

“A History of the Wisconsin State Button Society”

When Mrs. Ethel Bishop of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Chair of the Membership Committee of the National Button Society, asked Herman O. Zander to organize a Button society in Wisconsin, he agreed (but with some misgivings) to do so. The war was on, and at that time Mr. Zander knew of only sixteen button collectors in the whole state. And when he was asked if he would promise to secure fifty members, he agreed (likewise with misgivings). But as members from other states had promised to secure fifty members he knew that Wisconsin could do so as well, or better than other states!!

Accordingly, Mr. Zander secured the cooperation of both the Milwaukee Journal and the Sentinel to print announcements regarding the desire of Wisconsin Button Collectors to organize. As a result of this publicity, letters were received from other button collectors out over the state. Among these letters were encouraging ones from Mrs. Frances Blumer of Monroe and Mrs. Bessie Edmonds of Oshkosh, both of who agreed to assist in every possible way.

A call to organize a State Society was sent to all known button collectors and also to a number of antique dealers, inviting them to attend a meeting at 2 o'clock on Sunday afternoon, April 16, 1944, at the home and offices of Mr. and Mrs. Herman O. Zander, 849 North 10th St., Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Thirty-one were present at the meeting. Herman O. Zander was named temporary chairman and Mrs. Howard Amann was named temporary secretary. The name unanimously voted upon was THE WISCONSIN STATE BUTTON SOCIETY. A committee consisting of Miss Louise Bloomer, Milwaukee; Mrs. Bessie Edmonds, Oshkosh; Mrs. Frances Blumer, Monroe; Mrs. A.A. Roth, Superior and Miss Jane Rhodesm, Milwaukee, was appointed to assist the organization Chair to draft a Constitution. It was voted that the next meeting be on Saturday evening, June 10th at the Zander residence. After the meeting, tea was served by Mrs. Zander. In the evening, the Constitution Committee worked until late hours drafting a Constitution, a copy of which was typed by Miss Bloomer and mailed to the committee members for revision and further suggestions.

The Wisconsin State Button Society Bulletin #1 was published in Milwaukee, May 30, 1944, by Herman O. Zander and sent to all the button collectors in the State whose addresses he had been able to secure. To this bulletin was attached a copy of the Constitution as had been agreed upon by the Committee. The readers of this Bulletin were urged to send in such suggestions or changes as they thought should be made so they could be given consideration before the Constitution was voted upon at the organization meeting called for June 10th. Thirty-five paid memberships were reported and all other collectors were invited to join the Society without delay so as to still become a charter member, vote on the Constitution and for the first officers.

Bulletin #2 was published on August 24, 1944. It reported the June organization meeting at the home and offices of Mr. and Mrs. Herman O. Zander. This meeting was called to order by Mr. Zander, as acting chair of the Constitution and By-Laws Committee. It was voted that he proceed as temporary chair of the meeting and Victor Flint was appointed to act as temporary secretary.

The Constitution and By-Laws as prepared by the Committee were read. A few changes were suggested, discussed and voted upon. It was then moved by Mrs. Frances Blumer of Monroe and seconded by Mrs. Bessie Edmonds of Oshkosh, that the Constitution, By-Laws, and Code of Ethics be adopted as amended. This motion unanimously carried.

The organization having been completed, the following officers were unanimously elected: President, Herman O. Zander, Milwaukee; Vice-President, Mrs. Bessie Edmonds, Oshkosh; Recording Secretary, Victor Flint, Milwaukee, Corresponding Secretary, Miss Louise Bloomer, Milwaukee; Treasurer, Mrs. C.J. Fitzpatrick, Milwaukee; Librarian and Historian, Miss Jane Rhodes, Milwaukee; Advisory Board: Mrs. Frances Blumer, Monroe and Mrs. Arthur J. Mixdorf, Milwaukee.

After the meeting, donated buttons were auctioned and netted the Society an even \$10.00. The membership list shows forty-five Charter Members. *(NOTE: I do have a list of all the charter members, but didn't type them here.)*

The first regular meeting of the WSBS was held September 2, 1944, in the Odd Fellows' Temple in Milwaukee. Miss Jane Rhodes gave a talk on "Converted and Fake Buttons". An interesting discussion followed. The second regular meeting was held at the same place on Oct. 9th. Mrs. Leon Barndt gave a very interesting talk on "Paperweight Buttons", and supplemented her talk by showing a fine collection of desk paperweights.

At the National Button Society Show held November 10-13, 1944, at the LaSalle Hotel, Chicago, IL, the WSBS made button history by being the first out-of-state Button Society to hold a meeting in connection with the NBS Show. Fourteen members were present. (See WSBS Bulletin #4, P.1)

At this same show in Chicago, the WSBS held an interesting Educational Exhibit. This display, (which was the work of Vice President, Mrs. Bessie Edmonds) consisted of three cards showing various processes of stages used in the manufacture of Vegetable Ivory buttons, together with the proper explanatory information. There were also three cards showing Pearl Buttons as manufactured in Freemont, Wisconsin. A third item displayed was a card showing the "Rough and Ready" buttons with a condensed story from a book written on Zachery Taylor's eight years at Fort Crawford, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, prior to his being elected President of the United States.

The first annual meeting of the WSBS was held at the Odd Fellows Temple, Milwaukee, at 8 PM, Saturday, June 13, 1945. The report of this meeting shows that the WSBS (organized June 10, 1944, in Milwaukee) now had 56 members, had published 5 bulletins, and held 5 meetings in Milwaukee and one in Chicago. The Treasurer reported \$22.66 balance after having paid all expenses. The following officers were elected to serve for the first full year: President, Herman O. Zander, Milwaukee; Vice President, Mrs. Bessie Edmonds, Oshkosh; Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Howard Amann, Milwaukee; Secretary-Treasurer, Victor Flint, Milwaukee; Librarian-Historian, Mrs. Wm. Casselman, Milwaukee; Advisory Board, Mrs. Agnes Mixdorf, Milwaukee and Mr. Howard Amann, Milwaukee.

The WSBS completed its first full year and held its second annual meeting at the Zander home, Saturday evening, January 12, 1946, with an attendance of about 25. Reports were made by the out-going officers, and officers for 1946 were elected. They were: Pres., Mrs. Bessie Edmonds, Oshkosh; Vice-Pres., Mrs. Agnes Maxdorf, Milwaukee; Sec-Treas., Victor Flint, Milwaukee; Cor-Secretary., Mrs. Evie Zander, Milwaukee; Librarian-Historian., Mrs. Grace Flint, Milwaukee; Editor, Herman O Zander, Milwaukee; Advisory Board, Mrs. Helen Barndt, Wauwatosa and Mrs. Adeline Liegl, Milwaukee.

The first joint meeting of the WSBS and a local Button Club was held at 6:30 PM on March 23, 1946 at "The Lark", 2550 University Ave., Madison, WI. This was a dinner-meeting with an

attendance of about 40. The meeting was called to order by Mrs. L.C. Durke, President of the Madison Button Club, who welcomed all present. Madison Club members had been requested to bring some of their buttons for display. Many of those present were surprised to see so many fine, well displayed and mounted buttons, some of which were unusual and rare.

The program consisted of: reports of the Activities of the WSBS, by Victor Flint; a report of the History of WSBS and its Purpose, by Herman O Zander; a talk on Preparing and Exhibiting Buttons for the National Button Shows, by Mrs. Herman O Zander. At the close of the program, an auction of donated and other buttons was conducted by Mr. Zander and Mr. Flint with Paul J Pierce as clerk of the auction. This meeting was not only a never-to-be-forgotten success as a social event, it resulted in eight new members for WSBS.

On Sunday afternoon, October 13, 1946, the Society met with the Fox River Valley Button Club at the home of Mrs. Edythe M Luzem in North Fond du Lac, WI. Miss Mildred Merritt of Oshkosh was co-hostess. Twenty-eight attended this meeting. Mrs. E J Pfeiffer, of New London, exhibited over 100 trays of buttons and gave a very interesting and educational talk as to material, data, etc. She stressed that the real pleasure of the button collecting hobby comes from studying as well as caring for and mounting buttons, whether the collection be large or small.

The third annual meeting (1947) was held at the home of Mrs. Sadie Wilson at Union Grove, WI. Mrs. Harriet Loomis, also of Union Grove was co-hostess. After the reports of the various officers, the following officers were elected to serve for the year 1947: Pres., Paul J Pierce, Madison, 1st Vice-Pres., Mrs. L E A Kelso, Madison; 2nd VP Mrs. Agnes Mixdorf, Milwaukee; Sec-Treas., Victor Flint, Milwaukee; Cor-Sec., Mrs. Herman O Zander, Milwaukee; Librarian-Historian, Mrs. F P Pfeiffer, New London; Editor, Herman O Zander, Milwaukee.

On April 13, 1947 the members of the WSBS were guests of the Madison Button Club at a luncheon at the Kennedy Manor in Madison. In keeping with the occasion, buttons were used as the decorative theme for the luncheon tables. Forming the centerpiece for each table was a vase of flowers made of colorful plastic buttons. Even the place cards bore decorations on which the flowers were buttons.

Following the luncheon, Mrs. L E A Kelso presented her "Cavaload of Button Fashions in America" which is an interesting historical sketch portraying the various kinds of buttons work in this country from Colonial times to the present day. She had many beautiful buttons, (loaned by various members of the Madison Club) to illustrate this Cavaload; and even live models in costume, which indeed, added interest to the presentation. This program was followed by a button auction ably handled by Hermon O Zander and Victor Flint with Mrs. Evie Zander and Mrs. Walter Simon acting as auction clerks.

The next out-of-Milwaukee meeting during 1947 was held Sunday afternoon, Nov. 9 at the home of Mrs. Clovia Phares, 143 East Merrill, Fond du Lac. The weather was ideal and over 50 were in attendance. The program consisted primarily of "The Story Behind the Buttons". Among the stories given were "Lohengrin" by Miss Fisher of Fond du Lac; "Tom Thumb" by Miss Merritt of Oshkosh; "Black Glass and Jet Buttons" by Mrs. Hart of Fond du Lac. Mrs. Pfeiffer, New London, told how she mounts buttons as they are received prior to mounting them according to classification of the NBS. Visitors were then enabled to view the various trays of buttons brought by the members of the Fox River Valley Button Club, after which Mrs. Phares served a delicious lunch. The meeting was again resumed with reports from various members who had attended the National Button Show in Indianapolis.

Due to the considered judgment and foresight of its organizers and early leaders the WSBS has flourished. At the last annual meeting (1948) there were over 75 members. There are now three local button clubs, all 100% affiliated with the State Society. The oldest and largest of these groups is the Madison Button Club. This Club was over a year old when the WSBS was organized and it has the largest membership within any one city in the State and it also has members throughout the Madison area. The second local group to organize was the Fox River Valley Button Club which has members from Fond du Lac, Oshkosh, New London, and other sections of the Fox River Valley. The third group is the Kelvetian Button Club of Monroe.

Including the January 1948 issue, thirty-four bulletins were published, from five to ten each year by Herman O Zander, the Society's first Editor. These Bulletins contained mostly the news of the Society and were looked upon by the members primarily as friendly letters. Beginning with the Society's year of 1948, MR Zander asked to be relieved of the duties as Editor and Mrs. L E A Kelso has taken over these duties, changed the style of the Bulletin, and is now publishing not only the friendly news, but in addition a very attractive and larger Bulletin.

The Society has, in a number of instances, outgrown its present constitution. A new policy regarding meeting arrangements is gradually developing and revision of the Constitution is under way, so that the growing membership scattered all over the State can be better served. For friendly spirit, good fellowship, exchange of information and hobby materials, it would be hard to find a better group than the WSBS. Evie and Hermon O Zander say they have been greatly rewarded by seeing their efforts in organizing this group grow into what they consider "an A-No. 1 Organization".