BACKGROUND BUTTONS #6: SHELL
Sixth in a Series Concerning Background Buttons
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Buttons with pearl backgrounds are plentiful and beautiful.
First, let us review the section on backgrounds from the 2011-2012 National Button Society Classification Blue Book.

SECTION 11 — SHELL
11— 6.1 Mounted in/on metal — Background

SECTION 23 – SPECIFIC TYPES
23- 1 Backgrounds assorted
23- 1.5 Shell

The three buttons below are NOT "mounted in/on metal." They have a pearl base, upon which the design is carved or mounted.

ABOVE
LEFT: Cameo carved dog. CENTER: Brass thistle escutcheon on smoky pearl. RIGHT: Carved smoky pearl anchor mounted upon four-hole sew-through pearl.

RIGHT: Back and front of a four-hole sew-through shell button. Paint DF, now quite worn. This construction is an applied design (brass applied onto the pearl).

LEFT: Brass horse shoe border (rim only) on smoky pearl with a central cut steel. This is not a background as it is not mounted in metal.

RIGHT: Pierced pearl button (pink is the mounting card) with a brass crane and an attached border of brass and cut steel (not a pearl background). The shank attaches to the brass bird.

PEARL SET IN METAL. Clockwise from top left: Pierced shell set in brass of intricate asymmetrical border with cut steel escutcheon. Carved pearl set on metal with cut steel border and cut steels as flowers. Six leaves in a border around the shell. Pierced shell set in openwork brass with five cut steels OME.

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COMPARISON OF TWO BUTTONS WITH LEAF BORDERS: The button on the left is not a background button, however, the button on the right qualifies as a background button because the lovely curvilinear leaves are pierced and the pearl background shows through significantly.

LEFT IS NOT A PEARL BACKGROUND: This is a pearl button with a brass depiction of a woman above a wood background. Remember that background buttons “are usually, but not always, mounted in metal.” In competition, be aware of how an award is written. This button could not be used in Section 14—6 (Wood) but can be used in Section 23—1.6 Wood backgrounds.

RIGHT: Lovely silvered brass image of birds and young on a branch, over a background of smoky pearl. The straight button sides are also textured to match the design of the border.

ARCHITECTURE
THREE LEFT: Le Tour de Nesle of brass over pearl in steel cups.
TOP RIGHT: The Eiffel Tower and a French fop of brass over a pearl background in a steel cup with cut steel OME.
LOWER RIGHT: Brass windmill with steel blades above a pearl background with a stamped flower steel cup rim.

White metal tennis racket over a pearl background.

Acorn & three leaves over a pearl background.
TRANSPORTATION. Horseless carriage. Steel cup of a hot air balloon of brass with three cut steel OME. Beautifully detailed brass horseman blowing a horn.

DOG HEAD escutcheon over a pearl background. Paris backmark: TW&W PARIS.
BEAR OR WOLF HEAD escutcheon over a pearl background. Paris backmark: SUPERFIN PARIS.

PLANT LIFE: (Clockwise from upper right)
THISTLE escutcheon, abalone background. Back mark shown. NBS medium.
FLORAL SPRAY over smoky Pearl with a double handkerchief, engraved border.
LAUREL LEAF WREATH over oyster shell background set inside a laurel leaf wreath border. Cut steel OME. NBS medium.
STEEL CUP with smoky pearl disk behind a brass and cut steel stylized plant form with cut steel (CS) OME.
BRASS FLORAL with blued & cut steel OME above pearl set in a steel cup. NBS small.
STEEL CUP with brass plant form & two CS shapes over a pearl disk.
WHITE PAINTED STYLIZED PLANT FORMS pierced over a pearl disk set in brass.
ROSE & ROSEBUD over a pearl disk in a steel cup. NBS small.
SQUARE WITH HANDKERCHIEF CORNERS featuring a floral spray over a square pearl disk. NBS large.
CONVENTIONAL DESIGNS:
All are stamped brass shapes above pearl set in brass. Top left features a lovely silvered brass setting. Bottom left is a purple dyed shell background. Bottom right is a pierced setting and features a domed pearl background under a six-pointed radial design. Center right contains both paste and CS OME.

CONVENTIONAL & STYLIZED PLANT FORMS.
Stamped brass above pearl disks set in brass.

BRASS LOG ESCUTCHEON
Hollow brass log (escutcheon) over a smoky pearl disk set in stamped brass. NBS medium.

HEADS
Stamped brass escutcheons above pearl disks.
LEFT: Mary Stuart of stamped high relief.
LOWER LEFT: The Black Moor, set in steel cups.
LOWER RIGHT: Hector, both set in steel cups.