

antique button identification guide

Antique button identification guide is a valuable resource for collectors, historians, and enthusiasts alike. Antique buttons are not only functional items but also historical artifacts that reflect the craftsmanship and fashion of their respective eras. This guide aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how to identify antique buttons, including their materials, styles, and historical significance.

Understanding Antique Buttons

Antique buttons can be broadly categorized based on their materials, manufacturing techniques, and decorative styles. The identification process often involves examining these factors closely. Understanding the context in which a button was made will enhance your ability to identify and appreciate these small but significant pieces of history.

Materials Used in Antique Buttons

The material composition of a button can provide critical clues about its age, style, and origin. Here are some common materials used in making antique buttons:

- **Metal:** Buttons made from brass, copper, silver, or gold are common. Metal buttons often feature intricate designs and were popular from the 18th century onwards.
- **Glass:** Glass buttons, particularly those with vivid colors and elaborate designs, were popular in the 19th century. They can be either pressed or blown glass.
- **Plastic:** Although plastic buttons date back to the early 20th century, some early forms, like Bakelite, can be considered antiques.
- **Bone and Horn:** Often used in the 18th and 19th centuries, these materials were common for utilitarian buttons, especially in rural areas.
- **Wood:** Wooden buttons can be found from various periods and are typically hand-carved, showcasing unique craftsmanship.
- **Fabric:** Some buttons are made from fabric, often covered with embroidery or other decorative elements.

Common Styles of Antique Buttons

Antique buttons come in various styles, each reflecting the fashion trends of their time. Here are

some notable styles:

- **Flat Buttons:** Simple in design, flat buttons were popular in the 18th and 19th centuries.
- **Shank Buttons:** Featuring a loop on the back for sewing, shank buttons became prevalent in the late 19th century.
- **Covered Buttons:** These buttons are made by covering a button form with fabric, often used in clothing from the 20th century.
- **Novelty Buttons:** These buttons, often shaped like animals, flowers, or objects, gained popularity in the 20th century.
- **Carved Buttons:** Often made of wood or ivory, these buttons feature intricate carvings and were popular in the Victorian era.

Identifying Antique Buttons

When identifying an antique button, collectors should follow a systematic approach. The process typically involves examining the button's physical characteristics, materials, and any markings present.

Step-by-Step Identification Process

1. **Examine the Material:** Determine what the button is made from. This will help narrow down its age and origin.
2. **Assess the Design:** Look at the button's shape and decorative elements. Research different styles and their historical contexts.
3. **Check for Markings:** Some buttons have markings or stamps on the back indicating the manufacturer or designer. This can provide valuable information about the button's history.
4. **Measure the Size:** Measure the diameter and thickness of the button. Size can be a significant factor in dating a button.
5. **Research Historical Context:** Use reference books, online databases, and collector forums to find information on buttons similar to yours.
6. **Consult Experts:** If you're still unsure, consider reaching out to antique dealers or button clubs for assistance.

Resources for Antique Button Identification

To aid in your identification journey, several resources can be invaluable:

- Books:
 - "The Collector's Guide to Buttons" by Barbara A. B. Hodge
 - "Buttons: A Collector's Guide" by Anne M. Smith
- Websites:
 - The National Button Society (www.nationalbuttonociety.org)
 - Button collecting forums and social media groups
- Local Antique Shows: Attending shows can provide opportunities to meet other collectors and experts who can assist with identification.

Preservation and Care of Antique Buttons

Once you've identified your antique buttons, proper care and preservation are crucial to maintain their condition and value.

Best Practices for Preservation

- Clean Carefully: Use a soft, dry cloth to clean buttons. Avoid harsh chemicals that can damage delicate materials.
- Store Properly: Keep buttons in a cool, dry place. Consider using acid-free materials for storage to prevent chemical reactions.
- Display Thoughtfully: If displaying your buttons, use shadow boxes or frames to protect them from dust and damage.
- Avoid Direct Sunlight: Prolonged exposure to sunlight can fade colors and weaken materials.

Conclusion

Collecting antique buttons is not only a hobby but also a way to connect with history. Understanding the materials, styles, and identification process enhances the appreciation of these small artifacts. Whether you are a seasoned collector or just starting out, this **antique button identification guide** provides essential knowledge to help you navigate the fascinating world of antique buttons. By following the steps outlined and utilizing the resources provided, you can build a collection that reflects your personal interests and historical curiosity. Happy collecting!

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key characteristics to look for when identifying antique buttons?

Key characteristics include the material (e.g., metal, glass, ivory), size, shape, design patterns, back markings, and the method of attachment (e.g., shank, flat).

How can I determine the age of an antique button?

To determine the age, examine the materials used, the manufacturing techniques (like mold vs. hand-carved), and any markings or stamps that can indicate the time period.

Are there specific resources or books available for antique button identification?

Yes, there are several resources, including books like 'The Collector's Guide to Antique Buttons' by Barbara L. Williams and various online databases and forums dedicated to button collecting.

What materials are commonly found in antique buttons and how do they affect value?

Common materials include metal, glass, wood, ceramic, and plastic. Rare materials like bakelite or high-quality glass can significantly increase a button's value.

Can I use online tools or apps for identifying antique buttons?

Yes, there are several apps and online databases that allow users to upload images of their buttons for identification and comparison with known examples.

How do I care for and preserve antique buttons in my collection?

Care involves keeping buttons in a stable environment, avoiding direct sunlight, using soft cloths for cleaning, and storing them in acid-free materials to prevent damage.

What are some common types of antique buttons to look for in a collection?

Common types include glass buttons, metal buttons, celluloid buttons, and novelty buttons, each with their own historical significance and collector interest.

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