

# Button, Button, Who's Got the Button?



The Green Duck Company was founded in 1906 in Chicago, Illinois as a metal stamping and novelty production house. Within two years they landed the prestigious contract to produce campaign buttons for the presidential runs of the candidates from both political parties (Republican William Howard Taft and Democrat William Jennings Bryan). Their market dominance continued throughout the next six decades. It is estimated that they were responsible for 80% of all campaign buttons made during the 1950s.

The name Green Duck was chosen as it was a combination of the two founding businessmen, George Greenberg and Henry Duckgeishel. While they were predominantly known for their buttons (political, corporate, or commercial), they did make other kinds of metal novelty items including license plates, commemorative spoons, cigar cutters, etc. During WWII, they supplied the U.S. Army's 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions with "crickets" or "clickers" which resembled a child's noisemaker. These were used during the D-Day landing to distinguish American troops from the enemy. Two clicks for a U.S. soldier; four clicks meant a German soldier was nearby.

Green Duck continued to manufacture campaign buttons as late

as the 1960s, generating two designs each for JFK's and Nixon's campaigns. However, the signs of waning appeal were already beginning to show. By the time the company was approaching its 100th anniversary (after multiple changes in ownership), its doors were closing for good. But in its prime, it provided steady employment for hundreds of workers, including Walter J. McLaughlin, the great-grandfather of my niece's husband.

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