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BUTTERNUT: The Buttons & The Wood

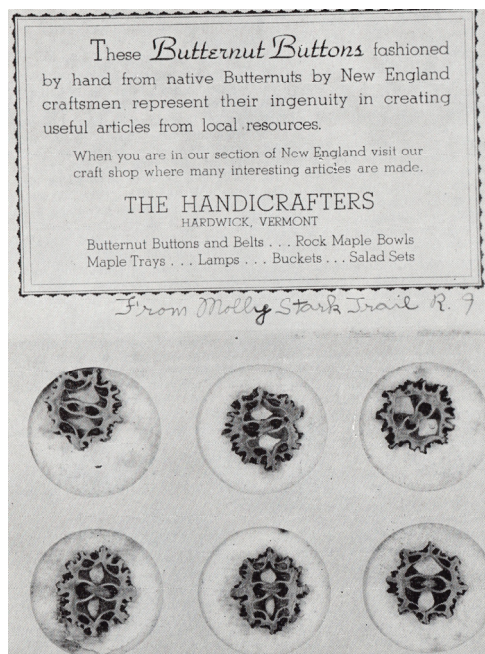
by Joy Journey

You may have an interesting button made from a slice of butternut. The tree grows in the Eastern US and SE Canada. It is also called White Walnut or Oil Nut.

It is a favorite wood of carvers. The bark and nut rinds were once used to dye homespun cloth for colors from light yellow to dark brown. In the mid-19th century, the people of southern Illinois and southern Indiana were known as "Butternuts" because of the colors of their clothing. In the Civil War, Confederates were also called Butternuts as their uniforms faded to tan.

In discovering the source of my butternut button, I also found an image of the butternut wood.

This is an excellent example of the appearance of ONE wood, cut three ways. This is also a caution to those of us who want to label our wood buttons by "sight" as opposed to knowing the artist or the authentic wood source. Do you see the incredible variance between the appearance of the wood dependent upon the angle of the cut? This is fascinating!



The December 1972 *Just Buttons* magazine contained this ad for Butternut Buttons from "The Handicrafters" of Hardwick, Vermont.

