

Dress for Life and Death: The Archaeology of Common Nineteenth-Century Buttons

Anatolijs Venovcevs, BA Hons, Staff Archaeologist

Archaeological Services Inc., Toronto

Paper written and presented for the 23rd annual Forward Into the Past Conference

April 6, 2013, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario

Introduction

This paper is about one of the smallest, humblest, and most ubiquitous artifacts found on late eighteenth and nineteenth century archaeological sites. Hundreds of these objects are recovered every year from archaeological sites slated for development by contract, or CRM, archaeologists on virtually every continent. From a backwoods frontier cabin to a wealthy town house, from a small smithy to a large fort, and from back lot cemeteries in Ontario to church grave yards in England, it is almost impossible to excavate a site dating after the mid-eighteenth century without at least finding one such artifact. This object is so ubiquitous because it is virtually unthinkable to live without it and yet, after every major excavation, it has been generally overlooked. This is the common button.

The last three decades saw an increasing amount of ink spilled on the study of this ubiquitous object (Ferris 1986; Lindbergh 1999; Sprague 2002). Through fantastic research, archaeologists ironed out the methods of manufacture, the chronology, and possible applications of different button types. Divided by style and material they were produced from, buttons have been shown to be powerful chronological markers – an attribute highly valued by archaeologists. Some attempts have also been made to link buttons with social economic status or activity areas, like sewing (Lindbergh 1999:53-55), and to present a wider socio-historical context of how buttons enter the archaeological record (Ferris 1986:103).

This work has been supplemented by a wide array of button collectors who have helped to establish button chronologies and documented changes in style (Epstein 1968; Fink and Ditzler 1993; Luscomb 1997). However, for the archaeologist reading this material might not be adequate given the collector's focus on "special" buttons and, on a few occasions, lack of proper citation. Fashion historians have also added to the literature (de Marly 1986; Willet and Cunnington 1991), though their focus on cloth and other biodegradable material does not often make them accessible for pure archaeological study.

What has been missing from these approaches, especially on behalf of the archaeologists, is a concentrated method to link buttons to the garments individuals might have worn before these objects were lost and were deposited for us to recover. While, for instance, finding a small four-hole sew-through prosser ceramic button within a pit feature can be extremely useful, given that the patent date for the prosser manufacturing process is June 17, 1840 (Sprague 2002:113), and while the archaeologist might have an inkling what it was used for (a shirt) it does not address the biggest question: What does this say about the person who lost it?

In the following discussion, I cannot pretend to answer that question as this is a topic for more than one person to address. However, though a literature review it is possible to generate a loose understanding of buttons and their chronologies which, when compared to archaeological data as seen through the lens of fashion history, certain generalizations can be observed. It is hoped that

this paper can start to establish a dialogue between the disparate groups of researchers to develop a cohesive and comprehensive model through which the lives of people in the past can be understood on a deeper level through the clothes they chose to wear and thus their decisions on how to portray themselves to the rest of society.

The Archaeological History of Buttons

Before one can link individual buttons to types of clothing it is important to review the previous literature written about buttons. In previous research buttons were primarily divided by material class. This has proved fruitful as buttons were made from a variety of materials each of which has a tight chronological date.

Bone

Bone buttons are probably the oldest buttons known to humankind. Since the prehistoric era whenever two pieces of fabric needed to be fastened, bone, in the form of a broach or another similar button-like implement, could have been used. They were also very inexpensive to make as literally anyone with a dead animal and a few tools could carve out a bone fabric fastener. This allowed bone buttons to become some of the earliest buttons produced in the beginning of the eighteenth century.

They were made from the shinbones of various animals and any farmer with a dead animal and a lathe could make them. A lathe would be used to cut a circular tube into the bone which would then be individually shaped into a button with anywhere between one and five ringlets. They were primarily utilitarian in nature and were used for men's underwear and pant flies while others were employed for ladies shawls and cloaks (Ferris 1986:99-100). Single-holed bone buttons were used as backs for cloth covered buttons known as Dorsets or Cartwheels and were popular on men's shirts. These however went out of fashion by about 1830. Alternatively, a pinshank could have been used to attach the single-holed button to the garment (Lindbergh 1999:51).

Bone buttons fell out of popularity by the 1850s as a new method was developed that employed vegetable ivory, called horn, to make similar, easy to dye, buttons for cheap. Bone buttons that continued to be used had a negligible presence within fashion community (Ferris 1986:100; Lindbergh 1999:52).

Metal

Metal buttons were first commercially manufactured buttons in the eighteenth century. The first such button was the metal ringlets used for the aforementioned cloth-covered buttons (Ferris 1986:98). Unfortunately, these small metal loops are seldom identified as such in the archaeological record and are thus remain highly underrepresented in archaeological assemblages.

Thus, most identifiable metal buttons consist of fully metal fastening objects that became popular in the 1760s. Popular primarily in men's fashion, these buttons came in either one or two piece moulds and had either plated or gilded decorations – the specifics of which were often stamped on the back by the manufacturer (Ferris 1986:98).

Pewter was an early metal applied for button manufacturing. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century pewter was a versatile and commonly used metal on low quality silverware and other food-related objects. During this period, low-grade pewter was employed for the manufacture of buttons. These soft metal buttons were first made as a single piece with possibly a thin copper plate for extra support and decoration. Starting in the 1820s, a separate copper shank was added as the early pewter shanks would wear out quickly when exposed to constant rubbing by a thread. Pewter mostly disappeared out of use by the 1830s.

Most metal buttons were made out of brass or ferrous metal and at their peak during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, metal buttons were used by everyone for a wide variety of purposes. Metal buttons were seen on coats, shirts, waistcoats, cuffs, leggings, dresses, and shoes. Until the Victorian era a large quantity of buttons was seen as a status symbol (Ferris 1986:98). Gilded buttons dominated the fashion industry between the 1830s and 1850s leading to archaeologists to recover countless buttons with words such as “Double Gilt” or “Triple Gilt” incised on the back (Lindbergh 1999:52). The text itself, was mandatory by a 1796 Act of Parliament that required all gilded buttons to be designated to distinguish them from genuine gold (Meredith and Meredith 2004:26).

Metal buttons declined in the mid-nineteenth century with the development of the florentine button – a domed, cloth covered metal button with a flexible cloth shank (Lindbergh 1999:52). This button appealed to the Victorian tastes of plainness and simplicity (Ferris 1986:98) and later evolved into a cuprous utilitarian two-piece, two-hole sew-through button that was covered with cotton or linen to match the article of clothing it was sewn on (Lindbergh 1999:53).

Given their ubiquitous nature, buttons come in a variety of shapes and sizes making it easier to pinpoint their origin. There are, for instance, small to medium single or double piece buttons for cuffs and vests while larger specimens were made for coats and other outerwear. These can oftentimes be very easy to distinguish as the coat buttons were sometimes pushed to enormous proportions and can be over 30 mm in diameter. Other identifiable metal specimens include the two-holed metal button that was used on underwear (Ferris 1986:99) and the single piece four-hole sew-through button most commonly associated with suspenders, though it could have been used on any type of working shirt or pair of trousers (Lindbergh 1999:52). It would appear that utilitarian metal buttons for coats, underwear, and suspender buttons continued to be produced well into the late nineteenth century.

The last type of metal buttons is those used by the military. The British army in particular were quite fond of employing individualized buttons on their army units making the buttons important social and chronological indicators. These military buttons are not just isolated to military sites. As Thomas Kenyon (1984) previously observed, military buttons are not an uncommon find on domestic sites. The answers to how buttons meant for military uniforms end up on farmsteads far away from any military installations remain speculative. Kenyon suggested that these could

be souvenirs while some, where the archival records are more numerous, could be linked to individuals serving or formerly serving in the military. Of course, the presence of military buttons might simply be the reuse of old military uniforms or old military buttons by civilians living in areas where they cannot readily afford or have access to such goods. Suffice it to say, the topic of military buttons on domestic sites is a complicated one that should be a topic for another paper.

Shell

Shell buttons, sometimes known as pearl, first appeared in the 1820s with the earliest known use being used as fastenings for an undershirt belonging to King George IV (Lindbergh 1999:51). They start to appear in large quantities by the mid-nineteenth century though these buttons are somewhat fragile and some may not survive in the archaeological record. As the name suggests, shell buttons were made from mollusc shell in much the same way they were produced from bone – with a tubular saw to produce button blanks and then modified in many different ways to accommodate the attachment (Ferris 1986:100).

These buttons were inexpensive to produce and while the industry sprang up in Birmingham, factories could be established cheaply wherever a supply of mollusc shells was available (Ferris 1986:100). Notable examples of these industries include the Mississippi River area where factories were established during the oyster boom of the late nineteenth century (Claasen 1994) and in Kitchener in 1891 (Ferris 1986:100).

Shell buttons were most commonly associated with shirt buttons and are usually found as small, four-holed specimens. However, they could be decorated with stars, sun bursts, asterix, piecrusts, and a variety of geometric motifs (Lindbergh 1999:52). Occasionally, larger ones have been recovered and could have been used for coats, trousers, and other pieces of outerwear (Ferris 1986:101). Furthermore, metal buttons and cufflinks with mother of pearl inlays were made as a form of fancy apparel for the refined consumer.

Ceramic

The first clay buttons were manufactured in the eighteenth century. These were made out of porcelain and often elaborately decorated for their affluent consumers (Epstein and Safro 2001:74). Thus, early ceramic buttons on early nineteenth-century sites are unheard as they would have been unaffordable to most ordinary people.

That trend changed in 1840 when Richard Prosser patented his dry porcelain mould method of making knobs, rings, beads, and, most importantly to the current discussion, ceramic buttons. The method was a fully industrialized process where clays, flint, and feldspar are finely ground to a powder and compressed under as much as 400 tons of pressure. This method, when fired, produced a clear, crisp white ceramic button. The patent was registered with the British patent office in London on June 17, 1840 and thus provides a nice *terminus post quem* for archaeologists (Sprague 2002:113).

Unfortunately for Richard, the patent did not stay for long in his hands. The following year, on June 30, 1841, his brother, Thomas Prosser patented an “improved” method of manufacturing these buttons with the United States patent office thus opening the door for the manufacture of prosser ceramic buttons by the American industry (Sprague 2002:113-114). To make matters worse for Richard Prosser, in 1843, a Frenchman by the name of Jean-Felix Bapterosses traveled to England and worked at the Minton factory producing prosser buttons. He worked there only long enough to learn the prosser process and, upon returning to France, he patented an improved version of the prosser process with the French on November 4, 1844 (Sprague 2002:115).

Bapterosses was credited with the first use of milk, rather than water, as a wetting agent for the buttons and, with the cheaper labour costs and the support of the French government, managed to kill the English ceramic button industry. Between the French-dominated European market and the American-dominated North American market, the British ceramic button industry had nowhere to sell their goods (Sprague 2002:115-116). Thus, by the 1850s ceramic buttons start to become more and more prevalent within archaeological assemblages.

The most common type of prosser ceramic button is the plain, white, four-hole sew-through button that comprises most buttons of its kind within most archaeological assemblages. These buttons were most often used on shirts though larger ones could have been used on a variety of clothing like jackets, pyjamas, trousers, and etc. (Ferris 1986:102; Sprague 2002:123). Other varieties consist of three-holed sew-through specimens used on children’s clothing (Sprague 2002:124), two-holed buttons of pants, and domed-shaped buttons with metal loops the which could be found on men’s boots or could be found on children’s and women’s clothing (Sprague 2002:112).

Ceramic buttons could be decorated as well. It is not uncommon to find ceramic buttons with a checkered transfer-printed motif, referred to as a “calico” (Ferris 1986:102), or just have the outside edge of a button be painted (Sprague 2002:112). In other cases, the four-holed button itself was moulded with piecrust, beaded, inkwell, or a variety of other styles (Ferris 1986:101). In fact, the ceramic button manufacturing process was not limited to just a few factories – a large number of manufacturers proliferated at the same time and each was patenting and making its own styles of buttons. Thus many different variations of the classic ceramic button have been found in archaeological assemblages (Sprague 2002:122).

The variability of ceramic buttons is related to their affordability. The prosser ceramic buttons are the most common button types recovered from late nineteenth-century sites. They were by far among the cheapest buttons an individual could buy which made them ideal for work clothes and other utilitarian wear that is the topic of this paper. They were really popular until the 1920s (Luscomb 1967:156) and continued to be produced, at the Bapterosse factory no less, until the 1950s or 60s when the plastic button industry finally pushed them out of production (Sprague 2002:115).

Glass

Moulded glass buttons are rare finds on archaeological finds that speaks to their limited presence in the market (Ferris 1986:102). They first started to be produced in the 1830s and were mounted on metal frames or, starting in the 1870s, were press moulded with an insertion of a metal shank (Lindbergh 1999:54).

They came in a variety of colours including clear, blue, and black and their and ornate designs have led some to assume that they were most commonly associated on women's attire or children's clothes. While that could have been the case, it is important to remember that it was fashionable for men to wear gaudy buttons. The black, "fancy vest" buttons were the height of fashion in the second half of the nineteenth century. After the death of Albert, the Prince Consort in 1861, Queen Victorian went into deep mourning and black clothing, buttons, and jewellery took off as a fashionable trend (Lindbergh 1999:54).

Rubber

On rural domestic sites in Ontario one very rarely stumbles upon a rubber button. Rubber buttons were an American monopoly and were one of the first things made from the material. Rubber buttons were patented in 1851 by Goodyear, surprisingly, not of tire fame. These were never appreciated in Europe because of their "peculiar smell" and in Ontario they only appear in ones or twos suggesting that they were a novelty item rather than part of functional garments. The smell does not seem to survive within the archaeological record (Ferris 1986:102).

Other

Buttons could be fashioned out of anything. Horn was used, which was actually boiled down cow hoofs, and so was wood. Any material that was hard and durable enough for continued use on clothing was suitable. These however rarely, if ever, are identified in the archaeological record (Ferris 1986:102; Lindbergh 2002:52).

Towards a Functional Typology

As was seen from the previous discussion the studies into buttons up this point have produced an effective typology based on material types and styles that provide good chronological information for most button assemblages. When combined with other chronologically diagnostic artifacts like ceramics, maker's marks on smoking pipes, and other chronologically relevant material, clear dates for archaeological sites can be surmised.

While this method has tremendous value and further research into buttons will help to refine our understanding of buttons and the dates they were available. It is important to start to go beyond the chronological and delve into the social aspects of buttons. Each button recovered from the archaeological record was once attached to a garment, often more than several throughout its use

life. Each garment was tailored to the specifications of a person that reflected their style, fashion, and socio-economic identity within their society. Thus, if one were to link buttons to the individual garments an individual was wearing, one could begin to reconstruct the life of the person themselves. As the old adage goes – “Clothes make the man.”

Challenges

While in the previous discussion of the established material typology, the uses for each material button type and style were addressed, several large challenges exist in attributing any given button to a particular garment. This stems from the fact that buttons are not static entities but were often times purchased separately of the garment they were sewn on and were often saved and reused on different clothing after the one it was sewn onto was worn out. Thus a button could have served several garments through several cycles of fashion from the time it was purchased to the time it was deposited into the ground.

To make matters worse, buttons are multi-functional and there could at times be little correlation between a style and size of button and any particular piece of fabric. Bone buttons are an excellent example as their utilitarian nature made them ideal to fasten everything from underwear to women’s shawls to jackets and, aside from the single-holed Cartwheel buttons discussed above, their specific function is almost impossible to ascertain.

Another example of this comes from shirts where any two, three, or four-holed buttons between the sizes of eight and 15 mm could have been used on a shirt (Lindbergh 1999:51) and while three-holed buttons have generally been associated with children, anyone could have used them. Buttons did not even have to match on the shirts or be of a uniform size, as can be seen from the Spitalfields Cemetery project in London, England, where one male was interred in a shirt fastened by alternating Cartwheel and mother-of-pearl buttons (Reeve & Adams 1993:111). Furthermore, there is little guarantee that something that can be classified as a shirt button would not have been used on a pillow or a pair of pyjamas.

There is also significant variation to the purposes between looped buttons. As previously discussed, the looped prosser ceramic button has been associated with shoes and gaiters but could just as easily have been used on child’s clothing and women’s apparel. A similar problem is found among small looped metal buttons. While large ones undoubtedly belonged to coats or jackets, smaller specimens could have been used for either coat cuffs or as vest buttons.

To make matters worse, survivability of buttons is an issue. As previously mentioned, shell buttons have been known to decay after a few hundred years in the ground and same could undoubtedly be true for bone. Wood is hardly ever recovered and the recovery of wooden buttons is all but unheard of. Fabric from Cartwheels and Dorsets also, of course, does not survive and while the single-holed bone buttons give a clear indication of what it was, some fabric covered buttons were spun around thin metal wires that hardly ever get identified as button support frames (Lindbergh 1999:51).

Finally, it is important to accept the general male-centric nature of this study. While there is more than enough room for analyzing the garments worn by women. Buttons were generally produced and marketed to male fashions. Women's garments were more often held up by laces, hooks and eyes, and pins and thus were not the focus of the button manufacturing industry. Regardless, women's clothes could and were fastened by buttons and these generally indistinguishable from the ones worn by men (Lindbergh 1999:56). While any functional typology of nineteenth-century buttons would generally focus on male garments, it should not be perceived that the absence of women's buttons is indicative of the absence of women's clothing and the social, cultural, and economic intricacies involved in its study.

Buying Buttons in Upper Canada

Unlike today, buttons were bought and sold separately from the garment they were attached with. Ready-to-wear, factory-made clothing did not start to become popular in Ontario until the late nineteenth century. According to research conducted by Neal Ferris (1986:102-103), the general store owners tried to keep abreast with the latest European fashions by offering their customers a variety of buttons at different prices.

Gilt and fancy gilt buttons were common as were shell shirt buttons, florentines, ceramic buttons, bone, and etc. Not surprisingly, each button came with its own radically different price tag. Sporting-themed metal coat buttons were the most expensive, more than twice that than those with plain gilt. Though plain gilt coat buttons were roughly equivalent, if not slightly more expensive, than bone and shell coat buttons. For shirts, shell buttons were more expensive than prosser ceramic and so forth. Unfortunately, there haven't been enough general store ledgers identified yet to come up with a general expense ranking through time for buttons like there has been for ceramic vessels (Kenyon 1995).

It is also important to understand that buttons, much like ceramics, would have been subject to the variance of supply and demand where-by some general store owners, especially in isolated parts of the province, would not acquire the same variety of buttons that would be available to their urban counterparts. Before 1850, shipping routes into Upper Canada were strenuous at best with new goods arriving into ports only once or twice a year as the St. Lawrence River shipping route was iced over for several months at a time. Only with the arrival of the railroad did the influx of goods into Ontario become a regular and relatively predictable phenomenon. Thus, like with ceramics, it is important to look at any tabulations of the types and styles of buttons with an understanding of the broader economic history of this region (Kenyon 1992).

Creating a Functional Typology

Despite the challenges presented in the previous discussion, a few broad generalizations can be made about buttons and the garments they were used on. Small eight to 15 mm diameter, two, three, or four-hole sew-through shell and prosser ceramic buttons were most commonly associated with shirts. Single-holed bone button blanks for cloth buttons can also be placed into

this category. Moulded and printed prosser buttons and decorated shell buttons required extra labour and cost to produce and thus would represent more expensive alternatives to these.

Regardless of material, very large buttons could exclusively be found on coats and jackets. Moulded metal buttons or those stamped with “FANCY GILT” or other qualitative descriptors of their quality were generally more expensive than those marked as “PLAIN GILT” or simply left plain. The specific use of smaller shanked metal buttons measuring under 16 mm could not be discerned as these could have been used as cuff buttons on a coat or on a vest. Thus, these were classified as cuff/vest buttons. Similar hierarchy exists among these buttons much like with the larger specimens.

A few very specialized buttons could be narrowed down to their exact use and these include the two-holed metal underwear button and the four-hole metal suspender button. Other buttons can clearly be associated with the military and occasionally attributed to women, as in the case of colourful glass buttons, and children or dolls, very small three-hole sew-through buttons. Gaiter ceramic buttons which could have been used on men’s clothing as well as that of children and women, were labelled as such.

Average-sized bone buttons that cannot be attributed to a shirt, a coat, or another specific piece of clothing were classified as “plain indeterminate outerwear.”

Putting Into Practice

For the purposes of this study, this functional typology was applied on six different rural farmstead sites from various time periods and locations.

The first of these was the Brady site (AlGq-83) that was located within the Geographic Township of Darlington and was mostly occupied by its landowner, Peter Brady, between circa the 1820s and 1840s. The rich material culture from this site suggests that Peter Brady was an affluent farmer of some means and a total of 76 buttons were recovered from this site (ASI 2011d).

Two more sites dated to this period. These are the Slater site and the Paira site. The Slater site (AiHc-402) consisted of a pair of log cabins in the Geographic Township of North Dumfries occupied sequentially by a family of Scottish tenants that ended up buying the land shortly before they moved out of their cabins in 1847 (ASI 2011a). The Paira site (AjGx-136) was located in the Geographic Township of Trafalgar in the Town of Milton and was occupied sporadically by a variety of tenants and small landowners from the early 1820s through to 1844. The artifacts from these sites speak to a frugal, isolated frontier existence and the buttons reflect that. Twelve buttons were recovered from the Slater site and only five were recovered from the Paira site (ASI 2011c).

Little-McKinnon (AjGx-120) was a similarly lightly-occupied site occupied by two landowners of a property in the Geographic Township of Esquesing in the Town of Halton Hills. The occupation stretched from the mid-1830s into the 1850s. Seven buttons were recovered from

this site (ASI 2011b). Springhill I (AlGt-510) was a location of small cabin in the Geographic Township of Markham. This site was occupied by tenants from the 1830s or 1840s to approximately the 1870s and its excavations produced a total of 27 buttons (ASI 2011e).

The last rural domestic site is Crumb (AlGq-86) dates from 1848 to 1854 and was located within the former Township of Darlington. This tightly-dated rural farmstead site was occupied by an English tenant farmer who, according to the material culture recovered from the site, was relatively affluent. A total of 34 buttons were recovered from this excavation (ASI 2012).

Results

The buttons from these sites were reanalyzed according to the system presented above and the results can be seen in the tables below. A few observations can be seen from these results.

Overall, shirt buttons tend to dominate and comprise, on average, 32.0 percent of all buttons recovered and most of them appear to be fairly plain and undecorated regardless of the status of the individuals who resided in them. Also, with the exception of Paira, shirt buttons tend to dominate the later button assemblages with sites like Springhill I and Crumb with shirt buttons around 40 percent of the total buttons recovered. This shift is associated with the change in fashions and the movement away from shirts with a single button at the very top to three or more buttons used on the front of the shirt (Willet and Cunnington 1991:138-142).

Cuff and vest buttons comprise about the same amount of as coats (25.9 percent and 25.1 percent respectively). Interestingly, there are significantly more fancy vest buttons than there are plain vest buttons, the reverse of what can be seen among coats. Cuff and vest buttons are less ubiquitous on archaeological sites whereas coat buttons are present on every archaeological site. This might reflect the differences between refined and working apparel as vests are an extemporaneous garment that, while needed as part of refined clothing, are not a necessary component of work attire. The absence of vest buttons on sparsely occupied sites like Springhill I and Paira support this observation.

Indeterminate bone outerwear buttons represent almost a fifth of all buttons analyzed in the study and comprise almost half of the button assemblage from the Springhill I. This might be due to their utilitarian nature and their extensive use on work clothing.

Finally, there is surprisingly little difference between fancy and plain buttons on sites that have been known to be affluent like Crumb and Brady and those that have been observed to be not. Fancy vest buttons appear at Crumb and Little-McKinnon while fancy coat buttons have been identified at Slater and Springhill I. Thus, the mere presence or absence of fancy, as opposed to plain, buttons does not appear to be indicative of economic status.

While the style of buttons is not indicative of class, it is important to observe that households classified to have been more affluent contain a great variety of buttons. Crumb and Brady have the largest variety of the types of buttons (11 out of 13 for Brady and 12 out of 13 for Crumb).

	Shirt		Cuff/vest		Coat		Ind. Out.	Underwear	Suspender	Military	Ladies	Child	Gaiter	Total
	Plain	Fancy	Plain	Fancy	Plain	Fancy								
Brady	11	2	8	15	14	10	4		7	1	2	2		76
Slater	3			3	2	1	2		1					12
Paira	2				1		1			1				5
Little-McK.	1			1	2		1					2		7
Springhill I	12	1					1	13						27
Crumb	12	1	2	4	1	2	2	4	3		1	1	1	34
Total	41	4	10	23	20	14	23	4	11	2	3	5	1	161

	Shirt		Cuff/vest		Coat		Ind. Out	Underwear	Suspender	Military	Ladies	Child	Gaiter	Total
	Plain	Fancy	Plain	Fancy	Plain	Fancy								
Brady	14.5%	2.6%	10.5%	19.7%	18.4%	13.2%	5.3%		9.2%	1.3%	2.6%	2.6%		100.0%
Slater	25.0%			25.0%	16.7%	8.3%	16.7%		8.3%					100.0%
Paira	40.0%				20.0%		20.0%			20.0%				100.0%
Little-McK.	14.3%			14.3%	28.6%		14.3%					28.6%		100.0%
Springhill I	44.4%	3.7%					3.7%	48.1%						100.0%
Crumb	35.3%	2.9%	5.9%	11.8%	2.9%	5.9%	5.9%	11.8%	8.8%		2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	100.0%
Average	28.9%	3.1%	8.2%	17.7%	17.3%	7.8%	18.4%	11.8%	8.8%	10.7%	2.8%	11.4%	2.9%	

The variation among buttons speaks to a variety of clothing present at the site and thus the household to be able to afford more than a small set of garments.

Conclusions

While this has only been a preliminary look at buttons and fashion history, a few trends are starting to show including the dominance of shirt buttons toward the middle of the nineteenth-century and the variability of different button types in more affluent households. With additional research into fashion history and button uses, as well as compiling a larger sample of archaeological sites, it is hoped that a fully coherent functional typology can be established.

Cited

(ASI) Archaeological Services Inc.

- 2011a Stage 3 Archaeological Assessment and Stage 4 Archaeological Mitigative Excavation of the Slater Site (AiHc-402), Proposed Expansion of the North Dumfries Pit, Part of Lot 15, Concession 10, Geographic Township of North Dumfries, Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Ontario. License Report. MTCS CIF# P315-015-2010. Report on file, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport, Toronto.
- 2011b Stage 3 Archaeological Resource Assessment and Stage 4 Salvage Excavation of the Little McKinnon Site (AjGx-120), Draft Plan of Subdivision 24T-97012, Georgetown South Lands, Part of Lot 11, Concession 10, Geographic Township of Esquesing, Town of Halton Hills, Regional Municipality of Halton, Ontario. License Report. MTCS CIF# 2001-020-199. Report on file, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport, Toronto.
- 2011c Stage 3 Archaeological Resource Assessment and Stage 4 Salvage Excavation of the Paira Site (AjGx-136), Draft Plan of Subdivision 24T-01002/M, Part of Lot 10, Concession 3, Geographic Township of Trafalgar, Town of Milton, Regional Municipality of Halton, Ontario. License Report. MTCS CIF# 2001-020-297. Report on file, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport, Toronto.
- 2011d Stage 4 Archaeological Mitigative Excavation of the Brady Site (AlGq-83), New Nuclear – Darlington Environmental Assessment, Part of Lot 18, Broken Front Concession, Geographic Township of Darlington, Regional Municipality of Durham, Ontario. License Report. MTCS CIF# P315-029-2010. Report on file, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport, Toronto
- 2011e Stage 4 Archaeological Mitigative Excavation of the Springhill I Site (AlGt-510), Part of Lot 11, Concession 9, Geographic Township of Markham, County of York, Town of Markham, Regional Municipality of York, Ontario. License Report. MTCS CIF# P128-052-2009. Report on file, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport, Toronto.
- 2012 Stage 4 Archaeological Mitigative Excavation of the Crumb Site (AlGq-86), New Nuclear – Darlington Environmental Assessment, Part of Lot 19, Broken Front Concession, Geographic Township of Darlington, Regional Municipality of Durham, Ontario. License Report. MTCS PIF# P347-029-2011. Report on file, Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport, Toronto.

Claasen, C.

- 1994 Washboards, pigtoes, and muckets: History musseling in the Mississippi watershed. *Historical Archaeology* 28(2).

Epstein, D and M. Safro

- 2001 *Buttons*. Harry N. Abrams, New York.

- Ferris, N.
1986 Buttons I Have Known. In *Studies in Southwestern Ontario Archaeology* edited by William Fox (ed), pp 98 – 106. Occasional Publications of the London Chapter, OAS, #1.
- de Marly, D.
1986 *Working Dress: A History of Occupational Clothing*. B. T. Batsford, Ltd., London.
- Fink, N. and M. Ditzler
1993 *Buttons: The Collector's Guide to Selecting, Restoring, and Enjoying New and Vintage Buttons*. New Burlington Books, London.
- Kenyon, I.
1992 Spilled Ink and Broken Cups: The Distribution and Consumption of Ceramic Tableware in Upper Canada, 1800-1840. *KEWA (Newsletter of the London Chapter, Ontario Archaeological Society)*, 92-4,
1995 A History of Ceramic Tableware in Ontario: 1780 – 1910. Paper presented at Table Talks Lecture Series, Montgomery's Inn, Toronto.
- Kenyon, T.
1984 Military Buttons from Non-Military Sites. *KEWA (Newsletter of London Chapter, Ontario Archaeological Society)*, 84-5.
- Lindbergh, J.
1999 Buttoning Down Archaeology. *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 17:50-57. Luscomb, S. C.
- Luscomb, S. C.
1967 *The Collector's Encyclopedia of Buttons*. Crown Publishers, Inc., New York.
- Meredith, A and G. Meredith
2004 *Buttons*. Shire Album 382. Shire Publications Ltd., Buckinghamshire, UK.
- Reeve, J. and M. Adams
1993 *The Spitalfields Project Volume I: The Archaeology Across the Styx*. CBA Research Report 85 Council for British Archaeology.
- Sprague, R.
2002 China or Prosser Button Identification and Dating. *Historical Archaeology* 36(2):111-127.
- Willet, C. and P. Cunnington
1991 *The History of Underclothes*. Faber & Faber, London.