						
63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1																																																												
73	72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1																																																		
83	82	81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73	72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1																																								
93	92	91	90	89	88	87	86	85	84	83	82	81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73	72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1																														
103	102	101	100	99	98	97	96	95	94	93	92	91	90	89	88	87	86	85	84	83	82	81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73	72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1																				
113	112	111	110	109	108	107	106	105	104	103	102	101	100	99	98	97	96	95	94	93	92	91	90	89	88	87	86	85	84	83	82	81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73	72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1										
123	122	121	120	119	118	117	116	115	114	113	112	111	110	109	108	107	106	105	104	103	102	101	100	99	98	97	96	95	94	93	92	91	90	89	88	87	86	85	84	83	82	81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74	73	72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61	60	59	58	57	56	55	54	53	52	51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Possibly older is another Bapterosses sample card showing mounds and deepwells with remarkable lusters.

BOUTONS EN ÉBÈLE
 BREVETÉ EN ANGLETERRE ET EN AMÉRIQUE

DÉPÔT
 A
 PARIS



DÉPÔT
 A
 PARIS

N^{OS}

SÉRIE 10

	A	B	C	Blanc Seule	D	E	F
10							
11							
12							
15							

SÉRIE 11

	A	B	C	Blanc Seule	D	E	F
10							
11							
12							
15							

Indiquer les couleurs par les lettres alphabétiques.

Continuing with sample cards showing medals won in international competition, is this blue background card of "BOUTONS AGATES BLANCS."

BOUTONS AGATES BLANCS

A LA MARQUE
F. B
BREVETE S.G.D.G.



NUMEROS ET GRANDEUR	FORME Lentille	FORME Cuvette	FORME Bourrelet	FORME Biseau
5				
4				
3				
3 1/2				
2				
2 1/2				
1				
1 1/2				
10				
20				
30				
40				
50				
55				

Another card shows some similar styles in a pearl lustered finish.

The heading on the card has been changed to read “Manufacture de Briare.” The Bapterosses factory is located in the small town of Briare, France

MANUFACTURE DE BRIARE



TARIF PAGE 3

6

N ^{OS}	BOUTONS PERLE						
	LENTILLE	CUVETTE	BOURRELET	BISEAU	PERLÉS	CANNELÉS	DEUX-TROUS
71							
72							
73							
74							
75							
76							
77							
78							
79							
80							
81							
82							
83							
84							

The same body styles in black are offered on this card which lacks the medals in gold.



MANUFACTURE DE BRIARE



		BOUTONS NOIRS								
N ^{os}	LENTILLE	CUVETTE	BOURRELET	BISEAU	PERLÉ	CANNELÉ	2 TROUS	N ^{os}		
5								5		
4								4		
3								3		
3½								3½		
2								2		
2½								2½		
1								1		
1½								1½		
10								10		
20								20		
30								30		
40								40		
50								50		
55								55		

A third sample card headed “Manufacture de Briare” offers a button which is not catalogued in *Guidelines*: a self shank ball shape. It shows a relationship to whistle shape #10 in that both have a raised band around the circumference of the button. The buttons are shown in glossy, matte and lustered finishes.



MANUFACTURE DE BRIARE











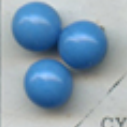




































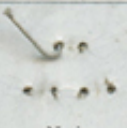



N°s de Grandeurs



Série 116

Série 126

Série 115

 Ivoire	 DA	 CX	 CX	 B	 Blanc	 AJ
 CJ	 CY	 L	 L	 H	 AG	 AN
 CL	 S	 BL	 BL	 AH	 AK	 A
 F	 Cbis	 CV	 CV	 Mordant	 AL	 E
 CS	 M	 CG	 CG	 AS	 Bleu ch.	 Rouge
 BO	 CE	 CD	 CD	 AQ	 AF	 Grenat
 BQ	 Noir	 CF	 Noir	 AC	 AP	 AM

Two smaller cards below are also from the Bapterosses factory, one showing smooth tops and the other hollow eyes and three examples of the elusive body style 4 smooth top.

MANUFACTURE DE BRIARE

BOUTONS



PERLES



DÉPÔT A PARIS.

N^{OS}

BOUTONS DEUX TROUS

N^{OS}

5					10
4					20
3					30
3 1/2					40
2					50
2 1/2					55
1					
1 1/2					

MANUFACTURE DE BRIARE











DÉPÔT

PARIS.

N^{os} FORMES

COULEURS

11	 W ₁	 W ₁	 W ₁
12	 W ₂	 B ₁	 B ₇
13	 W ₃	 C ₁	 C ₇
14	 W ₄	 D ₁	 D ₇
14	 W ₅	 E ₁	 E ₇
14	 W ₆	 F ₁	 F ₇
14 1/2	 W ₂	 H ₁	 G ₁

Chaque forme et chaque numéro se fait dans toutes les couleurs.

An additional card from the Bapterosses factory has a different heading: "Nouveauté" suggesting "new style." It features two and four hole tire type buttons in glossy and matte finishes and saucerlike holloweyes in glossy , matte and lustered finishes.



Nouveauté



Tarif page 12

33

GRANDEURS		COULEURS												GRANDEURS	
		SÉRIE 107. (Brillant)						SÉRIE 117. (Mat.)							
3															3
4														4	
6		CM	BE	DA	CJ	CJ	DA	BE	CM						6
8															8
9		CX	BG	CY	CA	CA	CY	BG	CX						9
10															10
11		DC	T	S	CL	CL	S	T	DC						11
12															12
13		X	CG	C bis	F	F	C bis	CG	X						13
14		CO	CD	M	BO	BO	M	CD	CO						14
		S ⁿ 57	S ⁿ 27	S ⁿ 28	S ⁿ 107	S ⁿ 117	S ⁿ 108	S ⁿ 118							

S ⁿ 67 LINES GRANDEURS		COULEURS			S ⁿ 97 LINES GRANDEURS		COULEURS			S ⁿ 168 LINES GRANDEURS		
		SÉRIE 67					SÉRIE 67			SÉRIE 167		
14					16		16					14
16					18		18	L	Blanc	A		16
18		CY	CJ	CX	20		20					18
20					22		22	Z	B	AK		20
22		S	CK	X	24		24					22
24					26		26	CF	H	AF		24
26		C bis	CA	CO								26
								CG	Rouge	Mordoré		
		M	CL	CS								
								Noir	E	AH		
		CE	F	CN								

We know that other button manufacturers were producing china and china type buttons concurrent with Bapterosses/Manufacture de Briare. *Guidelines* shows the sample case from the R & C Company in Germany. The sample card below is marked “RB” and I believe also originated in Germany. *Guidelines* makes the point that the French labeling on the R&C cards, and this card then, reflects the French domination of the industry and an attempt by other manufactures to be “à la mode” (in style) for the times.



BOUTONS AGATE



Art. 157	Art. 1005	Art. 111
Grand 11		Grand 11
12		12
13		13
14		14
15		15
16		16
17		17
18		18
20		20
22		22
24		24
26		26



Art. 405	505	605	705	Art. 407	507	607	707
Grand 17							Grand 17

Art. 355	357	361	Art. 805	807	811	1011	Art. 905	907	911
Grand 17			Grand 17				Grand 17		

If you noticed the expression “china type” in the text above, here is confirmation of buttons manufactured in the style of traditional ceramic body buttons, by a manufacturer of glass beads and buttons: Jablonex in Czechoslovakia. The two cards confirm recent suspicions by china button collectors that some of the buttons in our collections actually have a content that is more glass-like than ceramic. The cards are labeled, as were their French and German counterparts, “Boutons Agate”, and offer a variety of buttons in traditional china body types.



CARD No. 303
CARTE No. 303

ARTICLE-CARD

CARTE DES SÉRIES

Agate Buttons - Boutons Agate

100

Sizes in lines
111

Grandeurs en lignes
109

col. 101		105	107	108	109	col. 101	
11							14
12		110	111	112	114		16
13							18
14		115	116	117	119		20
15							22
16		126	127	141	166		24
17							26
18		168	205	1501	1502		28
20							30
22		1503	1506	1515	1526		32
24							
26		1529	1586	1587	1589		
28							
		1590	1591	1592	3315		






























CARD No. 303
CARTE No. 303




























100 F la carte
CARTE DES COULEURS

COLOUR - CARD

Agate Buttons - Boutons Agate

Cat. I.	 148	 40	 66	 15
------------	---	--	--	--

Cat. II.	 34	 62	 784	 34	 60	 789	 26	 27	 12
	 755	 16	 17	 3	 24	 4	 528	 5	 14
	 25	 46	 38	 21	 1292	 6	 274	 265	

Cat. III.	 1	 13	 18	 1231	 309	 756	 863	 974	 975
	 2	 1254	 1390	 976	 1262	 780	 680	 738	 956
	 681	 10	 398	 11	 36	 978	 1290	 8	 271

Cat. IV.	 101	 102	 104	 756L	 784L	 103	 70	 1303	 108
	 71	 114	 60L	 789L	 1304	 1305	 528L	 299	 69

CHAPTER 8: CHINA STENCIL DESIGNS

February 5, 2012 by Janet

Chapter Eight: China Stencil Designs

Part 1: Catalogue of China Stencils

Guidelines provides a descriptive definition of stencil buttons “so that all readers will understand precisely what buttons are included in this catalogue—and why these and no others.” I have rephrased except as quoted below.

THE NAME. These buttons are known to us as “stencils”; some of the patterns were actually created using a stencil, others obviously were hand decorated. The conclusion is then, that “stencil” signifies a style and not a technique.

STYLE OF PATTERN. Stencil patterns are medallion-like, the design created to fit the button as a single unit, in a single color.

BODY COLOR. Most commonly a stencil button is either white or cream. Only two of the thirty-one patterns are found on a different colored body, either black or orange.

BODY SHAPE. Round is the most common shape with three patterns decorating a modified square shape. The top of the

button is slightly convex with a mostly flat back. *"The top has no molding whatsoever except that is required by the holes."* This comment is important because often collectors mistakenly include a molded top fish eye button with color inside the molded area.

THE HOLES. There are always two holes enclosed in either a fisheye, oval-eye or boxed oval-eye well.

THE SIZE. The majority of stencils are NBS size small, with modified squares sometimes measuring as mediums. NBS diminutive sizes are rare.

THE COLORS. Colors listed are: black, red, orange, lavender, light blue, dark blue, light green, dark green, light brown, dark brown, deep lavender, pink and yellow. Metallic lusters are mentioned in the text.

THE CERAMIC BODY. Guidelines says: "One of the very most important distinguishing characteristics cannot be described—the look and feel of the china itself. These buttons have a body quite different from that of the calicoes, but only actual comparison of the buttons will show what the difference is."

Part 2: Stencil Patterns Tabulated

[Guidelines pages 143 – 148](#) show drawings of stencil patterns and a description of body types, colors and sizes for each. Clicking the link will initiate the download of a pdf of these pages.

Stencil Patterns Tabulated



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15



16



17



18



19



20



21



22



23



24



25



26



27



28



29



30



31



17 metallic



36



35



39

The text indicates which patterns are common and which are scarce. Short version: #s 2, 5, 13, 19 and 30 are hard to find. #7 is also less common. Guidelines mentions that only one example of #26 has been recorded. #31 is questionable as a stencil pattern and all numbers above #31 are quite rare.

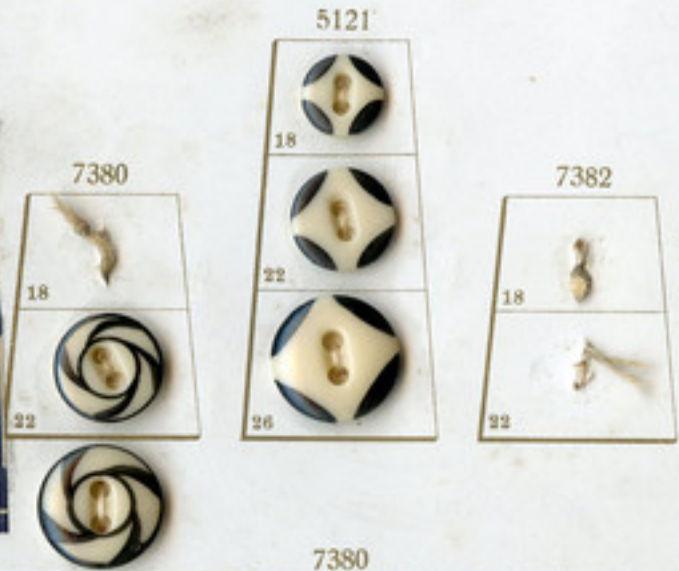
Occasionally examples of similarly decorated buttons are found, these two originating in the Czech Republic.



A newer sample card of stencils is shown below. The hyphenated “CZECHO-SLOVAKIA” (cut off from the bottom of the card in this scan) and the telephone number help date the popularity of these buttons to the years between 1918 and 1930.

Our Leader CAN BE SEWED ON BY MACHINE

NAMM & SINGER
CROCHET BUTTONS
AND NOVELTIES
38-40 WEST 32nd STREET
CHICKERING 7-380-7-381 NEW YORK



GUARANTEED TO WASH

Collectors also found a large quantity of stencil buttons in craft stores as late as the early 1990's, sold under the Jesse James "Dress-It-Up" brand. These could be purchased in small mixed packages or ordered directly from the company by the gross. In reply to an inquiry, they stated that they had found large bags of the buttons in a Czech Republic warehouse. All of the patterns were on cream bodied fisheye buttons. The pattern #29, the face pattern, had previously been rather scarce.



As another indication of the relatively late production of these buttons, stencils could be purchased in at least one shop in New York City in 2002.



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A concluding comment: The quote from *Guidelines* above, regarding the ceramic body of stencil buttons differing from that of calicos, is interesting in light of relatively recent discoveries. We have learned that many of our documented later china buttons, and particularly the stencil buttons, were manufactured from materials more commonly used in the production of glass buttons, rather than in ceramic button manufacture. Glasslike buttons remain in our china button classification as china type buttons, reflecting National Button Society's decision to group together china and china type (having characteristics of known china buttons) buttons.

Category [China Buttons 101](#) | Tags:

CHAPTER 9: BEYOND GUIDELINES FOR COLLECTING CHINA BUTTONS

February 5, 2012 by Janet

As I read through the previous chapters, I realize that I have included examples that vary from the buttons documented by the editors of *Guidelines*. Buttons that surfaced in the two years following publication were given official sanction in articles in the *National Button Bulletin*. After that time, we have been forced to rely on a consensus as to the appropriateness of a particular example, believing that it is reasonable to assume that buttons bearing a resemblance to known china buttons have a legitimate place in our collections.

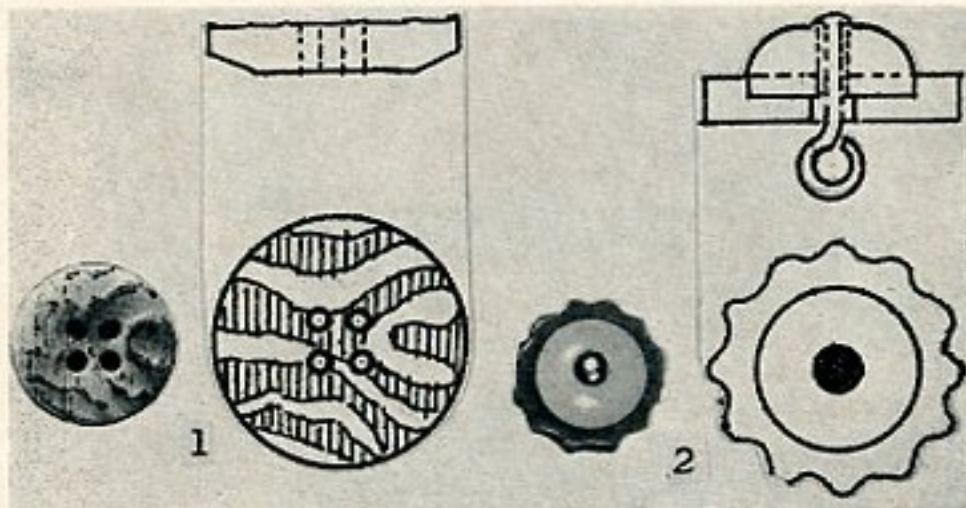
TWO HOLE BUTTONS OFF BEAT TYPES BODY STYLE NINE

In the March-April 1971 issue of *NBB* Jane Ford Adams proposed an additional "Off-Beat Type" giving it the designation "Body Style 9." The article also illustrates a china shoe button attached by way of its pin shank to a Bakelite button, with the disclaimer that the button is an interesting combination of materials, and considered to be a plastic button.

ADDITIONS TO THE CATALOG OF CHINA BUTTONS

Mrs. William Schreck of Lamont, Pennsylvania, has reported to Ruth Lamm her discovery of buttons not listed in "Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons."

Knowing that all collectors are interested, we pass the information along. On page 89 of the book, under 4-hole, OFF-BEAT TYPES, Body Style 9 can be added: It has a flat top molded with fine parallel lines and heavier wavy lines, making a design that looks like watered silk. The sides are straight; the back shaped.



On page 28, under SHOE BUTTONS, this footnote can be added: While this imaginative use of dead stock (china Shoe buttons) gives us plastic, not china buttons, they are worth noting here for the combination of materials. The button can be described best by construction. A scalloped-edge plastic disk, slightly wider than the shoe button, has a shallow depression into which the China button fits and an open center through which the metal pin-shank of the china button passes very freely. The full size is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Color is white china and orange plastic.

The drawings (larger than true size for better detail) were made by Charles Lamm.

Jane Ford Adams

EIGHT NEW STENCIL DESIGNS

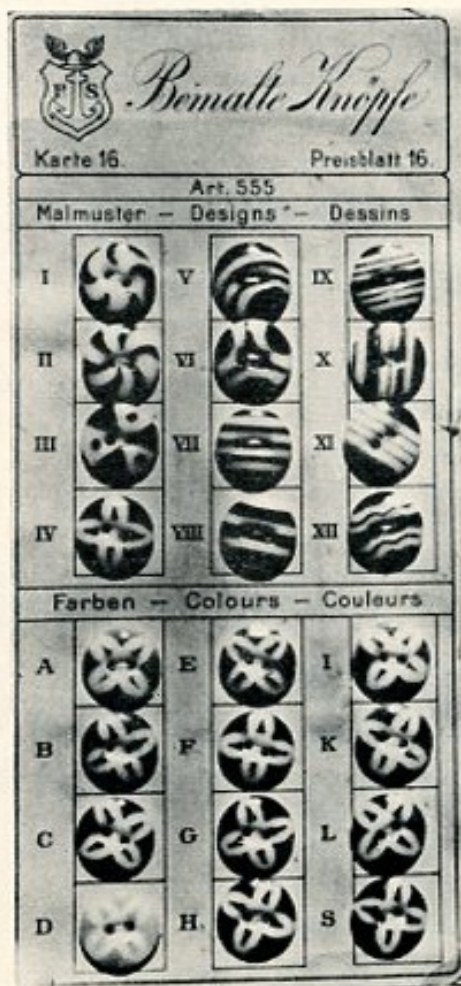
In the November-December 1971 issue Ms. Adams presents a sample card of German stencil buttons, noting that eight of the twelve designs it contains should be considered new additions to the catalog of patterns in *Guidelines*.

ANOTHER SAMPLE CARD OF CHINA BUTTONS

Jane Ford Adams

Mrs. Harold Eby is the fortunate owner of a china button sample card that has not been pictured or described until now. Eight of the twelve designs it contains are new additions to the catalog in "Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons." The card yields other new information also.

Judging from the German language heading and the trilingual captions below, the card originated with a German (or possibly Austrian) firm that did business in England, France and probably the United States. "Painted Buttons" is the literal translation of "Bemalte Knöpfe," a term new to us for buttons



NBS
Records
VI as # 32
VII as # 33
III as # 5

NBS
Records This
Pattern as
#16
Dark Brown
and Yellow
had not been
Recorded.

of this kind. It would be very interesting to know whether "bemalte" was a regular trade name for buttons of one particular kind or whether it was a less specific term.

The four stencil patterns already known to collectors are numbered on the card: III which is our #5; IV which is #16; V which is #33; and VI which is #32. See pages 143 and 144 in Guidelines.

The ceramic body is white and the holes are oval-eyes. All buttons in the design portion of the card are "painted" in the same color, a medium blue. In the color section design IV is used to show all of the twelve colors that are obtainable for the whole line. The colors are pink, red, reddish brown, yellow, tan, medium blue, darker blue, purple, light green, dark green, dark brown, black. Previously #5 has been reported in only four colors while #32 and #33 have been seen in only one each. With this addition of tan, brown and yellow, #16 is now recorded in fifteen colors, all that are known to exist for stencils.

After a close comparison of china buttons in her collection with those described in Guidelines, Mrs. Eby has these to add to the tabulations of color/size/shape:

Page 40. Shape #1 with a pink border and pink around the center hole.

Page 44. Igloo #18 with a black top; base white with orange band near the edge, not over.

Page 53. #7-F in marbled medium blue.

#8-F in marbled medium tan.

#12-0 in medium blue.

Page 56. #25 in medium blue.

Page 62. #5 with white body, black band around the edge and over the side.

Page 80. E. Color trim on opaque. All brown with green band midway between center and edge and gold band at edge, and over.

Page 94. Shape 3 in small size.

We are grateful to Mrs. Eby for this information and hope other collectors of china buttons will follow her example.

BIRD CAGE TWO-HOLE TOP

Ms. Adam's third and final addition is described but not pictured in the May-June 1972 *National Button Bulletin* as a "Bird cage, two-hole top."

A THRILLING CHINA BUTTON FIND

Jane Ford Adams

Erwina Chamberlin has had collector's luck in finding a china bird cage button so different from any ever seen before that it rates a star billing. It is a two-hole sew-through.

The back is exactly like any other bird cage, the shank being a hollow cone pierced by four slits. But the top, which is smooth and nearly flat, is perforated by two needle holes spaced to open into two of the slits. The color is untrimmed white; the size is 11/16th inch.

When one tries to sew the button on via the bird cage, the holes seem to complicate the operation without offering any advantage. Still if colored thread is used the holes will provide for a bit of decoration, such as making the button match the dress material. But see, there is another way to attach this button and the maker may have intended it so. It can be sewed on with the bird cage top side up. Then it reminds one very much of an igloo.

For pictures and descriptions of the different bird cage shapes and patterns previously recorded, see "Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons" pages 30-32. There is space on page 32 to enter this new discovery. In my opinion, it should be classified as a distinct variety rather than as another subclass under shapes. The large divisions of china buttons having china shanks will then become:

- A. Bird cages, solid tops
- B. Bird cages, two-hole tops
- C. Inserted two-way self shanks

GOLD DESIGNS ON CHINA BUTTONS

In the same issue, Ruth Lamm describes and pictures two partial sample cards. Card #1 features stencil pattern number 17 finished in gold over a bright surface color. The article refers to an example on which the reverse was painted black. I haven't see that variation, but the stencil buttons in the scan below include a white body, two black bodies and a pearl lustered body over which the colored and gold luster finishes have been applied.

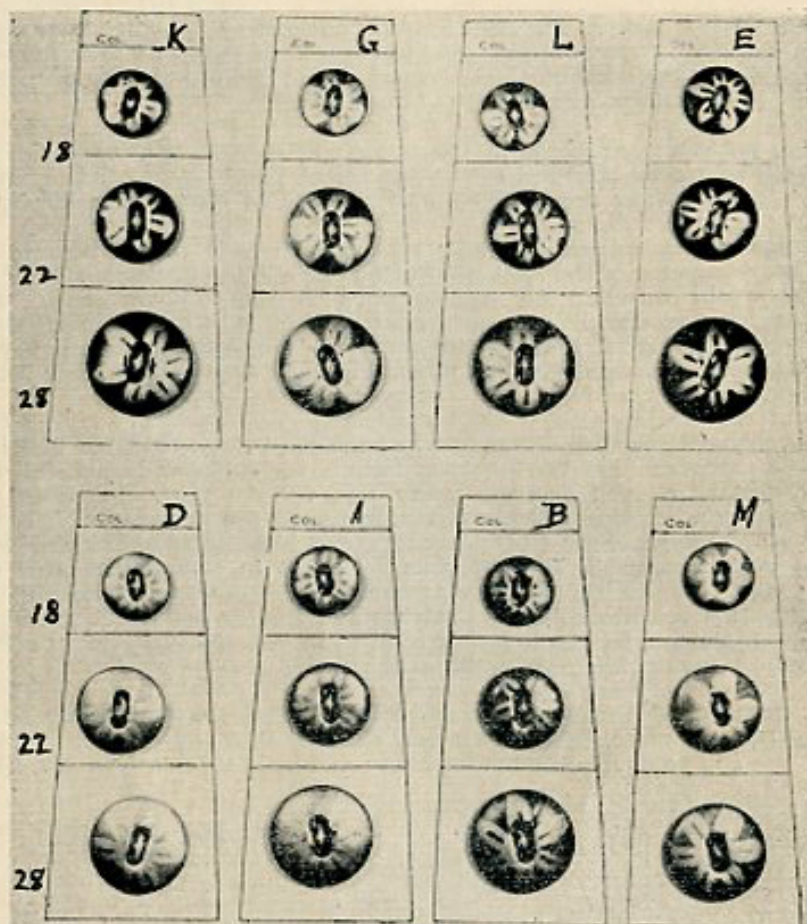
TWO MORE CHINA BUTTON SAMPLE CARDS

Ruth Lamm

Unlisted china buttons are found from time to time. Mrs. Mary B. Ditzler of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, bought two salesman's sample cards recently at a flea market. No manufacturers' names were on them. Each appeared to be the bottom half of a card, as the edgeline went only around three sides. The original cord which went from button to button was unchanged.

Buttons on the first card have pattern No. 17 in the stencil catalog on an ivory body, 2-hole with oval well eye in shape. The well hole and 6-petal flower are gold. A color line marks each petal. The flower seems to have been stenciled on after a bright lustered color had been put on for a base. Part of the buttons were painted black on the back; some were not touched. There are three sizes, 18, 22 and 28 lines, as written on the card. Colors are:

Key	Base Color	Flower	Back Color
K	bright green	gold	black
G	golden brown	gold	ivory
L	dark green	gold	black
E	black	gold	black
D	light pink	gold	ivory
A	light orange	gold	black
B	red	gold	black
M	rose	gold	ivory



CARD #1

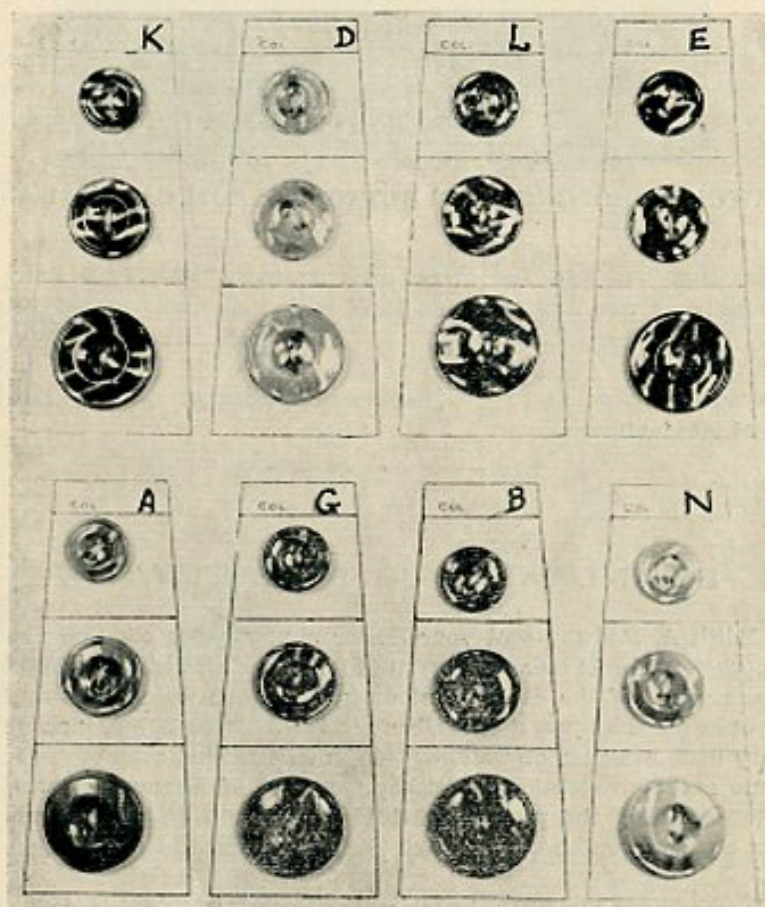
Since the two cards are of the same paper stock, printed exactly alike and with the same handwritten codes, it seems certain that they came from the same place at the same time. The ways in which the buttons are alike, that is, in coloring and sizes, suggests that they were all made at about the same time. However, the buttons on the second card differ from those on the first in two important ways—body shape and kind of pattern. As already described, those on the first card have a stencil shape and a stencil pattern.

Buttons on the second card have neither. As for the shape, it is like the 2-hole, saucerlike hollow-eye found on pages 54 and 55 in the China book, structure and construction shown on Plate 32, #15A. This is a rimmed shape; no stencils have rims. As for the design, it is composed of broken lines in gold arranged hit-and-miss on bright, sharp colored bases. When the gold reaches the sewing well, it continues across. Most of the lines go in one general direction; they



Card #2 is made up of saucer-like hollow eye buttons finished in a pattern of random gold lines topping a colored surface. In most collections of china buttons you will find additional body types decorated with a variation of this same treatment. Shown below are a tire, quatrefoil radiating line rim, tiny mound, plump, fisheye, dish and a piecrust example.

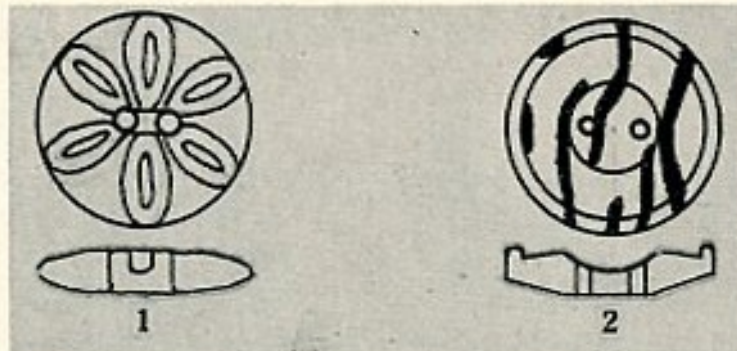
sometimes meet but do not cross at right angles. Only the button tops were painted but the color flowed over the sides to some extent. All backs remain ivory. The colors are:



CARD #2

Key	Base Color	Lines	Back Color
K	turquoise	gold	ivory
D	bright pink	gold	ivory
L	green	gold	ivory
E	black	gold	ivory
A	orange	gold	ivory
G	tan	gold	ivory
B	red	gold	ivory
M	raspberry	gold	ivory

I have in my own collection a button like those on the second card which is 22 line size and has gold lines on an untinted ivory ground. The outstanding china button collection made by the late Mrs. Josephine Vacher contains one of



DRAWINGS SHOWING TYPE BUTTONS—FROM CARDS #1 AND 2.

28 line size that has gold and green lines on ivory. Mrs. Ivan Bair of Leola, Pennsylvania, has one measuring 28 lines with gold lines placed regularly on dark red.

We would very much like to have descriptions of other variants. Please report any that you have.



A similar multi-color finish decorates the button on this card from Lansing. The gold is faint, but the technique appears to be similar.



ALBERT PARENT TRANSFER PATTERNS

To my knowledge the next mention of additional china buttons is found in the July 1985 issue of the *National Button Bulletin*, included in an article titled "A Great Find!" The buttons were discovered in Albert Parent & Co. of Paris sample books acquired by Diana Epstein and Millicent Safro. They sport intricate transfers topped by a luster finish covering the top surface of two hole oval eye smooth top china buttons.

A GREAT FIND!

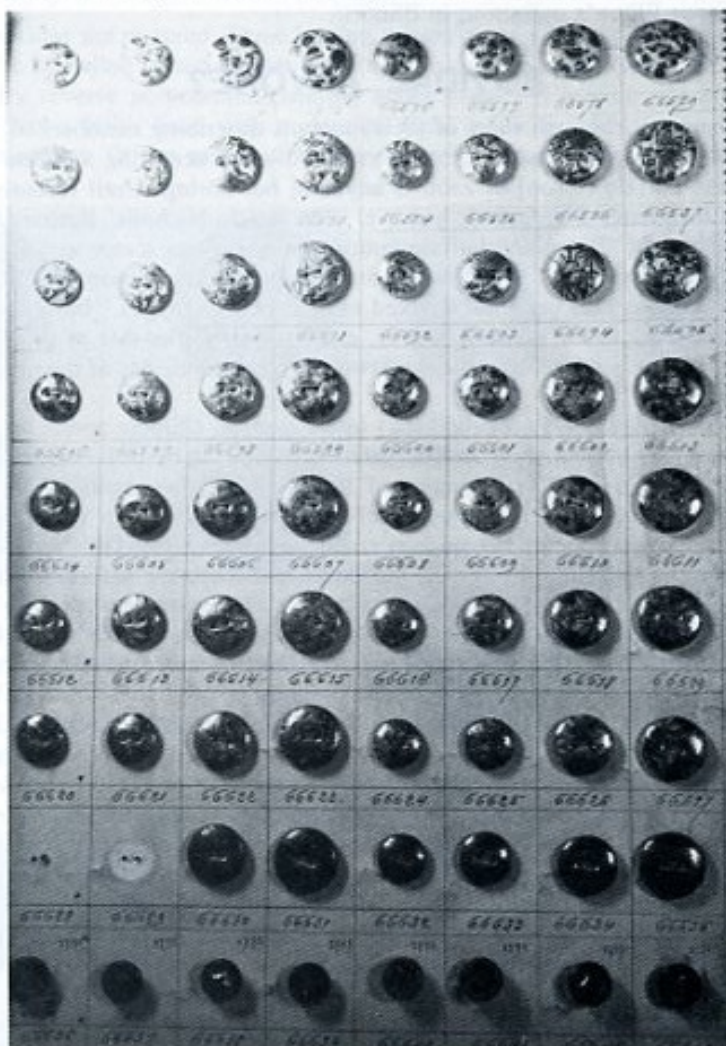
While examining the chinas in the Albert Parent sample books, we were amazed that



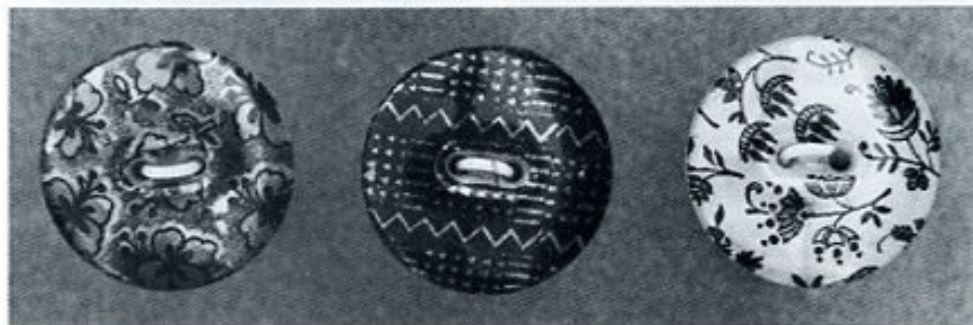
Three of the patterns now owned by Denver Elliott.

we did not find any of the gingham, calicoes or stencils we are accustomed to in the samples. Instead there were transfers or stencils which we had never seen. John Whiteford said he could only surmise that these were made for the more affluent clientele of the Parent Company.

At the Ohio show in April, 1985, Diana Epstein showed a card of these unusual china



The page of china buttons in the Albert Parent sample books.



A close-up of the other three of Denver's new acquisitions. (Close-up photos by George Sweat)

buttons to Denver Elliott. There were approximately 100 smooth top two hole oval eye buttons ranging in size from 21/32 to 27/32 inches in diameter. They were lustered and stenciled with a multitude of different patterns, some multi-colored. They cannot be classed with our well known stencils because the pattern is not medallion-like. Neither do they resemble our calicoes. The six close-ups shown on the previous pages had been added to Denver Elliott's collection in Illinois.



SNOUFFER CHINA BUTTONS

The next significant group of china buttons to surface is known as "Snouffers," named after their initial owner Marie Snouffer, who purchased the buttons in 1991 at a garage sale. The small price paid for the 300 loose buttons would make you weep, and you may read about it in a booklet detailing the purchase and including photos and descriptions of each of the 109 unique buttons retained by Marie. The remaining duplicate buttons were sold to other collectors and are circulating among us today. The booklet may be ordered from the Michigan Button Society for \$5 + \$2 shipping, mailed to Joy LeCount, 3472 W. 800 N, Wawaka

IN 46794-9781 with your request. [Mailto:jlecount@app-printing.com](mailto:jlecount@app-printing.com) The booklet may also be ordered from Suzanne Marsh via a PayPal payment of \$7: <mailto:sznbtn10@yahoo.com>

The buttons are dramatic stencils (medallion-like patterns created to fit the button as a unit with no repeats), calicos (design is repeated over the entire surface), and striking striped and geometric patterns decorating two and four hole china button bodies. The two hole examples are oval eye smooth tops; the four hole buttons are of two types: a body resembling a dish but with a flattened rim and a tire type closest in appearance to Body Style 5 variation 3 (pages 86-7 Guidelines). The buttons are found in three sizes: 16.5 mm, 14 mm and 12 mm. Lillian Buirkle and Marjorie Fraser have edited the material for the Michigan Button Society and I am scanning the covers of the booklet for a close up view of ten of the buttons.

The Marie Snouffer
China Buttons

Second Edition



Lillian Buirkle and Marjorie Fraser

Michigan Button Society

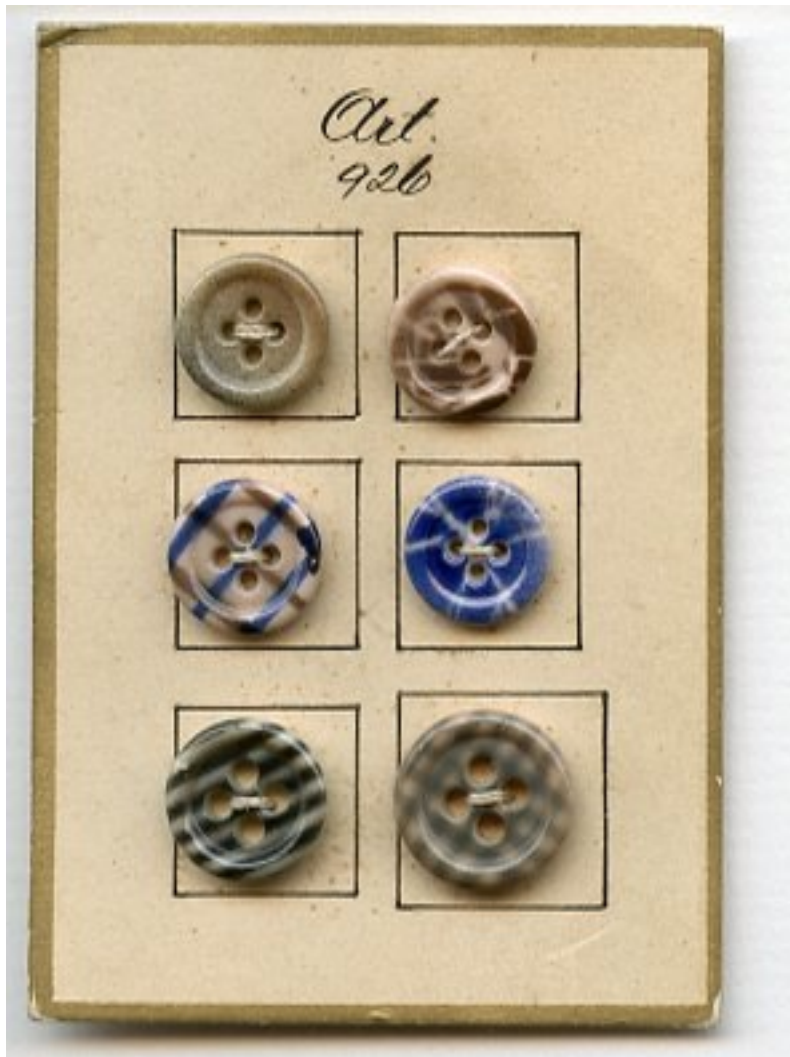
www.michiganbuttonssociety.org



Michigan Button Society
www.michiganbuttonssociety.org

Examples of buttons from this collection were included in an article titled “A Fresh Look at China Buttons” in the *National Button Bulletin*, May 2007, according them unquestionable acceptance as china buttons suitable for use in competition. This issue with a complete ordering of china buttons in great color images is still available from the National Button Society and is useful for proper classification of Snouffer and all china buttons. Contact Gil Biggie to request a copy: (<mailto:dbg@charter.net>), 9075 Wigwam Way, Reno, NV 89506. The cost is \$4 for the issue + \$2 for shipping.

Below is a small card of buttons that appear similar to the Snouffer four-hole tire type body, with surface decorations closer in appearance to those on the Snouffer four-hole flat rimmed dish type. These also are of unknown origin.



BAPTEROSSES BUTTON FROM BRIARE, FRANCE

What to say about the next explosion of china button knowledge? A chance meeting on ebay with Matthew Brown led to a visit by china collectors to the Bapterosses Museum in Briare, France, exploration of the discharge area behind the still operating factory, the unearthing (literally) of many new body types and finishes– and kiln testing. You can read about the 2005 visit to Briare at [The China Exchange](#) and view photos of china buttons

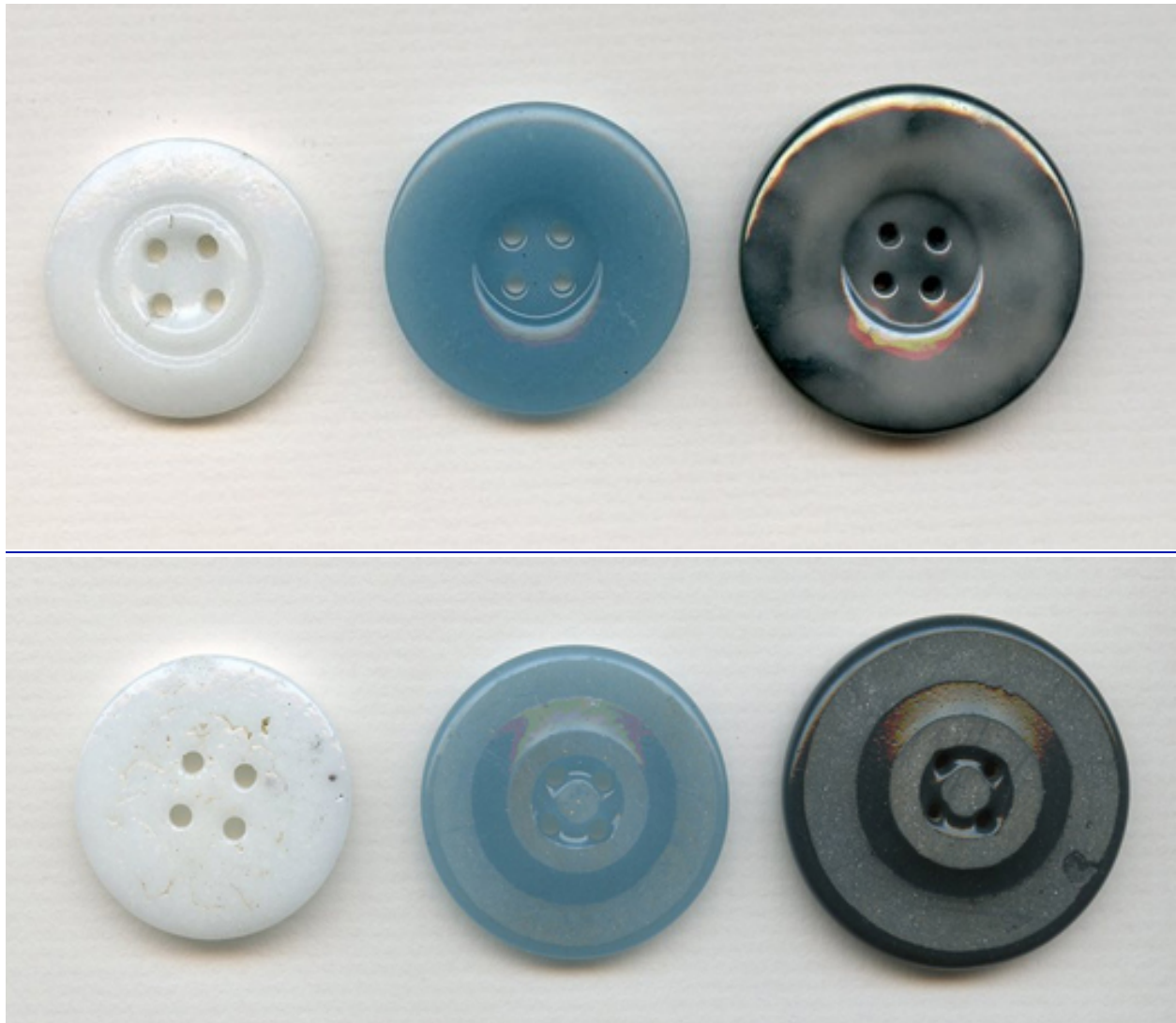
displayed at the museum. <http://www.angelfire.com/tx6/chinaexchangetoo/index.html>

Collectors and button dealers Jane Quimby and Deborah Hanson (Byson Buttons) have made repeated visits to the site and are responsible for the introduction of many new examples of china buttons produced at the factory, previously unseen or unrecognized by collectors in the U.S. Matthew Brown has also contributed many unlisted examples discovered at French brocantes. You may see a grouping of the variety of two-way inserted self shanks in Chapter 2. The buttons in the next photo have an unusual source. They were part of small keychain bead and button figures sold at the gift shop at the Bapterosses Museum. A close examination of the sample cards shown at the China Exchange site will result in many matches to these buttons.





Other buttons that came from Briare and the factory discharge area were also striking and new to us. *Guidelines* mentions one size large white china button, shown far left in the scan below. The other two buttons, also size large, were Byson Button finds from Briare. They measure from left to right $1\frac{5}{16}$ ", $1\frac{7}{16}$ ", $1\frac{5}{8}$ ".



In viewing the reverse of these large buttons, the obvious difference between the two types leads us back to one of the reasons for our initial visit to Briare and the Bapterosses Museum and Factory. We had noticed that buttons of later manufacture appearing on Bapterosses marked cards seemed to exhibit more characteristics of glass than of ceramic material. Our tour guide at the factory confirmed that as the factory began producing mosaic tile, in addition to beads and buttons, it transitioned from a ceramic to a glass formula. Later testing of buttons matching descriptions in *Guidelines* confirmed that buttons long accepted

as china were actually closer to glass in composition. Coining the term, “china types,” collectors decided that buttons bearing a resemblance to known china button types would be considered acceptable in china button representations and awards. Pat Fields addressed the issue in a *NBB* July 2007 article titled “The China/Glass Question: What Makes a ‘China’ Button?”

The following photos contain examples of other unlisted buttons. The first shows front and reverse of a saucer-like hollow eye and a dish button with “frit” (the mixture of silica and fluxes that is fused at high temperature to make glass• a similar calcined and pulverized mixture used to make soft-paste porcelain or ceramic glazes) surface embellishment. Although not matching the sample cards on view in 2005 at the Bapterosses Museum, we noticed this technique there on oval eye buttons.



The handsome black button, a Byson Button find, resembles a more familiar two-way inserted self shank button, but evidences a flatter, apparently solid body and a scaled down inserted shank. The button is 1" in diameter.



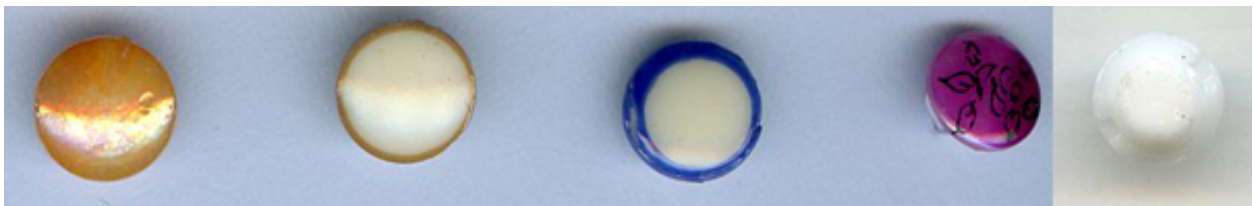
Jocelyn Howells shared the next image of a similar body type with an apparent transfer pattern surface decoration.



More Byson Button discoveries below with gold surface decoration on familiar body types.



Our visits to Briare made us aware also of the legitimacy of a self shank body type that we had noticed in china button collections. I tend to divide self shank types into three groups, differing mostly in the shape of the shank. I consider those with the flattest shank probably the earliest; the reverse also has more of the “pebbled” texture we have always considered to be a mark of china buttons. The example with the bright pink surface has a transfer of a rose design in black and came from a store card.



The second group of self shank buttons have a more rounded shank tip. The body far left with the molded crosshatch pattern is found on a sample card with the #20 two-way inserted self shank buttons that it “matches.” The pinkish version is a painted top pearl lustered body faux whistle and the far right front and reverse is a brick colored body with a bright copper luster.



The third variety I believe to be the latest production from the Bapterosses factory and was found in the accessible layers of the

discharge area. The buttons had a larger size range, were pastel in color and the shank was more elongated than the previous style.

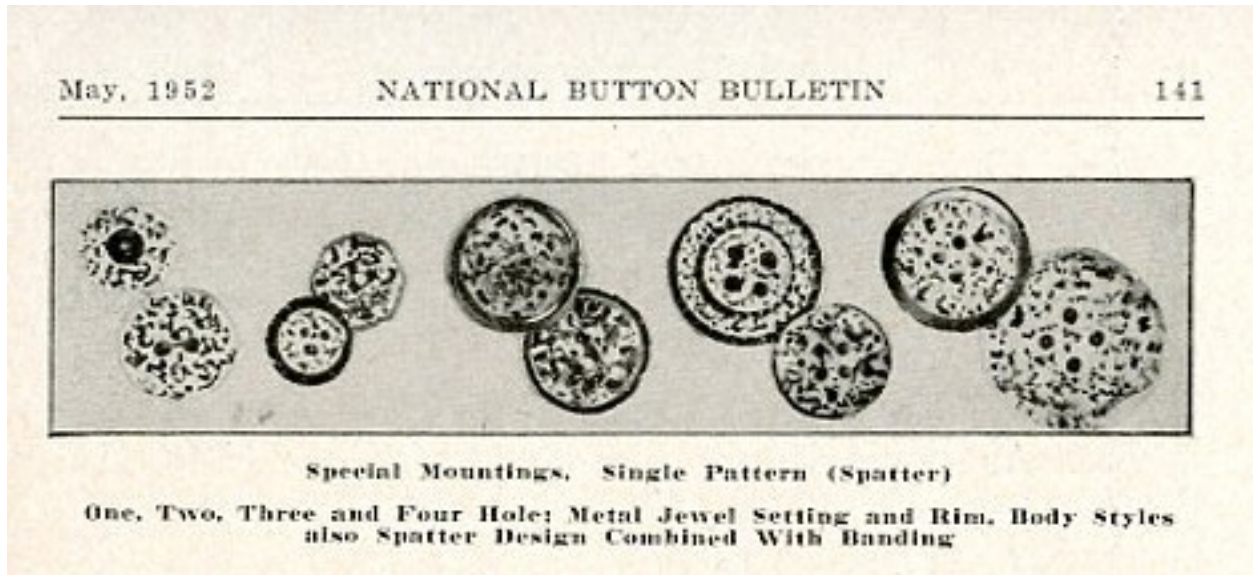


And the last item presumably from the Bapterosses factory....get ready....a bag of plastic buttons!

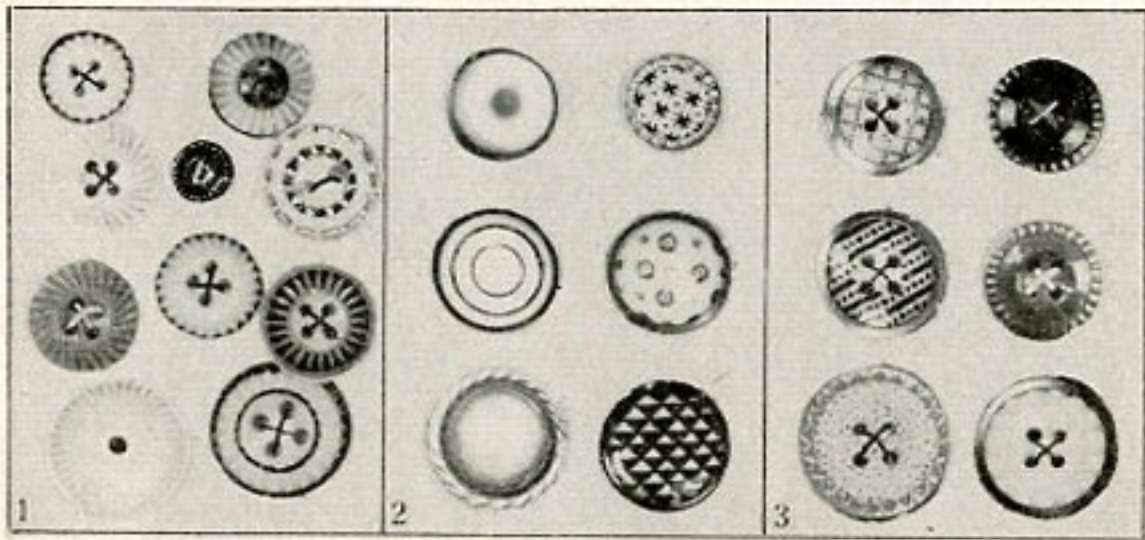


Before concluding the “Beyond” chapter, I’d like to go back to the initial proposed classification of china buttons printed in the

National Button Bulletin, May 1952, years prior to the publication of *Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons*. One surface decoration type, a spatter, was illustrated and later included as a calico pattern, but not in the variety as shown here originally.



Additionally, a body type was included in this article, but only briefly mentioned as a calico type in *Guidelines*, with no example shown: the metal jewel setting.



1. Ple-crust Rim. 2. Metal Jewel Setting. 3. Metal Rim

Calico metal jewels come in both diminutive and small sizes, and are set in varying metal rim styles.



There are also china bodies in metal jewel settings without any surface decoration (white and colored), and several variations of white bodies with banding and dotted centers.



The photo below shows the same surface decoration on a variety of bodies. In the top row the two buttons on the right are familiar pattern# 6 china whistles. The button far left is a faux whistle gaiter shape with a plate and loop shank, and the items in the bottom two rows are all china studs, two unrelated. These all point to the tremendous variety in production at the Bapterosses Factory.



And perhaps the last photo, two size medium pattern eye #2 appearing buttons, acquired from a French collector, with a metal escutcheon firmly affixed to the face of the button and secured by a pin and metal plate on the reverse. In Chapter 2 (<http://>

baublesandbuttons.com/china-buttons-101/20/chapter-2/) there is an inserted two way self shank button with a boar's head in relief on the surface. These may be considered another sporting type possibly produced by the Bapterosses factory.



DELUXE CHINAS ACCORDING TO JUDYE

February 5, 2012 by Janet

In 2004 Judye Stewart was asked what kind of china buttons excited her. Many new examples of chinas have been discovered in the intervening years, but Judye's list and drawings of traditional china rarities are still appropriate. Her text, [ChinaDeluxe2004](#), is here, with my thanks.

Judye has also designed display cards for china buttons. They are coordinated with *Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons* and can help you organize your collection in a very attractive manner.

[Mailto:judyest@ctesc.net](mailto:judyest@ctesc.net)



YELLOW CHINA BUTTONS

February 5, 2012 by Janet

A collector asked me what seemed at first to be a simple question: "Did I have any yellow china buttons?" Answering that question involved some digging, but the result was interesting and I'm sharing it with you in the following text and images.

It seems that yellow was not a color in fashion when china buttons were introduced in the mid 19th century. I don't think I have seen a single button with solid yellow body color or a button decorated with a yellow calico transfer pattern from the earlier period of porcelain/china button production. ***** Very soon after I wrote that sentence, our friend in France, Matthew Brown, sent me a scan of a calico button with a yellow transfer pattern. And soon after that, I actually received another example of the same pattern in the mail, also from France. I am revising my statement to say that yellow was rarely used for calico patterns. And here is the example*****



Light lemon luster did appear to be in use on early china buttons and this photo includes two whistle shapes and a pattern eye with this decorative finish.

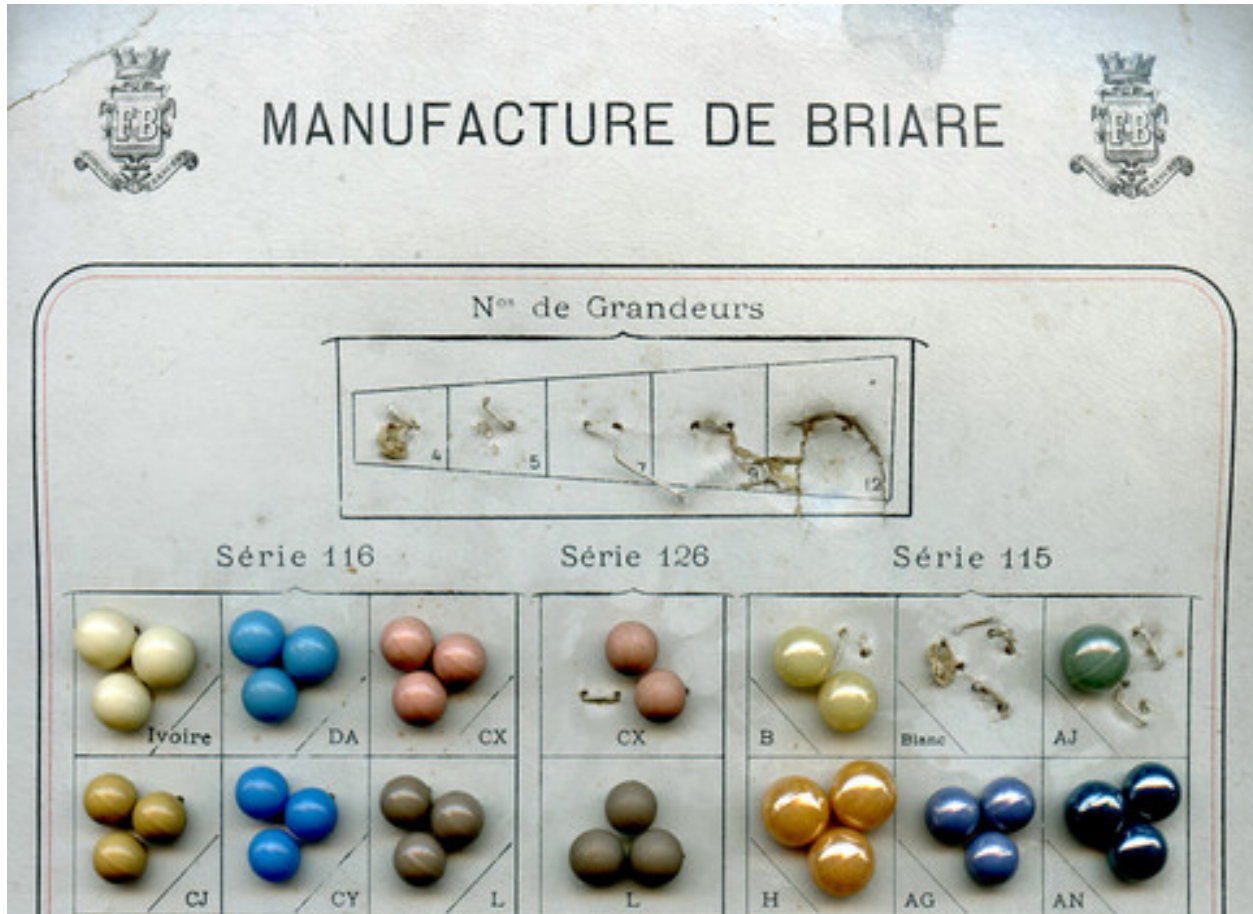


An early sample card from the Bapterosses factory in Briare France includes similar light lemon lustered examples of other body styles. Shown here are seven different luster finishes on a mound body type. On the bottom of the card the same lusters are shown on deepwell body styles.



Another sample card of an uncatalogued body type also produced by Bapterosses, a ball shape, includes yellow lustered examples.

Also of interest on this card are buttons with a matte finish, which we do not see often on other body types. The ball shape shares with whistle shape # 10, a slightly raised molded band around its midsection.



Another treatment which is unusual is a painted top button, a piecrust, which stops short of being a full body color in yellow. You can see the pearl lustered rim of the button in the photo.



There are also a few stencil patterns found in a bold yellow, but they are scarce and also were produced much later. Guidelines lists yellow as a documented color on stencil pattern #s 1, 2, 17, 20, 22. #17 is missing from the scan below.



It appears that it wasn't until china buttons were manufactured from glass type ingredients, that full yellow bodied buttons appeared. Our National Button Society Blue Book refers to these buttons as "china type buttons" and they are included with earlier examples in our classification of china buttons. We know from digs at the Baptherosses factory discharge site, that these buttons

were produced there, in traditional and varying body styles. And since we know from the current factory sources in Briare, that the Bapterosses factory ceased all button production in the early 1960's, that dates these buttons to before that time. Shown in the photo are a tiny mound, an uncatalogued four hole button, a fish eye, a two-way inserted self shank shape #20 button, and an uncatalogued self shank type. The buttons are also shown from the reverse.

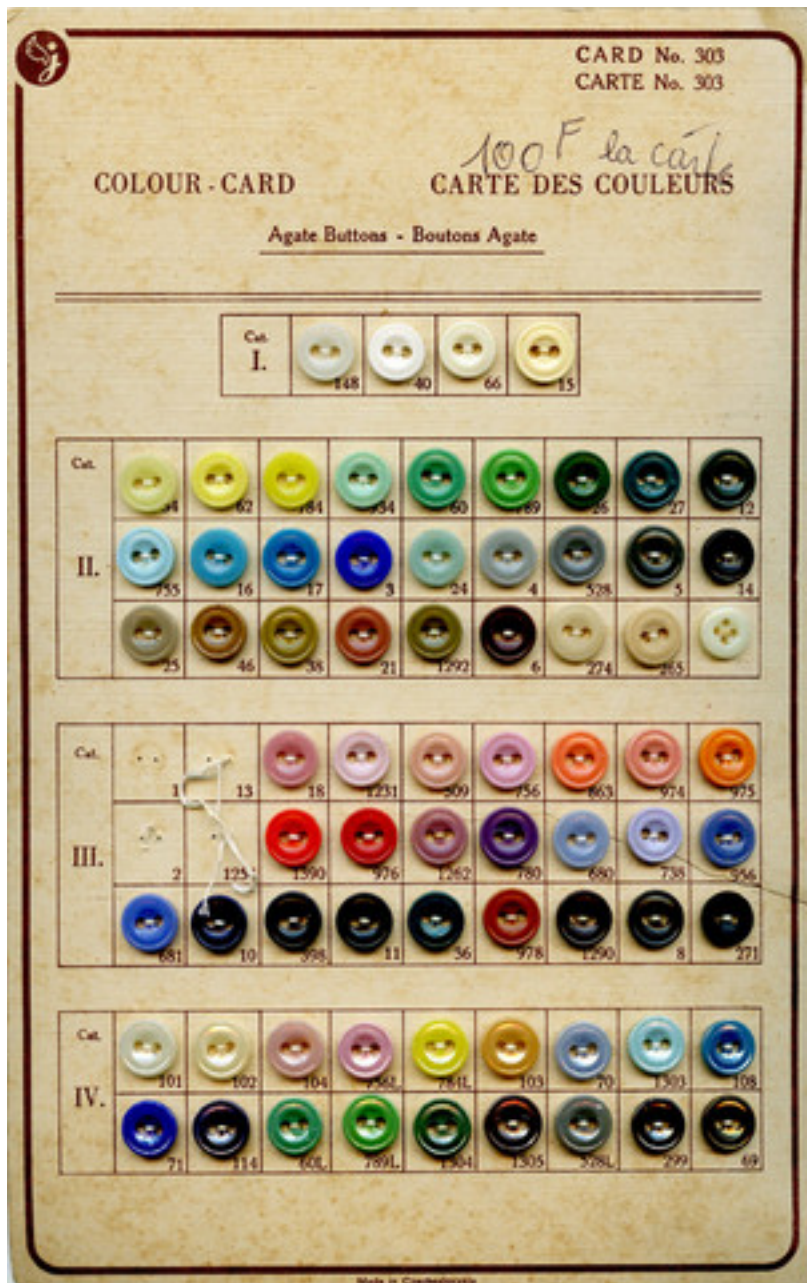


Another card of china type buttons decorated post production and offered for sale on a French card, shows the pattern eye shape #2 in bright solid yellow.



China type buttons were also manufactured by other factories .
Shown below is a card bearing the Jablonex logo, a flying “J”.
Jablonex in Czechoslovakia is known for its glass button
production. The card shows the very large variety of colors
produced in a china type saucerlike hollow-eye button, including
three shades of varying intensity yellow. I don’t have a time frame

for these buttons, but I suspect it was comparable to Bapterosses' later production.



I'd love to hear about, or see, any other yellow china buttons that might add to this answer of the yellow china button question.

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PREPARING A TRAY OF CHINA BUTTONS FOR COMPETITION

February 5, 2012 by Janet

When I began collecting china buttons 15 or more years ago, I received a handout prepared by Denver Elliott, an avid china collector and a successful competitor in china button awards. The sheets listed Mr. Elliott's suggestions for preparing a successful entry for a china button award. I am certain that he would be pleased to share this information with newer china collectors. You may read the article [here](#).

In the intervening years we have of course made new discoveries, but this valuable article requires only slight updating. What has changed since these guidelines were prepared? As china and china appearing buttons began to be imported from Europe in greater numbers, particularly from France and the region surrounding the Bapterosses factory in Briare, new types have become commonly accepted and perhaps even expected on china tray entries. There are now in circulation among collectors many additional body shapes featuring the two-way inserted self shank, enough perhaps that a tray of 42 inserted self shanks might be an interesting possibility. Self shank buttons have also been documented, in several different configurations.

Mr. Elliott's comment regarding the use of the suspect scallop edge gaiter button is now inappropriate. Since we have learned that the Bapterosses factory did indeed use glass type ingredients in the manufacture of china button shapes, the question of glass vs. china is no longer an issue in competition. Tests have also found that stencil buttons, long accepted as chinas, may never

have had a porcelain-appropriate formula in their manufacturing process.

Mr. Elliott has not included the truly rare china buttons that every china button collector dreams of possessing, but few actually do.

Omitted from his list of calico shapes are the pin shank and drum examples which we see infrequently on award winning trays.

Under gaiters shapes he does not include the molded imitation sew-thru body type found in both calico patterns and solid body colors.

For additional examples to make your entry even more interesting, you may also refer to several articles in the *National Button Bulletin* that supplement the *Guidelines for Collecting China Buttons*. One article preceded the publication of our text and includes images of a calico jewel, and three other examples of china jewels with other than a calico pattern, none of which are pictured or described in Guidelines. You may see them in the May 1952 issue in an article on the proposed china classification. Later additions of accepted china styles may be found in issues dated March-April 1971 (Off-beat type body style 9), November-December 1971 (new stencil designs), May-June 1972 (stencil #17 with gold and multicolored saucerlike hollow eye buttons), and July 1985 (transfer patterns).

Our updated classification also suggests a new way to describe and organize your china buttons, and to submit them for an award. Consideration should be given to body base color, surface decoration color and decorative finishes. Refer to the National Button Society Classification booklet Section 3.

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