

Hobby Dates Back To Dirty Thirties



MODERN novelty buttons in Mrs. W. W. Wade's collection hold a big fascination for her 4-year-old granddaughter, Marian Walters, 728 North Plum.

By EILEEN FOLEY

A GAME of "Button, Button, Who's Got the Button" might get a little complicated in the home of Mrs. W. W. Wade, 728 North Plum, who has thousands of buttons, literally.

Several years ago, before giving her modern ones to the Colored Day Nursery, she owned at least 15,000 buttons, and still has a considerable number. Her collection was begun 20 years ago after her husband's death, when her daughter, Mrs. Mary E. Walters, was away at Emporia State college, and her son, George L., now of Pratt, had a traveling job. It was the spring of big dust storms and she had time on her hands—"I was hard put for something to keep me busy," she said.

During Mrs. Wade's childhood when families "went calling" the children were kept amused by the hostess' button box, and they usually wound up taking home some of the buttons which the hostess gave them. Mrs. Wade's mother strung her collection, and it was this first string which she decided to polish and file during that long spring in the '30's. Friends invited her to look through their

tons also form a large part of Mrs. Wade's collection. Uniform, railroad and transportation buttons form three more divisions.

Most valuable button is one of the "named" variety, depicting Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf. The button, more than 90 years old, is worth \$25 and was given to Mrs. Wade soon after her collection was begun by an elderly Hutchinson woman who had it on her cape when she was a child. "Lady with a Guitar" is another old button dating back 115 to 120 years.

Face buttons include Queen Elizabeth I, Jenny Lind, etc. And Mrs. Wade owns some old glass buttons, hand-made. It's easy to identify the hand-made ones, she says, because there is a swirl on the back. One button which the collector likes especially was given her by a friend and has historical significance. It came from the uniform of the soldier who carried the first American flag across the Rhine into Germany Dec. 5, 1918. She likes military buttons because her husband

was a Spanish American War veteran.

Where does she get all her buttons? "Oh, I just swapped around here and there," she says. Her granddaughter is partial to modern "Goofies," or novelty buttons. She also has a grandson, Wade Walters, 16. "Some may think it a worthless hobby," says Mrs. Wade, who lived with her husband in Bison and LaCrosse many years when they were in newspaper work, "But I enjoyed my buttons a lot — they filled up many otherwise empty hours."

an Wal- string her collection, and it was this first string which she decided to polish and file during that long spring in the '30's. Friends invited her to look through their button collections, and other collectors contacted her by mail until soon she was exchanging button duplicates with persons from California to Connecticut and Florida to Minnesota.

Sixteen years ago Mrs. Wade helped organize the Hutchinson Button club and became its first president. Lately, however, her health hasn't been good and "while I haven't exactly lost interest, I lack ambition and time to remain active in the club, and keep up my collection."

It looks as if she has done enough work to rest on her laurels a while, however.

By reading library books about buttons she discovered the many, many different classifications, and filed hers accordingly. One of her oldest buttons is of pearl, dating back 125 years. Then there are miniatures, including old buttons from babies' clothing, that have three holes instead of two. Other sure signs of an old button is a 4 - way back, instead of the regular 2 - way back for modern sewing, and a thread - backed button.

Classifications Mrs. Wade has filled include gold tracery, cuff and shoe buttons, metal back enameled buttons, floral trims, squares, buckles, stars, jewels, silver and gold luster, iridescents, and picture buttons which have scenes from operas, Mother Goose rhymes or myths. She has quite a number of black buttons, which in former days helped to signify one in mourning. Upon the death of a loved one, a woman would remove the shiny buttons on a dress and substitute black crepe buttons.

Shell, pewter, rattan, pink ivory from Africa, snakeskin, Osage orange wood, butternut, sandstone, camel bone from China, corn cob, and horns from elks, buffalo, deer and cows, all make up buttons in Mrs. Wade's collections.

In 1851 Goodyear Rubber Co., patented an idea to make button designs in hard rubber, and those brown and black buttons proved popular in their day. Metal but-