



04737 Fuller Rd | East Jordan, MI 49727
231-536-3369 | info@miravenhill.org | MiRavenHill.org

Raven Hill Discovery Center, incorporated in 1991,
is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.

Open year-round on weekends – noon to 4pm Saturdays and 2pm to 4pm Sundays.
Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, hours expand to include weekdays from
10am to 4pm. The Center is also open other times, including holidays, by appointment.

MISSION: to provide a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong
learning for all ages by connecting science, history and the arts.

WHERE SCIENCE HISTORY AND ART CONNECT

To: Raven Hill friends
From: Cheri
Date: January 24, 2025
Re: Thought progressions

The progression of thought from Bonnie's Button House at Raven Hill to a single button from her collection mirrors a journey from the grand to the intimate, from the collective to the personal, and from the tangible to the symbolic. It begins with an appreciation for the sheer scale and whimsy of the Button House, an entire structure adorned with countless buttons, each one contributing to the overall tapestry of color, texture, and history. Created by volunteers Nancy Hellman, Gayle Levensgood and Georganna Monk, the sight of Bonnie's Button House is overwhelming and a celebration of abundance and creativity.

As visitors step closer, curiosity shifts from the whole to the parts. They start noticing patterns, buttons grouped by color, size and material. Thoughts begin to narrow, shifting from the whole Button House to the individual stories of the buttons within it. Who wore these buttons? Where did they come from? How were they made and of what material? How did they all end up here, side by side, in this unique display of human craftsmanship?

Bonnie's Button House



From left to right, creators of Bonnie's Button House were Georganna Monk, Nancy Hellman and Gayle Levensgood.

The Big Book of Buttons



Bonnie constructed a cover with handles so she could carry her BIG BOOK OF BUTTONS to the button club meetings.

Bonnie's Button House was created in honor of Bonnie Culver, reminding me about the boxes and boxes of buttons yet to be displayed and from there to Bonnie's treasured BIG BOOK OF BUTTONS by Elizabeth Hughes and Marian Lester. It was her "button bible." From there, a single button stands out isolated and fastened to a cardboard backing with notes written in pencil. This small, often overlooked button now becomes a window into a different time, place, and person. The thought progression becomes reflective. That single button is more than just a fastener. It illustrates craftsmanship, utility and history, including the economics of its era.

Button front



Around the rim of the button, the words are "WHEN YOU BUTTON UP YOUR OVERCOAT...," and in the middle of the button, it says, "REMEMBER YOUR CAR"

Button back



*The button back says, "CHANGE TO ALEMITE *Temprite* WINTER GEAR LUBRICANT"*

These advertising buttons of filled bakelite were made for distribution to car dealers and service stations as a promotional giveaway in 1937. What's a recent promotional giveaway that you have gotten--refrigerator magnet, pen, key chain, coffee mug, t-shirt, hat, carabiner?

This particular button above is an old filled Bakelite button. Bakelite is an early form of plastic that was manufactured using a specific technique involving fillers. Bakelite, invented by Leo Baekeland in 1907, was the first fully synthetic plastic and became widely used in various applications, including buttons. Filled Bakelite Buttons refers to Bakelite resin that has been combined with fillers such as wood flour (finely ground wood particles—think sawdust, cotton fibers, clay or other minerals, and even asbestos in some older versions. These fillers were added to enhance durability, reduce costs and achieve specific textures or colors.

In the end, the journey from Bonnie's Button House to a single advertising Bakelite button is a reminder that within every collection, no matter how vast, there is always a story waiting to be discovered, a connection waiting to be made, and a deeper understanding of the relationship between the objects kept and lives lived. At Raven Hill Discovery Center, this journey of discovery is at the heart of our mission: to provide a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages that connects science, history, and art. as visitors are encouraged to uncover the connections that shape our world and transform our lives.

Raven Hill Discovery Center is open during the winter for regular weekend hours, which are noon to 4pm on Saturdays and 2pm to 4pm on Sundays. To make an appointment for weekdays or other times, call 231.536.3369 or email info@miravenhill.org. Bring your family, friends and relatives out to enjoy a fun time of discovery and exploration. If you have been stuck inside and have a case of "cabin fever," Raven Hill is the perfect place for the family to get out, take a class, learn something new and relieve the boredom of being cooped up at home! Remember also that the **Under Michigan & Beyond** exhibition remains on display during regular hours and other times by appointment. Come soon and often!

Cheri