American Artifacts of Personal Adornment, 1680–1820

A Guide to Identification and Interpretation

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CHAPTER 3

Clothing Fasteners

CLOTHING FASTENERS ARE THE MOST COMMONLY recovered kinds of artifacts on archaeological sites, as they were the most commonly worn and were available at all price levels. This group of artifacts reflects most directly the kinds of clothing that people wore and includes aglets, buckles, buttons, and hooks and eyes and clasps.

AGLETS

Aglets are coverings over the tips of laces or strings. They are also known as tags, points, anlettes, and aiguilettes.[1] Aglets served a dual function. They prevented lacings from unravelling, and they allowed lacings to be more easily threaded through the eyelets on clothing. Lacings were used to fasten and tighten clothing down the front of a garment as well as at the knee on breeches.[2] Aglets could be very elaborate, made of gold or silver thread, set with precious gems, or stamped with decorations, but the most common forms worn for regular dress were made of metal, leather, or textiles.[3]

Sumptuary laws regulated this article of dress: in 1651 the General Court of Massachusetts stated its "utter detestation and dislike that men or women of meane condition, education and calling should take uppon them the garbe of gentlemen by the wearinge of gold or silver lace or buttons or *poynts* at their knees" (my emphasis).[4]

Metal tips are the most likely sort to be recovered archaeologically, and most are simple rolled or bent copper metal tubes.[5] Points could also be made of twisted thread, such as the one made of gold thread recovered at Martin's Hundred.[6]

There is very little detailed information to be found about the form of aglets, the way they may have changed over time, or, indeed, how an aglet was affixed to a lace. From the medieval period through the seventeenth century, aglets were typically made of copper-alloy sheets that were bent into a tube with a straight seam along the side (figure 3.1).[7] The end was rounded and bent inward by rotating the open end against a flat surface. These often have holes for small iron rivets. Eighteenth-century examples from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are conical in shape with finished rounded ends (figure 3.2). This form also has holes, used probably for a rivet or to sew the aglet to the lace.

The form of the eighteenth-century aglet creates confusion in identifying and distinguishing aglets from umbrella tips and brass cones. Brass cones made of copper alloy, known as "tinklers," are found on Native American sites throughout the New World, and aglets are often identified as tinklers. Limited documentary evidence demonstrates that aglets were sold along with other dry goods; for example, John Penhallow advertised "brass tips" in the November 9, 1759, issue of the *New Hampshire Gazette*. Though such ads also may refer to tips used on walking sticks or umbrellas, this one likely describes those simple, cone-shaped aglets that are recovered on archaeological sites in New England.

BUCKLES

As commonly recovered artifacts, buckles hold great potential for interpreting what people wore in the past and for interpreting the appearance of the individuals who wore them. Buckles, particularly shoe buckles, have been given a moderate amount of attention by costume historians and silver specialists as well as by archaeologists. The research conducted by these scholars makes buckles one of the best understood types of personal adornment artifacts.

Beginning in the seventeenth century, buckles were used to fasten shoes, breeches, stocks, hats, swords, collars, girdles, gloves, gallus, and any other kind of clothing that might need fastening. Shoe buckles replaced shoe roses and ribbon ties in the 1660s. Samuel Pepys stated on January 4, 1659, "This day I began to put on buckles to my shoes." John Evelyn recorded a similar event marking the shift to shoe and knee buckles in the English court on October 18, 1666:

> To court, It being the first time his majesty put himself solemnly into the Eastern fashion of vest, after the persian mode, with girdle and straps, and shoe-strings and garters into bouckles, of which some were set with precious stones, resolving never to alter it, and to leave the French mode, which had hitherto obtained to our great expence and reproach.

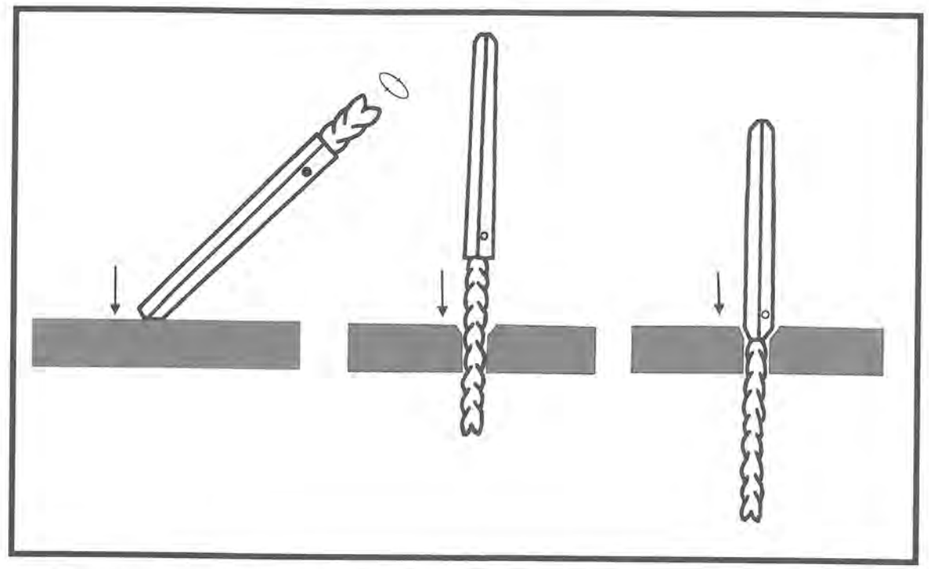

FIGURE 3.1. Process of making aglets in the medieval period. The copper sheet was rolled into a cylinder; the square end was rounded by applying pressure; the end was clinched by drawing the aglet through a hole to tighten it around the lace. (Drawing by the author after Geoff Egan and Frances Pritchard, *Dress Accessories c. 1150–1450. Medieval Finds from Excavations in London: 3* [London: HMSO, 1991], 281)

FIGURE 3.2. Copper-alloy aglets from the Richard Shortridge Site, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. (Photo by the author)

Buckles were the prevailing form of fastener through the late eighteenth century when they went out of fashion, replaced by buttons or ribbons. The displacement of the buckle was noted in 1780 in the *Coventry Mercury*: "The literary buckle is now superseded by the black ribbon in the shoes of Sir Foplings progeny, whose chief employment now is to tie it on with grace."[8]

Buckle design has varied immensely; in one collection of more than 2,000 buckles there are only one or two exact duplicates.[9] A full range of metals, from precious to base metals, were used to make buckles. Buckles were made in all kinds of materials, patterns, decorations, sizes, and shapes, and the variation makes classification of them very difficult.

It is also difficult to distinguish accurately between buckles worn by men, women, and children, although this categorization did exist at the time that these objects were bought and worn. For example, the Parrish, Potts, Shields, and Company—merchants from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—recorded purchasing "Children's Buckles" and "men's buckles."[10] Knee and stock buckles can be securely associated with men and girdle buckles with women, as these buckles were worn on garments worn by each sex, respectively, but shoe buckles—the most common sort of buckle—pose a more difficult task. It is nearly impossible to assign archaeologically recovered shoe buckles to either gender, even though there were styles favored by men and women; these distinctions are not visible today, obscured in part by the wide variation in size and decoration shoe buckles exhibit, making any kind of categorization by gender difficult. Further, children's buckles are also very difficult to identify, although, again, documentary sources contain references to children's buckles. The Parrish, Potts, Shields, and Company recorded children's buckles at less than half the price of the men's buckles, suggesting that they were smaller in size and elaboration.[11] The documentary record offers tantalizing glimpses of shoe buckle variations according to gender and age, but the written record does not provide enough detail to allow connections of gender or age to particular buckles.

Buckles can be loosely separated in terms of quality, and it is thus possible to use buckles as an index of class and status. In this sense, the materials used to make buckles reflected a person's social position.[12] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, almost everyone wore buckles of varying materials and with varying amounts of decoration. Some buckles were crafted with great care and expense and, since they were removable, were cared for as fine pieces of jewelry. To generalize, buckles made with the most expensive materials and with the most elaborate decoration were worn by wealthy people, and the least expensive and plainest buckles were worn by the poor. For example, George Washington ordered supplies from England in 1759 for his slaves at Mount Vernon and along with the buttons, textiles, and "coarse thread hose fit for negro servants" ordered "coarse shoes and knee buckles."[13] These were presumably made of inexpensive materials and thus thought appropriate for slaves. One must keep in mind that the presence of a fancy buckle is not representative of the presence of a wealthy person. By the same token, perhaps, the presence of an inexpensive and plain buckle does not automatically signify the presence of someone of poor economic means.

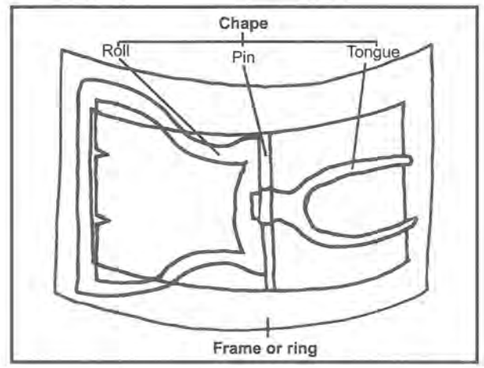

FIGURE 3.3. Diagram of buckle parts. (Drawing by the author)

Buckle Parts

Buckles worn between 1680 and 1820 were made of two basic parts: the frame (also called the ring) and the chape (figure 3.3). The two buckle parts can be recovered together, but frequently are found separately. The chape is further subdivided into three components: the pin, the roll, and the tongue. Shoe buckles are used here as a means for describing buckle parts, but the technology of the parts applies to all kinds of buckles. I discuss buckle chapes in further detail below under "Types of Buckles."

FRAME. The buckle frame (also called the ring) is the part of the buckle that is visible on the surface of the garment or shoe when the buckle is worn. The frame can take several different shapes (figure 3.4). Single-frame shapes are subcircular, square or rectangular, and trapezoidal. Double-frame types are combinations of these shapes. (Circular or annular shapes are not common in the eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries.) The size and shape of the frame is one of the main ways in which the function of the buckle can be discerned, and the relationship between shape and function is discussed in the sections on individual buckle types. Shoe buckle frames are curved to fit against the instep, for example. The frame is sometimes cut to hold the points of the chape tongue.

The frame exhibits pinholes on two sides used to hold the chape. There are two main types of pin terminals found on buckles (figure 3.5). The first type of pin terminal has a lobe of metal that extends over the entire width of the frame, and the hole is drilled through the lobe.[14] This type is found throughout the eighteenth century. The second type has a thin metal flange that extends only from the outer edge of the ring. This type is found in late-eighteenth-century contexts.[15] The orientation of the pinholes correlates with different types of buckles—shoe buckles have holes on the long axis; knee and stock buckles have holes on the short axis.

CHAPE. The chape is the portion of the buckle that fastens the buckle to the shoe (figure 3.3). The chape is made of three components: the pin, the roll, and the tongue. The chape held the shoe fast to the foot in the following manner: the two shoe straps or latchets would pass under the end of the shoe buckle frame and would cross over each other at the buckle pin or bridge. One strap was held by the buckle tongue and the other looped around the roll, and the pressure exerted by the

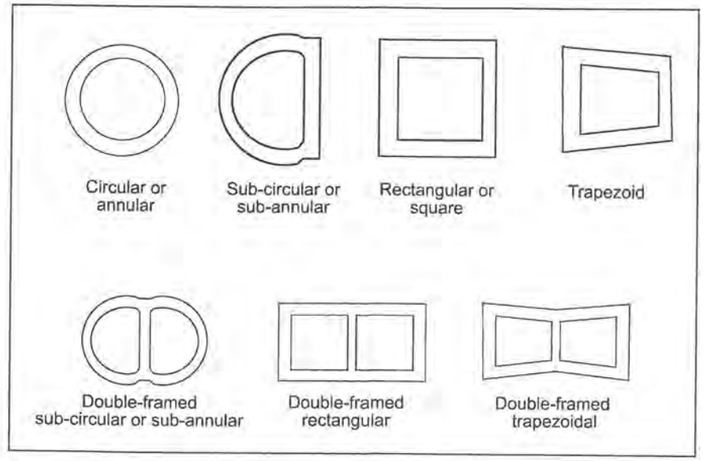

FIGURE 3.4. Buckle frame shapes. (Drawing by the author)

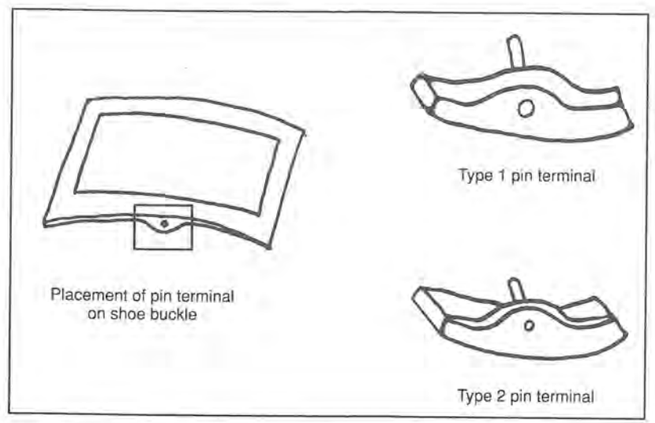

FIGURE 3.5. Diagram of pin terminal types and placement of the pin terminal on the buckle. (Drawing by the author after Merry W. Abbitt, "The Eighteenth-Century Shoe Buckle," in *Five Artifact Studies* by Audrey Noel Hume, Merry W. Abbitt, Robert H. McNulty, Isabel Davies, and Edward Chappell [Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg, 1973], figure 8, 25–53)

foot movement ensured that the buckle, and therefore the shoe, would remain in place.[16]

Pin. The pin (sometimes called the bridge) is set across the underside of the frame (figure 3.3) and can be made of iron, copper alloy, or steel. The pin was a solid cylinder until the late eighteenth century, after which a hollow cast tube was used.[17] The ends of the pin were tapered by the metalsmith to fit into the pinholes drilled on the frame. The two other chape components—the roll and the tongue—hinge on the pin. In archaeological contexts the pin is usually recovered with the roll or tongue attached.

Roll. The roll is a shouldered, open hoop that hinges on the pin and lies within the buckle frame (figure 3.3). Sometimes the top of the roll has two short spikes that point inward and allow it to adhere to the latchet.[18] The roll is generally a little under half the size of the frame. There is a considerable amount of variation in the form of the roll; its temporal and technical developments are discussed under "Shoe Buckle Chapes."

Tongue. The tongue is most commonly shaped like a pitchfork with two elongated spikes. It hinges on the pin and points away from the roll. The tongue

originally had a single sharp spike, but most eighteenth-century buckles have double spikes (as in figure 3.3). These spikes pierce the upper shoe latchets, and the tips of the tongue spikes rest on the surface of the frame. Sometimes the silversmith would cut small nicks in the inner edge of the frame to receive the tongue spikes.

Buckle Manufacture

In the eighteenth century, buckles were primarily manufactured in England and imported to America. Buckle manufacturing was a large industry in England by the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The assorted buckle parts were made by different manufacturers in different regions of the country. Jewelers and silversmiths commonly stated in their advertisements or trade cards that they were bucklemakers. Since the buckle was subject to changes in fashion, bucklemakers continually developed new designs in hopes of making their buckles more appealing to the consumer. The *London Tradesman*, 1747, stated that "Shoe Buckels of steel, Brass and coarser metals are mostly made in the Country . . . and handsome bread is made at This Trade which requires some fancy to invent new Designs. A Journeyman may earn from fifteen to twenty shillings a Week."[19] Most of the English buckle production occurred in the midlands,[20] and Matthew Boulton was at the heart of the British bucklemaking industry when it became a large-scale industry in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Of course, Boulton was a metalsmith and manufacturer of all manner of metals and objects, but buckle production was second only to button production in his factory in Birmingham, England.[21]

Buckles were also manufactured in America, though on a much smaller scale than in England. Few bucklemakers are known, though silversmiths and clockmakers were the primary manufacturers. Daniel Burnap, a Connecticut clockmaker, polished and plated shoe and knee buckle frame castings and shaped the frames by bending them on an anvil. He purchased buckle chapes from hardware dealers in Hartford, Connecticut, and fitted the chapes onto the buckle frames.[22] Silversmiths often marked their buckles, making it possible to identify buckles made by these smiths.[23]

As mentioned above, different parts of the buckle manufacturing process occurred at different locales in England. Until the end of the eighteenth century, typically, buckle frames were forged in one town and sent to another to be engraved and, in turn, sent to another for finishing. The different parts of the chape were often made by different people, at different rates, for different wages.[24] The final assembly of the buckle—the conjoining of the buckle and chape—took place in large towns such as Birmingham and London.

There was conflict between different groups who made various buckle parts, in particular between the chapemakers and ringmakers, revealing the structure and extent of buckle production. The ringmakers were master craftsmen, and the ringmakers purchased the chapes from the chapemakers. On April 22, 1760, Matthew Boulton appeared in the House of Commons as a witness for a petition for buckle ringmakers, asking that chapemakers be prevented from selling chapes overseas[25] because the ringmakers thought the chapemakers were demanding more for their products than they were worth. Boulton's testimony also described 8,000 people employed in bucklemaking in the Wolverhampton, Birmingham, and Bilston areas of England, not to mention those who made buckles elsewhere in the country. Of these, 2,500 people were chapemakers.[26]

When the shoe buckle fell out of fashion in England, it was a crisis for the vast numbers of people who worked in the buckle manufacturing industry. The bucklemakers lobbied the Prince of Wales, imploring him to continue to wear shoe buckles so as to hold on to the fashion and continue the demand for the buckles.[27] Despite the prince's compliance with the bucklemakers' request, shoe buckles still went out of fashion and were replaced by shoestrings, decimating the industry.

Buckle Materials

Buckle frames were made from every sort of material available. The most common metals used were copper alloys, gilded brass, and tin. Sheffield plate, close-plated iron, pinchbeck, bell metal, bath metal, iron, tutania, and blued steel were also employed, and so were precious metals such as cast silver and gold.[28] Earthenware buckles made by Josiah Wedgwood are known, and ceramic decorative accents were applied to metal buckles.[29] Papier-mâché accents, wood, and glass were used to make buckles as well, though these were gimmicks used by buckle manufacturers to differentiate their buckles from competitors and were not common buckle materials.[30] Buckles were set with pastes, plated, and made of cut steel.

The most common kinds of buckles were those made of metals that were plated or tinned. Advertisements in the *New Hampshire Gazette* convey the broad range of metals used to make buckles and the sort of choices a consumer could make when selecting metal

TABLE 3.1. Newspaper advertisements for buckles

Date *Newspaper*	*Seller*	*Buckle description*
November 15, 1757 *New Hampshire Gazette*	Robert Trail	"fine stone buckles for the ladies . . . white and yellow metal shoe and knee buckles, pinch back and steel ditto polished in the best manner"
December 23, 1757 *New Hampshire Gazette*	Thomas Durant	"a neat and fashionable assortment of steel, bath metal, copper and pinch back shoe and knee buckles"
January 27, 1758 *New Hampshire Gazette*	Samuel Griffith	"all sorts of buckles, chapes and tongues"
June 15, 1759 *New Hampshire Gazette*	John Nelson	"Also, A variety of silver shoe & knee buckles"
November 9, 1759 *New Hampshire Gazette*	John Penhallow	"black Buckles"
July 11, 1760 *New Hampshire Gazette*	Colborn Barrel	"Shoe & Knee Buckles"
January 16, 1761 *New Hampshire Gazette*	Daniel Wentworth	"steel, metal, and brass shoe and knee buckles"
April 10, 1761 *New Hampshire Gazette*	Hugh H. Wentworth	"white Metal Shoe and Knee Buckles"
August 21, 1761 *New Hampshire Gazette*	Pierce Long	"white and wrought metal buckels" and "steel shoe and knes ditto"
August 5, 1763 *New Hampshire Gazette*	Hugh H. Wentworth	"white and yellow mettel shoe and knee buckels, steel buckels"
December 2, 1763 *New Hampshire Gazette*	Nathaniel Barrel	"Shoe and Knee Chapes" and "Shoe and Knee Buckles"
November 30, 1772 *Pennsylvania Packet*		"foile stone and paste shoe, knee and stock buckles"
April 13, 1779 *Maryland Journal*		"Ladies paste shoe buckles, of the newest patterns, gentlemen's knee and stock buckles"
August 11, 1784 *Pennsylvania Journal*		"Best French paste, set shoe, stock and knee buckles with gold and fancy borders, of various patterns. Silver, plated, pinchbeck and gilt ditto"

buckles for purchase (table 3.1). For example Robert Trail advertised "white and yellow metal shoe and knee buckles, pinch back [pinchbeck] and steel ditto polished in the best manner," and Thomas Durant touted "a neat and fashionable assortment of steel, bath metal, copper and pinch back shoe and knee buckles." Silver, silver-plated, gilt, and brass buckles were also advertised.

Paste buckles were an elaborate and very fashionable type of buckle in the eighteenth century (see "Stone, Gems, Seals, and Imitations" in chapter 4 for a full description of pastes). Silver buckle frames were occasionally set with jewels such as diamonds or garnets, but paste or marcasite versions were much more common. Paste buckles were not simply imitations but were preferred because pastes were easier to set close together, and since buckles were lost with regularity, they were less expensive to replace. Pastes were set in all sorts of buckles; the November 30, 1772, *Pennsylvania Packet* advertised "foile stone and paste shoe, knee and stock buckles." Paste buckles were very stylish, and the advertisements emphasize not only the material, but also the style and fashionability of buckles in stock. The *Maryland Journal* advertised "Ladies paste shoe buckles, of the newest patterns" on April 13, 1779. The *Pennsylvania Journal* of August 11, 1784, advertised "Best French paste, set shoe, stock and knee buckles with gold and fancy borders, of various patterns."

Stone, when advertised, could mean a range of materials to include paste or precious and semiprecious stones and when advertised in conjunction with shoe buckles often referred to marcasite, which was used as a substitute for diamonds although it was still expensive. Marcasite is a mineral that contains iron and sulfur and can be tin white, silver white, or pale yellow and has a soft mirrorlike sheen. Marcasite was introduced to jewelry during the early part of the eighteenth century when it was first obtained from tin mines in Cornwall, England. Like pastes, marcasite could be cut to desired sizes, faceted into rosette shapes, and set into buckle frames against a silver foil. Occasionally it was set against a gold foil.[31] Stone buckles were favored by women as Robert Trail suggested in an advertisement in the *New Hampshire Gazette*: "fine stone buckles for the ladies."

Silver-plated buckles were very popular throughout the eighteenth century. Sheffield plating was used because it could appropriately handle the odd shape of the shoe buckle. Close plating was used on buckles beginning in the 1760s. In 1778 a Birmingham inventor created a method for casting the buckles by hand in tin or copper molds, where the silver was pressed into the impression in the mold, then the molten metal poured into the mold so that the buckle was plated when it came out. Inventors registered other patents for covering the corners and edges of buckles with silver, gold, and tin plating.[32]

Cut-steel buckles were another popular buckle type and were expensive. Until crucible steel was introduced in 1739, steel buckles were limited to plain designs. The use of crucible steel allowed elaborate buckles with a brilliant surface to be made. These buckles were handmade, and there were several specialized steps involved in making each buckle—forging, filing, grinding, polishing, and glazing—carried out individually by cottage industry specialists. Cut-steel buckle frames frequently were decorated with faceted steel studs designed to look like sparkling jewels. The facets were initially horseshoe-nail shaped and then were flat, concave, or convex, the convex shape being the most common; later they were made in a variety of shapes that were used in combination on single studs.[33]

In the early 1760s, the faceted cut-steel studs began to replace marcasite, crystal, and pastes in popularity. Steel studs were set in claw settings against a background of burnished steel that could also be edged with tiny dots known as "mille-grain" that added to the glitter of the buckle. In the 1770s, small cut-steel studs with faceted heads that screwed into holes drilled into the frame were fashionable. The studs could be removed to allow the buckle and facets to be reburnished by a jeweler. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century in Birmingham, England, Matthew Boulton introduced cast hard-steel studs that were ground, polished, glazed, and riveted on the buckle frame. A large shoe buckle could display up to 200 steel studs in four different sizes. French cut-steel studs can be differentiated from English ones by their elliptical shape; the English studs were circular.[34]

Buckles made of block tin that was japanned black or made of darkened brass were used for mourning buckles, which were in demand in the eighteenth century. John Penhallow advertised "black Buckles" in the *New Hampshire Gazette* on November 9, 1759. Mourning buckles could also be set with faceted jet or crystals with ciphers in gold wire.[35]

Buckles were made from all manner of materials, and the use of these varied materials reflects technical innovation as well as trends in fashion. Archaeological examples are often made with the most common kinds of materials—most typically plated or tinned copper alloy—but less common materials are also recovered.

Buckle Prices

Eighteenth-century account books recorded numerous, though occasional, transactions involving buckles. Shoe buckles varied in price, and although the monetary value likely correlated with the size, material, and decoration of the buckle, these descriptive elements are very rarely recorded. A typical eighteenth-century account book, recorded by William Wood—a storekeeper and "handyman"—registered the occasional purchase of buckles for a wide range of prices by the townspeople of Dartmouth, Massachusetts (table 3.2).[36] Wood's account book suggests that the price was heavily dependent on the kind of buckle sold, though he does not offer details of these differences; prices for shoe buckles ranged from £0-1-6 (the least expensive and most common recorded examples) to £3-0-0.

Knee buckle transactions were also recorded and were generally less expensive than shoe buckles. Nathaniel Sherman, a general merchant, differentiated between shoe buckles (£0-8-0 and £0-9-0 per pair) and the less expensive knee buckles (£0-6-0 and £0-6-6 per pair) in his account book from Portsmouth, New Hampshire.[37]

Account books likewise show the spectrum of prices for a range of different designs and materials (table 3.2). Prices range from £0-0-11 for a pair of buckles sold by Samuel Jackson, a store operator in Pennsylvania, to £2-15-0 for a "Pair of Silver Diamond Cut Shoe Buckles" purchased by Walter Stewart of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[38] Samuel Jackson's accounts contain many late-eighteenth-century buckle purchases with prices ranging from £0-0-11 to £0-13-3, with nineteen different prices for buckles enumerated in the transactions. Although the descriptions rarely provide details as to what caused buckles to vary in price, the

TABLE 3.2. Account book references to buckles

Name, occupation, and location	*Transaction date*	*Transaction*	*Price*
William Wood Storekeeper and "handyman" Dartmouth, MA	January 9, 1739	Sold "1 pare buckels"	£0-1-6
	May 2, 1744 December 30, 1744		
	July 1745		£0-4-0
	October 24, 1739		£0-5-0
	July 9, 1740		£0-6-6
	April 18, 1744		£0-7-6
	July 1745		
	April 7, 1744		
	November 1744	Made a "Shu Buckel"	£0-12-2
	March 27, 1745/46	Sold a pair of buckles	£3-0-0
Nathaniel Sherman General merchant Portsmouth, NH	1738	Sold "sho buckles" to Joseph Miller	£0-8-0
	1738	Sold pair of knee buckles to Joseph Miller	£0-6-0
	1739	Sold "1 pr sho buckle" to Peter Shilling, a Portsmouth joiner	£0-8-0
	January 4, 1740	Sold two pairs of buckles to John Lindsey	£0-9-0 each
	January 23, 1740	Sold pair of knee buckles to John Linsey	£0-6-6
	February 1740	Sold 1 pair shoe buckles to John Lindsey	£0-9-0
	1741	Sold to Thomas Handson of Dover 1 pair buckles	£0-6-0
	1742	Sold Thomas Rogers "1 pair buckles"	£0-6-0
Anonymous Portsmouth, NH	February 1752	Sold one dozen shoe buckles to Mrs. Bradford in exchange for 15 yards of worsted damask	
		Sold one dozen shoe buckles	48 shillings
		Sold Stephen Thursten of Stratham "buckles"	£0-18-0
Johnathan Griffen General store merchant Londonderry, NH	November 1756	Purchased "pair of ne buckles"	£0-6-0
George Shove Potter Dighton, MA	October 2, 1790	Purchased 1 "pear of shue buckels"	£0-2-3
	October 1794	Sold 1 pair of buckles to Enos Chase	£0-13-0
	November 1794	Purchased 2 pairs of plated shoe buckles	£0-15-0
	December 1794	Purchased 2 pairs of buckles from Ebenezer Edion	£0-17-0
	August 25, 1794	Purchased pair of plated buckles from Ebenezer Edion	£0-8-0
Ariel Abbott Cooper Wilton, NH	January 12, 1791	Sold pair of Buckles	£0-11-3
Walter Stewart Merchant Philadelphia, PA	September 5, 1787	Purchased "a case for a pair of stone shoe buckles"	£0-1-6
	September 8, 1787	"Repairing an old buckle Case"	£0-0-6
	September 8, 1787	Purchased "a new tongue to a girdle buckle"	£0-1-0
		Purchased "a pair of Silver Diamond Cut Shoe Buckles"	£2-15-0
Parrish, Potts, Shields, and Company Merchants Philadelphia, PA	October 1783	Purchased "Shoe Buckles"	£0-6-0 per pair

TABLE 3.2. Account book references to buckles (*Continued*)

Name, occupation, and location	*Transaction date*	*Transaction*	*Price*
	October 1783	Purchased "Children's Buckles"	£0-6-0 per dozen
	October 1783	Purchased "men's buckles"	£0-13-0 per dozen
Nathan Howard Farmer Bridgewater, NH	July 11, 1791	Purchased pair of "buckles"	£0-2-4
Samuel Jackson Store operator Pennsylvania	June 15, 1794	Sold to employee Polly Rone pair of buckles	£0-3-[?]
	April 26, 1792	Sold two pairs of buckles to Sam Boone	£0-3-4
	April 26, 1792	Sold pair of buckles	£0-4-2
	April 1792	Sold buckles	£0-3-5
	April 1792	Sold buckles	£0-1-7
	May 1792	Sold buckles	£0-3-7
	June 1792	Sold buckles	£0-3-4
	August 1792	Sold buckles	£0-3-4
	November 1792	Sold buckles	£0-3-6
	November 1792	Sold buckles	£0-0-11
	December 1792	Sold buckles	£0-4-6
	November 1792	Sold nine pairs of knee buckles	£0-5-3 (£0-0-7 each)
	November 1792	Sold four pairs of plated buckles	£0-3-5 each
	June 30, 1794	Sold pair of shoe buckles	£0-3-4
	June 30, 1794	Sold a pair of knee buckles	£0-0-9
	December 1794	Sold a pair of buckles	£0-0-11
	December 1794	Sold a pair of buckles	£0-13-3
	December 1798	Sold two pairs of buckles	£0-3-6
Charles Osbourn Jeweler New York, NY	1816	Inventoried two pairs of silver buckles	$2.00 each
	1816	Inventoried six buckles	$3.00 each
	1816	Inventoried "3 gilt buckles"	$12
	1816	Inventoried one pair paste shoe buckles	$4.00
	March 22, 1815	Sold a pair of buckles	$8.00

price differences indicate that there were assorted qualities of buckles for sale at a single store.

Types of Buckles

Buckles were used to fasten clothing and to hold it fast to different parts of the body. In the following section I discuss the kinds of buckles most commonly recovered on archaeological sites of former British colonies. I describe shoe, knee, stock, hat, boot or garter, girdle, spur, and sword buckles, tracing technical and stylistic developments as well as temporal information that can be used to date buckles.[39]

SHOE BUCKLES. Shoe buckles and their parts are the most commonly encountered buckles on archaeological sites. Shoe buckles were used to hold the shoe tightly to the foot. The shoe buckle attached to the latchets or straps of the shoe, and these latchets would be tightened over the foot's instep leaving the buckle frame visible and the other buckle parts hidden (see "Buckle Parts," above). The tension between the chape's roll and tongue and the shoe latchets held both the latchets and the buckle in place, securing the shoe to the foot.

By the early eighteenth century, the shoe buckle was a common clothing item worn by men, women, and children. Buckles were also fashionable items and were status markers; the materials used and the decorations elaborated on buckles were indications of the wealth of the individual.[40] Although there is immense variability in shoe buckles—in part due to their function as items of fashion—the size, form, and decoration of the frame and chape can be used to identify shoe buckles.

Shoe Buckle Frames. Although many of the trends in shoe buckle form and design are datable, some of the simple motifs and methods of decoration were used throughout the eighteenth century. For example, simple engraved lines and grooves were used on buckles throughout the period. Crisscrossed lines or zigzagging patterns were also used throughout the period on inexpensive buckles. Since archaeological examples are often common sorts of buckles, these ordinary and undatable motifs are also the most common.

Makers' marks have been used by collectors and silver historians to date buckles and some trends in buckle development. Until 1739 it was legally required in England that all silver buckles be hallmarked. The cost for an assay was fourpence a dozen. In 1739 the Assay Act in England exempted all buckles set with jewels or stones and elaborately wrought buckles weighing less than 10 pennyweights. Buckles then could pass without hallmarks, though many bucklemakers continued to identify their own work. By 1790 English buckles had to be hallmarked fully, and the marks include the place of assay and the letter indicating the year the quality test was made.[41] Despite this legal requirement, few archaeological examples are hallmarked.

In general, buckles were punched and stamped in order to impart the design to the buckle frame, particularly in the early to mid-eighteenth century. As the eighteenth century wore on, however, bucklemakers developed increasingly elaborate casting techniques in which the decoration was made as part of the buckle; as a result stamped and punched motifs declined in the later part of the century.[42] Trade names for shoe buckle designs included Bull's Eye, Marquis of Granby, Whim-Wham, Job's Fancy, and Crow's Foot. Other designs were called cluster, cable, and Newgate fetters, though the form of these named designs is not known.[43]

Buckles began to be worn in the mid-seventeenth century, and the mid-seventeenth century shoe buckle contrasted with the laces, rosettes, and knots that also decorated the shoe.[44] Generally, shoe buckles were small and square in the mid-seventeenth century (a few cm in length[45]). The pin on early shoe buckles is typically cast with the frame and is diamond-shaped in cross section, rather than circular as is the case in later examples.[46] Until about 1720, buckles were used to fasten shoes with square tongues that extended high in front of the ankle. The small buckles fastened straps that extended from the heel leathers to the front of the tongues.

By around 1680, the shoe buckle became a common method of fastening the shoe. Shoe buckles from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are small, usually less than 45 mm long. The buckle frames are asymmetrical, subannular, or trapezoidal in shape (see figure 3.4). The trapezoidal shape is common on archaeological examples.[47] Buckles from the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries usually have drilled frames to receive the pin (figure 3.5), though some American examples from this period still have the pin cast with the buckle frame (figure 3.6). These shoe buckles are usually slightly curved to fit on the foot, though this is not always the case.

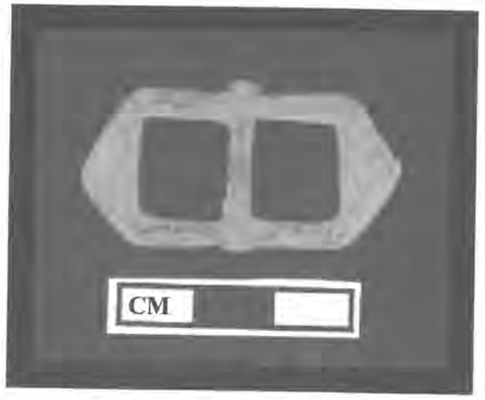

FIGURE 3.6. Copper-alloy buckle with cast pin recovered from the Sherburne Site, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. (Photo by the author)

Around 1700, shoe buckles developed into what can now be considered "standard" shoe buckles. These are rectangular and subrectangular buckles that are 30 to 40 mm × 20 to 30 mm, substantially larger in size than the seventeenth-century examples.[48] At this date shoe buckles were convex in order to fit over the foot comfortably. Rounded corners and the presence of a bulge in the inside edges of the frames—so that the buckle appears almost oval—are two characteristic features of shoe buckles dating to 1680 to 1720.[49]

Buckles from the 1690–1720 period are often decorated with knops and scalloping, particularly over the holes for the pin. Shell and flower motifs are also common. Some buckles, particularly late seventeenth-century examples, have serrated edges or molded extensions.[50]

The size of the shoe buckle continued to increase gradually between 1720 and 1770. By the 1720s, shoe buckles were a common item of dress and were larger and rectangular. In the 1740s, buckle decoration was more elaborate than in the earlier periods of the eighteenth century. Gem-set buckles became popular and spawned the design of silver buckles engraved to suggest close-set faceted stones. In the 1750s, the rococo style was reflected in more flamboyant buckle patterns of squared or shouldered outlines with scrolling or openwork patterns. Rococo designs and motifs used on buckles included molded rosettes, gadrooning, scallop shells, twisted-rope designs, scrolls, nailheads, grooves, and beaded borders.[51]

By around 1750, oval and round frames were common for shoe buckles. The frame typically measured 50–70 mm in width, and the patterns that decorated these buckles continued to become more elaborate. After around 1750 openwork styles came into popularity and twisted ribbon designs were particularly favored. All accessories, and particularly shoe buckles, increased in size in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, and by the 1760s shoe buckles were on average approximately 65 mm in diameter, though this dimension could be as large as 100 mm.[52] The surfaces of buckles were worked or made in molded openwork designs. By the 1770s, the shoe buckle had increased to a size that *The Gentleman's and London Magazine* of June 1777 derisively described as "harness buckles."

The range of shoe buckle decoration increased in the 1770s as the buckle increased in size and became a focal point of fashionable dress. Shoe buckles were decorated with a range of decorative motifs, mainly with molded ornamentation and engraving, though openwork designs were also common. In the 1770s and 1780s, the buckle incorporated motifs popular in jewelry design, such as large faceted embossments encircled by smaller ones, the marquise shape, and lines of tiny facets known as "bright-cutting." Precious and semiprecious stones and pastes (most commonly) were set in shoe buckles beginning around 1770.[53] Base metal buckles often were gilded, silvered, or tinned.

The largest shoe buckles were worn between 1775 and 1790. These were oblong, rectangular, or shuttle-shaped and curved over the foot dramatically; they were the subject of great satire. In 1787 the *Ipswich Journal* noted, "She used to fasten her shoes with a circle scarcely larger than a bird's eye and since, she has fastened it with a parallelogram as large as the buckle of a coach spring." The largest buckle, popular in the 1770s, was known as the Artois buckle, named for the Comte d'Artois, the French ambassador to England, later Charles X.[54] *Gentlemen's and London Magazine* in 1777 wrote, "The Artois shoe buckles are becoming universal for ladies and gentlemen: the size of those worn at Court are enormous." Artois buckles could be very unwieldy, as they could weigh as much as half a pound. By 1780 Artois buckles were made in openwork designs of interwoven ribbons, and they could be decorated with engraving and sometimes had a crest that could be monogrammed.[55] The Artois buckles could be decorated with elaborate cast designs or with openwork motifs but could also have a smooth surface. These grand dress accessories were popular at a time when fashion sensibility was about to shift from the flamboyant character of the 1770s and '80s to the reserved character of neoclassical dress. The later buckles anticipate this shift in some instances, exhibiting plain designs or delicate perforations in the buckle frame.[56] Some Artois buckles are shaped for right and left feet to preserve the appearance of symmetry of the buckles.[57]

The portrait of William Carpenter by Ralph Earl from 1779 illustrates an Artois-style buckle (figure 3.7). The large buckle curves over the foot and is placed low on the foot so that it can rest on the widest surface. This particular buckle is gilded and is decorated with engraving and beading to catch and reflect the light. This buckle is worn along with knee buckles that do not match the shoe buckles (see "Knee Buckles," below). The young man in this portrait wears a red velvet suit, fine white stockings, and a fancy collar and is shown with books at a desk, symbols of education and wealth.

The Artois buckle marked the apogee of shoe buckle size and design. From the late 1770s to the 1790s the size of the buckle decreased once again, though Artois buckles remained popular at the same time. The smaller buckles could be square with beveled corners, and the center was commonly filled with black leather (see also the overview of William Eley's patent in "Shoe Buckle Chapes," below).[58] In the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the kinds of decoration applied to buckles was generally flat and simple ornamentation, which corresponded with the restrained styles that characterized neoclassical fashions. A buckle frame might have a contrasting border or very delicate engraving.[59] Buckle motifs included lovers' knots, ribbons, rosettes, openwork and chain patterns, stars, and hearts.

The shoe buckle was replaced by the shoestring at the end of the eighteenth century in Europe, though shoe buckles were worn in America into the early nineteenth century.

Shoe Buckle Chapes. The shoe buckle chape was made separately from the buckle frame and attached to the frame in the last stages of buckle manufacture. The chape, like the frame, changed over time and can

FIGURE 3.7. Portrait of William Carpenter by Ralph Earl, 1779. Carpenter wears Artois-style shoe buckles and knee buckles. (Courtesy of the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts)

be used as an aid to dating the buckle frame, though the two parts are often recovered independently from one another. The chape, recovered by itself, can be used to identify the sort of buckle worn by people who inhabited a site.

Until 1720, the stud chape was used on shoe buckles (figure 3.8A). This type of chape was solid cast with a heart-shaped roll with a stud at the end. The chape was used by pushing the stud through a slit in the shoe's under latchet. The over latchet was held with a single iron or copper-alloy tongue.[60]

The anchor chape replaced the stud chape (figure 3.8B). The anchor chape had a fluke on one end and a single tongue on the other end, which was used to secure the over latchet. The flukes were inserted into a slit in the under latchet. This type of chape could not be used to secure large shoe buckles and was replaced by the loop chape form in the 1720s.

The loop chape had a rounded "cooking pot" roll on one end with a single tongue inside the roll (figure 3.8C).[61] The tongue was used to secure the under latchet. The loop chape with a single tongue was replaced by a chape with two spikes and a fork-shaped tongue (figure 3.8D, E). This type of chape was used between 1720 and 1770. The chapes usually were made of cast-copper alloy, though steel chapes from the period are also known.[62] The roll was still usually "cooking pot"–shaped, but some rolls had angular corners (figure 3.8E).

When large elaborate shoe buckles became popular in the 1770s, new chapes were developed in an attempt to further secure the buckle to the shoe. One of these inventions was a chape with a double roll, whereby the tongue rested on another roll instead of on the buckle frame. The spring chape was developed by a British bucklesmith and silversmith named William Eley in

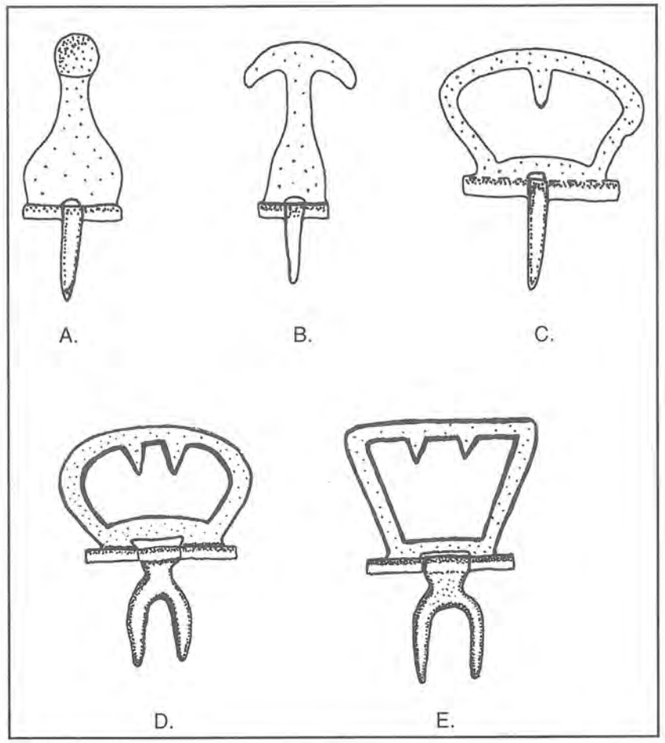

FIGURE 3.8. Shoe buckle chape forms. A. Stud chape. B. Anchor chape. C. Cooking pot–shaped loop chape with single tongue. D, E. Two forms of cooking pot–shaped loop chapes with fork-shaped tongues. (Drawing by the author)

1784, and Eley licensed his patent, making this chape form widespread. The tongue tips rested on a second roll rather than on the frame. This patent described a bridge covered by a steel box that was hinged on one end to the side of the frame and at the other end controlled by a press stud. In this arrangement, using the buckle's working parts, the frame could be raised out of the way when the straps were buckled. Then the frame could be securely pressed into position. These buckles are commonly stamped Eley's Patent and sometimes are marked with a serial number. Some are stamped Left, Right, and patent.[63] These chapes have black leather between the ring and the chape, concealing the chape and its spring mechanism.

KNEE BUCKLES. The knee buckle was worn on the breeches' kneeband and was used to hold the breeches tightly below or above the knee (and also hold up the stockings[64]). The knee buckle was placed so that the long axis of the buckle was oriented vertically; the pin terminals were on the short axis of the knee buckle. Ralph Earl's 1790 portrait of David Baldwin shows the placement of a vertically oriented knee buckle below the knee along with Artois shoe buckles (figure 3.9). Knee buckles were worn with a vertical row of buttons that also tightened the breeches at the knee. As many as seven or eight buttons could be used with the knee buckle, but three or four buttons were most common.[65] The knee buckle chape had an anchor-shaped roll that was used to attach the knee buckle to the kneeband. The roll would extend through a slit in the band, the buckle would be rotated a quarter turn, and the roll would prevent the chape from coming out of the slit (figure 3.10).

The kneeband started to be buckled around 1735; previous to this the kneeband was buttoned.[66] After 1750, the kneeband was usually buckled, though buttons continued to be used in association with the buckle. Even when knee buckles were most fashionable, however, some people—those who could not afford knee buckles—tied or buttoned the kneeband.[67] In the 1750s, it was fashionable to buckle breeches above

FIGURE 3.9. Portrait of David Baldwin by Ralph Earl, 1790. He wears large silver shoe buckles and knee buckles, as well as death's head–patterned buttons at the wrists and on the coat pleats in the back, small buttons at the wrist, and small buttons on his waistcoat. (High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia)

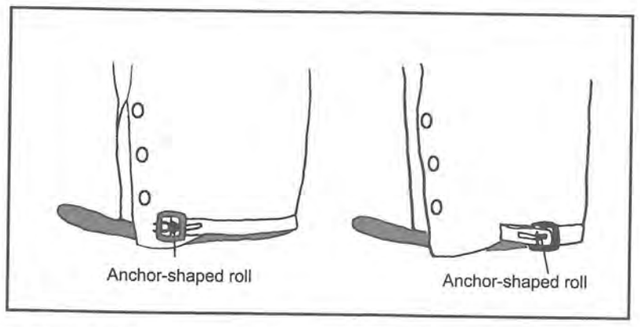

FIGURE 3.10. Placement of knee buckle at the breeches' kneeband. The view of the back of the buckle shows the anchor chape placed in the breeches' kneeband buttonhole. (Drawing by the author after Nancy O. Bryant, "Buckles and Buttons: An Inquiry into Fastening Systems Used on Eighteenth-Century English Breeches," *Dress* 14 [1988]: 27–36, figures 7A and 7B)

the knee, but by the 1780s breeches were buckled below the knee.[68]

In general, knee buckles are found in a range of sizes with the largest ones measuring 30 mm × 40 mm.[69] Knee buckles show the same trend toward increased size in the second half of the eighteenth century as do other accessories. In the 1750s, the knee buckle was small in size and square in shape. In the next decade the size varied somewhat, and by the 1770s the buckle was large in size. In the 1770s, knee buckles were square and oval, with neither shape predominant. In the 1780s, knee buckles were large and oval and were placed vertically, though square buckles were also worn. In the 1790s, buckles were oval, but the buckle was supplanted in this decade by ties at the knees.[70]

Knee buckles are most easily identified through four different characteristics. First, the knee buckle chape has a diagnostic shape (figure 3.11). The roll of the chape is anchor-shaped and typically, through not always, has a half-heart cut-out design. The chape has either two or three tongues, which makes it distinguishable from the anchor chape used on shoes, which has a single tongue.[71]

The second aid to identification of knee buckles is the position of the pin terminal on the buckle frame. Knee buckles were oriented vertically on the knee band, and thus the pin terminal was placed on the short axis of the buckle frame.

The third diagnostic feature is that knee buckles can sometimes be distinguished by the shape of the frame.

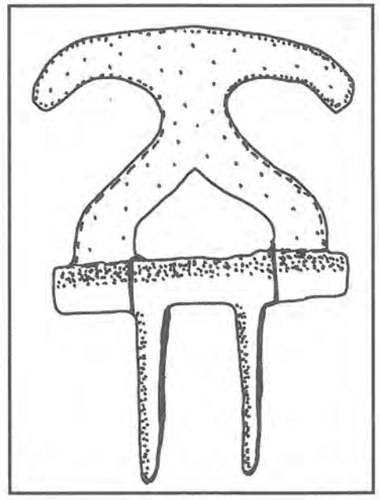

FIGURE 3.11. Knee buckle chape. (Drawing by the author)

Knee buckles are flat, that is, they do not have the convex shape that shoe buckles have to accommodate the shape of the foot. This difference can be a clue to identifying the function of smaller buckles.

The fourth key characteristic of knee buckles is the relatively small size of the frame, though this trait can be misleading. Knee buckles are generally smaller than shoe buckles. Since knee buckles were made in the same patterns as shoe buckles, it is often difficult to distinguish a small shoe buckle from an average knee buckle if the chape is missing or the buckle is square or rectangular in shape.

American portraiture shows that nonmatching knee and shoe buckles were worn together in common practice (see figures 3.7, 3.9). Ralph Earl's portrait of William Carpenter from 1779 shows Carpenter with knee buckles and shoe buckles that do not match. Carpenter's knee buckle is oval in shape and is smaller than one might expect to be worn with such large shoe buckles. Knee buckles also were worn in sets with matching shoe buckles. The knee buckle in these instances was a more diminutive version of the same pattern as the larger shoe buckle.

STOCK BUCKLES. The stock is a neckcloth worn by men that wrapped around the neck and buckled or tied at the back of the neck (figure 3.12). Stock buckles, though hidden, were often very fancy embellishments to dress and could be made of silver, plated copper and tin alloys, or pinchbeck. The buckles could be worked or plain and could be set with gems or pastes. The nailhead design was a common motif used by silversmiths on stock buckles.[72] Wigs could be styled or designed to allow stock buckles to show; Brummel describes a wig style as being short in the neck to allow others to see the fancy buckles: "The Prentice Minor-bob, or Hair cap; this is always short in the neck to shew the stone stock-buckle."[73]

Stock buckles can be identified in three ways (figure 3.13). First, the shape of the stock buckle frame identifies it; stock buckles are usually rectangular or oblong. Second, the pin terminals were placed on the shorter side of the frame, giving the buckle a vertical orientation. Third, the stock buckle chape is easily characterized by its roll, which had three or four buttons that would fit into corresponding buttonholes on the stock. The chape tongue had, typically, four spikes used to attach the buckle to the stock.

HAT BUCKLES. Hat buckles were worn on round hats and on tricornered hats. Hat buckle frames are usually rectangular in shape and are commonly decorated with rococo patterns.[74] Simple nailhead designs are also

FIGURE 3.12. Portrait of Richard Bennett Lloyd by Charles Wilson Peale, 1771. Lloyd wears a stock that is buckled or tied at the back as well as textile-covered coat and waistcoat buttons. (Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum)

typical. Hat buckles are difficult to distinguish from knee and stock buckles since they share the distinguishing characteristics of orientation and pin placement. Like stock buckles, hat buckles are oriented vertically and have their pin terminals on the short axis of the buckle.

The portrait of Mrs. Elijah Boardman and son painted by Ralph Earl ca. 1796 shows an oval-shaped hat buckle (figure 3.14). This buckle is placed vertically on the hat band and is either set with pastes or is cast with nailhead designs to emulate faceted stones.

BOOT OR GARTER BUCKLES. Buckles were employed on garters that were used to keep tall and close-fitting boots from falling down (figure 3.15). Top boots, fashionable in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, were also fastened with a strap that attached at the back of the boot and buckled above the knee. Boot and garter buckles have the same form: a small rectangular buckle usually not more than 25 mm in width and height (figure 3.16). The buckle was attached to the garter or boot strap with one to three sharp tongues fixed to the pin; the pin fit into holes drilled into the frame. The buckles do not have a roll as part of the chape. Most of these buckles are tinned copper alloy and are otherwise undecorated.[75]

GIRDLE BUCKLES. Girdles were narrow ribbon belts worn around the waist on gowns. The girdles fastened in the front with a bow or a buckle; it was fashionable for women to wear girdles as an element of fancy dress beginning around 1738.[76] Girdle buckles were often made in two interlocking parts but do not have one characteristic shape. Girdle buckles could be very elaborate and were made in gold, silver, plated and tinned alloys, brass, and cut steel with fancy baroque patterns as well as gadrooning and interlaced designs. Girdle buckles could be set with precious and semiprecious stones and pastes. Alloys were used to make less expensive girdle buckles.[77]

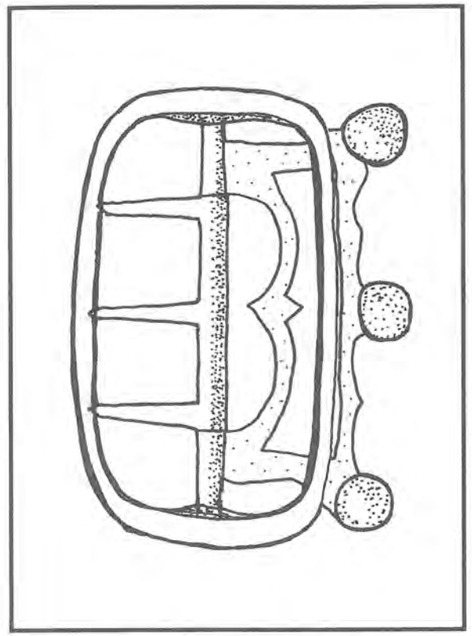

FIGURE 3.13. Stock buckle frame and chape. The stock buckle chape buttons would fit into corresponding buttonholes on the stock. (Drawing by the author)

By the early nineteenth century, the placement of the girdle or belt had risen to just below the bosom, and girdle buckles of this period were worn with the neoclassical fashions. These girdle buckles could be set with expensive gems but also with precious, semiprecious, or imitation gems. Garnets and pearls often were used to decorate girdle buckles, though most belts fastened with a simple single or double buckle of metal. Like many inexpensive forms of jewelry, these could take a wide variety of designs, and jewelry pattern books show neoclassical designs with floral and natural motifs, as well as double buckles with a favored pattern of clasping hands.[78]

SPUR BUCKLES. Double-looped trapezoidal buckles have been described as both spur buckles and seventeenth-century belt buckles. These buckles have narrow trapezoidal frames with pointed or enlarged ends. The edges can be decorated with molded designs, and the frame surfaces are sometimes decorated with rosettes or floral decorations. Some buckles have hook attachments for spurs (figure 3.17).[79]

SWORD BUCKLES. Sword buckles are usually double-looped with the pin cast with the frame and are often elongated along the vertical axis. Sometimes a suspension loop is cast with the buckle frame (figure 3.18). Sword buckles have been recovered in excavations in Jamestown, Virginia, and at Fort Pentagoet, Maine.[80]

Buckles: Important Items of Personal Adornment

Documentary evidence makes clear that buckles were important items of personal adornment. Buckles are faithfully rendered in portraits of the period, listed in economic transactions, and advertised regularly in newspapers as desirable and fashionable goods in a broad range of sizes, forms, and materials. Buckles were important items for individual people and were valued for their monetary worth, their functional purpose of fastening a garment, and for their performative role in social display. As important items of dress, buckles are highly visible not only in the documentary record but also in the archaeological record as frequently recovered items of personal adornment.

Portraits of the period not only illustrate the kinds of buckles worn by the upper ranks of society but also suggest that buckles were a fashion focal point. The artist frequently devoted a great deal of attention to shoe buckles and knee buckles, rendering the accessory in intricate detail (see figures 3.7, 3.9, 3.14). Buckles were used to convey wealth and status in portraiture, usually in conjunction with other accessories associated with wealth, knowledge, or leisure.

The diary of Abner Sanger, a person of low socioeconomic status who lived in Keene, New Hampshire, in the eighteenth century, provides a first-person account of the significance of buckles as a noted item of adornment. His diary contains several references to buckles, though he mainly mentions buckles that belong to other people.[81] His observations illustrate the significance (both as an object meriting admiration and in terms of monetary value) that a buckle could have to an individual. For example, Sanger recorded seeing "a remarkable pair of nice-worked silver buckles" on April 16, 1777, worn by someone from Kingston, New Hampshire.[82] These buckles made an impression on him that deserved comment, and his notice illustrates the visual impact of this item of personal adornment.

Sanger recorded several incidents that demonstrate the way that these small accessories were used as a form of currency, which elevated their worth to a person. On November 5, 1778, he helped someone search for a lost buckle: "Then [I] go with Lockhart Willard and look

FIGURE 3.14. Portrait of Mrs. Elijah Boardman and son by Ralph Earl, ca. 1796 with a hat and hat buckle; she also wears an elaborate coiffure with ribbons and artificial flowers, a necklace, and a pendant that may be a miniature. (Courtesy of the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California)

with him for his shoe buckle in the sixteen acres."[83] Apparently the value of the buckle warranted an extensive search. Sanger himself used buckles as currency. He exchanged a pair of buckles for four bushels of potatoes and, through a series of exchanges, used another to buy a wool surtout (an overcoat).[84]

Buckles were valued after their initial purchase and commonly were repaired rather than replaced; they were curated by individuals and worn over many years. Walter Stewart of Philadelphia recorded paying for the service of fixing "a new tongue to a girdle buckle" on September 8, 1797.[85] Portsmouth, New Hampshire, merchants sold chapes and tongues to be used in replacing the broken parts of buckles. For example, Samuel Griffith advertised "all sorts of buckles, chapes, and tongues" in the *New Hampshire Gazette* on January 27, 1758.

Although buckles could be fancy and very fashionable, account book transactions and advertisements demonstrate the prevalence of common plain shoe buckles among those bought and sold in the eighteenth century. Account books also affirm the wide range of buckle decorations and materials through the variety of prices they commanded, even as account books provide few details as to the criteria used to differentiate the buckles in price. Significantly, account books demonstrate that although buckles were regularly bought and sold, the transactions are relatively infrequent. Buckles

FIGURE 3.15. Tall boot with garter and buckle over boot (left) and top boot with garter and buckle attached to inside back of boot. (Drawing by the author)

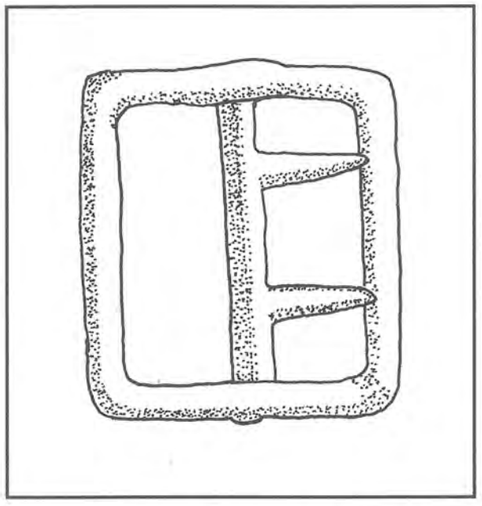

FIGURE 3.16. Garter buckle. (Drawing by the author)

were an occasional and special purchase, as even the comparatively inexpensive buckles were costly. Buckles were expected to be worn for an extended length of time and were replaced only when necessity dictated or when a person sought to keep up with the fashions of the time.

Buckles exhibited great variety in form, decoration, and material, which allowed them to be used as indicators of social status. Fancy, expensive, and fashionable buckles were worn by people of high socioeconomic status. Buckles made of base metals were worn by those of low or middle levels of affluence. Advertisements for runaway laborers or enslaved people provide descriptions of the runaway's clothing and provide information about the kinds of buckles worn by those on the lowest socioeconomic levels. For example, the August 19, 1757, issue of the *New Hampshire Gazette* advertised a reward for the return of "a NEGRO MAN named Toney, about Thirty Years of Age, speaks good English, a lusty stout Fellow: Had on when he went away, a black and blue full'd cloth round tail Jacket, a

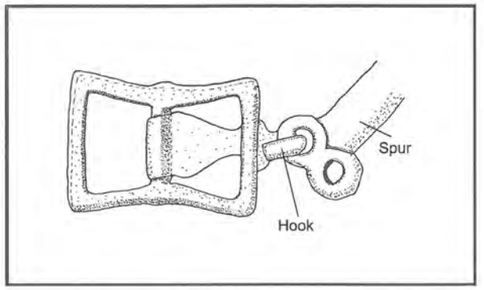

FIGURE 3.17. Spur buckle that is attached to the end of a spur with a hook attachment. (Drawing by the author)

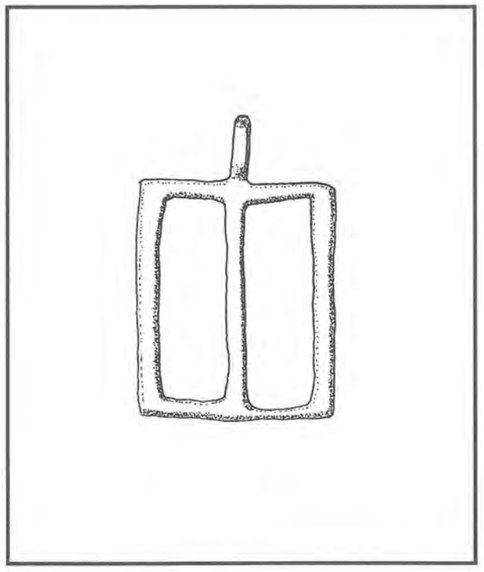

FIGURE 3.18. Sword buckle with suspension loop. (Drawing by the author)

stripped cotton Jacket, grey Yarn Stockings, a pair of new Pumps, and brass Buckles."

Buckles were important accessories to dress in the late seventeenth to late eighteenth centuries and, to some extent, into the early nineteenth century. They were important in the sense that they were both functional dress accessories and items of status that were a visible component of dress that conveyed information about a person to others. Buckles were objects that were worn by almost everyone across gender, status/class, age, and race/ethnicity lines and were valued within all of these groups. Buckles came in a vast array of forms, styles, and materials. The variation found in this object allowed it to signify the position of a person within a socially constructed group, through the form, material, size, and decoration of the buckle.

BUTTONS

In 1659 Samuel Pepys described buttons twice, detailing buttons attached to new articles of clothing. He wrote on July 1, 1659, "This morning came home my fine camlett coat, with gold buttons, and a silk suit, which cost me much money," and on July 5, "This morning my brother Tom brought me my jackanapes coat with silver buttons." The prominent place of buttons in Pepys's description of his clothing suggests their importance to the overall appearance of a garment. Buttons were more than functional fasteners; they were a primary way of embellishing a garment of clothing, particularly for men.

Buttons are the most common type of personal adornment artifact recovered on historical-period archaeological sites; they are found in great numbers and in multitudinous designs, materials, forms, and sizes. Buttons have been enthusiastically studied by collectors, and they have received a considerable amount of attention in archaeological studies.[86] Stanley South's typology provides a good guide for identifying buttons according to manufacturing techniques, materials, and design, though the dates of the button types are somewhat misleading since they are in reference to the layers in which South recovered these buttons.[87] Consequently archaeologists apply narrow manufacture dates to buttons that were made and worn over far broader periods of time. My own classification incorporates these typologies but streamlines them into broader categorizations. This discussion considers how buttons were made, changes in style and technology, and how buttons were worn. Like buckles, these small and functional objects have great potential for understanding not only what people wore in the past but also what was communicated through appearance.

Button Manufacture History

Sculptural evidence in the twelfth century provides the first European evidence of buttons; documentary references exist from around the early fourteenth century. Archaeological excavations by the Museum of London recovered buttons from the medieval period; the finds consisted mainly of plain metal buttons thought to belong to people of little means. It was not until the sixteenth century, however, that buttons became common clothing fasteners.[88]

Most of the buttons worn in America through the eighteenth century were made in England, though some were imported from Holland and France.[89] England's button production grew from a cottage industry in the seventeenth century to a major industry in the eighteenth century, though there was variation in production levels according to button type. In the seventeenth century, buttonmakers made thread-covered buttons of silk, hair, or twill over a ring of wire, and Dorset was a center of buttonmaking.[90] The vitality of this industry was actively protected by the crown, and a variety of governmental acts were passed in England in the seventeenth century to protect English buttonmakers from competition from cheaper imports and textile-covered buttons.[91] William IV imposed a penalty on the cheaper imported buttons. Queen Anne forbade wearing cloth-covered buttons at a penalty of £5 per dozen.[92]

Metal-buttonmaking became a major industry in England in the eighteenth century, contrasting with the cottage industry of the thread-covered buttons in the seventeenth century.[93] The industry was centered in Birmingham, and Matthew Boulton ran the largest and most well-known manufactory, though there were many other successful buttonmakers. In 1761 there were eighty-three buttonmakers in Birmingham who manufactured and plied their own specialty buttons. They made gilt, plated, silvered, lacquered, pinchbeck, inlaid glass, ivory, pearl, horn, and brass buttons.[94]

The metal-button industry was also protected through parliamentary efforts prohibiting the domestic manufacture of textile-covered buttons and the importation of French textile-covered buttons.[95] Although these buttons were smuggled into England, the button industry remained successful and continued to thrive even after the demise of the buckle industry in the late eighteenth century.

NOTES

1. Points referred not only to the tip of the lace, but also to the laces themselves; Geoff Egan and Frances Pritchard. *Dress Accessories c. 1150–1450. Medieval Finds from Excavations in London:* 3 (London: HMSO, 1991), 280.
2. Alice Morse Earle, *Two Centuries of Costume in America, 1620–1820*, 2 vols. (1903; repr., Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1971), 174–75.
3. Ivor Noël Hume, *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 255; Earle, *Two Centuries of Costume in America*, 174.
4. Cited in Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (1893; repr., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 317.
5. Kathleen Deagan, *Artifacts of the Spanish Colonies of Florida and the Caribbean, 1500–1800*, vol. 2: *Portable Personal Possessions*, (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 175.
6. Ivor Noël Hume, *Martin's Hundred* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 57–61.
7. Egan and Pritchard, 281; Deagan, 174–75.
8. Cited in John Wallace, "Accessories to Masculine Fashion," *Discovering Antiques* 19 (1936): 823.
9. Bernard Hughes and Therle Hughes, *Georgian Shoe Buckles* (London: Greater London Council, 1972), 1.
10. Parrish, Potts, Shields, and Company, *Invoice Book*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Doc. 310, Downs Collection (Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Winterthur, Delaware, 1783).
11. Parrish, Potts, Shields, and Company.
12. Joan Evans, *A History of Jewellery, 1100–1870* (Boston, 1970), 163.
13. Elisabeth McClellan, *Historic Dress in America, 1607–1870*, vol. 1. (1939; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1977), 244.
14. Merry W. Abbitt, "The Eighteenth-Century Shoe Buckle," in *Five Artifact Studies* by Audrey Noël Hume, Merry W. Abbitt, Robert H. McNulty, Isabel Davies, and Edward Chappell (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg, 1973), 35.
15. Abbit, 35.
16. Hughes and Hughes, 1.
17. June Swann, *Shoe Buckles: Catalogue of Shoe and Other Buckles in Northampton Museum* (Northampton, Canada: Northampton Borough Council Museums and Art Gallery, 1981), 2.
18. Hughes and Hughes, 1.
19. Cited in Hughes and Hughes, 5.
20. Philip Mould, *The English Shoe Buckle* (Neston, England: Leemans Seel House, 1979), 4.
21. Diana Scarisbrick, *Jewellery in Britain, 1066–1837: A Documentary, Social, Literary, and Artistic Survey* (Norwich, England: Michael Russell, 1994), 238.
22. Penrose R. Hoopes, *Connecticut Clockmakers of the Eighteenth Century* (Hartford, CT: Edwin Valentine Mitchell, 1930), 9.
23. See, for example, Charles S. Parsons, *New Hampshire Silver* (Warner, NH: Brayshaw and Co., 1983).
24. Mould, 5.
25. Mould, 6–7.
26. Hughes and Hughes, 2.
27. Wallace, 823.
28. Tutania was invented in 1772 by William Tutin and is an alloy of brass, antimony, and tin. Tutin's name is sometimes stamped on his tutania buckles (Mould, 8).
29. Hughes and Hughes, 2.
30. Mould, 10.
31. Hughes and Hughes, 4.
32. Mould, 9.
33. Hughes and Hughes, 5.
34. Scarisbrick, 238; Hughes and Hughes, 5.
35. Shirley Bury, *An Introduction to Sentimental Jewelry* (London: HMSO, 1985), 23; Hughes and Hughes, 5; Mould, 7.
36. W. Raymond Wood, "Ethnohistory and Historical Method," in *Archaeological Method and Theory*, vol. 2, ed. Michael B. Schiffer (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990).
37. Nathaniel Sherman, *Account Book*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Acc. 1994-024(M) (New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord, New Hampshire, 1716–1753).
38. Samuel Jackson, *Account Book*, Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, Doc. 406, Downs Collection (Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Winterthur, Delaware, 1792–1805). James Stewart, *Plocacosmos: Or the Whole Art of Hair Dressing; which is Contained Ample Rules for the Young Artisan, more particularly for ladies, women, valets, &c, &c*, (London: Printed by the author, 1782).
39. Like all of the developments in shoe buckle styles, most of these styles overlapped with, rather than replaced, one another, and the dates used in the section that follows are rough estimates rather than firm rules.
40. To generalize, working-class people wore buckles of base metals with plain decoration, artisans and craftspeople wore more elaborate buckles of finer metals, and the wealthy wore the most elaborate and expensive buckles (Mould, 3).
41. Hughes and Hughes, 3.
42. Ross Whitehead, *Buckles: 1250–1800* (Chelmsford, Essex: Greenlight Publishing, 1996), 12.
43. Mould, 1; Wallace, 824.
44. Mould, 2.
45. Mould, 2.
46. Swann, 2.
47. Whitehead, 96. cf. Noël Hume, *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America*, 84–88; Abbit.

48. C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), 156.
49. Whitehead, 97.
50. Mould, 3; Whitehead, 97.
51. Hughes and Hughes, 3; C. Willett Cunnington and Phillis Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 229; Whitehead, 10.
52. Whitehead, 103; Mould, 3.
53. Whitehead, 103; Hughes and Hughes, 3.
54. Swann, 14.
55. Mould, 3; Hughes and Hughes, 4.
56. Whitehead, 11, 103; Hughes and Hughes, 3.
57. Swann, 14.
58. Mould, 4.
59. Hughes and Hughes, 4.
60. Whitehead, 96, 97; Swann, 2.
61. Mould, 3.
62. Whitehead, 103.
63. Hughes and Hughes, 2.
64. Meredith Wright, *Put on Thy Beautiful Garments: Rural New England Clothing, 1783–1800* (East Montpelier, VT: The Clothes Press, 1990), 83.
65. Nancy O. Bryant, "Buckles and Buttons: An Inquiry into Fastening Systems Used on Eighteenth-Century English Breeches," *Dress* 14: 27–36.
66. Cunnington and Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, 63.
67. Linda Welters, personal communication, 2001.
68. cf. Bryant; Phillis Cunnington, *Costume in Pictures* (London: Studio Vista, 1964), 103.
69. Whitehead, 111.
70. Cunnington and Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, 63, 211.
71. Whitehead, 111.
72. See Parsons, 27–28.
73. Beau Brummel, *Male and Female Costume* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1932), 109.
74. Cunnington and Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, 83; Whitehead, 113.
75. Whitehead, 114.
76. Cunnington and Cunnington, *Handbook of English Costume in the Eighteenth Century*, 143.
77. See Henry Rene d'Allemagne, *Les Accessoires du Costume et du Mobilier* (Paris: Schemit, 1928), pl. XLII; Wallace, 824.
78. Scarisbrick, 358, figure 43.
79. Whitehead, 81–82; Noël Hume, *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America*, 85.
80. See Nicholas Luccketti and Beverly Straube, *1998 Interim Report on the APVA Excavations at Jamestown, Virginia* (Richmond, VA: Association for the Preservation of Virginia, 1998), 37; Alaric Faulkner and Gretchen Faulkner, *The French at Pentagoet 1635–1674: An Archaeological Portrait of the Acadian Frontier* (Augusta: Maine Historic Preservation Commission, 1987).
81. Lois K. Stabler, ed., *Very Poor and of a Lo Make: The Journal of Abner Sanger* (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall, 1986).
82. Stabler, 140.
83. Stabler, 217.
84. Stabler, 473, 355.
85. Walter Stewart, *Papers*, Philadelphia, Col. 142, Downs Collection (Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Winterthur, Delaware, 1773–1796).
86. For example, D. P. White, "The Birmingham Button Industry," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 11 (1977); Stanley South, "Analysis of the Buttons from Brunswick Town and Fort Fisher," *Florida Anthropologist* 17, no. 2 (1964); Stephen Hinks, *A Structural and Functional Analysis of Eighteenth Century Buttons*, Volumes in Historical Archaeology, vol. 32, 1988; Stanley J. Olsen, "Dating Early Plain Buttons by Their Form," *American Antiquity* 28, no. 4 (1963).
87. South.
88. Carl C. Dauterman, "Buttons: Historical Notes and Bibliography," *Cooper Union Museum Chronicle* 1, no. 6 (1940), 237; Egan and Pritchard, 280; White, 67.
89. Primrose Peacock, *Discovering Old Buttons* (Aylesbury, England: Shire Publication, 1978), 6.
90. White, 67, 68.
91. These were embroidered buttons on fabric over a bone or horn mold. See discussion of textile-covered buttons.
92. White, 68.
93. Wallace, 823.
94. Scarisbrick, 292.
95. Wallace, 823.
96. Dauterman, 239, 241.
97. John Gaines II and Thomas Gaines, *Account Book*, Ipswich, Massachusetts, Col. 409, Downs Collection (Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library, Winterthur, Delaware, 1707–1762).
98. Dauterman, 241, 243.
99. White.
100. White, 69.
101. White, 69; Lillian Smith Albert and Kathryn Kent, *The Complete Button Book* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1949), 17, 18, 22.
102. White, 69.
103. Described and cited in Albert and Kent, 10.
104. Elizabeth Hughes and Marion Lester, *The Big Book of Buttons* (Boyertown, PA: Boyertown Publishing Company, 1981), 216.
105. White, 69.
106. Albert and Kent, 8; Olsen, 552; Hughes and Lester, 216; Peacock, 14.