

## BUTTON MOSAIC ILLUSTRATES "THE SANTA FE TRAIL"

Mr. Norman C. Engler, President of the Kansas State Button Society finds great satisfaction in making mosaic pictures with all types of buttons. Some of his finished works have been displayed at the Hobby Shows in Chicago during the past years and it is expected that he will exhibit a number at our Kansas City Show.

This particular mosaic "The Santa Fe Trail" illustrates the settling of Kansas. It is 38 inches high and 96 inches long. Let us read about its construction from Mr. Engler's account.

"This button mosaic depicts the settling of Kansas. The covered wagon train is just leaving the hilly, eastern part of Kansas and is approaching the open central and western Kansas plains. Very often people upon seeing the picture, exclaim . . . 'That is just the way my folks (or grandfolks) came to Kansas.' Little did they know at the time that the land where they built their sod houses would some day yield vast quantities of salt, oil and gas, as well as wheat.



THE SANTA FE TRAIL

Courtesy of Norman C. Engler.

"There are approximately 25,000 buttons on this picture. I tried to use buttons that pioneers themselves might have worn on their clothing, their common buttons as well as their treasured ones. My friends generously contributed their grandmothers buttons. In making button mosaics, there must be available about three times as many buttons as are actually sewn on the picture. A button not only has to have the right color and shape but also the right 'feel' to fit a certain spot. Many buttons fastened at close range would not stand the distance test. They had to be removed and substitutions made. Beeswaxed linen thread was used to sew all the buttons onto the wool velour backed by light canvas stretched on a frame. But before that, study and research of the subject was made. An error in a small painting often passes unnoticed. An error in a button picture would assume glaring proportions.

"As in modern paintings, many paint mediums may be used, so many types of buttons are used in making the mosaics. A coveted pink opaque may be found nestling close to a hard rubber. The Pony Express rider is made of old glass buttons of many kinds; his horse is made of small metal buttons from Germany and Austria. There are pearls of all kinds, hand painted, carved, pressed and plain. Black glass includes iridescent, mirror, silver, fabric, paisley, etc. Many small Czechoslovakian buttons are used to add the right color, sparkle and repetition necessary for a picture. There are carved and plain vegetable ivory, wood, horn, tortoise shell, crocheted, plush, overall, celluloid, metals, pastes, military, etc. Enamels, hard rubber, stencils, balls, calicoes, porcelains, inlays, goldies, nail-heads—are all used. However the picture is the ultimate goal . . . not the classification.

"The antique gold leaf frame, found in its original wrapping in an old store in Southern Minnesota, was given me by the elderly proprietor. All he asked in return was 2 cans of Kansas Salt, and added, 'My wife and I would like to see the finished picture.'"