

IOWA CITY NOW THE LEADER IN PEARL BUTTONS; ARE MADE FROM FRESH WATER CLAMS

Behold, Muscatine, Iowa, the pearl button capital of the world. Surprising as it may seem, this Western prairie city of less than 20,000 inhabitants turns out more pearl buttons, button blanks and pearl novelties than any other place in the world. Also this city has the largest factory in the country for the manufacture of button-making machinery.

Think of an annual production of 17,500,000 gross of pearl buttons! If these buttons were made up into a necklace so arranged that the buttons would just touch each other edge to edge, a necklace made from one year's output from the factories of Muscatine would reach around the world.

From infancy we have all seen and admired buttons. Who has not played in childhood with a long string of bright buttons? Every civilized man, woman and child wears buttons. Big buttons that do not button, small buttons that do not stay buttoned; buttons down the front, buttons up the back; wood buttons, pearl buttons, steel buttons, glass buttons, fibre buttons, molded buttons, brass buttons. Yet who of us has even a vague idea of how buttons are made?

Of course, different kinds of buttons are made by different methods, but there are none more interesting than the process of making pearl buttons, says the Christian Science Monitor.

The output of pearl buttons from Iowa constitutes about three-fourths of the pearl button production of the United States. The reason why this particular locality should have become the centre of the pearl button industry is easy enough to discover. Iowa pearl buttons are made from the shells of fresh water clams, or mussels, which are found in great abundance in the Mississippi River near Muscatine. Also, the man who developed this industry was a resident of Muscatine.

A Visit to a Muscatine Factory.

A visitor to Muscatine will find himself well repaid by a visit to one of the large button factories, and visitors are always welcome. The factory we were invited to visit was housed in a large, well constructed building, surrounded by shrubs and flowers and with ivy-covered walls. In the rear of the yard was a great pile of shells twenty feet high and 100 feet long or more, from which buttons had already been cut. These perforated shells are waste material, so far as the button industry is concerned, but are sold for various uses.

On entering the building we found ourselves in a busy modern factory. The manager met us and took great pains to show us through and point out and explain every detail of manufacture from the raw shell to the finished button sewed on the fancy earl. The inspection tour began at the rear of the factory and followed the various processes through in logical sequence.

All the shells are sorted by hand before they come into the factory. They are graded according to species and quality, and then each assortment is put through a classifier which classifies them as to size. After this classification the shells are put into large tanks or vats of water and left to soak for a week or more to soften the shell and make it easier to cut.

The real manufacturing process begins in the cutting room, where the blanks are made. This room is equipped with six rows of cutting machines. The blank is cut from the shell with a small tubular saw made by cutting teeth on the edge of a piece of steel tubing.

In the classifying room were rows of machines called classifiers. The blanks are conveyed into a hopper and from it fed into the machine. The classifiers consist of sets of revolving rolls set at different distances apart. The blanks descend on edge and roll between these rolls and are classified as to thickness into six or seven classes, depending on which set of rolls they fall between. The blanks are then put into revolving barrels or tumblers with water and pumice stone

and tumbled over and over until they are thoroughly cleaned.

Finishing Machines.

The finishing machines, located in another room, are entirely automatic and do what they are set to do. One of the larger machines was rounding the edges of the buttons, carving out the centre to make the face and drilling four holes. There are attachments that may be put on the same machine for making many different patterns. The finishing machines are operated by girls who seemed wonderfully adept at their work. One of these machines turns out a button each second or 30,000 buttons a day.

After the buttons come from the automatics they are again put into tumblers with water and pumice stone and thoroughly cleaned, and, of course get a preliminary polish. After this they are ready for the final polish, which is also done by tumbling. Then they go to the sorting room.

Although there is no machinery in the sorting room, the process of sorting and classifying is most interesting. This work is done mostly by girls, who have proved to be much more expert than men at this job. These girls sit at long tables facing the windows where they have good light. Two of the girls who sat at one of the tables were pointed out as being specially adept at classifying, and were said to be the highest paid girls in the factory. Each button must be picked up and examined individually and assigned to one of twelve grades.

In one of the piles are those with natural shell stains, in another those which had been slightly chipped in manufacture. The buttons were further classified according to color and lustre and iridescence. So expert are these girls, however, that they can sort at the rate of 40 buttons a minute or 20,000 buttons a day. While to a casual observer they seem to scarcely look at each button, they in fact do their work with the greatest precision.

Founder of the Industry.

As was said, the reason for Iowa being the great pearl button State is because of the great beds of mussel shells in the bottom of the Mississippi River in that vicinity. To Mr. J. F. Boepple of Muscatine, belongs the credit for having started this industry. Boepple was a native of Germany where he had been engaged in making buttons. When he found mussel shells in such abundance along the river he became convinced that good marketable buttons could be made from these shells. So he rigged up a saw and started in.

After a number of discouraging attempts he finally succeeded in perfecting a practical process. From this small beginning in 1880 there grew up in the next ten years a mammoth industry with forty factories in Muscatine alone.

The shells are fished from the bottom of the river and brought into Muscatine in fleets of barges carrying 100 tons or more of shells each. Shell fishing is very interesting. As a rule the shells are gathered by fishermen who operate their own business and who sell the raw product to the button manufacturers. Shells, suitable for buttons are called "niggerheads."

There are a number of methods of fishing for shells, the most common being with hook and line. But the hooks are very different from ordinary fish hooks and no bait is used. The hooks are made of heavy wire beat at right angles.

PERFECTION IN GOLDEN BLONDE

New York, May 3—A golden blond with perfect color scheme is the choice of Leo Quanchi, portrait painter, for the most beautiful woman in America. He is to show his portrait of Dorothy Hall, actress, at a Paris exhibition. He describes her hair as of spun gold, eyes sky blue, cheeks pink, lips a rich red and teeth dazzling.

Some men act so important over nothing that they look like a kiddy-car run by steam power.

LETTERS OF REIL ADDED TO ARCHIVES

A. G. Doughty is Doing Splendid Work Gathering Up Art Treasures.

Dr. A. G. Doughty, Dominion archivist, who has added another historical treasure to the Dominion archives in a number of hand-written letters by Louis Riel, fanatical champion of Indian rights in the northwest, is Canada's super-treasure hunter.

Heroes of fiction and of newspaper feature stories, are in the habit of fitting out expeditions at their own expense to go in search of Spanish doubloons, lost by the Armada, or pirate gold buried in the Spanish Main. Dr. Doughty is not a treasure hunter in this sense.

Indeed, he is not an ordinary treasure hunter at all. His hunting is done at the request of the State and finder or loser he is paid the salary of a deputy minister.

For twenty-six years—as Dominion archivist—Dr. Doughty has sought treasures for Canada, and his success has been remarkable. A few years ago Parliament voted money to erect a new and modern building to house the treasure trove he has brought to Ottawa. In this building, in an office upon whose walls are hung paintings worth a modern fortune, behind a door of solid shining copper he sits and plans new campaigns.

His latest find is replete with interest for the Prairie Provinces. It seems that one of the private soldiers of the Wolseley expedition was in the party which captured lower Fort Garry. He seized a number of documents from Riel's desk and instead of turning them over to his superior officer, sent them back to his mother at York, England. The documents include letters written by "President Louis Riel of the Northwest Territories," to his lieutenants; the "List of Rights," issued by Riel prior to the rebellion of 1870, and the first act passed by the first Legislature of the Territories.

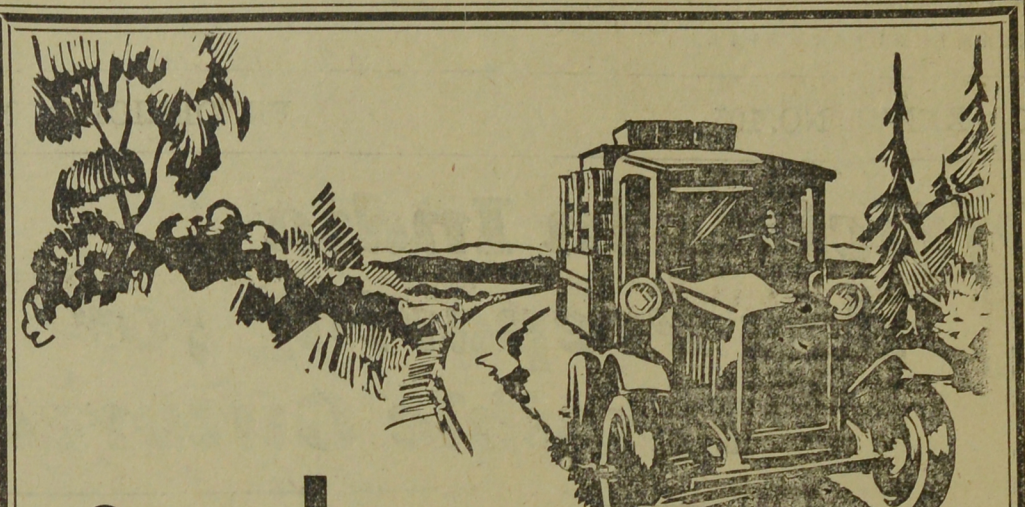
These documents, neatly pasted in a bound scrapbook are now available to the public, along with scores of other objects of supreme interest which Dr. Doughty has gathered together in twenty-six years of questing. There is the silk shirt in which Wolfe's body was wrapped in the return to England; the miniature model of Quebec City prepared for Wellington in order that the Iron Duke might make recommendations for improving its military strength; the coat Gen. Brock wore when shot in battle; and innumerable others.

Dr. Doughty has written sufficient history to fill a modest library. In later years he has been accumulating degrees almost as rapidly as he has won historical treasures for this country. He now signs himself F. R. S. C., M. A., D. Litt, and C. M. G.

A GOOD SEASON IS LOOKED FOR AT BANFF HOTEL

Montreal, May 2—A brilliant social season is assured for the Banff Springs Hotel, this year, according to N. F. Matthews, General Manager western Lines Canadian Pacific Railway. Indications already point to the guestsale shrdlu shrdlu cmfwy, 89 fact that an increased number will take part in the activities of the world famous resort, he said.

The golf course, already acknowledged as one of the best appointed on the American continent will have a new \$100,000 golf pavillion which will be ready early in June, and will be a notable embellishment to the course. The course, itself, is the last word in golf architecture in a setting of spectacular mountain scenery which cannot be paralleled elsewhere in North America. The competition for the Prince of Whales trophy is already drawing entries from Great Britain and the United States as well as from Canadian clubs.



One hour to Destroy Weeks and Weeks to Repair

The damage which can be done to a road in one hour at this season of the year by a heavily loaded motor truck or a high-powered passenger car travelling at a fast rate of speed may take weeks of work to repair.

All kinds of roads suffer under heavy weights during the spring period when the frost is coming out of the ground. Foundations are weakened and road surfaces break. Wheels sink into gravel roads which now are soft and porous.

To prevent needless damage to New Brunswick's Highways motor traffic has been restricted during the danger period this Spring, but these restrictions have now been lifted for the entire Province except the most northern counties and for all vehicles except trucks with gross weight of 5,000 pounds or more.

The cost of repair and maintenance of New Brunswick's roads now amounts to almost a million dollars a year. Owners and drivers of automobiles will consult their own personal interest by keeping their loads and speed well within the legal limit at all times.

If you do not speed you save the surface; and, if you save the surface you save the road. If in wet weather you do not load your truck heavily or drive your car at a rapid rate of speed the road will not break down. By taking such precautions you lower the cost of maintenance; but by neglecting them, you increase the cost of which you must pay your own proportion.

YOU'LL DO YOUR PART, WON'T YOU? THANK YOU!

New Brunswick Department of Public Works
THE HON. D. A. STEWART, MINISTER

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