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Buttoning Down the Past: A Look at Buttons as Indicators of Chronology and Material Culture

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Buttons as Indicators of Material Culture

The study of past cultures is the preoccupation of archaeology, one which includes a craving for all the minutia of detail. Seeking to know not only strict history of the past, but to understand material culture, life ways, and social change, the archaeologist is often thwarted in the search for detail. Through excavation, a carefully built picture of the past is formed. Unfortunately, many aspects of life do not survive the process of entering the archaeological record. Clothing styles are one of these missing bits of the puzzle. Using button collecting literature, the results of archaeological excavations at early American sites, fashion histories, and personal accounts such as travel journals, this paper identifies buttons more commonly found on archaeological sites in the eastern United States and gives date ranges and specific identifying features for the material types. It also will attempt to link these buttons to the people who wore them and the clothing types which they adorned. Many features related to fashion and clothing styles do not survive in the archaeological record. Buttons represent an exception to that rule, and attention should be paid to them as surviving descriptions of daily wear. Military buttons are not covered, as these artifacts are well documented in military history texts.

Classification and Chronological Scheme

Buttons have been sorted according to material (see Table 1) and assigned categories based on this composition. While most types of buttons would survive in an archaeological context, wood, paper, and cloth items present difficulties. Paper buttons are not discussed, due to the rapidity of decay in the soil. Wooden and cloth buttons,

however, are more likely to survive in part and thus present some evidence during analysis. A discussion of material types and basic manufacturing techniques follows.

Bone buttons were often constructed in the home during the 17th and 18th centuries. Usually made of cow or pig bone, the raw material is soaked or steamed to soften. It is then separated into sheets (thickness of the desired button), and a circular saw is used to cut out and remove the button blanks. These are polished, and holes are drilled into the body to allow sewing onto garments. A few of the later ones from the 19th century are mounted on metal shanks. Plain bone buttons tend to be utilitarian in nature, such as fastening undergarments. Carved or inlaid bone buttons were produced in the second half of the 19th century in factories, and were intended for fancy outer wear. Not only buttons are recovered, but the strips of prepared bone with holes cut from them for blanks are recovered in site excavations.

Celluloid was utilized for button manufacture from it's inception in 1869 up to the present. Originally developed to imitate ivory, it was intricately carved and inlaid. Later examples were 'window' buttons, in which a thin clear layer of celluloid covered a variety of decorative designs. In order to detect this material, rub the suspected button vigorously. As celluloid heats, it gives off an acidic odor.

Ceramics were fashioned as buttons from at least the early 1700's into the present. Earthenware types may be dated either as to ceramic guides (see jasperware) or by distinctive coloration. Porcelain buttons did not occur until the mid 19th century, and may be dated as to motif or back marks. Small calico buttons, which were transfer printed with checkered and calico designs, and birdcages, which were hollow two piece buttons with the backs slightly extended and three to five sew-through holes, were very common, especially in women's clothing. After the McKinley tariff act of 1891, imported ceramic buttons were stamped with either country of origin or registry marks.

Cloth does not often survive burial, but the metal or bone structural elements of these buttons will do so. Fabric was either stretched over metal/bone hoops or thread

was woven around these bases in a lace-like manner. The process of making cloth covered buttons was automated in the early 19th century, and was returned to partial hand construction in dressmaker shops during the latter half of the century as fashion dictated buttons be covered to match the garments they adorned. Metal bases or hoops with corresponding metal shanks attached were not developed until the early 19th century, and thick metal rings with a single hole in the center may represent examples of the flexible canvas shank, developed in 1825.

Enameled buttons consisted of metal or glass bases which may or may not have been stamped with designs. Color is built up upon the bases by means of applying a number of coats of colored glass powder and repeated firings. These buttons are datable by examination of the enamel type and comparison with a number of available histories of enamel manufacture.

Glass has been crafted into buttons since the 18th century in Britain. 'Drop' buttons, or those constructed of globs of glass and polished or faceted and mounted on a U- shaped metal shank (rather like a staple), were imported from Britain. Blown glass buttons with glass shanks appear in the 19th century and perhaps previously. Blown glass with metal shanks were developed after 1900. Lacey glass, both that of the pressed tableware fame and look-alikes, was produced from 1825 to 1870, primarily for women's clothing. In 1840, milk glass buttons, simple utilitarian two to four hole sew-through styles of opaque white pressed glass, began to replace brass and gilt buttons in men's wear.

Horn buttons represent another pre-colonial tradition. Natural horn buttons were slices of antler or the solid portion near the tip of the horn. These blanks were fashioned in much the same way as bone buttons. Processed horn buttons were patented in 1830. The hollow portion of the horn was soaked, straightened, and became so plastic that blanks could be stamped or molded. These buttons are often dyed black.

Composite buttons consist of ground horn and hoof mixed with various resins, which were then molded into various decorative motifs.

Ivory has been carved and inlaid as buttons since precolonial times. A number of US firms imported both the finished product and raw materials. In the 19th century, vegetable ivory, or corozo nut, was utilized as a replacement material. In 1869, celluloid was also developed to imitate ivory buttons.

Metal has been fashioned into buttons from at least the 16th century into modern times. Aluminum buttons were very fashionable in the late 19th century, due to the newness of the metal and its relative scarcity- aluminum was even more expensive than gold. Brass, tombric, or yellow metal buttons were alloys of various mixtures, and were often more orange in color in earlier years due to the high amount of copper present in the alloy. These buttons were most popular from the late 18th century until 1820, at which time they were replaced by gilded, or gold plated brass, buttons. This 'Golden Age' of buttons lasted until 1850, at which time milk glass buttons took over in traditional men's wear. Most popular between 1800 and 1870, iron buttons were usually inexpensive stamped buttons, usually with two to five sew-through holes, although some two piece self-shanked iron buttons have been found.

Silver buttons have been constructed from the 16th century into the present. Early forms (up to the 18th century) are often linked buttons. These pairs of buttons represent a style of fastening which disappears in the 1700's, in which the shank of a button is attached by links to another button or a toggle. These pairs of linked buttons were found on men's trousers or coats. A number of other styles of silver buttons were in vogue during the 18th century, including capped, or 'gentleman's' buttons. These buttons were favored for both military officers garments and civilian men of standing. A base of wood, horn, ivory, or bone was capped with a layer of silver, usually plain. In 1754, Joseph Hopkins constructed nine buttons of horn blanks capped with silver (Luscomb, 181). Silver once again became stylish in the latter half of the 19th and the

20th centuries among women, often fashioned as window or picture buttons. White metal, or pewter, was the name given to a variety of white colored alloys. Pewter buttons were popular from 1700 to 1820, and then were revived in the 1850's. These buttons were molded and often homemade. They were either self-shanked from the molding process or were attached by wire shanks. A number of pewter button molds are still in existence, and will be addressed in the following section on metal manufacturing techniques. Iron shanks were attached to pewter buttons after 1800, and pewter buttons often carry back marks, identifying the maker of the button. This practice began around 1800, and was widespread by 1820. Britannia buttons were a specific alloy, usually around 90% tin and 10% antimony. It was developed in 1770, and was always stamped 'Britannia' on imports.

Pearl or Shell has been used to produce buttons from pre-colonial times. In the United States, most of the pearl buttons were constructed of imported freshwater or oceanic shells prior to 1891. Some marine shell buttons were manufactured in the US in 1855, and French colonists used Mississippi mussels to produce pearl cuff buttons in a report noted in 1802 by French Minister of the Interior Dr. F. A. Michaux. However, early attempts to utilize native freshwater shells in Knoxville in 1883 failed, either due to foreign competition or inadequate equipment. In 1892, J. F. Boepple started a freshwater pearl button manufacturing firm and this time domestic manufacture of freshwater buttons caught on (Claassen, 4-5). Abalone shells from the Pacific coast were first fashioned into buttons in 1750, and continue to be produced today.

Shells are soaked up to a week before circular drills are used to remove blanks of the desired size. These are then tumbled to remove the rough outer layers, and sliced into the appropriate thickness. Pearl buttons that are to be carved are then artistically treated, polished, and a metal shank is attached. Sew-through pearl buttons are size and color graded in the blank stage. They are then drilled, polished, and

occasionally bleached or dyed. Used shells can be found near factories which are riddled with holes from this process.

Rubber buttons have been in use from the 1850's to the present. Patented in 1851 by Nelson Goodyear, hard rubber buttons went into production almost immediately, but did not catch on with the public until the middle part of the decade. Often, they will be back marked with 'Goodyear 1851' or 'Goodyear 1849-1951' in reference to the patent dates. Rubber buttons were often used as advertisements, stamped or molded with slogans and often handed out to consumers.

Wood buttons were also made in colonial crafts shops and homes. During the 18th century, most wooden buttons were plain and utilitarian. In 1770, Benjamin Randolph advertised his apple, holy, and laurel buttons (Luscomb, ix). Decorated wooden buttons, which were carved, painted, and inlaid, were popular in the 19th century.

Metal Button Manufacturing Techniques

Metal buttons have been constructed in a variety of methods over time. One of the simplest and earliest is die cutting. Used with silver sheets, button blanks were dye cut from the metal. These can then be stamped, or the cutting and stamping can be accomplished in one step. Shanks would then be soldered to the back of the buttons. Molded metal is heated until liquid and then poured into a heated mold to cool. These molds could be either self-shanking (Olsen, 1964) or intended for manual attachment of wire shanks (Smith, 1990). Pewter was commonly molded into buttons, due to the low temperature of melting and ease of re-use. Smith presents an interesting pewter button mold, apparently made of stone and designed to produce shallow buttons with wire shanks. It was probably intended for home use, as one could envision frontier settlers needing to fashion material goods such as buttons. Olsen's button mold is a more common type, in which a metal mold is held by wooden handles as it cools. It appears

to be designed like lead bullet molds of the period. Both types of molds can be plain or decorated, usually with either military insignia or geometric designs.

Wire shanks were attached to the back of buttons in two major methods. The first, named Alpha by collectors, features a loop of wire which is soldered with flux to the back of the button. Due to the small area of attachment, these shanks often broke off, and should be recoverable in excavations if soil is water screened. The Omega type replaced this early style by 1800, and continued in production to the 20th century. The wire loop has ends which been bent outward, providing more surface area for flux to bind in soldering. It provided more stability than the earlier style. In the 1820's, the Sanders type shank came into use. Wire shanks were riveted into the back plate of two piece button by pressure and the top of the button was folded over the back plate.

Two piece metal buttons were commonly die cut, then crimped together. This style was developed at the end of the 18th century, and was very popular for both yellow metal and white metal buttons, as well as gilt. This technique varied throughout the 19th century, and provided the basis for many of the metal buttons of the time. The upper portion, or cap, could be plain, embossed, painted, etched, etc.

Back Marks

Many buttons which date after 1800 will possess back marks, which allow some dating and collection of associated information. Metal buttons will often be stamped with the names of makers or places. Porcelain buttons after 1891 are impressed as being imported, and some show British registry marks. Some types of synthetic buttons are molded with place names or brand names. Advertisements and company uniform buttons often contain datable slogans. Table 3 presents a group of example back marks.

Buttons as Indicators of Material Culture

Several differing groups of clothing styles and possible associations with buttons which may be found archaeologically are discussed below. The fashions of middle to upper class women in the antebellum period of 1840 to 1860 bewilders in its variety. The clothing of black women in the nineteenth century shows a marked distinction in social class and occupation. Early accounts of one slave in Maryland in 1783 details some of his 'Sunday best' clothing.

Women, Free and Slave, 1840 to 1860

There is a common belief that women did not use buttons as methods of fastening clothing prior to the 19th century, but rather made use of complicated hook and eye catches, ribbons, ties, and temporary stitching. However, even during this period, the button played an important place in decoration. By the era examined here, from 1840 to 1860, buttons were an integral factor in women's clothing, serving as mechanical fasteners and decorative statements of status and self-image.

A number of important changes come into effect in this time span that reflect on both fashion itself and our present ability to study the styles of the time. Perhaps most important is the wide-spread use of the sewing machine. With this device, production of clothing became much easier and faster. It was possible to have several different dresses rather than the two or three of earlier years. Additionally, the speed at which fashion styles could be incorporated into new clothing was hastened without having to hand sew each new article. General increased economic position, due in great part to the expansion of the overseas trade of cotton, allowed for richer materials, use of more fabric, and faster changing of styles. The development of a number of new button styles became popular during this period, including china paste buttons and cloth-covered buttons with improved flexible cloth shanks, which allowed the wearers more freedom both in style and in placement on clothing.

In determining the fashion styles of this period, the development of photography and the public's instant fascination with true-life 'portraits' comes into play. Not only does the investigator have to rely on preserved pieces from museums and private collections or descriptions and sketches from written period accounts, but actual photographs of the clothing are available. Unlike portraits, which were usually commissioned only by more well-to-do individuals, photographs give a wider cross-section of what the general public was wearing, rather than those on the cutting edge of fashion. Even slaves and servants were photographed, providing valuable information about these previously 'hidden' portions of the population.

Undergarments of the era included petticoats, hoops, nightgowns, chemises, and bloomers. A surprising number of these articles included buttons in what could only be a mechanical usage, as the undergarments were not for general show. I examined one chemise dating to 1850 in a local antique store. Constructed of thin but sturdy white cotton broadcloth, it was trimmed in eyelet lace. The chemise opened in the front, with the bottom held fast by a white, milk-glass button, approximately one-fourth of an inch in diameter. The top of the closure, which might possibly have been seen peeking out of a dress bodice, was held closed by a ribbon tie. A number of garments in collections also illustrate this hidden button attribute. In Tina Irick-Nauer's Price Guide to Antique and Vintage Clothes, she mentions a pair of cotton underwear from 1845 featuring a drawstring waist and buttoned crotch. Additionally, a picture of a silk bodice, completely buttoned up the front, apparently with small glass buttons, and an abundance of lace is dated to 1850 (15).

Those buttons which appear on outer garments are either constructed of precious materials, such as pearl, gold or silver, glass "paperweights", or decorated, inlaid designs under glass covers, or are manufactured as cloth covered buttons with metal supports and either metal or cloth shanks for sewing onto fabric (Luscomb, 80-89: Epstein and Safro, 70). A number of hidden buttons, plain and used entirely for their

mechanical purposes, are evidenced in underclothing and most likely in outer wear as well. Metal blanks with holes in the center and raised edges suggest cloth covered buttons, commonly seen as both decoration and fastening in bodices. Fancy buttons are almost always seen on outer garments, while utilitarian glass, plain metal or ceramic, and mismatched left-over buttons fastened undergarments. As women's bodices become looser, buttons become more prominent and decorative.

Male Slaves, late 18th century

The case of Charles Cox, a black slave living in Maryland during the late eighteenth century, sheds light on the clothing of at least the more privileged members of slave society. Mr. Cox was a highly skilled individual who ran the mill house on the Whitehall plantation, owned by Maryland Governor Horatio Sharpe. On the night of February 3, 1783, the mill burned. The plantation manager interviewed a number of people to determine the cause of the blaze, including the overseer and Mr. Cox. Sprinkle notes the written accounts of Charles Cox's interview (Maryland State Archives, 1783), in which a description of the contents of a chest belonging to Mr. Cox are described:

> He [Cox] had a chest on the middle mill house floor in which he always kept his best clothes ... two shirts, two summer waistcoats, a good light brown broadcloth coat with silver basket buttons (formerly Col. Sharpe's), a yellow broadcloth waistcoat with yellow buttons, a pair of brown cloth breeches with yellow metal buttons... a silver sleeve button....

Of these materials, the only objects to survive in an archaeological context would be the silver basket buttons from the light brown coat, the yellow buttons from the waistcoat and breeches, and the silver sleeve button. Most likely, the silver basket buttons were actually a type of white metal, rather than actual silver. The yellow buttons would probably have been cast of a brass alloy. Judging from the time period involved,

none of these buttons were two-piece in construction. Please refer to the earlier section on metal button typology and manufacture for more details.

As to the clothing itself, it is interesting to note that Charles Cox wears clothing that, while probably not the height of men's fashion, is of quality and is regarded as belonging to Mr. Cox, by himself and the manager and overseer of the plantation. The broadcloth coat, which is a gift from Gov. Sharpe, illustrates the practice of dressing high status slaves in quality clothing, perhaps as a method of increasing the status of the plantations owner. If the owner can afford to dress his slaves in fashionable attire, this could reflect his wealth. Thus, it is possible to assume that the clothing of highly visible slave, with a higher status in the slave hierarchy, closely follows that of high status slave owners.

Table 1 Button typology and basic chronology

Material type		Date Range	Notes
Bone	Plain	Pre-colonial to present	Often homemade during 17th & 18th C.; sew throughs w/ 2-5 holes.
	Carved/inlaid	Post 1850	Fancy buttons, usually produced in a button plant instead of home made.
Celluloid		1869 to present	Early used to imitate carved ivory, later (1900) a two piece 'window' button
Ceramic	Earthenware	1700 to present	
	Jasperware type	1825-1853	Produced by Wedgewood and imitated by many.
	Norwalk type	1906-1950	Dark red-brown, with occasional light colors. Connecticut production.
	Pewabic type	Early 20th C.	Blue and gray body, coppery glaze. From Detroit.
	Ruskin type	Late 18th C., popular 1850 - 1920	British. Blue, green, brown, or purple non-lead glazes, "Ruskin" stamped.
	Porcelain	1840- ?	Usually handpainted or transfer printed
	Calico type	1891- ?	Transfer printed, usually a color on white. Mostly sew-through, 1/4" to 1 1/4"
	Coalport type	Late 19th C. to present	Coalport makers mark, decal decoration.
	Satsuma type	Late 19th C. to present	Japanese, feldspathic glaze, red, green, or golden body.Self-shanked.
	Birdcages	Mid 19th C.	Hollow 2 piece buttons, shank fired to top of button, often painted.
Cloth	Cloth shanks	1825 on	Flexible canvas shank developed by Saunders, Jr.
	Dorset	Mid 18th to mid 19th C.	Woven thread flat or piled over a metal or bone ring; British cottage industry.
	Embroidered	1700 on	Automated in early 19th C.
	Metal shanks	1810's on	Metal shank attached to fabric button, developed by Saunders.
	Undecorated	17th C.	Fabric stretched over bone, ivory, wood, or metal hoops.
Enameled		19th C. on	Metal disk bases, 'painted' w/ colored glass powders and fired.
Glass	Antiquarian/faceted	18th-19th C.	British 'drop' buttons w/ U shank and faceted glass.
	Blown,glass shanks	19th C.	Hollow w/ decorative filling; pearl-like buttons; round,oval, or faceted.
	Blown, metal shanks	After 1900	Metal plate w/ shank attached to glass body, decorated as above.
	Crackle glazed	19th C. on	Balls on wire shanks, usually clear; plunged into water producing cracked top.
	Coralene	19th C.	Improved process patented 1883; glass beads fused onto disk, often gilded.
	Lacey glass	1825 - 1870	Pressed glass, composed of actual 'lacey glass' between 1825 & 1850.
	Milk glass	1840 to 1940's	Pressed glass, white opaque. Shirts and structural use.
Horn (including hoof)			

Table 1 Button typology and basic chronology

	Composite	Late 19th C. to present	Ground hoof &horn w/ resins, molded in various designs.
	Natural	Pre-colonial to late 19th C.	Slices of antler or solid tips of horn; plain, carved, or inlaid.
	Processed	1830 to present	Hollow portion of horn, soaked and stamped or molded; usually dyed black.
Ivory	True ivory	Pre-colonial to 1960's	Imported finished and raw materials, carved and inlaid.
	Vegetable ivory	19th and early 20th C.	Made of corozo nut; white (natural tone), yellow, or amber; worked as ivory.
Metal	Aluminum	1880's to present	Early forms were 1 or 2 piece stamped & more expensive than gold/silver.
	Stenciled	1931 to 1940's	Very flat, enameled and lacquered with geometric designs and bold colors.
	Brass / Tombric /Yellowmetal	1700's to present	Mostly imported before 1780; popular after 1800; see Table 2.
	Coin	17th C to present	Real coins and stamped faces, popular with silver coins in US during 19th C.
	Copper	Late 17th to early 20th C.	Plain prior to 1800, then stamped, engraved, inlaid, etc. Modern are alloys.
	Gilt	1800 to 1850's	Prior to 1830, one piece buttons; two piece from 1830-1850.
	Iron	1800 to 1870	Stamped or two piece, sew throughs (2 or 4 hole, 4 most common)
	Silver	16th. C on	Mens fashions, large size. Smaller ones are cuff or breeches buttons.
	Linked	17th to 18th C.	Shanks linked in pairs or a button and toggle; men's coats and breeches.
	Capped backs	18th to 19th C.	Thin silver caps over wood, bone, horn, or ivory blanks
	Solid stamped	18th to 19th C.	Disks are cut from sheets and engraved and stamped.
	2-part fused	18th to 19th C.	Hollow, fused with silver flux.
	Picture	19th to 20th C.	Smaller, worn by women.
	White metal		
	Pewter	1700-1820, 1850's on	Molded, often homemade. Either self-shanked or wire shanked.
	w/ iron shanks	After 1800	Developed by Grilley and Brothers, CT.
	Britannia	1770 to 1800's	Imported and stamped 'Britannia' on back. 90% tin, 10%antimony
Pearl / Shell			
	White or Smoked	Pre-colonial; US man. from 1892	Can be freshwater or oceanic; imported prior to 1892
	Abalone	1750 to present	Carved cameos prior to 1880, smooth backs prior to 1900
Rubber		1850's on	Popular 1855 on; often stamped '1851' or '1849-1851'; often ads.
Wood		Pre-colonial to present	18th C. plain & utilitarian; 19th C. decorated (carved, painted, etc.)

Table 2

Typology of early metal buttons
Adapted from Olsen (1963) and South (1964)

Material	Style	Date	Notes
Gilt	Orange cast	1800-1820	Two piece brass, high copper content
	True gilted/ yellow	1820-1850	Two piece brass, plated with gold solution 'Dandelion water'
Iron	Plain, 4-holed sew-through	1800-1870	One piece cast, with drilled holes.
Silver	Capped	1700-1790	Thin silver sheet over bone, etc base.
	Linked	17th -18th C.	Old style, not common; linked button pairs.
Steel	Stamped 2 piece 4-holed	post 1870	Rim is clamped onto base, which forms entire center of button.
Yellow metal / brass			
	Cast shanks, wedge shaped	1700-1765	See button molds.
	Spun-back	1760-1785	Wire eye inset & spun to wanted thickness; 'swirl' marks on back.
	Two-piece, 'bullet shapes'	1810-1830	Highly conical, developed for military uniform buttons.
	Two-piece	1830 to present	Cap of brass crimped around base, w/ or w/o attached wire shank.
	Plain, Alpha wire shank	1785-1800	Wire eye soldered to back, small surface attachment.
	Plain, Omega wire shank	1800-1830	Wire eye w/ bent ends soldered on; thus more surface & stability.
White metal / pewter			
	Cast shanks, wedge shaped	1700-1765	See button molds.
	Wire ring, embedded	1760-1790	Iron wire ring, embedded within the raised back.
	Spun-back	1760-1785	Wire eye inset & spun to wanted thickness; 'swirl' marks on back.
	Cast heavy shanks, round	18th to mid 19th C.	Often made in the home; molded.
	Plain, 4-holed sew-through	1800-1860	One piece cast, with drilled holes.

Table 3.
Representative manufacturing firms and their back marks

Firm	Back mark	Dates	Notes
A. Goodyear & Son	A. Goodyear	1812- 1827	Pewter and gilt buttons
Ames Sword Company	Ames Sword Co.	1834- 1923	Metal uniform
George Armitage	George Armitage	1800- 1830's	Metal button blanks; based in Philadelphia
B. Sanders & Son	B. Sanders	ca. 1810	Developed the two piece crimped metal button "Sanders type", & cloth covered buttons with metal shanks.
Aaron Benedict	A. Benedict	1812- 1820's 1823- 1829	Pewter One piece yellow metal
Benedict & Burnham	Benedict and Burnham	1834- 1843	Brass 1 & 2 piece
	Caen	post 1830	Molded horn; marked as products of Caen, France.
	Casein	1900- 1950's	Early plastic produced from milk solids.
Charles Yale	Charles Yale	1830's	Pewter & Yellow/ Gilded
Cheshire Manufacturing Co.	Cheshire Man. Co.	1850-1901	Metal dress and uniform buttons
Coalport Works	Coalport British registry marks	post 1891	Porcelain buttons, decaled and gilded.
D. Evans & Company	D. Evans & Company	1848- 1942	Metal uniform, gilt, brass plated w/ pearl inlaid centers.
Dickinson Hard Rubber Company	D.H.R. Co.	ca. 1878	Dull black hard rubber buttons, either 2 holes or shelf shanked.
Draper & Sandland	Draper & Sandland D. & S. Extra Rich	ca. 1878	High quality gilt mens wear buttons.

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Firm	Back mark	Dates	Notes
E. Fowler	E. Fowler	1812	Pewter
E. R. Yale	E. R. Yale Meriden	1880's	Small (sleeve sized) gilt buttons; based out of Meriden, CT
E. Scott	E. Scott Scott & Co.	Early 1800's	CT based, pewter (?) and brass (?)
Ellsworth & Thayer Manufacturing Co.	Ellsworth & Thayer Manufacturing Co.	1890-1920	Black molded composite buttons
Straw & Ellsworth Manufacturing Co.	Straw & Ellsworth Manufacturing Co.	1890-1900	Black molded composite buttons
Maltby Fowler	M. Fowler Northford	1800-1820	Pewter
Nelson Goodyear	Goodyear 1849-1851 Goodyear 1851	post 1851, popular after 1856	Hard rubber; date in back mark refers to patent years.
Hyde & Goodrich	Hyde & Goodrich	1850- 1860's	Metal Confederate uniform buttons.

India Rubber Comb Co.	I.R.C. CO., Goodyear 1851	1880's- 1890's	Rubber rosettes under glass in brass mounting, and standard rubber.
L. Ives	L. Ives	ca. 1814	Plain pewter
W. H. Jones	W. H. Jones	1830- 1832	Gilt buttons
Judd & Wooster	Judd & Wooster	1830's	Pewter
Leavenworth & Kendrick	Leavenworth & Kendrick	1829- 1837.	Gilt buttons
Leavenworth, Spencer, & Sperry	L. S. & S.	1830's	Gilt buttons
Anson Matthews	A. Matthews	1806- 1830	Pewter buttons with wire shanks.
Novelty Rubber Company	Novelty Rubber Company N. R. Co.	1855-1870	Hard rubber buttons
R. & W. Robinson & Company	R. Robinson & Co. Robinson, Jones & Co. Jones & Co. R. & W. Robinson R & W R. Co.	1812- 1840's	Pewter, yellow metal, and gilt buttons.
Reeds, Jacobs & Sons	Reeds, Jacobs & Sons	1900's	Uniform buttons

Firm	Back mark	Dates	Notes
Ruskin Pottery	Ruskin	1900's	Earthenware, with a colored glaze.
Firm	Back mark	Dates	Notes
Van Wart, Sons & CO.	Van Wart, Sons & CO.	1860's	Uniform buttons
Wanamaker & Brown	Wanamaker & Brown	1861 to 1885	A merchant company who contracted button firms to make individualized metal imprinted buttons.
Waterbury Button Company; Waterbury Companies, Inc.	A. Benedict & Co. Benedict & Coe Benedict & Burnham (B & B Co.) Waterbury Button Company	1823- 1828 1829- 1833 1834- 1848 1849 on	Brass and gilt Gilt Gilt Metal