

*For many years I have been intrigued by, and hunted for, the little buttons with five interlocking circles -- Olympic buttons. After asking Mary to help find some for me, she also became caught up in the fun of these buttons. Marilyn*

## OLYMPIC BUTTONS

The Olympic Games began in ancient Greece, possibly much earlier than the first reported Games in 776 BC. Early Olympic athletes competed in loin cloths and then naked. Women were not allowed to compete, or even attend, they held their own games called Heraea. The Games portrayed the strong nationalistic spirit of the Greeks and victories were more revered than battles won.



At first, the Games were confined to running and victors received a wreath of olive branches. Olive because according to tradition; Hercules, founder of the Games, planted a sacred olive tree behind the temple of Zeus. Over time new events were added.

The modern revival of the Olympic Games occurred in 1896 and was held in Athens. The 1900 Games were held as part of the World's Fair. Charlotte Cooper became the first female Olympic champion, winning a Gold Medal for tennis. World Wars prevented the Games from being held in 1916, 1940 and 1944.

The Games were originally held every fourth Summer. As the number of events and competitors increased the separate Winter event was started in Chamonix, France in 1924. It is only since 1994 that the Winter and Summer events have been held on an alternating two-year rotation.

The first Opening Ceremonies were held during the 1908 Games in London. As the men and women athletes enter the great facilities for the opening and closing ceremonies, one has to wonder what buttons are holding all those garments closed.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin designed the flag of modern day Olympics in 1914. Five rings to represent the Continents. Interlocking rings to symbolize all nations coming together as one and competing in unity. The colors left to right, are blue, yellow, black, green and red, mounted on a field of white. These five colors have at least one color from every nation's flag represented. First flown at the Games in Antwerp, Belgium in 1920, it has been flown at every Olympic Event since.

Lighting the Olympic Flame is an important part of every Opening Ceremonies. It burns continuously throughout the Games and is extinguished at the end of the Closing Ceremonies. The Flame reappeared during modern Olympics at the 1928 Summer Games in Amsterdam.



Carl Diem, suggested what is now the modern Olympic Torch relay in 1936. That first relay Torch was lit at the ancient site of Olympia by women using a curved mirror and the sun, then passed from runner to runner to the Olympic stadium in Berlin.



The 1960 Summer Games in Rome were the first to be covered by U.S. television. This Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver, which is the largest city to host the Games, were viewed by millions. The Associated Press reports that NBC paid 820 million dollars for the TV rights.

Most Olympic buttons are yellow or white metal; others metalized or colorful plastic. Some have interesting depictions of statues or designs, which are identifiable and can be used to associate them with Games. There are also pictures which remain unidentified. We have attempted to link the buttons with specific years and locations of the Olympiad. The available information is not easy to validate, much is hearsay.

Many of the Olympic buttons are blazer buttons. Some were worn by the different country Olympic officials, some may have been on the clothing worn by the athletes themselves and others, but this cannot be confirmed. One definite fact about the buttons is that in some countries they contributed to the commercialization of the event. For example there are numerous buttons representing Canadian games. One series is backmarked © 1972 and COJO 76. We believe the design was copyright approved in 1972 while manufactured for the Games which were held in 1976. Most are colorful plastic, some with cold plastic enamel, and metalized plastic, including a gun metal gray. Others have the same design with different colored paper adhered to the top of plain plastic buttons.

Another Canadian design is of the Rings in the center of the Canadian Maple leaf. These come in metalized plastic and some have bright red cold enamel plastic accenting the Maple leaf.



Metalized Plastic  
Backmarked  
© 1972 and  
COJO 76



Plastic with Red  
Paper Design.  
No Backmark



Metalized Plastic

With the advent of television, the Olympic Games have given host countries an opportunity to showcase their Nation. The wonderful thing about the Games is the athletes, from both small and large countries, compete without political constraints.

*Submitted by Marilyn Regrut and Mary Weinberg  
Central Ohio Button Club, with buttons belonging to both.*

www.Olympic.org  
www. Wikipedia  
www.referencecenter.com Olympics

Romulus and Remus, twin brothers of Mars, were thrown into the Tiber River to drown. Found by a she-wolf who fed and raised them, they were later rescued by a shepherd. After returning their grandfather to the throne, they decided to build a city where they had been born. Each wanted to rule which lead to Romulus killing Remus over the size of his part of the city. He named the city for himself and became the first King of Rome in 753 BC. 1960 Summer Rome Olympic button.



Highly polish engraved brass cuff button with the Rings and 1968, is backmarked with PITT & Co MADDOX St LONDON

Two buttons showing the Bavaria statue in Munich Germany  
OLYMPIADE 1972 - MUNCHEN  
OLYMPIAD 1972 MUNCHEN



1976 Montreal, Canada white metal button, backmarked 1976 COJO  
COJO stands for 'Comité Organisateur des Jeux Olympiques (Olympic Games Organizing Committee).

Not all Olympic buttons are blazer type. This simply sew-thru looks more like a shirt or even pant button.



 1932 US Summer Los Angeles	 1980 US Winter lake placid	 1984 US Summer Los Angeles	 1996 US Summer Atlantic, Georgia
 Olympic Flame and Rings	 One Example of Olympic Rings	 Olympic Torch SR 89	 Olympic Torch Rings and Wreath
 1960 Summer Rome MCMLX	 1972 Munchen Olympiade	 Olympiade 1972 Munchen	 1976 Winter Innsbruck, Austria
 Mexico	 Great Britian	 Algeria Cufflink By Bertoni Milano	 Kommitte Sveriges Olympiska (Committee Sweden Olympic)
 Canadian Olympic Association Olympique Canadienne	 Canada	 Olympic Games Canada	 2010 Winter Vancouver, Canada Cuff Link
 Unknown Olympic Olympia	 Unknown 2 facing Fish	 Unknown Oriental Design	 Unknown