



Collecting buttons is a lifelong hobby for Merry Jo Thoele. Buttons are mounted on 9 by 12 cards for presentations and competitions.

Historical Buttons Worth Big Bucks

Merry Jo Thoele remembers dumping out containers of buttons and playing with them when she was a kid. Overall buttons and work clothes buttons were especially fun. Now the Minnesota State Button Society Editor has a spare bedroom overflowing with buttons organized in containers and mounted on 9 by 12 cards for presentations and competitions.

"With buttons you see the history of art, industry, manufacturing and fashion," Thoele says.

Styles are endless, from technology that allowed black glass to be mass produced to make buttons for common folks to follow Queen Victoria's fashion to sturdy, utilitarian china buttons (1840-1930s) made by pressing into molds for everyday work clothing. She even has buttons from Colt, the firearms company, made in the 1920s to 1950s.

"One of the ways to tell the age of buttons is to look on back of the button. Older buttons often have metal shanks embedded into the glass; modern glass buttons are usually self-shanked because they were molded all at once," Thoele says. She adds that prices for individual collectible buttons are not as high as they were 15 years ago. The Colt or Synthetics Plastic Corp. buttons are worth \$2 or \$3 each, for example.

"My grandmother would be shocked to know how some buttons are sought by collectors," laughs Thoele. She recalls that her grandfather saved his mother's button collection when the family moved from Iowa to Minnesota during a grasshopper

infestation. Thoele's grandmother wasn't impressed with the "work clothes" buttons (china) and gave many of them away. Thoele has since gotten many of them back.

Besides inheriting her family's collection, over the years she has purchased valuable and unusual buttons (\$50 and up) such as a couple of 18th century habitat buttons from the late 1700s. The 1 1/2-in buttons have real seeds, bugs and grasses mounted on mica covered with a glass dome and sealed with a brass rim. Habitat buttons can be worth as much as \$1,000.

For Thoele, collecting buttons is a lifelong hobby, inspired by her grandmother's mantra that everyone should have a hobby to stay engaged in continuous learning. She is always on the lookout for more buttons and enjoys networking with members of the Minnesota organization (organized in 1943) as well as the National Button Society, which has groups in 39 states and four continents. Members typically meet monthly in her Minnesota group, but recently have been meeting virtually.

"Buttons are really fascinating. And at least they are small," Thoele laughs, noting her "small" collection has taken over her spare bedroom and spread to the big table in the family room.

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This 1992 Deere 4760 had only 3.6 hrs. on it when it was sold for \$260,000 at a recent auction in Saskatchewan.

Auction Tractor Find Has Only 3.6 Hours

Brendan Kramer, Territory Manager for Ritchie Bros., managed one of the most interesting auctions he's ever been a part of when he sold a 1992 Deere 4760 with only 3.6 hrs. on it. The tractor was part of a Ritchie Bros. online auction for the estate of Danny Spence, a Saskatchewan farmer. It was held the end of October last year. The \$80,000 when new tractor sold for a record \$260,000 (all prices Canadian).

"You don't see a tractor of this vintage with hours this low," says Kramer. "Knowing the original owner, I could understand how a tractor like this could get tucked away in the shed and never be used, but I was still shocked that it only had 3.6 hrs. on it."

"When I climbed up and opened the cab, it smelled like a brand-new tractor sitting in the showroom," adds Kramer. "The original shipping tags were still on the tires, the original dealer stock tag still on the cab step. I thought to myself, this is going to be fun to sell!"

Kramer didn't log how many calls or emails the auction company received. However, it attracted more than 5,500 bidders from Canada, the U.S., the U.K., Australia and New Zealand.

"The number of people who came to look at it was staggering," he says. "I would love

to know how many would have attended a live auction."

The "new" old tractor wasn't the only thing that captured interest in the auction. It included more than 1,500 lots and bidding ran for 5 days.

The tractor wasn't the only low-hour, nearly new item. "There was a 1996 Polaris snowmobile with only 0.9 kilometers on it that sold for \$9,750," says Kramer. "A 2016 Polaris 4-wheeler with 2.6 hours and 41 kilometers on it sold for \$9,500."

There were other tractors with low hours, as well as a 1994 Kenworth semi that had been purchased new and seen very little use. It had 53,500 kilometers on it and sold for \$78,000.

"A 1992 Ford F XLT dually had only 3,400 kilometers on it and brought 20 grand," says Kramer. "Like the tractor, it still smelled like new."

Kramer says he has worked one other large auction with low hour equipment. Like Mr. Spence, the owners were bachelor farmers.

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A pair of 10-ft. satellite dishes, painted with aluminum roofing paint, were used to make this UFO-shaped chicken coop.

Out-Of-This-World Chicken Coop

A clever UFO-shaped chicken coop, built with two 10-ft. satellite dishes, has been going around on social media. We weren't able to contact the Idaho couple that built it but we did find a YouTube video, and thought we'd share the idea.

Brett Wilson and Ellen DeAngelis wanted a creative, yet practical coop for their small backyard flock of chickens. The satellite dishes provided the basic frame that fit perfectly in an 8-ft. trampoline base. They installed a removable 8-ft. dia. plywood floor topped with countertop laminate for easy cleaning. Wilson cut 6-in. holes for acrylic windows and holes for a door and a hatch in the back for access to collect eggs.

They cut 1-in. Styrofoam insulation to fit in between the metal sections of the exterior of both dishes. After sealing them with roofing material and tape, the dishes were painted with aluminum roofing paint. The top dish has handles so it can be lifted off for cleaning.

For heat during Idaho winters they installed two 250w ceramic heaters (with chicken wire cages over them for safety), which can be monitored and controlled from a website on their computer.

For the final touch, they added LED lights in 2-in. clear tubing.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, YouTube: UFO Chicken Coop, UFO Chicken Coop Returns.

Kids Love This "Play Caboose"

"Every year we take our grandkids to an amusement park in French Lick, Ind., for a ride on the Polar Express train. However, last summer we couldn't make the trip because of Covid-19. So at my wife's suggestion, I built this 'caboose' to pull behind our lawn tractor. The kids really enjoy riding in it," says Tom Chaney, Chrisman, Ill.

The caboose rides on 4 caster wheels purchased from Harbor Freight. The sides are made of 3/4-in. plywood, the floor is off an old shipping crate, and the roof was made using scrap lumber. There are doors on front and back, which kids can open and then step outside onto a small "porch". There also are windows with ledges on both sides. The entire structure is supported by a pair of 2-in. angle iron frames.

"It even has a working tail light that kids can turn on and off from inside the caboose by using a battery-operated switch," says Chaney.

He made a 4-ft. long drawbar hitch out of 1-in. sq. tubing that lets him pull the caboose behind either a garden tractor or a barrel train he already had. "I drilled a pair of holes through one end of the tubing, then ran a 4-in. muffler clamp through them and bolted it on front of the caboose. The tube swivels on the clamp when turning," notes Chaney.



Tom Chaney's grandkids have fun riding this "play caboose" he built to pull behind a lawn tractor.

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