



Identifying Multiple Versions of the Gretsch¹ Round Badge - 1930s – 1960s One Additional Tool for Assessing Vintage Gretsch Drums

By Richard E. Gier

Vintage Gretsch drums bearing the iconic Round Badge are highly sought by players and collectors for their sound and their value. Those fortunate enough to own round badge drums and those seeking to purchase them seek to learn as much as possible about their drums. Multiple authentic versions of the round badge exist. Understanding the characteristics of the different badges may assist in the assessment of age and authenticity of vintage Gretsch drums. This paper strives to document the different variations of the Round Badge and establish a foundation for additional discussion and discovery.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the first Round Badge on a Gretsch drum occurred some time in the 1920s or 1930s. Documentation necessary to better refine this date is sparse. By 1939, the Round Badge design appeared in Gretsch's catalog. Although the precise version of the Round Badge is not discernible from the small pictures of the drums, it is clear that drums in that catalog sported badges that were round. Some variation of the Round Badge was then used by Gretsch until about 1969, when it was replaced by an octagonal badge known as the Stop Sign Badge.²

The commonly cited distinction between versions of the Round Badge is the size of the drumsticks on the badge. These variations are popularly known as "Skinny Stick," or Thin Stick, and "Thick Stick," or Fat Stick, badges. With just this distinguishing characteristic, one can make a preliminary determination of a drum's date. Skinny Stick badges are generally associated with 3-ply shells made up until the late 1950s or early 1960s, while Thick Stick badges are associated with 6-ply

¹ Gretsch is a registered trademark of Fred W. Gretsch Enterprises Ltd. Although the ownership of the Gretsch brand has changed over the years, this article considers those drums produced under the Gretsch name from the 1930s through the late 1960s. The author is not associated with the owner or licensees of the mark. All trademarks referenced in this paper are the property of their respective owners.

² Based upon a number of factors discussed in an earlier study of Gretsch vintage drums (Richard E. Gier, [Dating of Gretsch Drums Based upon Serial Numbers: Challenging the Legend Lore and Lies](#), Rebeats, 2011), it appears that the Round Badge was no longer used in production after 1969, but other sources place that date in 1970 or 1971.

shells which made their initial appearance in the late 1950s or early 1960s. That is not to say that all 3-ply shells have Skinny Stick badges or that all 6-ply shells have Thick Stick badges - it is not that definitive or absolute. There is overlap. However, this basic distinction based upon the width of the sticks is a helpful start.

The initial categorization based upon Skinny and Thick Sticks can be further refined. Seven different variations of the vintage Round Badge are documented below, four Skinny Stick versions and three Thick Stick versions. One of these variations is only apparent from observation of the back of the badge, which requires removal from the drum and irreversible damage to the originality of the drum. One variation is most easily distinguished because it is made of copper rather than brass. Additional variations of the Round Badge may exist, but have not yet been documented.

TERMINOLOGY

A uniform set of terms is needed for use with this discussion. Although the meaning of these terms are fairly straightforward, standard terms are defined to avoid potential confusion and establish a common language for evaluating and comparing the variations of badges. An example badge with defined terms indicated is pictured below.

Rim – the raised band at the edge of the badge. The thickness of the Rim may vary by the design of the die as well as by the alignment on the badge blank when it was stamped. If the badge blank was not in the proper place when it was stamped, the Rim may be cut off in some locations around the perimeter. To avoid introducing this manufacturing variation into the equation, the Rim thickness measured and reported is taken at the widest observed point. All measurements taken from a point on the badge to the Rim are measured to the interior-most point of the Rim.

Arc of “Drum Makers” – the curvature of the words “DRUM MAKERS” at the bottom portion of the badge. The arc of and the placement of the letters “Drum Makers” differs between variations of the badge. The Arc is determined visually or by measurement of the distance from various points to the Rim. On some, the distance from the Rim to the letters “D” “M” and “S”, labeled as Rim-D, Rim-M and Rim-S, respectively, is fairly consistent and the Arc of the letters “Drum Makers” is the same as the arc of the letters “Since 1883.” On others, Rim-M is less than either Rim-D or Rim-S, making the letters “Drum Makers” in a tighter Arc than the letters “Since 1883.” Further, on some variations, Rim-D is less than Rim-S because the vertex of the Arc of “Drum Makers” is not at the center of the badge. As a result, the letters “Drum Makers” appear lopsided.

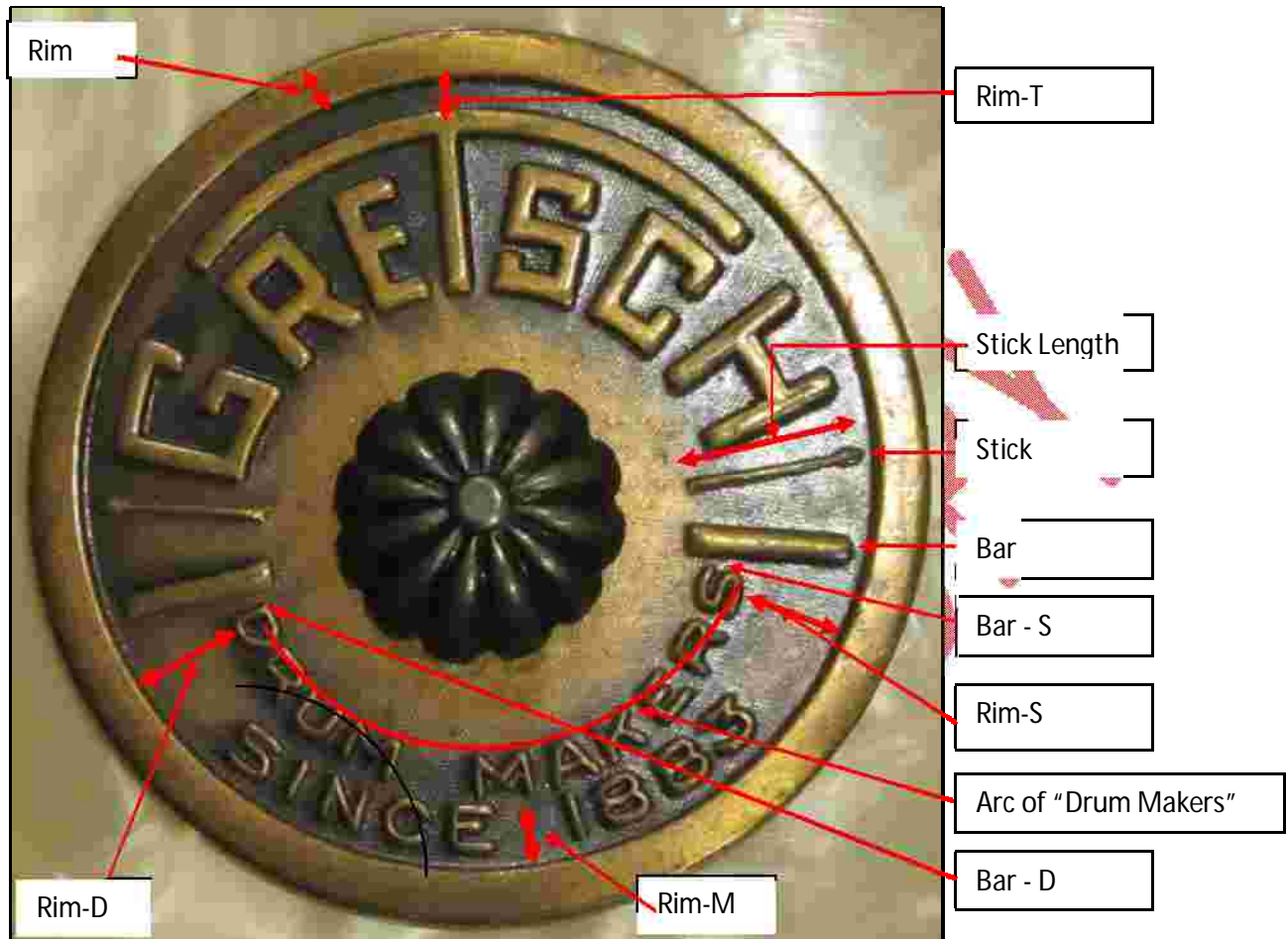
Rim-T - the distance between the inner edge of the Rim and the “Roof T” portion of the logo. Rim-T differs between variations of the badge, but is consistent within a badge.

Sticks - the drum sticks at either end of the word “Gretsch.” Sticks vary in both thickness and length.

Bars –the half-cylinders between the Sticks and the phrase “Drum Makers Since 1883.” The Bars vary in thickness.

Bar-D and Bar-S – distance between Bar and the letters “D” and “S” in “DRUM MAKERS,” respectively.

Example Badge with Defined Terms



"SKINNY STICK" VARIATIONS

At least four variations of the Skinny Stick style of badge exist, labeled here as Skinny Stick/Large Font, Textured Skinny Stick, Robbins Co. Textured Skinny Stick, and Skinny Stick/Small Font.

1. "Skinny Stick/Large Font" Badge

As the name implies, this variation on the Round Badge has skinny drumsticks and possesses lettering which is large, clear and easily readable. This appears to be the first Round Badge and was apparently in use from the 1930s into the 1950s. Examples of Skinny Stick/Large Font badge have been seen on drums with early characteristics (i.e.: Broadcaster lugs, tacked on resonant heads, cradle mounted floor toms) and as late as a snare drum reported to have a August 25 1952 date stamp.

Skinny Stick/Large Font Badge Characteristics:

1. Sticks are relatively thin and long (~0.295" or 7.5 mm). The bottom of the Sticks appear noticeably lower than the letters "G" and "H" in "GRETSCHE."
2. "DRUM MAKERS SINCE 1883" font is large, clear and distinct.
3. The Bars are relatively thick.

4. The Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is much tighter than the arc of "SINCE 1883."
5. The Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is not concentric with center of badge, but appears symmetrical on a vertical line through the center of the badge. Rim-D and Rim-S are ~ 0.190" / 4.5 mm and Rim-M is ~ 0.125" / 3.0 mm.
6. "DRUM MAKERS" extends close to the Bars, making Bar-D and Bar-S relatively short.
7. Letter "D" in "DRUM" is somewhat distorted and not uniformly rounded.
8. Letters in "GRETSCHE" have squared off corners and are fairly crisp.
9. Rim is relatively thick (~0.090" / 2.3 mm).
10. Rim-T is relatively large (~0.060" / 1.6 mm).

Pictures of Skinny Stick/Large Font Badge:



Skinny Stick/Large Font Badge (author)



Skinny Stick/Large Font Badge (Bill Maley)

Textured Badges

The fronts of the second and third badge variations appear identical to one another. The difference between the two is only determined by inspection of the obverse side of the badge. Most discussion will link these two variations together under the label "Textured Badges."

Textured Badges share most of the same characteristics as the Skinny Stick/Large Font Badge, but has a slightly woven texture similar to cheesecloth noticeable on the portions of the badge that would be smooth on other badges. The degree of the texturing varies on different examples. Whether the variation is original or has resulted from wear and the passage of time is not certain. Textured badges are reported on drums date stamped as early as MAY 8 1947 and as late as MAY 14 1953. Therefore, the textured badge appeared to be in use for at least a six year time period.

Some Textured Badges which have been removed from their drums exhibit a raised maker's mark on the obverse indicating "ROBBINS CO. ATTLEBORO."³ It is unclear how many Gretsch badges have makers' marks on them since most badges are still affixed to drums and the obverse sides are not

³ The Robbins Company of Attleboro, Massachusetts, was founded in and manufactured, among other items, election campaign buttons, medallions, costume jewelry and watch fobs.

visible. Because there are known examples of textured badges both with and without the Robbins Co. mark, they are considered to represent two variations of the Round Badge. Of the Textured Badges that had been removed from their drums, permitting examination of the obverse side, many displayed the Robbins Co. Attleboro mark. As a practical matter, it is not possible to determine if the Robbins Co. mark is present on badges which remain on their drums. Therefore, one with a drum with a textured badge may not know which variation of the textured badge they possess.

2. "Textured Skinny Stick" Badge

The Textured Skinny Stick Badge has a slightly woven texture similar to cheesecloth noticeable on the background of the badge.

Textured Skinny Stick Badge Characteristics:

1. Sticks are relatively thin and long (0.295" / 7.5 mm). The bottom of the Sticks appear noticeably lower than the letters "G" and "H" in "GRETSCHE".
2. "DRUM MAKERS SINCE 1883" font is large, clear and distinct.
3. The Bars are relatively thick.
4. The Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is much tighter than the arc of "SINCE 1883."
5. The Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is not concentric with center of badge, but appears symmetrical on a vertical line through the center of the badge. Rim-D and Rim-S are ~ 0.190" / 4.5 mm and Rim-M is ~ 0.125" / 3.0 mm.
6. "DRUM MAKERS" extends close to the Bars, making Bar-D and Bar-S relatively short.
7. Letter "D" in "DRUM" is somewhat distorted and not uniformly rounded.
8. Letters in "GRETSCHE" have squared off corners and are fairly crisp.
9. Rim is relatively thick (~ 0.090" / 2.3 mm).
10. Rim-T is relatively large (~0.060" / 1.6 mm).
11. The background of the badge has a textured, cheesecloth-like appearance.
12. No Makers Mark is present on the obverse of the badge.

Pictures of Textured Skinny Stick Badge:



9x13 Tom, JUN 19 1952 (author)



Detail of JUN 19 1952 Tom (author)

3. "Robbins Co. Textured Skinny Stick" Badge

This version of the Textured Badge has the "ROBBINS CO ATTLEBORO" Maker's Mark on the obverse of the badge.

Robbins Co. Textured Skinny Stick Badge Characteristics:

1. Sticks are relatively thin and long (~0.295" / 7.5 mm). The bottom of the Sticks appear noticeably lower than the letters "G" and "H" in "GRETSCHE".
2. "DRUM MAKERS SINCE 1883" font is large, clear and distinct.
3. The Bars are relatively thick.
4. The Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is much tighter than the arc of "SINCE 1883."
5. The Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is not concentric with center of badge, but appears symmetrical on a vertical line through the center of the badge. Rim-D and Rim-S are ~ 0.180" / 4.5 mm and the Rim-M is ~ 0.125" / 3.0 mm.
6. "DRUM MAKERS" extends close to the Bars, making Bar-D and Bar-S relatively short.
7. Letter "D" in "DRUM" is somewhat distorted and not uniformly rounded.
8. Letters in "GRETSCHE" have squared off corners and are fairly crisp.
9. Rim is relatively thick (~0.090" / 2.3 mm).
10. Rim-T is relatively large (~0.060" / 1.6 mm).
11. The background of the badge has a textured, cheesecloth-like appearance.
12. "ROBBINS CO. ATTLEBORO" is stamped on the obverse in raised letters.

Pictures of Robbins Co. Textured Skinny Stick Badge



"ROBBINS CO. ATTLEBORO" on obverse, textured finish. Date Unknown (author)



Detail of "ROBBINS CO ATTLEBORO" mark. Date Unknown (author)

4. "Skinny Stick/Small Font" Badges

A fourth variation of the Skinny Stick badge, labeled the "Skinny Stick/Small Font" badge, possesses many unique properties. As the name implies, it has relatively skinny sticks, though these are shorter than on other Skinny Stick variations. One of the most easily recognizable unique properties of

this variation is the letters used for the "DRUM MAKERS SINCE 1883" portion of the badge are smaller and appear worn rather than clear and crisp. The condition does not appear to be the result of a worn die or post-stamping wear, but appears to represent the result of using a different die. Because the letters are smaller, the words "DRUM MAKERS" do not extend as far as the Large Font variation, so Bar-D and Bar-S are relatively large. Note that the phrase "SINCE 1883" also takes up less room, but is not as easy to see. There are several other less noticeable differences described below.

Numerous examples of this variation of badge have been observed. Based upon these examples, the Skinny Stick/Small Font variation of the badge first appears some time in the late 1940s or early 1950s. It is generally associated with drums with three-ply shells, some with and some without the silver interior finish. It is not yet clear if multiple Skinny Stick badge variations were used by Gretsch simultaneously or if there were distinct and definable periods for each variation. Use of this variation of badge continued into the six-ply shell era and has been reported on a few drums with labels. If these reports involve unaltered drums, this would indicate that this badge variation was in use through at least 1962 or 1963.

Skinny Stick/Small Font Badge Characteristics:

1. Sticks are relatively thin and shorter than other Skinny Stick variations (~0.280" / 7.0 mm).
2. Letters and digits in "DRUM MAKERS SINCE 1883" are small and not very clear, with worn down appearance.
3. The Bars are relatively thin.
4. Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is tighter than arc of "SINCE 1883."
5. Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is concentric with center of badge. The bottoms of all letters are ~ 0.160" / 4.0 mm from the Rim.
6. "DRUM MAKERS" does not extend close to Bars, making Bar-D and Bar-S relatively long.
7. Letters in "GRETSCHE" have slightly less precise corners – appear more rounded than other Skinny Stick variations.
8. Rim is relatively thin (~.055" / 1.5 mm).
9. Rim-T is relatively large (~0.060" / 1.6 mm).
10. Background of badge is smooth.

Pictures of Skinny Stick/Small Font Badge:



Skinny Stick/Small Font Badge from 6x14 Snare, 3 ply, unpainted interior, circa 1940s-1953 (author) Skinny Stick/Small Font Badge from 5x14 Snare, 3 ply, painted interior, circa 1954-58. (Jim Beebe)

"THICK STICK" VARIATIONS

Three variations of the Thick Stick style badge have been identified. They are designated as the Thick Stick/Large Font, the Thick Stick/Medium Font and the Thick Stick/Copper badges. They are easily distinguishable from the Skinny Stick Variations, but not easy to distinguish from one another.

All Thick Stick badge variations use relatively thick Sticks. The Bars are also thicker than the Skinny Stick variations. The Thick Stick variations all employ a font similar but not identical to the Skinny Stick/Large Font badge. The presentation of "DRUM MAKERS" is different, as the Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" more closely matches the arc of "SINCE 1883." Therefore, the words "DRUM MAKERS" do not approach as close to the Bars as the Skinny Sticks/Large Font variation, although they are closer than the Skinny Stick/Small Font variation. The letter "D" in "DRUM MAKERS" appears more uniformly rounded, possibly because it is not attempting to follow the tighter arc of the Skinny Stick/Large Font badge.

Although easy to differentiate from the Skinny Stick versions, the Thick Stick variations are more difficult to tell apart. The primary differences in design involve the font used on the Thick Stick variations. The primary distinction of the Thick Stick/Large Font Badge is that the words "DRUM MAKERS" and "SINCE 1883" are slightly farther apart. The individual letters "U" in "DRUM" and "I" in "SINCE" appear to be slightly taller than the Medium Font variation and the letter "M" appears to be more clear. The differences are easy to overlook when looking at a badge in isolation, but can be detected when direct comparison is possible. The third variation seems to possess a blend of the other two, but is distinguishable because it is stamped onto a copper base rather than the much more typical brass. The one example in the author's possession is not as deeply stuck as the typical Thick Stick badge. Whether this represents an intentional design difference or a manufacturing variation is not completely clear.

The Thick Stick variations do not make their appearance until the late 1950s or early 1960s. These variations are most likely going to be present on Round Badge drums with interior paper labels displaying model numbers and serial numbers. Although not all drums with labels have the Thick Stick badge variations, the overwhelming majority of them do. Because there is some evidence that the paper labels started in about 1962, that helps to support the determination for the time period when these badges were in use.

5. Thick Stick/Large Font Badge

On the Thick Stick/Large Font badge, the letters are spaced slightly farther apart and certain letters are more clear than the medium font variation. The best way to tell them apart is by comparing pictures.

Thick Stick/Large Font Badge Characteristics:

1. Sticks are relatively thick and short (~0.28" / 7 mm).
2. "DRUM MAKERS SINCE 1883" lettering is distinct and clear.
3. Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is much closer to arc of "SINCE 1883."
4. Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is not concentric with center of badge. Rim-D is ~ 0.15" / 3.7 mm, Rim-S is ~ 0.11" / 2.8 mm and Rim-M is ~ 0.12" / 3.0 mm. This results in a slightly lop-sided appearance.
5. "DRUM MAKERS" extends somewhat close to the Bars, but not as close as the Skinny Stick/Large Font variation, making Bar-D and Bar-S of intermediate length.
6. Letter "D" in "DRUM" is more uniformly rounded and not distorted.
7. The Bars are relatively thick.
8. The Rim is relatively thin (~0.050" / 1.3 mm).
9. The letters "U" and "I" are taller and the letter "M" is more clear compared to the Thick Stick/Medium Font variation.
9. Rim-T is relatively small (~0.030" / 0.8 mm).

Pictures of Thick Stick/Large Font Badge:



Thick Stick/Large Font Badge (author)



Detail of Thick Stick/Large Font Badge (author)

6. Thick Stick/Medium Font Badge

Although both variations of the Thick Stick Badge use a font similar to the one which appears on the Skinny Stick/Large Font Badge, there are slight differences. In this version, the words "DRUM MAKERS" and "SINCE 1883" are slightly farther apart. The "M" is not as cleanly struck and appears a bit filled in at the middle of the letter. The individual letters "U" in "DRUM" and "I" in "SINCE" appear to be slightly shorter than the Large Font variation. Although the lettering is very close in size and style, it appears to be slightly smaller and does not quite match the Large Font version.

Thick Stick/Medium Font Badge Characteristics:

1. Sticks are relatively thick and short (~0.280" / 7 mm).
2. "DRUM MAKERS SINCE 1883" lettering is very similar to the Skinny Stick/Large Font variations but is not quite as distinct and clear as the Thick Stick/Large Font variation.
3. The Bars are relatively thick.
4. Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is same as arc as "SINCE 1883."
5. Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is not concentric with center of badge. Rim-D is ~ 0.150" / 3.7 mm, Rim-S is ~ 0.110" / 2.8 mm and Rim-M is ~ 0.120" / 3.0 mm. This results in a slightly lop-sided appearance.
6. Words "DRUM MAKERS" extend somewhat close to Bars, but not as close as the Skinny Stick/Large Font variation, making Bar-D and Bar-S an intermediate length.
7. Letter "D" in "DRUM" is more uniformly rounded and not distorted compared to the Skinny Stick/Large Font variation.
8. The words "DRUM MAKERS" and "SINCE 1883" are not as close together as with the Thick Stick/Large Font variation.
9. The letters "U" and "I" are shorter and the letter "M" is less clear compared to the Thick Stick/Large Font variation.
10. The Rim is relatively thin (~0.050" / 1.3 mm).
11. Rim-T is relatively small (~0.030" / 0.8 mm).

Pictures of Thick Stick/Medium Font Badge:



Thick Stick/Medium Font Badge (Bill Maley)



Detail of Thick Stick/Medium Font Badge (Bill Maley)

7. Thick Stick/Copper Badge

The Thick Stick/Copper badge is most easily distinguished because it is stamped on copper rather than brass. It actually smells like an old penny. This variation possesses thick Sticks and a relatively large font, but it does not appear to be the exact same design as either of the other Thick Stick badges. The letters U and I are taller and more similar to the Large Font variation, but the letter M is more similar to the Medium Font Variation. Note that these observations are based upon examination of only one example of this variation of the badge. Other copper badges are known to exist, so the description of this badge is subject to additional refinement as more examples are studied.

Thick Stick/Copper Badge Characteristics:

1. Sticks are relatively thick.

2. "DRUM MAKERS SINCE 1883" lettering is very similar to the Skinny Stick/Large Font variations but is not quite as distinct and clear as the Thick Stick/Large Font variation.
3. The Bars are relatively thick.
4. Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is same as arc as "SINCE 1883."
5. Arc of "DRUM MAKERS" is not concentric with center of badge. Rim-D is ~ 0.150" / 3.7 mm, Rim-S is ~ 0.110" / 2.8 mm and Rim-M is ~ 0.120" / 3.0 mm. This results in a slightly lop-sided appearance.
6. Words "DRUM MAKERS" extend somewhat close to Bars, but not as close as the Skinny Stick/Large Font variation, making Bar-D and Bar-S an intermediate length.
7. Letter "D" in "DRUM" is more uniformly rounded and not distorted compared to the Skinny Stick/Large Font variation.
8. The words "DRUM MAKERS" and "SINCE 1883" are not as close together as with the Thick Stick/Large Font variation.
9. The letters "U" and "I" are similar to the Thick Stick/Large Font variation - longer than the Thick Stick/Medium Font variation.
10. The letter "M" is similar to the Thick Stick/Medium Font variation - less clear compared to the Thick Stick/Large Font variation.
11. The Rim is relatively thin (~0.050" / 1.3 mm).
12. Rim-T is relatively small (~0.030" / 0.8 mm).
13. The badge is made of copper rather than brass.

Pictures of Thick Stick/Copper Badge:



Thick Stick/Copper Badge (author)



Detail of Thick Stick Copper Badge (author)

Time Frames When Each Variation Appears

There is no definitive dating guide that spans the entire Round Badge era. There are infrequently printed catalogs for most of this period. The author created a serial number-based guide for drums made from about 1962 and after, but virtually all of those badges were Thick Stick types. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a definitive guide for when each variation of badge was used. However, after review of thousands of drums with Round Badges, a guide with general estimates is possible. The reader should recognize the limitations of this guide and should use it with a great deal of caution.

Approximate Time Frames for Each Variation of Round Badge

Approximate Years of Use*	Badge Variation
1930s - 1950	Skinny Stick/Large Font
1940s - 1950s	Textured Skinny Stick
1940s - 1950s	Robbins Co. Textured Skinny Stick
1950s - Early 1960s	Skinny Stick/Small Font
Late 1950s/Early 1960s - 1969	Thick Stick/Large Font
Late 1950s/Early 1960s - 1969	Thick Stick/Medium Font
Unknown	Thick Stick/Copper

*Switched or replaced badges may improperly impact the analysis and date estimates.

Comparison of Badge Characteristics

	Robbins Co.						
	Skinny Stick Large Font	Textured Skinny Stick	Textured Skinny Stick	Skinny Stick Small Font	Thick Stick Medium Font	Thick Stick Large Font	Thick Stick Copper
Stick Thickness	Thin	Thin	Thin	Thin	Thick	Thick	Thick
Stick Length	Long 0.295" 7.5 mm	Long 0.295" 7.5 mm	Long 0.295" 7.5 mm	Short 0.280" 7.0 mm	Short 0.280" 7.0 mm	Short 0.280" 7.0 mm	Short 0.280" 7.0 mm
Letters – "Drum Makers Since 1883"	Large and distinct, with wide M, N, 8; distorted D	Large and distinct, with wide M, N, 8; distorted D	Large and distinct, with wide M, N, 8; distorted D	Small, with worn appearance	Medium, slightly worn appearance; short U and I; rounded D; wide M	Large and distinct, with narrow M, N and, 8, and tall U, I; rounded D	Large and distinct, with tall U, I; rounded D; wide M; slightly worn appearance
Letters – "Gretsch"	Squared off edges	Squared off edges	Squared off edges	Rounded off edges	Rounded off edges	Rounded off edges	Rounded off edges
Bar Width	Thick	Thick	Thick	Thin	Thick	Thick	Thick
Arc of "Drum Makers"	Tight, letters reach close to bars	Tight, letters reach close to bars	Tight, letters reach close to bars	Tight, but letters do not reach close to bars	Not tight, letters do not reach close to bars	Not tight, letters do not reach close to bars	Not tight, letters do not reach close to bars
Rim Thickness	Thick 0.090" 2.3 mm	Thick 0.090" 2.3 mm	Thick 0.090" 2.3 mm	Thin 0.055" 1.5 mm	Thin 0.050" 1.3 m	Thin 0.050" 1.3 mm	Thin 0.050" 1.3 mm
Rim-T Distance	Large 0.060" 1.6 mm	Large 0.060" 1.6 mm	Large 0.060" 1.6 mm	Large 0.060" 1.6 mm	Small 0.030" 0.8 mm	Small 0.030" 0.8 mm	Small 0.030" 0.8 mm
Background	Smooth	Textured, cheesecloth- like look	Textured, cheesecloth- like look	Smooth	Smooth	Smooth	Smooth
Maker's Mark	None	None	ROBBINS CO ATTLEBORO on obverse of badge	None	None	None	None

The Secondary Market for Original Round Badges

Because vintage drum enthusiasts create a demand for vintage Round Badges, a secondary market supplying vintage badges has developed. Current asking prices of up to \$150 a piece are seen on eBay, although few appear to sell at that price. Fifty to one hundred dollars seems like a more common actual sales price. The limited supply of original badges has inspired multiple methods of meeting the demand for badges. Some salvage badges from cracked or damaged shells. Others strip badges and other parts off of otherwise complete and original vintage instruments because selling the parts individually yields more than selling an intact drum. However it comes about, once a badge is separated from its original host, it can be matched up to complete a drum missing a badge (legitimate restoration) or to make a drum which is not a vintage Round Badge Gretsch drum appear to be one (making fakes). An understanding of the variations of Round Badges can assist in assessing a drum's authenticity and evaluating claims about a drum's history and originality. When an atypical variation of the Round Badge

appears on a drum advertised as “all original,” one should be skeptical. When one is seeking to replace a lost badge, it is important to match the correct variation of badge with other original drums in a set and the production time frame. Unfortunately, better understanding of the differences in badges can also be used to make better fakes.



Badges salvaged from damaged drums (Bill Maley)



Author's more modest badge stash (author)

Counterfeit and Reproduction Badges

A few in the US and abroad have filled the demand for Round Badges by producing counterfeit or reproduction badges. When one looks closely, many counterfeit badges do not look like the badges described above. These non-original badges range from paper stickers or resin poured into molds made from legitimate badges made for individual use by hobbyists to mass produced, stamped badges made using non-original dies by individuals motivated primarily by greed. Please be mindful that if a badge is not identified above, it may be an authentic vintage Round Badge which has thus far escaped this cataloging effort or it could be counterfeit. If this paper is expanded to include additional legitimate variations of the Round Badge, the counterfeits should be even easier to identify. These badges may end up attached to otherwise authentic vintage drums or to drums fabricated to mimic vintage drums. The presence of a counterfeit badge should raise questions about the originality of the remainder of the drum, especially when the owner fails to mention the counterfeit badge. Some owners may not even be aware that their badges are not original, as the installation of the counterfeit or reproduction may have taken place multiple sales before. The counterfeit or reproduction badges are often sold as original or with ignorance, feigned or genuine, of their unauthentic nature.

Additional examples of counterfeit and reproduction badges have been collected from online auction listings and other sources, but not surprisingly, the owners of those badges have not granted permission to reproduce those images as part of this paper. Counterfeits and reproductions are usually detected by looking at the back of the badge or by unusual finishes. A few examples are shown below were provided by Bill Maley, whom it must be emphasized, did not produce the badges, just purchased them. The wayward stick on the first example may be a deliberate “tell” to inform the buyer that the badge is not authentic.



Apparent Counterfeit Badge - Note inconsistent angles of sticks. (Bill Maley)



Apparent Reproduction Badge (Bill Maley)

Original Finishes, Patina and Appearance

Multiple finishes are also apparent with vintage Round Badges, including brass-like, two-tone brass-like, and nickel/steel-like. It appears that many badges had a darkened background and lighter raised letters when they left the factory. Since then, a variety of things may have occurred that result in the current appearance of a badge. Some show the accumulation of dirt, debris, wax, skin oils, adhesive, spilled drinks, cigarette smoke and oxidation and the impact of efforts to remove all of the above. These finish variations could some day be classified as additional variations of each of the variations of the Round Badge identified above, however, finishes are not evaluated in this paper. It is often difficult to determine with certainty the original finish after decades of accumulated patina and wear and subsequent attempts at cleaning, waxing and restoration. Determination of original finish is

especially difficult when in-person physical examination is not possible and one relies only upon pictures. Therefore, this paper focuses on the design stamped into the metal itself and leaves the finish variations for another day. Even without in depth analysis, one can subjectively evaluate if a particular finish appears to be aged naturally. If a badge looks significantly more or less aged than the drum to which it is attached, one should consider the possibility that the badge and drum did not leave the factory together.

Examples of different finishes are presented below to permit side-by-side comparisons (author).



Nickel/Steel Look



Two-Toned with wear



Single Tone Brass



Appears to have been cleaned (lacks patina and shading)



Single Tone Brass with patina (area under tack is light)



Copper

Ongoing Efforts

This paper represents a first attempt to formally document the known variations in the legitimate Round Badges used on Gretsch branded drums from about the 1930s through about 1969. More work is needed and assistance is sought. Please forward pictures and descriptions of Round Badges that you have which you believe could improve the information presented in this paper to Rick@GretschDrumDatingGuide.com.

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