Theodore “TR” Roosevelt Jr. was an American author, naturalist, explorer, historian, politician, and the 26th President of the United States. His life began on Oct 27th, 1858 in New York City. After a sickly childhood he went on to graduate Summa Cum Laude from Harvard University and started at Columbia School of Law. He left school to begin a career in politics and married Alice Hathaway Lee. They had a daughter, Alice. Two days later, on Valentines Day 1884, both his wife and his mother died. Heartbroken, he left his infant daughter in the care of his sister and left for the Badlands in the Dakotas and took up the life of a rancher and cowboy. Of this period he said, “I do not believe there ever was any life more attractive to a vigorous young fellow than life on a cattle ranch in those days. It was a fine, healthy life, too; it taught a man self-reliance, hardihood, and the value of instant decision ... I enjoyed the life to the full.”

Two years later he returned to political life and worked his way up to the position of Assistant Secretary of the Navy under President William McKinley. He resigned this post to fight in the Spanish American War, forming a volunteer brigade known as the “Rough Riders”. He led his men in a bold charge up San Juan Hill in Cuba, helping to develop his image as a swashbuckling war hero. He was nominated for the Congressional Medal of Honor and was soon elected as Governor of New York. He ran on the ticket as Vice President under McKinley and when McKinley was assassinated in 1901, Roosevelt, at age forty two, became the youngest U.S. President ever. He married Edith Kermit Carow in 1886 and had five more children with her. The White House was home to children for the first time.

As President, Roosevelt, known as “T.R.” had many accomplishments including prosecuting monopolies under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, the “Square Deal”, a domestic program which reformed the American workplace, regulated industry and consumer protection, with the aim of helping the middle class. He bulked up the Navy and created “The Great White Fleet” which sailed on a world tour to show off the nation’s military Power. He was quoted as saying, “speak softly and carry a big stick. The button at right depicts “Teddy” carrying a big stick.
He helped push the completion of the Panama Canal, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for helping to negotiate the end of the Russo-Japanese War. An environmental activist, he created many of the first National Parks, securing about 200 million acres of wilderness for future generations to enjoy, including the Grand Canyon and countless wildlife sanctuaries, national forests and federal game preserves. He was an avid hunter. On one hunt, it is told that some of his friends treed a bear cub and summoned him to take a shot at it. The President declined to shoot it. Word spread and the name “Teddy” evolved as a name for toy bears.

We can get a sense of T.R.’s popularity just from the number of buttons depicting him and his activities. Button makers of the day were on the lookout for the newest, latest thing to put on their salesman’s sample cards. Topical images were the rage. When a new Gilbert and Sullivan operetta or Sarah Bernhardt production hit the stage the button industry was not far behind. New motor cars were pictured, as well as locomotives. When “Teddy” went on safari to Africa, the press followed and images soon appeared on buttons. The button below measures 2-3/4".
The three big game hunting buttons above are thought to have been made up from findings in the 1940’s although many collectors still believe them to be genuine.

The lion hunting pictorial bottom below is made of pressed steel.

After finishing his term in 1908, Roosevelt vowed not to run again, but he decided in 1912 to form the Bull Moose Party and run against Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson. He lost to Wilson. The button below showing a bear holding a big stick and looking at the moon thru a telescope is a reference to his unsuccessful campaign.

Teddy Roosevelt went on to publish more than 25 books, including the 4 volume *The Winning of the West*. He died in 1919 at the age of 60 at his Long Island estate, Sagamore Hill.

All buttons from the author’s collection
Western Regional Button Association is pleased to share our educational articles with the button collecting community. This article appeared in the May 2015 WRBA *Territorial News*. Enjoy! Please join WRBA! Go to [www.WRBA.us](http://www.WRBA.us)

WRBA gladly offers our articles for reprint, as long as credit is given to WRBA as the source, and the author.
Western Regional Button Association is pleased to share our educational articles with the button collecting community. This article appeared in the May 2015 WRBA *Territorial News*. Enjoy! Please join WRBA! Go to www.WRBA.us

WRBA gladly offers our articles for reprint, as long as credit is given to WRBA as the source, and the author.