

## THE BUTTON CALENDAR

**Oregon Spring Workshop.** March 14. Tualatin Elks Lodge.

**Button Bazaar (presented by Sacramento Button Club)** February 28, Saturday. 10AM–5PM. Carmichael Park Community Club House, 5750 Grant Avenue, Carmichael CA. Donation \$2. Contact Faye Wolfe (916) 489-1785  
fwolfe@surewest.net



**Colorado Button Show.** April 17-19. 9am-4pm.

**Oregon State Button Show,** April 29 -May 2. "Buttons . . . The Stories They Tell" Keizer Renaissance Inn, Keizer OR. Exit 260B on I-5 Highway. (800) 299-7221 [www.labelcollector.com](http://www.labelcollector.com)

**California State Button Society.** May 22-24. "Celebrating the Art of Buttons" Holiday Inn Sacramento North, East I-80. (916) 338-5800.

**Idaho State Button Show.** June 4-6. "Rainbow of Shells" Best Western Hotel, Caldwell ID.

**National Button Society Annual Show,** August 3-8. (Showroom open August 6-8) Crowne Plaza DIA Convention Cntr, 15500 E 40<sup>th</sup> Ave, Denver CO 80239  
Room reservations: 303-371-9494 / 800-496-7621

**Reservation Deadline: June 22, 2009** Room Rate: \$100

More information [www.nationalbuttonsociety.com](http://www.nationalbuttonsociety.com)

or call Harriett Brittenham (720) 851-2572 [brittmh@aol.com](mailto:brittmh@aol.com)

*Sponsored by the Colorado State Button Society*

**JHB** JHB Tours will be available during the show



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Best wishes to each of you for a safe, peaceful, productive 2009 filled with laughter, love, and buttons that warm your heart. Make memories you can treasure in the years to come! The WRBA button world lost dear members this year and we shall treasure the memories we made with them.

Speaking of treasure, this issue contains our 2008 financial reports. The careful management and hard work of WRBA leaders contributes to our stability.

To best manage WRBA finances, our Treasurer shall open two bank CDs with funds not needed until our 2010 WRBA convention.



The WRBA Board recently completed action on 3 items.

- (1) The 10-tray limit on competitive trays has been removed.
- (2) We adopted a policy that membership information will not be shared, sold, or in any way used to compromise privacy of our members.
- (3) The WRBA Board expanded and now includes the following positions:

President	Joy Journey	<a href="mailto:cjoy@gci.net">cjoy@gci.net</a>
Vice President	Gil Biggie	<a href="mailto:dbgb@charter.net">dbgb@charter.net</a>
Secretary	Nancy Craig	<a href="mailto:btznzdncy@msn.com">btznzdncy@msn.com</a>
Treasurer	Janel Marchi	<a href="mailto:janel@buttonsintime.com">janel@buttonsintime.com</a>
Web Chair	Mika Jarmusz	<a href="mailto:mikaiz@comcast.net">mikaiz@comcast.net</a>
Show Chair	Gil Biggie	<a href="mailto:dbgb@charter.net">dbgb@charter.net</a>
Awards Chair	Tom Barrans	<a href="mailto:tomdarby@aol.com">tomdarby@aol.com</a>
Editor	Joy Journey	<a href="mailto:cjoy@gci.net">cjoy@gci.net</a>
Education Chair	Gloria Skovronsky	<a href="mailto:gloriosky999@aol.com">gloriosky999@aol.com</a>
Judging Chair	Barb Barrans	<a href="mailto:darbysbarb@aol.com">darbysbarb@aol.com</a>
Membership Chair	Harriet Brittenham	<a href="mailto:brittmh@aol.com">brittmh@aol.com</a>
At-Large	Roberta Schuler	<a href="mailto:bklassic@comcast.net">bklassic@comcast.net</a>
Past President	Judy Schwenk	<a href="mailto:anajamm@comcast.net">anajamm@comcast.net</a>
Fundraising Chair	VACANT	

The WRBA Board continues discussion on other ideas. We are excited that the Show Chair and Education Chair are developing procedures for the mail-in of WRBA competitive trays for WRBA 2010.

If you have ideas to improve WRBA that you would like introduced, please contact a Board member. The active involvement of everyone makes us better and increases the fun!

*Joy Journey, WRBA President & Editor*

## FROM THE EDUCATION CHAIR

Button Friends,

I have made a January Resolution that will not be hard to keep: I resolve to learn more about those buttons that I know absolutely nothing about! That should be fun, shouldn't it?

One of my favorite aspects of the button-collecting hobby (obsession—face it) is that when one has (a) completed a favorite tray, (b) decided that nothing more can be learned about the French Fops, or (c) scientifically researched every metal and composite to be found, then there is still a myriad of buttons to find and love.



So, I think we need to form educational study groups to focus on our favorite obsessions for 2009. Where is your button journey taking you now? What are you searching for? I wouldn't be surprised if there are other WRBA members out there who would love to share information and news.

We already have our newest study group, encouraged by the excellent articles in our *WRBA Territorial News*: i.e., the newly formed **Riveted Buttons Study Group**, hosted by David Race, (217) 222-1378 [dave@dave&deb.com](mailto:dave@dave&deb.com). Please email Dave and let him know that you've got some rivets to share. He wants to create a rivet reference collection that would be available for exhibition purposes.

Who will start a Button Art Study Group? My inspiration has been the innovative and enjoyable exhibit produced by our member state, California, with their successful "No Harm Button Challenge" for 2008.

I would love to see a yearly compilation of the output from our fabulous studio button artists. WRBA's publication of these buttons would help judges identify the latest creations, and we could continue documentation so ably introduced by Jane Leslie in her *Reference Book on Studio Button Makers*. Are you interested in leading this group?

We know there are livery buttons out there (hint, hint).

If you would like to start a button study group on any topic, please email me and let me know. We will publish your updates in the WRBA newsletter, and we are already planning study group exhibits for WRBA 2010. Let me know how I can help you. This is my chance to continue to learn! We all can share and add to our knowledge base—not only for ourselves but for future button collectors.

Best wishes,

*Gloriosky*

## CORRECTION

The lovely button (right) that was featured on the November 2008 cover is **painted ivory under glass** mounted in metal. It was erroneously identified as enamel. It's owner is glad to have this correct identification!



### Judy Schwenk & Jim Nolan

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[anajamm@comcast.net](mailto:anajamm@comcast.net)**

**We buy any size collections.  
Approvals sent on request.  
Contact us for  
your button needs.**



## WRBA 2008 Financial Statements

*Janel Marchi, WRBA Treasurer*

### Balance Sheet—as of 12/31/2008 (cash basis)

Account	12/31/2008 Balance
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Cash and Bank Accounts</b>	
Gil Biggie's Checking	0.00
WRBA Checking	14,789.25
WRBA PayPal	67.36
WRBA Savings	3,114.73
<b>TOTAL Cash and Bank Accounts</b>	<b>17,971.34</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>17,971.34</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
<b>LIABILITIES</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>	<b>17,971.34</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>17,971.34</b>

### Profit & Loss Statement Jan 1 through Dec 31, 2008

Category Description	1/1/2008- 12/31/2008
<b>INCOME</b>	
Advertising, Newsletter	127.00
Donations	
Other Donations	10.00
<b>TOTAL Donations</b>	<b>10.00</b>
Interest Inc	10.43
Membership Dues	5,526.67
Show Income	
Award Donations	862.00
Dealer Tables	3,775.00
Hotel Commissions	1,651.00
Meal Reservations	3,880.00
Misc. Sales	45.00
Registration	940.00
Tray Entries	67.50

### Profit & Loss Statement (continued)

Category Description	1/1/2008- 12/31/2008
Ways & Means	
Auction, Live	2,055.00
Prize Drawing(s)	103.00
<b>TOTAL Ways &amp; Means</b>	<b>2,158.00</b>
Other Show Income	0.00
<b>TOTAL Show Income</b>	<b>13,378.50</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>19,052.60</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Uncategorized	0.00
Bank Charge	97.61
Insurance	427.00
Membership Development	
Other Membership Development	40.33
<b>TOTAL Membership Development</b>	<b>40.33</b>
Newsletter	1,815.70
Postage & Box Rental	70.00
Professional Services	700.00
Show Expenses	
Auction, Live	40.00
Awards	385.00
Decorations	109.73
Hotel	6,903.13
Registration	247.48
Security	367.00
Show Souvenirs	841.51
Workshops	51.92
<b>TOTAL Show Expenses</b>	<b>8,945.77</b>
Tax	
Other Tax	50.00
<b>TOTAL Tax</b>	<b>50.00</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>12,146.41</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>6,906.19</b>



## FILIGREE

*by Janel Marchi, Bend, Oregon*

Let me begin with a qualification... or should I say, a disqualification.

I volunteered to write this article as a means of educating myself about this special class of buttons. My inspiration came from two filigree button collectors and both have passed: Marjorie Moore of California and Jean Corcoran of Oregon. I am honored to have a few of their buttons in my collection.

As I put together my tray of filigree buttons, I discovered that there were some interesting variations among them. So, my attempt here is to bring attention to the standards and the variations—so that we can enjoy them all.

### The NBS Classification

My button studies generally begin with the official National Button Society (NBS) Classification—during this study I used the 2008 edition.



*Asian filigree. 11-36 mm in diameter. Button collectors may be familiar with niello silver from Thailand. Silver filigree was also a specialty, revived as a tourist industry in the early 20th Century. Top two are brooches, marked SIAM STERLING. Row 2 buttons date from the mid 20th Century. Bottom four buttons are unmarked, and are believed to be Burmese due to their shape, not typical of Thai (Jane Perry, "A Collector's Guide to Peasant Silver Buttons". Lulu Publishing, p 103.)*

Here we can find filigree listed in three separate classifications. The first is under **Metal, Mechanical make-up assorted, Openwork design (Class. 10-13.4)**. The clarification (p. 77) for this class describes it as "*Filigree: delicate lacelike ornamental work (intertwined wire, cut, molded, etc.).*"

The second NBS reference for filigree is under **10-15 Specific types**. Here it is included in a list (tintype, wire filigree, etc.). This second class is best for including a broad range of filigree work. Traditional (old) filigree was commonly wire work on solid sheet metal. This would not qualify for "openwork."



*Left: In some cases the wirework is laid onto a solid sheet. Pictured here is a Norwegian applied filigree button measuring 15 mm in diameter. It was made by Jacob Tosttrup, the father of modern Norwegian filigree, in about 1870. Photo courtesy of Jane Perry, "A Collector's Guide to Peasant Silver Buttons" (2007) Lulu Publishing, p 45.*



*Below: Domed Norwegian decorative filigree. 28-30 mm in diameter (Jane Perry, p. 102).*



*Above: Some filigree is shaped as a dome or cap that is affixed to a metal base. Buttons of this type were made in Spain, Italy, and Germany. Pictured here are buttons from the Hamburg area with open filigree fronts. These date from the first half of the 19th Century. They can be found with and without maker's marks. Photo courtesy of Jane Perry, "A Collector's Guide to Peasant Silver Buttons" (2007) Lulu Publishing, p 112.*



*Right: Domed filigree buttons. Swedish filigree 12-15 mm in diameter (Jane Perry, p 99).*

Buttons that can be filigree-foolers include molded metal buttons where the mold was created from a wire-worked (filigree) button. The reproduction is a single piece of metal that appears to be filigree, but in fact is a molded imitation. These buttons could be used in Class 10-13.4 (metal, openwork) but seem best suited for the third category of filigree—within

#### **Patterns. It is Section 22, Class 1.4.**

The Pattern section clarification (on Page 59 of the 2008 NBS Classification) also refers to Page 77's description (above). The National classification chair, Barbara Barrans, explained to me that the Patterns section is where we would include a broad range of filigree—in metal or other materials, openwork or otherwise. Personally, I liked the idea of building a tray of filigree-patterns. I wondered about the difficulty.

Next I chose to explore the world view of filigree—beyond buttons. Would it help us to understand our buttons better? I found the answer was, “Yes.”

#### **Definition of Filigree – fil-i-gree (fil'ī-grē)**

The dictionaries tell us that “filigree” is a noun; an alteration of the French word *filigrane*, from the Italian *filigrana*. It originated from the Latin combination of *filum* and *grānum* (thread + grain). It refers to delicate and intricate ornamental work made from gold, silver, or other fine twisted wire. The word also can be used in reference to fanciful ornamentation (such as “filigrees of frosting on a cake”). And, yes, it can be converted into a verb such as filigreed, filigreeing, and filigrees.

#### **The Origin**

A quick internet search led me to a number of books that detail both the archeological evidence of ancient filigree and the modern techniques

filigreeing. From Egypt, there is pride in the history.

*In the 1920s archeologists lifted the lid on two of the most significant finds this century, revealing that filigree was in fact more than 5000 years old. The first discovery was of a filigree knife sheath dating from 2600 B.C., found in the royal tomb of the Mesopotamian Queen Pu-Abi. The second was the discovery of several gold and silver rings with exquisitely formed filigree shanks dating from 1350 B.C., found in the legendary tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamen. (www.fromcairo.com)*

I learned that the style of the filigree is an indicator of both its location of origin and its age. The ancient Phoenician sites of Sardinia and Cyprus revealed gold filigree work. Greek and Etruscan work from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. show the art perfected. Ancient filigree examples can be seen in museums in Europe and the Middle East. Asian countries also take pride in their filigree work—old and modern.

Filigree is an art that has been practiced throughout Europe – from Spain, Italy, Portugal, Albania, and Greece to the north in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, and west in the British Isles. Saxons, Britons, and Celts all practiced the metal technique in times past.

Today, a Northern California filigree artist, Yehuda Tasa, has revived the old Yemenite style of filigree. He reports that it was Yemenite Jews that carried the art to other parts of the Middle East, including Israel, where the art continues today. As tools have changed, so has the artistry of the work. Tasa uses old and modern tools in his work. (<http://www.sabrajewelrydesign.com>)

#### **How Is Filigree Made?**

Studying the metal filigree buttons I have collected, I see that there are variations in construction. Some are delicate, intertwined metal strands of wire twisted into beautiful patterns. If there is soldering, it is invisible or close to it. Others have been heated, causing the wires to melt into one another. While it may be intended to stabilize the wires, the quality of artistry in these varies greatly. And some appear to have been heated and stamped—another method of stabilizing.

In some buttons the filigree work forms a convex cap that is soldered onto a solid base that holds the button shank. On others, the wire work is soldered to a solid base. (This was the style of ancient filigree work.) Some buttons have been embellished with small sheet metal bits and metal balls. And a few have cut glass or gemstones to enhance the design.







*South German buttons with colored pastes. 21 mm in diameter. These are marked on the side of the shank. Photo courtesy of Jane Perry, "A Collector's Guide to Peasant Silver Buttons" (2007) Lulu Publishing, p 106.*

From my internet search I discovered that there are filigree artists selling a range of work for decorative and ornamental purposes. An Indian website describes the appeal of the silver work of Karimnagar. Its originality makes it appealing, with each piece having unique characteristics. The construction method is summarized:

*In Filigree work, twisted silver wire is the material, and the articles have the trellis-like appearance of 'jali' (net) which endows them with a rare charm.*

*The silversmith crimps thin strips of fine silver into zigzag patterns and loops using it to fill up the ground of designs formed by thicker silver strips. The strips and fine silver are then deftly soldered, carefully avoiding the trellis-like Filigree pattern.*

*Leaves, flowers, trees, animals, and birds in the area of origin seem to be predominant. However, the versatility of the art is not restricted by tradition. The art has been extended from jewelry to other household articles like tea-trays, ornament containers, key chains and even cigarette boxes. (www.aponline.gov.in)*

I also found a book by silver filigree artist, Jeanne Rhodes-Moen. The title is Silver Threads (Kalmbach Publishing). Jeanne covers the history, techniques, and countries of origin. She also provides instruction for creating your own filigree projects.

Victoria Lansford, a filigree artist, has a website that illustrates techniques. You'll need a video player to see a preview of her DVD. She describes her work as Russian-style filigree in gold and silver—all openwork.

On eBay's online marketplace one can find an abundance of filigree bracelets, rings, pendants, brooches, watch bands, and more. The prices seem to undervalue the work involved. Currently, much filigree work is being done in Mexico and Israel for export.



*Pictured are Russian filigree buttons and the matching belt buckle. (Janel Smith Marchi collection.) These combine gold and silver with semi-precious stones. According to Jane Perry's "A Collector's Guide to Peasant Silver Buttons," traditional Russian buttons for fastening clothes are all ovoid or spherical in shape. Those pictured here were likely attached to a man's leather belt using a lace or cord that ran through both the button shank and the belt leather. Belts of this type were worn in the Caucasus from at least the 19<sup>th</sup> Century up to the 1920s. (Perry p 51 illustrates a similar silver button set.)*

### Filigree in our Button Books

My next venture was to seek examples of filigree buttons. Here are NBS Bulletin sources:

- 1) "A Jeweled Silver Filigree Button with Secret Compartment": Sept. 1952, p 283.
- 2) "Ohio Educational Exhibit...NBS Texas 1975": Mar. 1976, p 57.
- 3) "Patterns—Non-Pictorial Designs": Feb. 1986, p 5-7 (illus).

The "Secret Compartment" article features a single filigree button which is quite amazing with a baroque pearl center, cobalt blue enamel on star shaped silver, six small turquoise settings with silver filigree wire work. Unfortunately, the photo is black and white and the article does not list an age or place of origin. However, Epstein and Saftro's "Buttons" (Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York, 1991) shows a similar "smuggler's button" among a selection of silver buttons ascribed as "Silver, Austro-Hungarian, probably 17<sup>th</sup> Century" (p 55). Among them are several highly ornate, jeweled and/or enameled filigree buttons.

The Epstein and Saftro text also shows (p 57) two filigree buttons among other silver buttons believed to be late 17<sup>th</sup> century and of Dutch or German origin. However, the one highly ornate filigree has a very different appearance from the others. It is a style of filigree work I have seen with a Portuguese back mark.

The NBS Bulletin, March 1976, reference is to a tray that included five filigree buttons as part of a "Patterns" display. The February 1986 Patterns article shows just one example of filigree (p 7). It is a good source to see a range of pattern illustrations, however.

As you might imagine from the photos included here, the best resource I found for filigree buttons was Jane Perry's "A Collector's Guide to Peasant Silver Buttons" (Lulu Publishing, 2007, 186 pp). This illustrated guide includes both descriptions and exceptional photos of souvenir and peasant silver buttons from Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The book is available at Lulu.com and other bookstores. Button images are enlarged, making identification all the easier. Equally important, the author has detailed the origin, size, and construction information for each button pictured.



*Silver filigree brooch in the author's collection, originally in Jean Corcoran's. Assumed to be Mexican.*



*Back marked "LIMOGES/FRANCE" this porcelain button features a richly detailed hand-painted design of two Tanagers among Dogwood flowers. Beads of white glaze create the centers of each flower. Set in a silver frame with filigree trim, a rope inside border, and silver balls forming the outer border. I wonder if the filigree loops once held satin or silk decorative thread. Probably made in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.*



*Genoese (Italy) filigree. 13-16 mm in diameter. Stamped on shank. (Jane Perry, p 122)*



*Decorative Hungarian 18mm diameter by 20 mm long, excluding the shank. (Jane Perry, p 124)*





*Dutch blackberry or Zeeuwse buttons. 15-30 mm in diameter  
(Jane Perry, p. 126.)*

### What's in Your Collection?

With so many collectors focused on pictorial designs or material categories, I suspect that there may be filigree buttons in many collections that are overlooked. While writing this article, I discovered four medium-size jewel filigree buttons on my tray of 18<sup>th</sup> Century buttons. All four are likely older. Isn't it time you checked your collection?

Here are some things to look for.

#### **Class. 10-13.4. Metal, Mechanical make-up assorted, Openwork design:**

- 1) flat,
- 2) domed,
- 3) attached to a solid base,
- 4) assorted materials (wires of gold, silver, copper),
- 5) embellishments (such as jewels and imitation jewels),
- 6) cast buttons where the cast was made from filigree work),
- 7) toggle and belt buttons.

Just remember that all must be "openwork" design. You may find a variety of metals.

**10-15 Specific types.** Here the filigree does not need to be openwork. It can be wire affixed to a solid back (no light passing through the filigree pattern). But the above openwork designs would also qualify here.

**22-1.4 Patterns, filigree.** This is the spot for all forms of filigree. This includes all the openwork design forms, the specific types, AND the imitation filigree patterns. There was some discussion that this classification does not limit materials, however, consultation with collectors resulted in the conclusion that only metal buttons with filigree patterns should be used here.



*Decorative Hungarian 18mm diameter  
by 20 mm long, excluding the shank.  
(Jane Perry, p. 124)*

*The author, Janel Marchi, is Past President of the California State Button Society, a founding Director and current Treasurer of WRBA, a Life Member of National, and a member of the Oregon State Button Society. She resides in Bend, Oregon, where she works in advertising. Her website can be found at [www.buttonsintime.com](http://www.buttonsintime.com).*