

Backs and Shanks of Transitional Buttons (Made Both Before and After 1918)



LEFT: Rosette shanks have five or six "petals" at the base of the shank. Since buttons with rosette shanks were manufactured both before and after 1918, care must be taken when trying to establish their age. Many times it is the front of the button in this case which will tell the story. The long shank on this sample, however, probably suggests that this one is antique.

RIGHT: Here are transitional four way shanks. Compare them to the antique version and you will see how they sit up high on the back of the button and do not require thread guides for the needle to have clear passage.



LEFT: This type of button back, with the brass loop and plate shank at the apex of a high, molded tip of glass, is called a cone shank. The shank can be a four way sometimes too. Buttons of this type were constructed after 1918, although the glass pieces might have been older (some were made into hat pins, some into buttons). Because of their unusual history, it is best to use them as a modern button or where age is not a consideration.

Sometimes it is necessary to see the front of the button in order to place it in time, and that is especially true of these transitional samples. As these articles on black glass buttons continue, further study will be made of how the back and age of the button interact with its construction and decoration.

As with anything worth learning, there are exceptions and clarifications to be made to the study of black glass button backs. Much more could be said about many fine points, variations, and

oddities – but for now we will leave those discussions to the experts. The basics have been presented here: no more, no less. Much new research is being done by serious glass button collectors, both here in the United States and in Europe. Beginners should seriously consider joining the National Button Society to stay abreast of new discoveries in the button world.

Resources:

Speights, Jean and Freddie. "Free, Free At Last." *National Button Bulletin*, February 1988, p. 36.

Hughes and Lester. *The Big Book of Buttons*. Boyertown Publishing Company, Boyertown, Pennsylvania, 1981.

Official NBS Classification. National Button Society, 2009/2010.

Ryan, Helen. *A Complete Classification of Clear and Colored Glass Buttons*. Plank's Press, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, 1986.

And special thanks to glass button experts Rebecca Lyon and Cathy Mayer for consulting with me on this article.

Western Regional Button Association is pleased to share our educational articles with the button collecting community.

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