

CONNECTICUT HISTORY OF BUTTON MAKING
BICENTENNIAL PROJECT
of the
CONNECTICUT STATE BUTTON SOCIETY

COUNTY	RESEARCHED BY
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HARTFORD	ACORN BUTTON CLUB
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MIDDLESEX & TOLLAND	NUTMEG BUTTON CLUB
NEW HAVEN	MATTATUCK BUTTON CLUB
NEW LONDON	OWANECO BUTTON CLUB
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BUTTON MANUFACTURERS IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY

By the Charter Oak Button Club

The Connecticut Yankee Peddler's delight! Small and light, he carried buttons along with his miscellaneous load, which was often a pack on his back. Buttons, a necessity, were often in great demand wherever he went.

The Yankee Peddler was probably the most picturesque and colorful individual to walk the Connecticut highways and byways. Always interesting, he was eagerly awaited by the women in the community. The Postrider and the Peddler brought news and gossip which made up for long intervals with no work from family and friends.

First, he had to decide on the specialty - what would sell - how far to travel. Naturally, among small wares for the merchant on foot, buttons were always there. The fashion of the day required many buttons on both male and female garments, their underwear and especially the women's basque waist.

Speaking of buttons, one immediately thinks of Scovill Mfg. Co. in Waterbury, New Haven County. However, there were scores of button makers on a small scale producing various types of buttons in Fairfield County.

Bridgeport, from about 1860, with a population of 13,299, was just beginning to be known as a manufacturing town. Button making firms were not too well known. By 1870, with a population of 19,837, it had gradually increased in manufacturing of all kinds.

The old Bridgeport City Directories yield the following names of button manufacturers from 1871 - 1892. There is no further mention in later years under that subject heading.

1871-1872	Curtis, Samuel & Son - Sandy Hook
	Nichols, Charles B. - Cold Springs
	Platt, Wm. - " "
	Salmons, Daniel & Co. - Weston
	Saugatuck Button Works - Saugatuck
1872-1873	Banks, George F. - Redding Ridge
	Sanford, Stephen - " "
	Smith Brothers & Co. - Brookfield
1874-1875	No names
1876	Bridgeport Button Works, 247 Water Street
1877	" " " " " "
	Taylor, J.K., Railroad Ave. - Vegetable Ivory
1878	Bridgeport Button Works, 247 Water Street
	Cables, H.A. & Company, 88 Middle Street
	Taylor, J.K., 133 Railroad Ave. - Vegetable Ivory?

- 1879-1880 Alvord, W.J. - Beech & Maple
Bridgeport Button Works, 247 Water Street
Metropolitan Button Works, Cannon Street
- 1880-1881 Nothing in the Directory
- 1881-1882 Alvord, W.J. - Beech & Maple
Bridgeport Button Works, 247 Water Street
- 1882-1883 Alvord, W.J. - Beech & Maple
Bridgeport Button Works, 247 Water Street
Doolittle, George, 88 John
- 1883-1884 Alvord, W.J. - Beech & Maple
Bridgeport Button Works, 247 Water Street
Doolittle, George, 88 John St. Mfg. of Upholsterers
Buttons
- 1884-1885 Bridgeport Button Works, 247 Water Street
Doolittle, George, 88 John St. Upholsterers Buttons
- 1885 Bostwick, W.B., Railroad Avenue
Doolittle, 85 John St. Mfg. Upholsters Buttons
Bridgeport Button Works, 243 Water Street
- 1886 Bostwick, W.B. & Co., Railroad Avenue
Bridgeport Button Works, 243 Water Street
Doolittle, George, 88 John Street
- 1887 Bostwick, W.B. & Company, Railroad Avenue
Bridgeport Button Works, 243 Water Street
Doolittle, George, 88 John Street
- 1888 Bostwick Button Works, Vegetable Ivory, Railroad Ave.
Bridgeport Button Works, 243 Water, Ladies Covered
Dress Buttons, Undertakers Covered Buttons,
Covered Underwear Buttons, Plush, Railroad Car
Buttons, Covered Carriage Buttons
Doolittle, George, 88 John Street
- 1889 Bostwick Button Works (Vegetable Ivory) Railroad Ave.
Bridgeport Button Works, 243 Water Street
- 1890 Bostwick Button Works, Railroad Avenue
- 1891 Bostwick Button Works, Vegetable Ivory, Railroad Ave.
Bridgeport Button Works, 243 Water Street
- 1892 Kellogg, N.G. Button Works, 243 Water Street

DANBURY

The Danbury Library produced nothing that indicated a factory of any kind made buttons there. However, there were two items of interest pertaining to buttons in the Farmer's Journal dated March 25, 1790. "An act for laying on duty on goods and wares and merchandise imported into the United States on buttons and on all playing cards 10%". Ad #5 Subscribers shop was broken open: Following articles taken from thence, viz - One fancy waistcoat with yellow gilt buttons.

MONROE

The old Bailey House on Tannery Rd., Monroe, was a button factory

at one time as a side-line to the tanning of hides. This house is now preserved by the Monroe Historical Society.

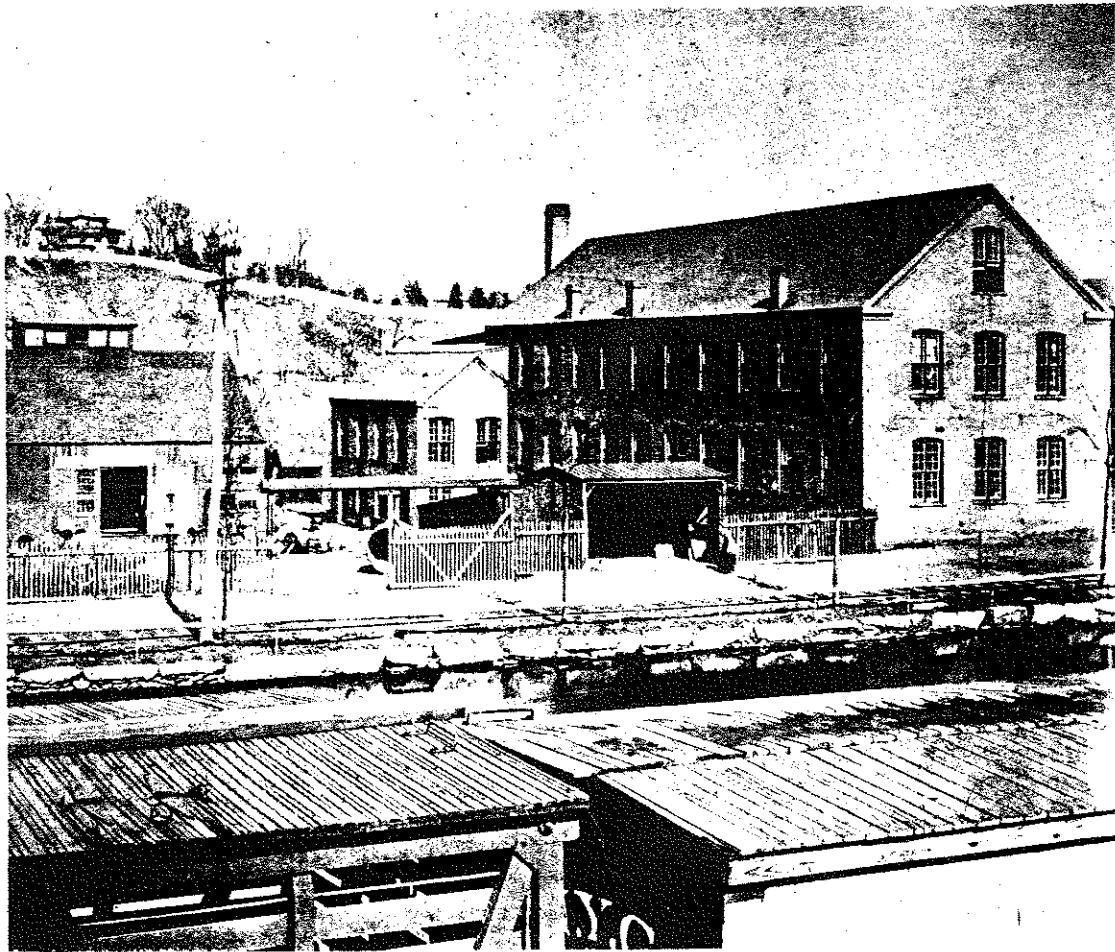
The Rosenfeld House, Stanley Road, Stepney, a part of Monroe, was used to make buttons in the old part.

Circa 1850 a leather tannery in Monroe sold by-products of horn to make combs and buttons manufactured by Samuel Curtis & Son.

There was a button factory owned by John Griffin.

Thursday, May 7, 1970 THE SUBURBAN NEWS; Shelton, Connecticut Page 5

Milestones and Memories



"BUTTON - BUTTON"

Back in the gay nineties, when buttons were an essential part of every article of clothing, one of the thriving industrial firms along the Shelton Canal was the button shop of J. & G. Griffin. The firm, reported to be the largest manufacturers of horn buttons in the United States, employed fewer than 100 people and turned out over 10,000,000 buttons per month, in 100 styles and sizes ranging from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter.

NEW MILFORD

The manufacturing of buttons from vegetable ivory was begun here in 1866 by Henry S. and Walter B. Bostwick under the firm of Bostwick Brothers.

The ivory nuts were at that time brought to this country as ballast to ships and sold at a small price, so that the making of buttons from them was quite profitable.

Bostwick Brothers erected a building on Railroad St. and carried on the business with great success until 1884 when the plant was damaged by fire. Soon after the firm dissolved. Walter B. Bostwick went to Bridgeport, where he engaged in business, became prominent and was elected mayor.

Buttons were made at the old Hat Shop, corner of Bridge and Railroad Streets, New Milford, for several years by Isaac B. Bristol, Robert H. Isbell, Wm. Schoverling, Rufus Leavitt and perhaps others.

About 1878 the Noble Brothers purchased the business and carried it on for a few years. After that various mechanical inventions were developed there.

A button shop was erected in 1884 on West St. Extension in which were manufactured by Wm. Schoverling, George W. Anthony and David E. Soule until 1889 when it burned to the ground. This put an end substantially to button making in the town, the cost of raw material having increased so much that it became unprofitable.

From Two Centuries of New Milford, Conn. 1707-1907

NEWTOWN

From "The Story of Connecticut" by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932-1935-1943, page 361. "Beginning about 1790 to 1800 many button factories were set up in Connecticut. Buttons were made of pewter in Waterbury, of ivory in Essex and of pearl in Newtown.

From a January 20, 1962 Bridgeport Post article on Hattertown in the Late 1800s. "As one passes through the little village, the quiet atmosphere does not convey the impression that more than 100 years ago it was a thriving active community with three hat shops, a comb and button shop, two blacksmith shops, a grist mill, two wagon shops, a schoolhouse and a general store, all very prosperous. The old comb and button shop still stands on Hattertown road but is now used as a private garage. George Morehouse started this business and later sold out to Homer Pratt who failed to make it a success.

Botsford Section of Newtown - Mr. Johnson, Main Street recalls that the smell of the button factory was terrible. He stated the crows were so noisy they disturbed the peace and quiet of the

country. The old water wheel is still visible on Main Street but a new company is now in operation.

NORWALK

Glazed pottery buttons with a brown, green or cream mottled coloring were produced during the 1800s at potteries in Bennington, Vermont, Waterbury and Norwalk, Connecticut.

Woman's Day, Nov. 1964, Antiques
Button, Button, Who's Got the Button?
By Dorothy H. Jenkins

The term "Norwalk Pottery" as generally used is collective. During the last half of the 19th century there was, it is true, only one pottery, namely Asa Smith in 1825 and conducted by him and his descendants up to 1887. This was the only pottery ever located in the Borough of Norwalk, but between 1825 and 1835 there were five other potteries.

1. Settler's Pottery, Traditional and perhaps mythical.
2. Hoyt Pottery at the village $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Old Well.
(Built before the Revolution, discontinued before 1820).
3. Day Pottery at Old Mill, now South Norwalk.
4. Quintard Pottery at Old Mill near preceding.
5. Smith Pottery at Norwalk Borough.
6. Gregory Pottery at Half Mile Isle.

Note: South Norwalk was called Old Mill.

Norwalk Conn. Pottery from Old Time New England
V.24 #3, Ser. #75, Jan. 1934, page 75 by Andrew
L. and Kate Barber Winton.

A book, "Early New England Potters and Their Wares" by Lura Woodside Watkins, was published in 1950 by Harvard University Press. Mrs. Watkins says, "Although the Bennington works produced some door and curtain knobs with their well-known mottled glazes, the Norwalk knobs seem to be the only ones of mixed clays made in New England. The button manufacture also was confined to the Quintard and Wheeler output. Specimens of Norwalk buttons and knobs may be seen in the Pitkin collection in the Wadsworth Atheneum at Hartford.

A notice in the May 10, 1825 Gazette states the dissolution of the partnership of Quintard and Chichester with James Quintard announcing his intention of continuing the pottery in his own name. He was undoubtedly one of the three potters of Old well in 1838. Large redware coat buttons are also said to have been among his products.

L. D. Wheeler, in partnership with Asa Hill made buttons of plastic clay, at first formed in clay molds, later pressed in dies. This button manufacture was discontinued before 1853. Location of the Wheeler Pottery is not known but possibly it occupied the old buildings of the Day Pottery which were sold in 1852.

From "Early Connecticut Pottery Buttons" by Gertrude Dullard Adkins in Just Buttons Magazine

SANDY HOOK

Whether in Sandy Hook or Cheshire, the S. Curtis & Sons, Inc. is today a modern business, relying on sophisticated technology and skilled craftsmen. It takes a certain agility of mind to link the Curtis of today to early times when the company's business was making combs and buttons from animal horns and hoofs.

To go back to quite another era, John and Elizabeth Curtis with their three sons, left Essex in England for the new world in Massachusetts about 1637. By 1639, John had died and his widow and her three sons moved to Stratford, Connecticut with its other original settlers.

Matthew Curtis, a fourth generation descendant born in 1712, moved about 20 miles up the Housatonic River to Newtown and this is where it all began.

Samuel Curtis (Matthew's Great-great-grandson) in 1845 started the Berkshire Company with three partners, making combs and buttons. The first factory was built in Sandy Hook which is a part of Newtown and the site of the plant today. Business was brisk in those early years and a leveling fire in 1852 simply led the industrious Samuel Curtis and his associates to build a second, larger plant on the same site.

By 1870 Samuel had acquired sole interest in the business and later gave his son, Henry Gould Curtis, a share. The firm name was changed to S. Curtis & Son and the tradition of corporate leadership drawn from the Curtis family began.

The founder was apparently a man of considerable ambition, industry and ingenuity. These qualities permitted the company to survive radical changes in the button and comb business toward the end of the century. The raw material--cattle horn and hooves--was becoming increasingly scarce in New England and other materials were being used more economically. During this modern era, Curtis has emerged as an innovative leader in the custom packaging industry. It has accomplished this by adopting a comprehensive approach to the needs and special problems of its customers.

From "Connecticut Industry" February, 1971

TRUMBULL

Mrs. Belle Mahoney and her son, George, at one time operated a branch of the Warner Brothers Company on the Mahoney property. This business was known as the "Button Shop".

From Trumbull Churches and People by Wachenheim,
Lora Freer Page 138, Vol. I Ed I

WESTON

"As to the site of the Button Factory. Mr. Irving Patchen lives

at 265 Lyons Plains Rd. Across the road and slightly north of his house is the old foundation and sluice-way above the river which was the Agriculture and Implement factory, among other things. Mr. Patchen's family owned this site and he is the surviving member, in his 70s. He said the Button Factory probably stood back of where the garage now stands on the river side. It may have been powered by water power also. He has in his barn a tool which he can only deduce was used in forming the flat plates from which the buttons themselves were punched. The buttons were made from cattle horns and hooves. In our Historical Society Barn Museum we have one button from the original Jarvis Academy. This was a school and military Academy near the Horfield Congregational Church near the Town Hall. Dr. Ralph Bush in that area has another button from the uniforms worn by the boys of that era. I believe, without looking it up, the Academy under Mr. Jarvis was operated in the late 1700s on thru perhaps the Civil War or to the late 1800s.

Excerpt from letter to Mrs. H. O. Stenberg, November 1, 1975 from Weston Historical Society, W. E. Hill.

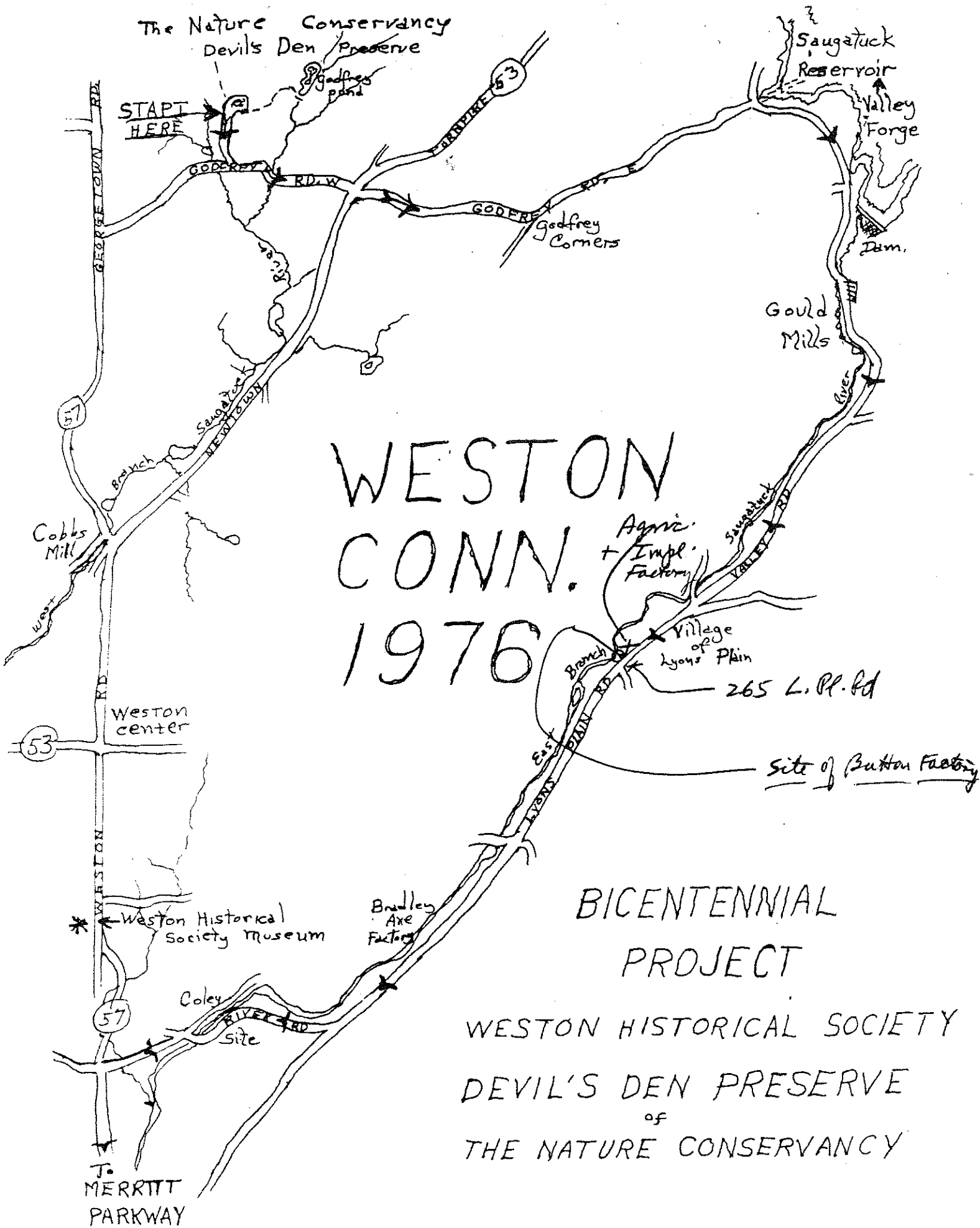
WILTON

A former member of Charter Oak Button Club purchased a house in Wilton and learned there had been a factory making buttons in the cellar. A kiln or oven was in the cellar and at the rear a brook which was used for said buttons. This brook has now been diverted. We took a picture of this house. When the button factory was there it was not as large. Mrs. Lillian Hartman, owner who bought the house to sell antiques, showed us the old and new sections.

REDDING RIDGE

The only information that could be secured was that there was a Horn Button Factory on the Aspatuck River at the Warren Dam and the foundation still remains.

Charter Oak Club Members assigned to research Fairfield County were Mrs. Helen Bauermann, Katherine Brockway, Mrs. Louis Drew, Mrs. Milton Hobby, Mrs. Betty Johnson, Mrs. Althea Tracy Jones, Mrs. Jean Longo, Mrs. Eugenie Lydecker, Mrs. Robert Moore, Mrs. Ernest Naber, Mrs. Astrid Stenberg, Mrs. Clara B. van Iderstine and Mrs. Clara Williams.



The Nature Conservancy
Devils Den Preserve

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BICENTENNIAL
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WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
DEVIL'S DEN PRESERVE
of
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Ten

HISTORY OF BUTTON MAKING IN HARTFORD COUNTY

by The Acorn Button Club

The Acorn Button Club found only nine Button Manufacturers in Hartford County. The members who undertook the research became so enthused we feel, as we have time, we will continue our research. There may be a few more stories within our County. We will proceed with the nine alphabetically. Our Chart will show the location of each of these towns with a ribbon to a sticker giving pertinent facts regarding the companies.

In (1) Broad Brook, formerly called Pearlville, there is quite a story about an Andrew Hamilton. Andrew had a Button Shop there in 1851, which burned in October 1854. In April 1855 he, his brother Arnold and Horatio Abbe formed Hamilton & Abbe Manufacturing Company to make rifles. Four years later in 1859 he and J. F. Whipple formed a partnership with a return to making pearl buttons, but Mr. Whipple left later that year. In April 1860 Andrew took William Hancock for a partner but in April 1863 that partnership ended but in June 1863 he found a new partner F. M. Hoag of New York and formed the A. Hamilton & Company. Eighteen months later Hoag left and a Mr. DeGray of New York became a partner and they made many items such as Pearl buttons for shirts and blouses, Pearl tooth powder and polishing powder, Tin buttons, Vegetable Ivory buttons, Metal ornaments for photo albums, Pearl jewelry and ornaments, Belt buckles, Scarf pins, Breast pins, Pearl drops, Square buttons and Finger rings. Fire destroyed the shop in July 1870 but it was rebuilt the same year. Now without a partner again Andrew returned to other things such as Typewriter ribbons, Carbon paper and a Cider press but again in April 1877 fire destroyed his buildings and he apparently gave up and became a farmer!

From page 27 of the 1968 Summer Edition of the Magazine "The Lure of the Litchfield Hills" there is a story about the Ezra Adams Industries in Canton quote "Beside the store which stood next to the Adams Tavern on the west side were several small buildings which housed other Adams businesses. A shop for making buttons and button molds stood near the road west of the Alice Case house. According to the account books Ezra Adams was making buttons here as early as 1804".

In the history of (2) East Windsor it is recorded that there was a Pearl Button manufactory in 1848 operated by G. C. Brown in the old White Mill which was swept away by the flood of 1869.

It is believed there were pewter buttons with touch mark, made in Farmington (3) but we cannot come up with anything other than this item "In 1802 and 1803 there were manufactured 15,000 yards of linen, 2500 hats in Timothy Root's hat factory on Hatters Lane, leather goods in four shops, potash & saltpetre, muskets and buttons".

The City of (4) Hartford's history includes a Stephen Austin who operated in the 1770s and made Gold and Silver Spangled Buttons worked on cloth; in 1780-1790s Kelliger & Tisdale who made Metal Buttons.

then from 1890 to 1915 The American Specialty Company which made Metal Buttons before they were taken over by the Connecticut Hardware Mfg. Co. Colts Firearms Company (manufacturers of the famous Colt Pistols) opened a plastics division in 1929 making many plastic products including buttons. In 1941 the plastic division was sold and it is now called Colts Plastics and it is located in Grosvenor Dale, which is just outside Putnam, Connecticut, and they are still making plastic buttons.

In the beginning (5) New Britain was part of Farmington but in 1870 it became the City of New Britain. The substitution of buttons for hooks and eyes closed the then hook and eye business of North & Stanley. Thomas Lee and Son (L. P. Lee) were engaged in making metal buttons, curb chains, snaps, hooks and rings, using seven different sizes of wire, some of which cost \$1.00 per lb. On the East side of Carnelles Stream, sometimes called "Stocking Brook" a saw mill built by Isaac Botsford was converted into a shop for the manufacture of tin buttons and other small articles.

In the 1880 to 1890s A. N. Clarke & Son operated in the town of (6) Plainville making Glove Buttons.

About 1810 in the town of (7) Rocky Hill, Lewis Hart and his son Eldad made pewter and later wooden buttons in a shop on the stream south of the west end of New France Street. It stood just where the road crosses the stream and the little water power needed was obtained without a dam. This fact would indicate that the dam here was not built until Belden and Dickinson built their mill in 1824. The Harts, being prosecuted for an infringement of patent, gave up the business after a few years.

Anson Matthews made pewter buttons in the south end of (8) Southington from 1806 to 1830. There are probably more pewter buttons found today with "A. Matthews" on the backs than with any other marking. His buttons were all made with wire shanks and a greater variety of his patterns has been found than of any other pewterer. On April 26, 1815 Anson Matthews was issued a patent for an improvement in manufacturing button molds from wood.

Abel Porter probably made pewter buttons in Southington before 1800. It can be assumed that he was a successful pewterer and made many pewter buttons, apparently with molds that produced buttons with self shanks and no back markings.

On September 12, 1815 Heman Matthews was granted a patent for a machine for making wire necked metal buttons. March 1, 1816 Samuel H. Woodruff and Anson Matthews were given a patent for composition for making wire eyed buttons. On June 13, 1816 John Norton was issued a patent for manufacturing and polishing wooden button molds. All of these patents were given in Southington.

In 1846 the Atwater Co. manufactured Carriage Hardware, Forgings, Carpet Tacks, Piano Hardware and Buttons in Southington. (9)

About 1875 there was a Pearl Button factory at the foot of Southington Mountain. Families in the area were paid one cent a card to sew the buttons on. It is believed there was also a work-clothes button shop at the south end of Southington near the Wolcott border. Some were found when a building was moved in that area and brought to the Museum.

In 1850 Edward Hamilton purchased a building in Unionville to manufacture Tin and Wooden Buttons and later hooks and eyes. Eventually his son James E. Hamilton took over the business and sold to S. L. Sanford.

An interesting note found while researching Berlin. It was here in 1740 that the Pattison brothers, Edward and William, fashioned the first tinware made in America. They sold their goods by calling at the homes in the vicinity, thus becoming the first of the well known "Yankee Pedlars". Altho buttons were not made in Berlin, they were imported from the Naugatuck Valley to be part of the stock of the Yankee Pedlar.

Bibliography

- (1) June 16, 1966 Journal Inquirer quoting from diary of Mrs. Helen M. Hamilton.
- (2) October 1, 1974 Northern Connecticut Bazaar.
- (3) and (5) History of New Britain by David Camp A.M.
- (4) R. L. Wilson, Historical Consultant
Colt's Firearms Company, Manchester, Conn.
- (6) The Complete Button Book by Lillian Smith Albert
and Kathryn Kent.
- (7) History of Ancient Wethersfield, pg. 928
Rocky Hill Library.
- (8) The Collector's Encyclopedia of Buttons by
Sally Luscomb.
- (9) History of Hartford County, Conn. - Burpee Vol. II
Rocky Hill Library R 974.6 B
- (10) Magazine "The Lure of the Litchfield Hills"

BUTTON MANUFACTURING IN LITCHFIELD COUNTY

TORRINGTON

The history of the Wadhams in the making of buttons in Torrington, according to Sally Luscomb in THE COLLECTOR'S ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BUTTONS, is not too accurately known. They produced some fine one and two piece gilt buttons, the earliest mark found to date being that of Wadhams, Coe & Co., formed in the early 1830s with George D. Wadhams, Ashael Coe and two Abernathys as officers.

In 1838 the Wadhams, Webster & Co. was organized "for the purpose of manufacturing gilt and other buttons or any articles composed of brass, copper or other metals". The officers were Russell C. Abernathy, president, and George D. Wadhams, Martin Webster and Lauren Wetmore, directors. The capital stock amounted to \$14,000. In 1851 this company was reorganized as the Wadhams Manufacturing Co. The main building of the old company was called the button shop and stood east of Main Street on the old road to Torrington. Later were added the manufacturing of daguerreotype cases, work boxes and desks made wholly or in part of paper (papier machie). At the beginning of the Civil War (1861-62) the company closed its business. (HISTORY OF TORRINGTON by Rev. Samuel Orcutt, J. Mansell, Printer, 1878).

NEW MILFORD

In 1867 Henry E. and Walter B. Bostwick started making vegetable ivory buttons in New Milford. The ivory nuts were at that time brought to this country as ballast in ships and sold at a small price, so the making of buttons from them was quite profitable. The Bostwick Brothers erected a building on Railroad Street and carried on the business with great success until 1884 when the plant was damaged by fire. Soon after, the firm dissolved. Walter B. Bostwick went to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where he engaged in business, became prominent and was elected Mayor.

Buttons were made at the old Hat Shop, corner of Bridge and Railroad Streets in New Milford for several years by Isaac B. Bristol, Robert H. Isbell, William Schoverling, Rufus Leavitt and perhaps others. About 1876 Alfred H. and George B. Noble purchased the business and carried it on until 1882.

A button shop was erected in 1884 on West Street Extension in which buttons were manufactured by William Schoverling, George W. Anthony and David E. Soule until 1889 when it burned to the ground. (TWO CENTURIES OF NEW MILFORD by Citizens of New Milford for the BiCentennial, Grafton Press, New York). (See also the HISTORY OF NEW MILFORD by Rev. Samuel Orcutt, J. Mansell, Printer, 1878).

The manufacturing of buttons by small companies in Northwestern Connecticut apparently phased out completely in the later part of the nineteenth century, as the direct use of water as a power source was replaced by steam (See EMPIRE OVER THE DAM by Kenneth Howell and Einar Carlson, the Pequot Press). The exception has been the continuing manufacture of all kinds of brass items, including buttons in the Waterbury area (New Haven County).

MANUFACTURE OF BUTTONS IN MIDDLESEX AND TOLLAND COUNTIES

This being our Bicentennial Year, the Nutmeg Button Club of Middlesex County has been reasearching material on buttons made in our area. Wood, Ivory, Bone, Horn, Vegetable Ivory and Pearl were found to have been manufactured at one time or another in Middlesex and Tolland Counties.

Wood Buttons and Wood Button Molds

Over the years, many industries were along the stream which fed the Connecticut River. Among these was a Haddam industry. About 1835 W. W. Pardee, resident of Beaver Meadow Road district, commenced the manufacture of buttons in a shop situated upon a small stream near his home and carried on a considerable business. The buttons were of wood, the fine grain laurel and sometime boxwood.

Between 1940 and 1950 A. W. Knowles of Westbrook made wood button molds and on special order made bone and shell buttons. This was a man and wife operation and was located in the rear of the house next to the present Post Office. These molds are small circles, perforated in the center. Lengths of hard firmly grained apple, yew or boxwood were turned. The material was sawn into thin and equal flakes, from which the molds are cut out by an operation which at the same time makes a perforation through the center. A lathe is provided with a cutting tool having three projecting points. A girl places a flake of wood in a position where the tool can cut upon it and by the rotation of the tool, the two outer points cut out the circular mold, while the central point perforates through it. While this is being done the surface of the mold is worked smooth by the parts of the tool intermediate between the points. The mold then drops into a box. A girl ten or twelve years of age is enabled to cut out twenty or thirty button molds per minute in this manner.

These molds were covered at home with satin, tatting, crochet, embroidery or matching dress fabric. The covering was secured to the mold by cross weaving of heavy linen thread or cord. This fastening also served as a shank for sewing the buttons to the garment. Later years they were also covered by machine.

Ivory Buttons

In 1861 Tyler & Post of Chester betan manufacturing ivory sleeve and collar buttons. Tyler was bought out by John Post in 1865 but was not very successful.

Pratt Read & Co. in Ivoryton presently manufactures piano keys but at one time it turned 4-hole sew-on buttons as well as ivory collar buttons.

In 1789 Phineas Pratt opened a small ivory workshop near the site of the present Pratt Read & Co. factory in Ivoryton. They dammed a nearby stream and constructed a water wheel to power Pratt's ivory cutting tools. In 1809 George Read and Phineas Pratt began an ivory comb business in Deep River. Through various mergers the concern became Pratt Bros. & Co. in 1850 and it erected a factory in 1856 in Deep River. In 1863 the firms of Julius

Pratt & Co. of Meriden, George Read & Co. of Deep River and Pratt Bros. of Deep River merged under the Name of Pratt Read & Co. In 1881 this factory was destroyed by fire but was rebuilt and kept in Deep River and consisted of not only the red factory on Main St. and the West factory, but a machine shop, blacksmith shop, a large barn, a dry kiln, matching houses, homes for its employees, bleach houses and about 50 acres of land. On December 31, 1936 Pratt Read & Co. of Deep River and Comstock Cheney of Ivoryton were merged under the name of Pratt Read & Co. and the machinery moved to Ivoryton and the business consisting only of the making of piano keys and actions is still carried on there.

Just when ivory buttons and ivory collar buttons were turned by Pratt Read & Co. is not known but two 4-hole sew-on buttons and many ivory collar buttons are among the memorabilia at the firm today as well as many other small ivory articles. These were all made from the scrap ivory left from making piano keys from elephant tusks (in reality merely a tooth) averaging 170 lbs. each, the largest pair on record weighing 228 and 232 pounds. It has been said that three quarter of the ivory export from Africa was sent to Deep River and Ivoryton ivory factories and that 30,000 elephants were killed from 1905 to 1912 for these factories.

According to some sources, ivory was originally used as ballast in the old sailing ships and was dumped on the shores of many Connecticut River towns. It was soon found, by the early settlers of these towns, that it could be cut into combs and other small articles and later, about 1800, used for piano keys. Horses were used to haul the tusks from the dock in Essex.

The exterior of an ivory tusk is light brown in color and its outer part is covered with a bark similar to the bark of a tree. After a tusk is cut a minute black spot is detected and this is the nerve of the tooth. In a female elephant, the nerve is in the absolute center; in the male it is in different places and very seldom in the exact center. The entire tusk is utilized. The dust made a powerful fertilizer and odd shaped pieces were made into a variety of trinkets and small articles, including buttons.

Ivory is bleached to make it as white as possible both in peroxide and on racks in bleach houses. Bleach houses are large, glass affairs open to the sun and similar in appearance to the greenhouses used in nurseries. After the bleaching of the ivory, the pieces are classified into one of six grades depending upon the amount of grain which can be seen. The less grain or finer, the better the ivory.

In Chester, Carlton J. Bates at the age of 14 worked for Tyler & Post who had a small one-room business making artifacts of ivory. Mr. Post in 1865 bought out his partner and also bought up a small plant, Griswold's in Essex, which was making crochet hooks of whale and shin bone. Mr. Bates, after attending business college, bought out Mr. Post in 1873 and continued to produce bone crochet hooks as well as many odds and ends from scraps of ivory for the next 25 years. This imported material was available in nearby Deep River where another company was

making ivory keys for pianos and other ivory products. Among the items made by C. J. Bates were ivory shirt and cuff studs, cribbage pegs, stilettos, bodkins, manicure sticks, etc. In 1893 C. J. Bates became ill and his son, 14 years old, managed the business. The firm then became known as C. J. Bates & Son. In 1905 two idle factory buildings on North St. belonging to S. Silliman & Co. (manufacturers of inkstands) were acquired. These two buildings were connected by a wooden bridge above the street which was a landmark in Chester until torn down in 1940. The machinery was run by a central drive shaft turned by the then more abundant currents of Chester's great brook. As ivory and whale bone became in short supply, Mr. Bates gradually expanded to use celluloid and steel for manicure implements, knitting needles and crochet hooks, which are manufactured today in a new modern plant in Chester.

Bone Buttons

In 1848 in Middlefield, the Lake Besek Dam was built in order to furnish water to power industries on the Besek River which is now called Ellen Doyle Brook. A. M. Bailey contracted to build the dam for \$2,000. The stones were quarried from Powder Hill and drawn by oxen to the dam site. It was during this construction that famous dinosaur tracks were found in Middlefield. In 1849 the Button Shop was built and occupied the first privilege on the Desek River. It employed twenty hands and for several years the manufacture of bone and horn buttons was carried on very profitably. After then it turned into a grist mill and later wringers for washing machines were manufactured there. Miller, Coe & Bennett was the last company who made buttons there. They hired the mill for five years and discontinued their business in 1880.

Natives remember "Sin-bone alley" better known as Pamachea Ave. in Middletown. Bones of cattle, horses etc. were boiled, cleaned and cut into lengthwise slabs from which discs were cut from the smaller bones and sent to the bone factory in Rockfall to be made into buttons; the larger ones going to Roger & Hubbard Fertilizer Co., Portland, Conn. to be ground into fertilizer. Many bone buttons were strictly utilitarian, such as underwear and trouser buttons; however, there were also beautifully carved and inlaid examples.

John Rogers started his business in Deep River and moved to Middletown at Wadsworth and Water Streets in October 1891. In addition to running the mill they operated a plant known as "The Globe Shop" which stood at the corner of Middlefield Road and Forest Street (Rockfall). The company manufactured a wide variety of bone novelties. The principal products were knife handles, buttons and pipe bits. About this time, Rogers and Hubbard of Portland was anxious to dispose of their bone novelty line. This resulted in Rogers Manufacturing purchasing it. Early in 1957 the bone manufacturing industry faced competition from the plastic industry. In 1961 a fire destroyed the entire plant. Only remaining was a storage plant and a stone office. From this area the firm expanded to

its present size. After the fire a greater emphasis was placed on plastic injection moulding and bone manufacturing was gradually phased out.

Vegetable Ivory Buttons

Vegetable Ivory is the trade name for the kernel of the corozo or taqua nut which grows on a palm found in South America and Africa. It is called vegetable ivory to distinguish the material from tusk ivory. The palm fruit in its natural state looks like a coconut about the size of a man's head and contains 30 or more nuts as large as hen's eggs resembling animal ivory. This white kernel can easily be turned or cut and used for buttons. Vegetable Ivory buttons replaced bone buttons. The nuts were largely imported here until plastics came on the scene. A factory at Leeds, Mass. is credited with making the first vegetable ivory buttons in North America.

In 1876 a German named Abraham Skaatz, an expert button maker, came to Connecticut from Massachusetts and interested Captain Noah Dickinson, one of Haddam's prominent citizens, in a button making venture. A largely unoccupied factory, partly owned by Capt. Dickinson, was fitted up with necessary machinery. The material used was vegetable ivory nut and some handsome goods were turned out. They found a ready market in New York. From twenty to thirty people were employed at good wages. After two years the business was discontinued.

On Walkley Hill in Haddam a factory made vegetable ivory buttons. This factory burned down a number of years ago. An original card of these buttons is in the Haddam Library. On the Main Road in Haddam near the Agricultural Building there was a factory that made vegetable ivory buttons and another on the West side of Mill Road next to the stream.

The Corozo nut is a hard nut to crack. The hard outer shell was removed, the kernel of the nut was cut into slices and then cured in a kiln for six days to prevent warping. After machine sorting and sizing, button blanks were cut with tubular saws. After grading, they were softened by a hot solution and the buttons cut or carved by a lathe and holes drilled. Shank insertion was carried out where required and the buttons soaked to open the pores of the material prior to dyeing. Vegetable ivory is very hard and will not absorb dye except on the outer surface and thus dyeing was not very satisfactory and easily faded. they were considered a cheap button and deteriorated rapidly in wear. Vegetable Ivory buttons range in size from 1/2" to 1". The larger buttons are very scarce since the nuts were not usually big enough for many large buttons. It takes 906 nuts to make a gross of 45 line buttons too small for overcoat buttons. 1008 nuts were necessary to make a gross of 50 line buttons and 3989 nuts to make one gross of 55 line buttons (1-3/8").

Pearl Buttons

In Higganum, near the center along the stream, a number of the people had a small shed in their backyards and they made buttons, mostly pearl. Some of the sheds stripped of their motors and machines, still remain standing. Duranek owned one near the Wire Shop on Killingworth Road. The large factory owned by Buchod burned, then was later torn down. At one time the yard was full of piles of scrap shells from which button discs were taken. Sixty-four years ago they were scattered everywhere, now they have been covered with dirt and a garage built over them.

Continuing about two miles farther and up an almost impassable road was a large pearl button factory on Gunger Hill, owned by Powers and Planeta. The motor used for power is still in use in Higganum, now owned by Delbert Burr. In 1959 he painted it and set it upon an old truck and he drives it in the parades. Mr. Power's daughter, now of Long Island, helped sew the buttons on the cards.

On Ponsset Road, now George Zink's, is a shed where pearl buttons were made and it was still running in 1912. The neighbors worked there in between seasons and in the winter would take cloth bags of button discs to New York to sell them. Piles of shell discards are all over the yard. Inside the shed the pulleys used for the belts are fastened to the ceiling, the huge motor for the power is in one corner, a bench resembling an old shingle maker was there with imprints of cutters used for making discs. An old disc cutter was also found but no perfect buttons or discs have been seen.

On Turkey Hill there was a factory owned by "Old Pete" who made pearl buttons. This was running in 1912.

Pearl button making was carried on in Tolland County as well as in Middlesex County. The B. Schwanda & Sons in Staffordville on Route 19 makes the Schwanda products - today plastic is used. When the factory was moved from Woodside, Long Island, New York, to its present location, it is reported that Mr. Schwanda offered all his employees houses if they would move to Staffordville and work. At that time pearl buttons were manufactured at the plant.

The Heinige Button Factory at Gurleyville also known as the Mansfield Buttons Factory, conducted a pearl button industry. This factory building is now an antique shop. In connection with this button factory there is on exhibit a board used to count a gross, a paddle-shaped board having just one hundred forty-four indentations of any one size. This is run through a bin of finished buttons and when shaken just right, a gross of buttons is left on the board. Each size button would have a board with corresponding size holes.

In the January, 1960 issue of "Just Buttons Magazine" the following account is given of a visit to the Mansfield Button Factory by the Owaneco Button Club: "Winding your way down a narrow country road, following a small stream, you expect to find an

old time button factory. But lo, it's quite a new building and inside, instead of water power, there is electrically driven machinery. Here Leo Heinige conducts a pearl button industry from shells to carded mother of pearl buttons. And with all this modern machinery, it is surprising to see much manual work at the benches. First the shells were seen soaking in tubs, not to soften as the laymen expects softness, but to make them less brittle. Each shell must produce as many buttons as possible. Just the width of the saw between each button is allowed. These shells come by the pound and any waste is almost valueless. If the "rods" will make two, three or more buttons, this splitting is done at the bench. While the girl snaps down a sharp knife on to the shell rods which she holds against hardened metal, she must be sure her fingers are not in the way. Do you think today machines would hold the discs while the holes were being drilled? Oh no, a girl holds those discs too. Even the very tiny ones she holds. It's not quite as dangerous as it reads, but to be speedy and safe, one must surely be alert".

Conclusion

Information for this paper has been gathered from books, magazines and papers written by individual button club members and some by word of mouth from "old timers" who remembered or heard of button making. We believe it is as accurate information as can be gathered from material available. Edith Welker, Chairman, with Dorothy Comeau, Chary Nash, Lyde Packard, Delores Sauso and Agnes Rogers

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Acknowledgements

Our sincere thanks to Mabel Knittel, a long time resident of Westbrook, Mr. Peter Comstock, President of Pratt Read & Co., Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Trischman of Deep River, Mrs. Donald R. Moore, Curator Deep River Historical Society, Mr. Wells Bates of C. J. Bates & Son Inc., the Librarians of the many Libraries in Middlesex County for all their help and Hazel Gallagher for the maps of Middlesex and Tolland Counties.

HISTORY OF BUTTON MAKING IN NEW HAVEN COUNTY

WATERBURY

Joseph Hopkins, a gold and silversmith of Waterbury, advertised in the "Connecticut Courant" in 1767 that he had always made silver spoons and silver buttons at a cost lower than most others.

The manufacture of gilt buttons in America centered primarily in Waterbury, Connecticut. The period covered by gilt buttons is roughly 1800-1850, though there are a few later, and as we have found, some very much earlier. Some of these may perhaps have been to individual order and custom made.

Abel Porter is spoken of as the first gilt button maker in the United States, c. 1802. The statement seems to need a qualifying adjective. We find earlier references to gilt button making. In the Hart Collection in the Museum of Hobbies there is said to be a leather bound sample case of James L. Scovill Button Manufacturing Co., one of the nation's pioneer button manufacturers. It has the date of June 1788 on the rear cover of the case, which contains thirty-two different type gilt buttons. This James Scovill was the father of the better-known-to-collectors J.M.L. and W. H. Scovill. President Dwight of Yale, visiting Waterbury in 1789 wrote that "Gilt buttons have been made here in considerable quantities, not inferior in strength and beauty to those which are imported". William Leavenworth (father of Mark) was in business in Waterbury before 1800. If all this is true, can we say that Abel Porter was the first gilt button maker in the United States?

After the gilt button business was established, all of the wire for the eyes was brought from England. It was very expensive and there was much uncertainty over delivery. Therefore, it had to be ordered about a year ahead of time. All of the eyes were copper.

Leavenworth, Hayden and Scovill in 1820 had twenty-three varieties of buttons. In 1825 there were thirty-seven. J.M.L. and W. H. Scovill in 1836 had two hundred twenty one items on their price list. In 1839 they showed three hundred twelve. There were probably more, counting special orders from customers. This last figure of three hundred twelve would not mean that all were of different design, but that there were that many different items on the list, which would include all the sizes and different qualities.

Hiram Washington Hayden made the first chased buttons. They were manufactured by J.M.L. and W. H. Scovill and were probably the first made in the United States. From 1841 to 1853 he made all the important dies for buttons and medals for Scovill and Company.

Mention should be made of the sporting buttons, the Lafayettes, the presidential campaign buttons, the Jacksonians, of which nearly one hundred pictorial patterns are on record, including variations of several subjects.

WATERBURY
(cont.)

The hunting-case watch gilts were once observed as the buttons used on a full dress uniform.

Mr. Charles D. Kingsbury, sometime between 1821 and 1827 or 1830 had a pearl button factory on Mad River in Waterbury.

"The Mill on Mad River" by Howard Clark published May 1948 is a novel of the burgeoning years of the republic and carries the reader back into little-known scenes of America's past. Covering the years 1810-1828 with most of the locale in Waterbury, it is a revealing story of the early brass button making and of the struggle to make the young American industry the equal of that in England. Based on facts, it is also a novel of romance, intrigue and violence, and is truly enjoyable reading.

The covering of buttons by machinery was originated between 1828 and 1830 by Daniel Hayden and his son Joseph Shepard Hayden. The factory was on Willow Street in Waterbury and they made 40 gross a day. It was probably at this factory, during a visit to Waterbury, that Josiah Hayden of Haydenville, Massachusetts (a cousin of Joseph) who was engaged in the manufacture of buttons for Mr. Williston, got his first idea of button-making-machinery. A year or two after Mr. Hayden's visit, the manufacture of machine-covered buttons was commenced by Mr. Williston (July 4, 1834) on machines of his own invention. But to Waterbury, Connecticut, must be credited the invention of the first machinery for making cloth-covered buttons.

Between 1837 and 1852 William Hitchcock with Scovills, was making the cloth covered buttons with the interesting eagle-marked tin backs. In the Waterbury Companies, Inc. Museum are rare buttons of the covered type c. 1849. They are backmarked Tresse--W.B.C.

Golden Age Jewels -- those small gilts with the so-called Sandwich glass centers -- were made in the 1830's by Scovills. The first ones were made in 1834 and by the time the 1836 price list was compiled there were five varieties of glass center buttons sold generally enough, to warrant their inclusion on the printed list. There may have been a few other varieties made to special customer order. Scovills, themselves, made the glass centers. In correspondence concerning the making of these centers, J.M.L. Scovill wrote that he and someone named Lang once made glass buttons. Benedict and Burnham, and Ives, Scott and Co. also made this type but whether they made their own centers or purchased them is not known. On exhibit is a scarce one with a black glass head design.

Around 1839 in Waterbury a Leverett Judd made bone and horn buttons in such quantities that the shavings formed a large heap, from which farmers carried away cart loads, these shavings being regarded as a valuable manure for light lands.

In 1849 The Waterbury Button Company was making metal, composition, cloth and ivory buttons. This was possibly real ivory, not vegetable ivory. Mr. Eugene Mermilliod in his report written in 1904 after the St. Louis Exposition, starts with the date 1750 and gives some statistics of interest concerning button manufacturing in the

WATERBURY
(cont.)

United States. He writes that in 1812 horn, and ivory, and a new product under the name of vegetable ivory, are worked by very rudimentary mechanical process. It is to be regretted that he did not record the location in the United States of this button making, but the early date is of great interest.

Glass buttons are not as a rule thought of as being a product of Connecticut manufacture, although they are known to have been made by Scovill and Cheshire. An 1870 directory shows Steele and Johnson including glass in their list of kinds made and Hitchcock and Castle, Waterbury, includes fancy glass among theirs. Many of those with Jenny Lind heads were made by Waterbury Button Co. At one time, when the company was digging up the driveway for a new flag pole, workers came across the remains of these glass heads and old time employees recalled that a Henry Abbott had made them.

In 1849 plated buttons seem to have been popular, as gilt and plated buttons are listed for Scovills and Co., Lane and Hitchcock, W. and A. Brown, Waterville Mfg. Co. and Sherman Brunson. In 1850 or 1851 the demand for gilt buttons was lessened by the vogue for covered buttons. In 1849 Mark Leavenworth was making covered buttons in Waterbury.

In Waterbury sometime between 1854 and 1880 F. M. Perkins & Co. made fine pearl coat and vest buttons. In 1866 in Waterbury William Mabbott manufactured buttons and other pearl goods.

In the 1870s Steele and Johnson, Hitchcock & Castle included covered buttons in their line. Waterbury Button Co. included silk and velvet. At the 1876 Centennial at Philadelphia an award was won by Scovill Manufacturing Company for "metallic buttons for military etc. for foreign and domestic markets, also lasting and other covered buttons". (Lasting is a durable woolen or worsted fabric used for the uppers of women's shoes, for covering buttons and for similar purposes.) In 1895 Waterbury Button Co. is still listed as making cloth covered buttons in great variety.

The sand of the glass has run out and we have said nothing about crystallized tin from the Lane Mfg. Co. in Waterbury, and their many picture buttons, especially the ones with handkerchief corners. And Uniform buttons -- without end! We even have two red and one royal blue Limoge-type enamel buttons with applied gold devices. These were uniform buttons made by Waterbury Companies, Inc. for Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iran.

The Waterbury Button Company, in 1895, lists Vegetable Ivory buttons as among their current output, plus cloth covered buttons in great variety.

In 1896 a set of nine buttons made by Joseph Hopkins ~~when we found~~ was pictured in Andersons "History of Waterbury". They are of horn covered with silver, with an eye of iron wire securely inserted. It was stated that they were in as perfect condition as when sent out from Judge Hopkins' shop. They had been in almost constant use ever since they were made, the father of their present 1896 owner having used them on twenty-seven different vests.

4.

WATERBURY
(cont.)

An account book of Judah Frisbie from Waterbury tells us that he made buttons in 1772 and on. There are entries of three dozen buttons for one shilling, six dozen (twice as many) for only four pence, and then only one and one half dozen but costing nine pence. If one could but know exactly how they looked! A historian tells us these were cast flat, usually with two holes for the thread, in iron or soapstone molds.

By 1900 Waterbury had become the center of the metal button industry in the United States.

Turn over your Aluminum Pants buttons. Sometimes the interesting part is on the back. Patent 1,518,717, dated December 9, 1924, was secured by F. R. White, and assigned to Patent Button Company, Waterbury. The invention concerned the design of a one piece, sew through aluminum button, which could be enameled or japanned. Its principle new feature was the shape, the central portion of the button being thickened to allow the button to rest directly upon the material, and yet permit easy buttoning because the disc was higher. Aluminum was suggested as the material because of its light weight and because its porous nature permitted it to take a high japan or enamel finish to compete with vegetable ivory buttons. One in hand is aluminum color, 17 mm wide, back mark: P. B. Co/Pat. applied for. The other is japanned black, 15 mm wide, with four stars and an olive wreath on the face; the back is grey, backmarked: "P. B. Co/Patented Dec. 9, 1924." Both have four holes for sewing.

Excerpts from Connecticut Made Buttons by
Gertrude Dullard Adkins in Just Buttons
Magazine, February, March and April, 1968.

WATERBURY
(cont.)

The first known worker in brass and other metals in Waterbury was John Allen. If he made buttons is not known. The Probate Records list buttons among the many items in the 1749 inventory of his estate, but these glass buttons set in silver and a pair of brass buttons may have been for his own personal use.

Henry, Samuel and Silas Grilley were in business during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They filled many orders for the Government. In previous years pewter buttons had been cast in a mold with the eye in solid piece. The Grilleys originated a successful type of wire-eye pewter button.

A. Platt and D. Pritchard also made pewter buttons.

Aaron Benedict is said to have made pewter buttons. In 1812 before he started on his gilt buttons, he made them of bone and ivory. The firm of A. Benedict which began in 1823 became Benedict & Coe in 1829; A. Benedict & Burnham in 1834; Benedict & Burnham Mfg. Co. in 1843 and The Waterbury Button Co. in 1849.

Abel Porter & Co. began Sept. 7, 1802. The firm in 1811 was made up of Frederick Leavenworth, J.M.L. Scovill and James Scovill. In 1812 it was F. Leavenworth & J.M.L. Scovill. It became Leavenworth, Hayden & Scovill in 1814; J.M.L. & W.H. Scovill in 1827; Scovills & Co. in 1840 and in 1850 became The Scovill Mfg. Co.

In the village of Waterville, lying about two miles to the north of the borough limits of Waterbury, we find the last of the so-called "Big Three". Starting out as Haydens & Co. c.1825, it became Leavenworths & Kendrick in 1829; Ives, Scott & Co. in 1834; Ives, Kendrick & Co. in 1837 and The Waterville Mfg. Co. in 1847.

It is impossible to detail here all of the many, many firms that have made buttons in Waterbury. Most of the high spots have been touched upon. We mention in passing a few others - J. Bronson, Festus Hayden, W. H. Jones, Lane Mfg. Co., Elizur and Leonard Pritchard, Stearns, Ellis & Co., Waterbury Jewelry Co. and Waterbury Mfg. Co.

Note: Waterbury, page 4 - Last paragraph

Credit should have been given to Edith Fairman "Aluminum Buttons" Just Buttons Magazine, February 1968.

HISTORY OF BUTTON MAKING IN NEW HAVEN COUNTY

CHESHIRE

In 1811 Charles A. Stanley was given a government order for uniform buttons to be marked L. D. for Light Dragoons, figures 1-7, or Eagle buttons 1-7 for the seven regiments of Infantry. This is all we know.

In 1847 a group of people began manufacturing vegetable ivory buttons in a small building beside the canal in West Cheshire. About three years later on April 11, 1850 the Cheshire Mfg. Co. was organized for the manufacture of combs and buttons of every description and kind. Little seems to have been done with combs, but the manufacture of fancy metal, vegetable ivory and jewel insert buttons began in earnest. In 1901 the Cheshire Mfg. Co. combined with the Ball & Socket Fastener Co. of Portsmouth, N.H. and became the Ball & Socket Mfg. Co. They have made many work clothes buttons, uniform buttons, glass buttons, celluloid campaign pins, combinations of metal with celluloid, fabric and glass. They made many of our picture buttons. We attribute those with heart border to them. Their Victorian dress buttons include large sizes showing a profusion of unusual pressed glass centers. There are drum buttons and those decorated with galena. There are so-called drum glories and Victorian jewels with centers resembling dewdrops and reflectors. When they organized in 1850 they bought the dies and other properties of Steele, Casite & Co. of Waterbury. To date we have not been able to find out a single thing about this Waterbury concern.

MERIDEN

About 1790 Samuel Yale, Sr. was making pewter buttons. His children were pewterers and made items of many kinds but we do have buttons marked Charles Yale and William & Samuel Yale. These last two are often listed as of Wallingford but probably did most of their work in Meriden. The E. R. Yale mark that we find on gilts is for Edwin Rodolphus Yale who was William's son.

Amos Curtis in the early 1800s made pewter buttons in his own home assisted by his children, and a button is reported marked A. Curtis.

A. Griswold opened a shop in 1808. He is credited with the first successful formula for Britannia but some authorities give that honor to others. We have pewter backmarks of A.G. and A.G.&Son// Britannia Metal but whether this is Griswold or Goodyear we can't be sure.

On October 24, 1808 Ambrose Hough, Meriden, was ordered by the U.S. Government to make 400 groce each of coat and vest buttons for Infantry. On December 19 his dies were pronounced unsatisfactory. He was permitted to supply plain buttons.

About 1812 Sidney & Laurens Merriam, and Joel & Sylvester Merriam were making pewter buttons. There seems to be some confusion over spelling of the name as Merriam and Meriman seem to be used interchangeably in some town history books.

Also, around 1812 we have E. Johnson and J. Hull and pewter buttons are reported with this backmark.

MERIDEN
(cont.)

A pewter button marked M. Smith is on record. There was a Martin Smith in Meriden in 1812 connected with the manufacture of these buttons.

We have pewter buttons marked Booth Collins. A John B. Collins of Meriden took out a patent April 12, 1815 for single jointed button moulds for casting wire-eyed pewter buttons.

In 1849 Birdsey & Williams, employing twelve hands and H. Griswold, employing twenty hands, made bone buttons.

MIDDLEBURY

It is said that buttons have been made here. To date efforts to establish this as fact, by unearthing details of their manufacture, have met with no success.

NAUGATUCK

The turnpike between Waterbury and New Haven passes thru Union City, a village at the northern extremity of Naugatuck, formerly called Salem Bridge. All of this was once a part of Waterbury, Fulling Mill Brook, which rises in Prospect, flows under the road and enters the Naugatuck River here.

In 1807 when Silas Grilley left Abel Porter & Co. in Waterbury he began to make pewter buttons on the South Branch of the brook. In 1808 the New Haven & Baltimore Co. began manufacturing and by 1825 there were six more new button shops. Even the eighteenth century grist mill was converted for a time to button making. In 1822 one small shop used pieces of tusk ivory not large enough to make combs. These pieces were teamed over from Meriden by oxen. Wooden, japanned tin, brass, mother-of-pearl, bone, ivory, vegetable ivory and later cloth-covered and silk-bound buttons were made.

For over fifty years vegetable ivory buttons were made on the brook until the factory burned in 1912. Two kinds known to have been made by the Smith shop are those with pad backs and the ones with metal bar in reinforced hole, with two holes for sewing, and often pearl laid on top.

In 1801 a group of six or seven men of the neighborhood, apparently impressed by the profitable future the Grilley enterprise seemed to offer, organized the New Haven and Baltimore Co. They bought land on Fulling Mill Brook, built their button factory just east of the old grist mill and constructed a long flume from the dam half a mile upstream. If they then lacked money enough to equip the shop is not known, but finally the activity that started this factory about 1808 was the manufacture of polished metal buttons. They continued operations until 1831.

Amasa Goodyear had moved here in 1805 from New Haven. He was one of the partners of this company. After the N.H.&B.Co. ended its

NAUGATUCK
(Union City)
(cont.)

existence Amasa continued making round-tined forks, cast buttons, molasses gates (which are faucets) and other articles in a small shop in the village center. When Amasa moved to Naugatuck from New Haven he was about thirty-three years old and, if he had been engaged in button making in New Haven we do not yet know. Over the years he was in Naugatuck there seems to have been some continuing but unknown connection with New Haven. His pewter buttons are marked A. Goodyear with sometimes the word, "Patent".

About 1822 the buttons bore the mark A. Goodyear & Son. His son Charles of rubber fame was then twenty one years old. About 1826 the backmark was changed to A. Goodyear & Sons, to include one or more of Charles four younger brothers.

In a Goodyear geneology book Amasa is noted as being, in 1807, the first pearl button maker in the United States. All efforts to enlarge on this statement have so far been to no avail.

Although they are very scarce, we must not lose track of the fact that Amasa also make brass buttons. During the Gilt Seminar at Just Buttons Museum two re-used brass buttons were shown. Originally marked Goodyear's A No 1, they now had a new Goodyear mark and in addition HIVE WORKS. Trying to find clues about this HIVE WORKS is now driving some of us up a wall.

An interesting thing to note about Goodyear is that he and his son Charles deviated from the usual system of selling through peddlers by opening a store in Philadelphia in 1826. There Charles marketed his father's manufactures through this first general hardware store in America. In Philadelphia Charles took out a patent on Jan. 12, 1831 for making buttons, called the safe-eyed button. Amasa Goodyear took out patents for various items such as forks, lanterns etc. but he did a great deal of work with buttons.

In 1808 A. Goodyear & Co. with Abel Porter & Co. entered into a contract with the Government for Light Artillery buttons. In 1812 he made Infantry buttons for the Government and in September he still had not been paid for 3,072 groce of Infantry coat and the same amount of Infantry vest, for a total of \$2,608.80. The coat buttons cost .50 a groce and the vest .35 a groce.

Among pewter button makers working in Salem Bridge we list Hotchkiss & Terrel; Judd & Wooster; M. Wooster; Jesse Wooster; Spencer, Hotchkiss & Co. and L. Isbell. Some who made brass buttons were Smith & Hopkins and Milo Hines.

Around 1816 Lucian Judd and David Wooster drew the first wire in this area. This copper wire was used for button eyes. The wire previously had all been imported from England.

Chauncey Lewis and Silas Grilley started their business in 1824. They made gilt buttons. They were soon joined by Milo Lewis and the firm became Lewis, Grilley & Lewis. In 1826 they received an

NAUGATUCK
(cont.)

award for gilt buttons exhibited at the Third Exhibition of the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. It was their factory that J.M.L. & W.H. Scovill used while rebuilding theirs, which was destroyed by fire in March 1830 and rebuilt in July 1830 (Waterbury). Lewis, Grilley & Lewis sold the factory and power rights in 1831.

NEW HAVEN

Abel Buel died in 1825 at the age of 83. He was a man of singular versatility and inventive genius. He was in New Haven from 1770 to 1798. In an advertisement in 1796, among many different activities, and emphasis is put on the work many, he lists making silver, silver plated, gilt and polished steel buttons. He also made button moulds. He was the coiner of the first authorized Connecticut coppers, produced in a machine of his own invention.

On April 27, 1791 two advertisements appeared in the "Connecticut Journal". One was for Eldad and Joseph Mix. The other announced that John Mix, Hanover Barney and Jonathan Mix had recently formed Mix, Barney & Co. to manufacture hard metal buttons. Both concerns sought old metals including pewter.

In a report to Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, John Mix, Jr. of New Haven, on October 7, 1791, talks about his Skelton Rim Buttons, some with cloath with white or yellow rims, some of white hard metal with white or yellow rims. Mr. Mix said they were approved by the first Class of People and used on Superfine and Medling Cloaths. He had never heard of them being made in any other Button Factory on the Continent of America but his. The manufacture entailed a considerable expense. The body of the button made much in the manner that the common white metal buttons are. But making the rims involved much labor, the button and rim being handled as many as twenty times through different operations before it is fit for Market. The white rims were silver plated on copper. He also mentioned that they were preparing to make the common as well as best kind of horn buttons, and paper Japand Buttons.

VILLAGE OF NORTHFORD, NORTH BRANFORD

E. C. Maltby made large wooden buttons but no date given. Sanuel Maltby listed as a button maker 1840-50s.

M. Fowler (believed to be Maltby Fowler) made pewter buttons and in 1840s and 50s made wood and bone buttons. In 1831 DeGrasse Fowler had a patent to do with pewter buttons. D. G. Fowler took out a patent May 8, 1833 for a dead-eyed wood button. He is listed in New Branford.

Later, in 1861-65 Douglas Fowler Maltby who was born in Northford, was President and Treasurer of Maltby, Morton & Co. of Waterbury. They made buttons, etc. In 1865 the works were almost destroyed by fire. Scovill Mfg. Co. bought the property and business that remained. It is only recently that buttons backmarked Maltby, Morton & Co. have come to light.

PROSPECT

In 1846 to 1865 in the former Eben Tuttle hoe shop Ranson Russell made bone, wire and wooden buttons.

Before 1867 Henry Judd made metal buttons. These seem to have been for work clothes, perhaps pants buttons only, said to have been enamelled and japanned, and shipped to New York by way of the canal.

Members of the Mattatuck Button Club made excavating trips to these two sites in the 1950s. At the Russell site quite a bit of elephant tusk scrap and a few teeth were found along with bone.

Captain William Mix started with a grist mill at the first water privilege on the Ten Mile River. Later he had a water wheel built which was twenty feet in diameter with five buckets to furnish power for a variety of enterprises in which he and his family were engaged. These included a pottery where clay buttons and drawer pulls were fashioned and glazed.

In 1853 John and Titus Mix, relatives of William, organized the Mix Mfg. Co. to carry on the manufacture of Britannia ware and small household accessories. They also continued to make bits, augers, gimlets and dress findings and notably clay buttons. This site in the area called Ray Hollow, is where Mrs. Barton Bieler and Mrs. Richard O. Adkins first excavated in August 1950.

WALLINGFORD

We have pewter buttons marked H. Smith but little is known about them. There is a reference to their being made in Naugatuck and a history of Wallingford tells that Horace and Henry Smith were in business in Naugatuck in 1828. But it is not stated if they had made buttons before or after this date in Wallingford. Horace Smith is said to have used the shop vacated by Silas Grilley when he joined Chauncey Lewis to start the new firm of Lewis & Grilley.

At one time in the 1950s a large cache of pottery buttons was found in a home in Wallingford, but it was said that they came from the Mix pottery in Prospect.

The Pomeroy Mfg. Co. made paper buttons c. 1843 to the 1850s. Elisha M. Pomeroy obtained two United States patents on his paper buttons, September 24, 1843, re-issued on November 24 and one in 1849. The first patent was concerned with the process by which the button was prepared to receive a smooth coat of varnish and the method used to give it this coat.

GUILFORD

The factory site at the foot of High Street could tell a story of a long and checkered career. On this spot one business enterprise after another has been launched, each offering employment to the townspeople and, through the securing of its raw material or the marketing of its finished product, tying Guilford to the remote corners of the world.

The factory, a wooden building, was built in 1863 but it was not until 1877 that the Guilford Enterprise Company occupied it and opened what was called "the button shop". Starting with a capital of \$5000 the company was incorporated "to manufacture and sell vegetable ivory goods and other articles of wood, ivory, metal, composition or rubber". The actual products, however, seem to have been limited to buttons made from vegetable ivory.

The vegetable ivory imported at that time was the fruit or nut of a certain species of palm tree indigenous to the Amazon River area.

Mr. Henry Morton was manager of the button shop for several years. Mr. Odell Chittenden followed and he was succeeded by Judge Woodruff. Several experienced workers were brought from outside to operate and repair the machines that turned the raw material into buttons and to do the dying but employment was also given to a number of local workers. Many young girls found it pleasant work especially during the summer vacation. Mrs. Mary Leete, to whom we are indebted for information about the conduct of the work, was one of these young women.

The outside of the nut, which was brown and rather thick, had to be cracked off. Four or five girls worked at picking out the best pieces of the ivory. A group of men operated the delicate machines that turned the material into buttons of varying sizes. Dying was the next process. The buttons were colored many different hues, after which they were brought back to the main room for polishing. Holes were punched by a foot operated machine. This, Mrs. Leete says, was the work assigned to her. Then the buttons were sewed on cards, ready for merchandising.

The building was a rather ramshackle structure and in the winter uncomfortable and cold for the workers. Early one evening in May, 1884, it caught fire, some said in the dye room, and burned to the ground. Mr. Frank Leete relates that Frank Parmelee, then keeper of the lighthouse at Faulkner's Island, saw the fire from there and by its light could distinguish the apple blossoms on the trees near the factory.

A substantial brick building was erected on the site but the fortunes of the button shop declined from this time on and it finally closed. The building did not long remain unoccupied, however. A hub industry was the next to be housed in the good brick building and from time to time several other enterprises have found a home there. It is at present occupied by the Guilford Finishing Company.

By permission of The Keeping Society, Guilford, Conn.

BUTTON MANUFACTURING IN NEW LONDON COUNTY

Some member of the Owaneco Button Club researched each of the 21 towns in New London County to ascertain any reference to button manufacturing in this area. The results showed few references to such manufacturing.

There were woolen mills, silk mills, cotton mills, velvet mills, and printing of textiles. Buttons have been found at several sites. Evidently they were thrown away after recycling clothes.

In researching at The Connecticut Historical Society, 1 Elizabeth St., Hartford, Ref. 73526 and 73528 it was noted that in Waterford in 1836-46 there was a Robert Blake Co. There are employees work records and records of shipments of buttons.

We found that in 1830 there was a small button shop on the west side of Slater Ave, between the viaduct and the bridge in Jewett City, town of Griswold. The power came from a dam on the Pachaug River. Farmers would bring animal bones to be made into buttons.

The Leffingwell Inn (among others) has a button mold that was used to make buttons out of melted metal. Today we would use plastic.

In Norwich at the site of the A and P store and St. Mary's cemetery was the Newton Farm. Buttons were made there from animal horns. Mildred Young and Sigrid Potter have some of these buttons.

Mildred Young has a button with five holes made of stone. It was found on the Fleming Farm in Preston. No knowledge of its source or age has been found.

In the library at the Leffingwell Inn are some Norwich directories. In 1877 it was printed that James Newton was a "clerk" boarding at the Newton Farm. John M. Newton manufactured machine screws, Palmer Newton was a "farmer". There was no change in 1878, John's factory was "at the foot of 6th. Street". In 1879 Palmer was "farming", James was a "travelling salesman", John was a "button manufacturer". The directory for 1880 was missing. In 1881 Palmer was no longer listed, James was "teaming", and John was back "manufacturing screws in the Falls area". No mention of what happened to the button factory was found.

Dressmakers and tailors made their own buttons by covering wooden buttons with fabric to match the garments. Beaded and crocheted buttons were made. In 1881 there were 59 dressmakers and 5 tailors listed. Today there is a trouser factory, no dressmakers, 4 tailors, and one factory that makes women's clothes (John Meyer). Since New London County has seashore coastal areas we can expect there was some use of shells for buttons. No doubt leather was used and slices of butternut shells.

The Yankee Peddlers sold buttons that were manufactured somewhere.. but apparently it was not in New London County.

THE HISTORY OF BUTTON MAKING IN WINDHAM COUNTY

Windham County is located in the northeastern part of Connecticut, with New London County on the south, Tolland County and the Willimantic River on the west and the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island on the northern and eastern boundaries. Within this area are the fifteen towns that comprise Windham County.

Following is the list of towns with the date that each became a part of Windham County: (1) Woodstock, 1749 (2) Windham, 1692 (3) Plainfield, 1700 (4) Canterbury, 1703 (5) Killingly, 1703 (6) Ashford, 1710 (7) Pomfret, 1705 (8) Thompson, 1785 (9) Brooklyn, 1786 (10) Hampton, 1786 (11) Sterling, 1794 (12) Chaplin, 1822 (13) Eastford, 1847 (14) Putnam, 1855 Scotland, 1857.

In searching through local histories, one finds fascinating stories of struggles with Indians and stories of home and farm life amid the hilly terrain of Windham County. The life of the colonists centered around the meetinghouse; also the place of the town meeting, its site being selected with a view to this two-fold purpose.

Sunday was Sunday indeed, and any deviation from the proper observance was promptly noted and punished. Even those audacious youth who chose to play ball on this day had the law enforced against them and were forced to pay fines. However, good citizenship was established and these early settlers carried out into the world a certain stability and tenacity that enabled them to make their way amid hardships and toil. They have borne an important part in building up and developing our nation.

The economic foundation of our country was farming and Windham County with its large meadows and valleys free from forests, attracted many settlers. The rivers and streams provided water power for all types of mills and history records them all; that is, all but the button mills. It is said that before the Civil War burst upon the nation, that not even a brook was permitted to run to sea without contributing its power to some industry.

The Quinebaug River, in the heart of the village of Putnam, had the most distinctive physical factors. The High Falls were noted back in the aboriginal days for their remarkable facilities for fishing, especially when shad and salmon were trying to ascend them. Manufacturing enterprises, aided by railroads, built up a flourishing village.

It is in the Town of Putnam today that we find The U. S. Plastic and Chemical Corp. Button Division, a subsidiary of Koppers Company, Inc., Mr. G. M. McElhaney, Controller, who very kindly contributed the following information:

"Where Do all the Buttons Come From?"

This is the story about the humble but ever-so-necessary button. It is also another version of the typically American business history: gradual growth from an insignificant start.

About sixty years ago a Czech wood turner named Frank Parizek came to America to make his fortune. He landed in New York like so many others, and when he found that his particular talents were not in sufficient demand, he adapted his skills to a more precious raw material--mother-of-pearl. He worked in a button shop turning out fine pearl buttons for men's shirts.

After a few years, Parizek moved his family to Willington, Connecticut and began farming. In the winter and in bad weather, he continued to make pearl buttons. As his skill became more widely recognized, it was necessary to hire a helper--then two, and so on.

By 1916, Parizek had built a small brick factory. The button business grew so much that he decided to incorporate in 1924, and three plant additions were made by 1929. Until 1940, the Frank Parizek Manufacturing Company devoted its efforts entirely to natural materials, using beautiful shells from Australia, the Dutch East Indies, Tahiti, and the Red Sea.

In 1940 the company began to use synthetic materials for the first time. Space was rented in Willimantic in a building on John Street, owned by the Rossie Velvet Co. Presses were installed to produce buttons from thermo-setting plastic

materials. In 1949 the Parizek Manufacturing Company bought a plant in Putnam and moved its molding facilities there. While plastic buttons lack the beauty of the natural shells, they are mass-produced in terms of literally millions of buttons a day for a fraction of the cost and with no sacrifice of durability.

Postwar years brought a scarcity of shells and correspondingly high prices. This led to the discontinuation of the natural materials in 1952. Nevertheless, the skills and tools of the mother plant in Willington which had been working with natural materials were adapted to plastics. Using the same techniques, highly polished imitation pearl buttons are now created from bars, sheets and strips of plastic materials. It is possible to obtain a wide variety of color combinations and gradations, and sometimes almost impossible to tell these buttons from the natural pearl buttons.

Gas is used at the Putnam plant to provide steam to heat the molds in the presses. The preformed plastic pellets are subjected to a combination of heat and pressure. Under these conditions a chemical change takes place which permanently sets the button so that it will survive the toughest laundry and the hottest flatirons. Each press is teamed with a gas-fired, two-horsepower boiler rated for 200 pounds per square inch pressure. Since buttons vary from $1/4$ inch to almost $1/2$ inches in diameter, and also in thickness, the molds have varying heat requirements which call for maximum flexibility of the steam supply. One job may need steam at 85 pounds pressure while the next run on the same press will need almost twice that pressure. Each of the presses is constantly demanding different steam characteristics. With small steam boilers, the output can be quickly adjusted to the requirements of the particular job and a continuous output from the shop as a whole is assured.

In July 1968, the U. S. Plastic & Chemical Corporation, a subsidiary of Koppers Co. Inc. of Pittsburg, acquired the former Frank Parizek Manufacturing Company; U. S. Plastic until that time was a manufacturer of polyester button blanks and a prime supplier to the F.P.M. Co. In turn, Koppers Company, Inc.

(who may be known in this area for its Koppers Coke) was a basic manufacturer of polyester resins. All of these consolidations now make U. S. Plastic & Chemical, the only button manufacturing company in the United States that is veritably integrated from the lump of coal to the finished button, and probably ranks second in the country in sales of polyester shirt type buttons. Within the last two years the company has broadened its product line into the more sophisticated suiting and stylized women's wear buttons. This expansion is based on newly developed techniques for casting polyester resins. In addition to the Putnam plant, this company is manufacturing polyester (pearl shirt buttons) products in Danielson.

In 1949, Wm. Prym, Inc. began a button-making business in Dayville. They manufacture a cloth-covered metal-rimmed button, very popular on suits, dresses, and coats. These buttons give a real professional finish to homesewn garments. Prym sells to wholesalers who in turn sell to retailers and these metal and fabric buttons may be found in most stores dealing in sewing supplies. This company is still in operation in Dayville.

An unrecorded story has been told the writer by the daughter of a former button manufacturer in Scotland. For several years, small white shirt buttons were made in this mill, conducted in a small, quaint, white house, beside a brook on "the old Moffitt place." When the purchase of shells became impossible, the business was given up in 1950.

Historical records prove that citizens of Windham County have always been loyal to their country and willing to assist in times of need. The earliest records show that knit stockings, tow cloth for tents, and home-woven shirtings and vestings kept thousands of nimble fingers at work during the American Revolution. We wonder where the buttons came from that were no doubt used on this clothing.

In 1789, George Washington visited in the Town of Ashford while on his presidential tour, spending the night at the Perkins Tavern. History records that on

5

Sunday, Washington attended church and sat in the most honored seat in the house of worship.

President Harrison and his cabinet members came to Windham County in 1880. This distinguishing honor in being permitted to entertain the chief magistrate of the great republic was fully appreciated. The veterans of the Grand Army appeared in new uniforms and a colorful parade of military and civic organizations escorted the presidential party through Putnam. The ringing of bells, booming cannon, waving banners with hearty cheers, added to the impressiveness of the exhibition and was admired by the President and other spectators. We wonder if this occasion produced the number of President Harrison Campaign buttons that are known to have found in Windham.

One could go on and on with recordings of historical interest, but somehow the records of button making did not seem important to our forefathers. The Connecticut State Button Society solicits your interest and will appreciate any information regarding button making, either in factories or by private enterprise.

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ADDENDUM

FAIRFIELD COUNTY

In the 1850s William Platt made horn buttons in Newtown.

Edwin Hopkins and Horace Smith, formerly making covered wooden and metal buttons in Union City (New Haven County), using silk lasting twist and other materials for that purpose, moved to Saugatuck in 1859.

Another Smith & Hopkins with E. S. Wheeler, also in the same line in Union City, moved to Westport in 1861.

Alonzo Isbell & Co. (who may have come from Union City or had relatives there) made Cloth covered buttons in Norwalk.

The first cam machine for turning horn buttons was invented by John Griffin. Later in 1895 the Griffin factory in Shelton led all competitors in their line and was the largest manufacturer of horn buttons in the United States, turning out over one hundred styles from one quarter inch to two and one half inches in diameter. Each machine turned out three million five hundred thousand buttons per month. The census for 1899 listed Connecticut as the center for horn buttons.

There was much activity with horn in Newtown. On exhibit is a horn button with the backmark of William Platt of Newtown made about 1850.

HARTFORD COUNTY

Martin Bull of Farmington died in 1825 at the age of eighty one. He was a gold and silversmith and maker of silver buttons and spoons, as so advertised in the "Connecticut Courant" in 1767.

We find mention of Pearl button making by a G. C. Brown in East Windsor in 1849.

LITCHFIELD COUNTY

Papier Mache' buttons are said to have been made in Litchfield, but it is not known by whom, unless it was the Litchfield Mfg. Co.

William Eaves, who came from Birmingham, England, in 1829, went to the Scovill firm where he cut dies for them until 1842. Now about fifty years old, he decided to go into business for himself. He went to Wolcottville (Torrington) and in a small wooden building, next door to George D. Wadhams, manufactured buttons from 1842 to 1849. His sons John and Joseph were associated with him in making quality buttons.

In Watertown, Bishop & Heminways and G. Smith made pewter buttons.

In Woodbury, N. Parker & Co. manufactured covered buttons. They date in the 1840s and 1850s.

George Capewell, also of Woodbury, made buttons. He had a patent granted in 1866 for a self-fastening button.

ADDENDUM
(cont.)

NEW LONDON COUNTY

What may be the first date mentioned in relation to button making in Connecticut is known to be before 1812, probably 1707 or 1708. It refers to Samuel Gray of New London, a silversmith, who died in 1713. Although he was only twenty-nine years old his inventory gives evidence that he was an expert silversmith. Along with tankards, cups, spoons, forks, chafing dishes, etc., it mentions twenty and one half ounces of plate in buckles and buttons.

A customer of Captain Pygan Adams of New London, wrote in a diary that he purchased from him in 1735 a pair of gold sleeve buttons and in 1738 some plated buttons.

Robert Douglas of New London advertised in 1766 that he made shoe and knee buckles, buttons, crystal rings, sparks and cyphered earrings.

Thomas Harland of Norwich died in 1809 at the age of seventy-four. His first advertisement appeared in 1773. In addition to the trade of silversmithing he was an expert watch and clock maker. He also produced quantities of jewelry which is described in his advertisements as "Brilliant garnet and plain gold rings, broaches, hair sprigs, earl jewels and gold and silver buttons".

TOLLAND COUNTY

In 1976 pearl buttons and cut-out shells were found at a site in West Willington, maker unknown.

Gertrude Dullard Adkins

ADDENDUM
(cont.)

TOLLAND COUNTY

Over the years, there have been many buttons made in Willington. It was here about 1915 that Bill Parizek and his brother Frank each established a factory for making beautiful pearl buttons. Bill did not operate too long but Frank continued there until the shells were too costly and difficult to obtain. In 1940 he began to use synthetic materials and moved the business to Willimantic (told in Windham County History).

A Bohemian named Hak also made buttons in Willington - dates unknown.

The B. Schwanda and Sons Button Company began making pearl buttons in Staffordville in 1915. They continued this operation until 1960. The company opened up under new management and changed the name to Schwanda Plastics, Inc. They began making plastic buttons and are still operating at this date (1977).

There was a button factory that made wooden buttons in Union, date unknown.

DeGrasse Fowler made wooden buttons in North Branford from 1830- ?.

Mildred L. Young

A button mill operated by a Mr. Ruskin from New Jersey made pearl buttons in Daleville, Willington, from 1937 to about 1950. They employed fifty people.

The mill and four houses that comprised this small village was owned by one man. During the war he found it impossible to obtain shells from the South Sea Isles so he gave up the business. He converted the mill into a chicken coop. Being so near to the highway, the chickens were frightened with the traffic, so Mr. Ruskin became discouraged. This fact, and the high taxes he was forced to pay on the buildings, caused him to burn the entire village in 1950.

Betty Gordon