



Figure 133. Pin with fabric from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B). This burial held a man buried in clothing and with this pin and cloth on the cranium. Recovered during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains. The ruler is measured in 0.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 134. Unidentified woven textile from Burial 104 (Catalog No. 847-B.003). Length is 5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 135. Textile from a possible shroud that had adhered to a coin from Burial 230 (Catalog No. 1216-B.002). The coin is 22 mm in diameter (photograph by Jon Abbott).

information was not retained after laboratory staff reboxed the items.

These pins were inventoried and a few examples photographed by laboratory personnel. They were reexamined by Howard University Archaeology Team personnel during laboratory analysis in 1998–1999 and in 2001, and all fragments were counted (head and shank, shank, or shank with point). Final, high-quality photographs of representative pins were taken by Jon Abbott in August 2001. At that time, the pins were packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and

shipped by Artex to its art storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. The pins were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers at Artex in 2003 and subsequently transshipped back to New York, where they were placed in coffins for reburial.

In many cases, pins were within soil pedestals adhering to skeletal remains when they were removed from the ground. When such pins were recovered during the cleaning of the bones at the Howard University Cobb Laboratory, they were placed in polyethylene

bags and labeled according to the skeletal element they were associated with. These pins were not treated by conservators. They were retained at the Cobb Laboratory and shipped to the New York laboratory in 2003, where they were inventoried by Howard University Archaeology Team staff. In September 2003 they were reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers and placed in coffins for reburial.

The low rate of textile survival is a result of the soil conditions at the site. Textile and fiber fragments were recovered in association with some pins during field excavation, preserved by copper salts associated with the degradation of the copper alloy. Only the more robust fibers and textile fragments were cleaned in the laboratory. Of the possible shroud fragments, three were identified as linen and one as cotton. In some cases, pseudomorphs (corrosion products that permeated the fibers and replaced them, creating an exact replica) of cloth were recovered. Pseudomorphs from Burials 121 and 135 were examined and photographed microscopically. Another possible pseudomorph from Burial 186 was investigated with scanning electron microscopy, which indicated mineralized wood but was inconclusive as to the presence of textile or fiber.

In two cases, fibers brought to the laboratory were identified as rodent hairs (these are not included in the list above).

## Methodology

Pins were examined visually, some under magnification. Pin fragments were recorded in the artifact

inventory as head and shank, shank, or shank with point. This allowed for counting minimum numbers of pins for each burial in cases where they were not noted in the field or shown on field drawings. Pins were counted as follows: all pins recorded in situ were counted for the analysis of pin placement. Where field recording was not precise or pins were recovered during laboratory cleaning, an inventoried pin fragment was counted as one pin only if it included the pinhead, or was the only fragment from a burial location, or had the point and no fragment with a head present.

Pin placement within a burial was recorded in the database where possible. This information was obtained from field records and drawings or, in the case of pins from pedestalled remains, from the skeletal laboratory staff, who were careful to label pins according to skeletal element.

## Manufacture and Dating

The pins found at the New York African Burial Ground were copper alloy and drawn with wire-wrapped heads; on some, a tinned surface was visible. These were typical manufactures of the African Burial Ground period. Wrapped-head pins were common by the beginning of the seventeenth century and were produced until the early nineteenth century (Noël Hume 1969:254). The pins, therefore, do not provide specific dating for burials.



## CHAPTER 12

# Buttons and Fasteners

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This chapter discusses the evidence for clothing supplied by the buttons, cuff links, and aglets associated with the deceased. It begins with an overview of the burials from which these items were recovered. It then focuses on what black New Yorkers wore during the eighteenth century and how clothing and buttons were acquired. The assemblage is then described. Information is provided about recovery, condition and treatment, chain of custody, and findings about manufacture, origin, and age. A synopsis of the material and stylistic range of the assemblage is provided in the typology. The inventory is organized by individual burial, a format that best conveys how the fasteners were used.

### Burials with Buttons, Cuff Links, and Aglets

The preservation environment at the New York African Burial Ground favored durable items, and cloth and clothing did not survive except in tiny fragments that adhered to metal objects. Only a handful of textile fragments were recovered (see section entitled “The Button, Cuff Link, and Aglet Assemblage and Associated Cloth”). More conspicuous were the fasteners clothing left behind. These included buttons, cuff links, and aglets, tiny tubes that encased the ends of lacings and cords typically used on caps, shirts, and gowns. One possible grommet was also recovered.

Clothing fasteners made from metal, bone, and wood were found in direct association with 33 individuals, about 8.8 percent of the burials in the archaeologically excavated portion of the cemetery.<sup>1</sup> Another

nine individuals had tenuous connections with clothing fasteners. The characteristics of the burials are summarized in Table 48. Cases with problematic proveniences are noted in the table.

The burials listed in Table 48 do not provide an even-handed guide to eighteenth-century street clothes—three quarters of the entries pertain to men. Nor does the table provide an even-handed guide to the clothes people were interred in. Drawstrings, tapes, and ties fastened eighteenth-century street clothes in black New York, but shirts, trousers, and gowns with fabric fasteners are not represented in the archaeological record at the New York African Burial Ground. Straight pins also fastened street clothing, particularly women’s wear. Women, as noted in Chapter 11, had a higher frequency than men of pins in the torso area of the body, a difference that may hint of bodices beneath, or in lieu of, winding sheets and shrouds. In addition, some of the buttons and cuff links were recovered from contexts that point to nonclothing use.

Aglets were the least visible of the clothing fasteners recovered from the individuals interred in the burial ground. Small in size and few in number, aglets were also the least informative about burial attire. Only three aglets were recovered, one from a young child (Burial 22, a Middle Group interment) and two others from adult women (Burials 213 and 342, Middle and Late Group interments, respectively). The aglets from Burials 22 and 342 were not provenienced in the field. The aglet from Burial 213 was located on the left parietal (the cranium) and a few strands of hair had adhered to it. Whether the aglet enclosed the end of a lace on a woman’s cap is unclear.

Unlike aglets, buttons were numerous, stylistically varied, and although associated almost exclusively with men, provided considerable detail about the types of attire in which the dead were laid out.

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<sup>1</sup> The total used here of 376 burials includes those for which, at a minimum, the presence/absence of a coffin and in situ skeletal remains could be clearly determined; the most highly disturbed burials are not counted.

**Table 48. Burials with Buttons, Cuff Links, and Aglets**

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex <sup>a</sup>	Temporal Group <sup>a</sup>	Items	Location in Grave <sup>b</sup>
6	25–30	male?	Late	8 buttons (5 whole copper alloy, 2 with anchor motif; portions of 3 pewter)	4 copper alloy along torso, 1 at sacrum; pewter at sacrum
10	40–45	male	Late-Middle	13 copper-alloy buttons (8 whole, 5 shanks only)	7 on torso, 1 on right foot; shanks at lower right leg
22	2.5–4.5	undetermined	Middle	aglet	not recorded
37	45–55	male	Late	1 bone button	at left wrist
158	20–30	male	Late	2 pairs <sup>c</sup> gilt copper-alloy cuff links, circular shape	at wrists
171	44–60	male	Late	2 bone buttons; 1 copper-alloy button ring	bone buttons at right scapula and right femur; button ring at sternum
174	17–18	male	Late	2 pewter buttons	lumbar vertebrae and right innominate
181	20–23	male	Late	7 buttons (3 copper-alloy; 4 copper-alloy-and-bone with impressed design); cuff links (missing from lab)	6 on pelvic area, 1 found during skeletal cleaning; location of cuff links unknown
191	25–30	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button	left ilium
194	30–40	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button shank	near right femur
203	12–18	undetermined	Late	8 wood-and-copper-alloy buttons; possible leather covers	at the knees, wrists, and pelvic area
211	adult	male?	Late	1 enamel cuff link face	on the right clavicle, adjacent to the chin
213	45–55	female	Middle	aglet	left parietal
214	45–55	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button; fragments from 3 shanks; 1 wood button	copper-alloy button near right shoulder; 2 shanks in pelvic area; shank and wood button in soil near head
238	40–50	male	Late-Middle	1 bone button, 2 pairs <sup>c</sup> octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	button at cervical vertebrae; cuff links at each wrist
250	adult	undetermined	Early	1 copper-alloy button	possibly near pelvis
257	30–40	male	Late	3 bone buttons	1 button from left acetabulum; 2 found during screening of soil
259	17–19	female?	Late	18 buttons (11 copper alloy, 2 wood, and 5 shanks)	4 copper alloy at each knee, 3 in pelvic area; 2 wood at ribs; 5 shanks on vertebrae and pelvis
313	45–55	male	Late	3 bone buttons; 1 possible copper-alloy button ring	coffin floor beneath top of the head; possible button ring from among left ribs
325	25–35	male	Late	1 gilt copper-alloy button	left upper sacrum
326	45–55	male	Middle	4 copper-alloy domed buttons	in pelvic area and between tops of the femurs, near the hands
333	45–55	male	Late-Middle	6 bone buttons	pelvis
341	adult	male	Middle	1 pair <sup>c</sup> octagonal-shaped copper-alloy cuff links	left radius

**Table 48. Burials with Buttons, Cuff Links, and Aglets (continued)**

Burial No.	Age (years)	Sex <sup>a</sup>	Temporal Group <sup>a</sup>	Items	Location in Grave <sup>b</sup>
342	25–35	female?	Late	aglet	not recorded
353	24–34	male	Middle	1 bone button	next to left sciatic notch
361	33–57	male	Early	1 pewter button (missing from laboratory)	above right scapula/humerus
366	34–62	undetermined	Middle	1 copper-alloy button	at right wrist
368	10.5–13.5	undetermined	Middle	1 possible grommet, copper alloy	at throat
379	30–40	male	Middle	1 copper-alloy domed button, 1 possible leather button	pelvic area (innominate and left ulna)
385	40–60	female	Middle	2 bone buttons	right rib area
392	42.5–52.5	male	Late-Middle	11 bone-backed buttons; 2 octagonal cuff-link faces	4 buttons at right knee, 3 at left knee, 3 adjacent to right hand, 1 adjacent to left hand; 1 cuff link at right clavicle, 1 at cervical vertebrae
405	6–10	undetermined	Middle	1 white metal button	below right wrist on pelvis
415	35–55	Male	Middle	13 copper-alloy domed buttons (14 recorded in field)	4 at each knee, 2 at each upper femur, 2 at sacrum
<b>Burials with Artifacts with Problematic Provenience</b>					
32	50–60	male?	Middle	1 pewter button fragment	unknown; button not recorded in field records
243	40–50	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button	beneath the skull, in redeposited soil (no coffin)
271	45–57	male	Middle	2 copper-alloy domed buttons	found on the screen
276	20–24	female	Late	1 copper-alloy button	above right rib area in soil that was likely redeposited (no coffin)
278	45–55	male	Late	1 copper-alloy button	unclear, probably from soil matrix in fill (no coffin)
371	25–35	female	Middle	1 metal button; 2 turquoise enamel cuff-link faces	button appears to be intrusive to the burial; cuff-link faces beneath left humerus
387	34–44	male	Early	cuff link or button fragment	provenience unknown
398	25–35	undetermined	Middle?	1 octagonal cuff link face	in disturbed deposit; association with burial unclear
403	39–65	male	Middle	2 copper-alloy buttons (1 domed, 1 flat); 2 pewter buttons	in disturbed deposit; association with burial unclear

<sup>a</sup> A question mark indicates that the assignment is probable.

<sup>b</sup> Burials for which artifact provenience is problematic are listed at the bottom of this table. Because the association between the burials and the artifacts is not clear, they have been excluded from the counts presented in the chapter.

<sup>c</sup> A “pair” of cuff links—two faces (or crowns) linked together—fasten a sleeve. One “cuff link” (a single face) is insufficient. A properly fastened shirt would have needed a “set” of cuff links—two matched pairs, one pair per sleeve.

Ten individuals appear to have been interred in pants or breeches that buttoned at the hips or at the hips and the knees (Burials 10, 181, 203, 259, 325, 326, 379, 392, 415, and possibly 174). With the exception of the young people in Burials 203 and 259, the wearers of pants and breeches were men. Burials 203 and 259 were Late Group interments. The former held a 12–18-year old of undetermined sex, and the latter held a 17–19-year old identified as a probable woman. Because the degree of confidence in the identification was not the highest, it is conceivable that Burial 259 held a slender young man clad in knee breeches. But the idea of a young African woman remaking herself by manipulating everyday dress is not far fetched (for examples of enslaved Africans in colonial Boston and New York suspected by their owners of intending to pass for the opposite sex, see Greene [1944:141] and White [1991:126]; for a white New York woman who sought to obtain work on a privateer by dressing as a man, see Foote [2004:202]).

Two men probably wore jackets, as indicated by buttons in the torso area of the body. The jacket buttons from Burial 10 (Late-Middle Group) formed a seven-member set of matched, polished faces. The jacket buttons from Burial 6 (Late Group) also made a striking display: the set included one polished and four gilt faces in different sizes bearing a range of impressed designs, including upright foul anchors (see Button Type 6, discussed in section entitled “The Button, Cuff Link, and Aglet Assemblage and Associated Cloth”).

Cuff links—two buttons linked together—fastened shirtsleeves during the era when the burial ground was in use. Cuff links were found with six individuals, but only in three cases were the cuff links positioned near the wearer’s wrists. The men in Burials 238 (Late-Middle Group) and 158 (Late Group) each had a set of cuff links. Just one pair was recovered from the man in Burial 341 (Middle Group), although its location at the wrist also suggests a shirt was worn. It is possible a second pair was not preserved or that the man had only one pair when interred. The two turquoise enamel cuff-link faces associated with the woman in Burial 371 (Middle Group) might not to have been used to fasten a garment. They were located beneath her left upper arm. The probable man in Burial 211 (Late Group) had a turquoise enamel cuff-link face on the right clavicle, immediately adjacent to the chin. The man in Burial 392 (Late-Middle Group) also had a cuff link face on the right clavicle; a possible mate was recovered in the lab when the cervical vertebrae

were cleaned. Whether the cuff links from Burials 211 and 392 fastened a shirt with, say, a generous front overlap or a center front is unclear.

Eighteenth-century shirtsleeves were also fastened with buttons, as were shirtfronts and shirt necks. Buttons recovered from the ribs of the probable woman in Burial 259 suggest her knee breeches were topped with a shirt. Two bone buttons and a possible button ring were recovered near the scapula and sternum of the man in Burial 171 (Late Group). This man may have been interred in a shirt that fastened at the neck.

The bone buttons from Burial 171 may have been covered with fabric or thread, as suggested by the lack of staining associated with a metal cap. This kind of button sometimes fastened eighteenth-century undergarments (see discussion in section entitled “Clothing and Fasteners in Historical Context”), particularly when its size was relatively small. In addition to Burial 171, bone buttons that may have had fabric or thread covers were associated with seven other interments. Some of these buttons were located in areas that hint of underdrawers (the left sciatic notch of the man in Middle Group Burial 353, the pelvis of the man in Late-Middle Group Burial 333, and the left acetabulum, or hip joint, of the man in Late Group Burial 257). Other examples were located in areas that hint at a gown (the ribs of the woman in Middle Group Burial 385) and shirts (the cervical vertebrae of the man in Late-Middle Group Burial 238 and the left wrist of the man in Late Group Burial 37). Whether shirts that fastened with covered buttons were street clothes or undergarments in the eyes of their wearers or in the eyes of the mourners who prepared shirt wearers for burial, is not known. The three bone buttons with the man in Burial 313 (Late Group) were located on the coffin floor beneath the top of the head. Their use as clothing fasteners is doubtful. They might have decorated a hat or been part of a hairstyle (for hat and hair decorations, see Chapter 13).

Some of the buttons (Burials 6, 10, 181, 259, 325, 326, and 415) and cuff links (Burials 158, 238, 341, and 392) would have ornamented as well as fastened clothing. The items were either decorated with gilt or impressed designs or were arrayed in eye-catching ways. Seven of the 10 individuals interred with what we consider decorative buttons and cuff links were from the Late-Middle and Late Groups. These men were apparently part of a broader trend. As shown in Table 49, the proportion of men with durable clothing fasteners increased with each successive temporal group.

**Table 49. Burials of Men with Buttons or Cuff Links, by Temporal Group Assignment**

Temporal Group	Total Men <sup>a</sup>	Men with Clothing Items <sup>b</sup>	
		Number	Percent
Early	10	1	10.0
Middle	27	5	18.5
Late-Middle	19	4	21.0
Late	39	13	33.3

<sup>a</sup>Total includes male and probable male burials with likely preservation (“y” or “y, no cranium”).

<sup>b</sup>Burials in which clothing items were not clearly associated with an individual’s skeletal remains are not included (see Table 48).

Although the small size of the sample exaggerates the rise of male burial attire with durable fasteners, the rise itself, even if less robust than it appears, is not especially remarkable from an economic view. As we explain in the section entitled “Clothing and Fasteners in Historical Context,” the availability of consumer goods like clothing, buttons, and cuff links increased rapidly after the mid-1700s.

Still, the proportion of Late Group men with buttons and cuff links is striking because some of these items clearly fastened street clothing rather than undergarments or shrouds. It is impossible to determine precisely how many men were interred in street clothes. The quandary derives, in part, from the difficulty of differentiating outerwear from undergarments on the basis of button cover and button size. But it also derives from the multiple lives buttons led. For example, some buttons in Late Group burials of men may have been accessories rather than fasteners, such as the buttons beneath the head of the man in Burial 313. Other possible accessories include the bone buttons and button ring found at the scapula and sternum of Burial 171, which might have been worn on a string necklace, and the bone button at the left wrist of the man in Burial 37, which might have been part of a bracelet.

Even if we had a more precise sense of where to draw the line between undergarments and outer garments, we have no way of knowing whether street clothes constituted the deceased’s best outfit or simply the garments he had on when he died. Men who were buried in the clothes they had on when they died may not have had a circle of kin and neighbors who could supply a shroud or a winding sheet. Street clothes may therefore represent makeshift burial attire—a practical response of community members to the circumstances

of death rather than to the economic wherewithal of the deceased per se. Data on coffinless burials lend support to the idea of street clothes as the burial attire of unusual circumstances. Evidence for clothing was slightly more frequent in burials of men without coffins (see Chapter 10). Coffinless burials were prominent in the Late Group, when the Revolutionary War and its aftermath disrupted the city.

Some of the buttons recovered in association with skeletal remains may have been talismans or mementos rather than fasteners or jewelry. The likeliest candidate is the copper-alloy button from Early Group Burial 250. It was recovered near the pelvis, in conjunction with a small iron mass and a large glass bead.

## Clothing and Fasteners in Historical Context

The clearest view of how Africans in eighteenth-century Manhattan dressed comes from the *New-York Gazette* and the rival weeklies that issued from the city’s print shops. Government printer William Bradford established the *Gazette* in 1725. Within the next two decades three of his former apprentices, John Peter Zenger, Henry DeForeest, and James Parker, started publications of their own (Hildeburn 1895). Their newspapers, and those that followed, brokered New York’s commercial world. They carried shipping news, business correspondence, notices of public auctions and private sales, lists of imported and domestic goods, and, as the century progressed, an expanding roster of appeals for the capture of workers who fled from bondage. A command of insider knowledge about the lives of unfree laborers was a key feature

of the appeals (White 1991:116–120). In addition to clothing and adornment, writers described linguistic proficiency and workplace skills, elemental signs of status manipulated by runaways, confidence men, and ambitious members of the public at large (Waldstreicher 1999).

An “endless procession of tow cloth shirts and trousers, buckskin breeches, and beaver hats” made its way through Manhattan’s world of print (Hodges and Brown 1994:xxxii). Waistcoats and jackets were also part of African men’s attire. African women typically wore a petticoat (a skirt) and a short gown, an overblouse to present-day eyes. Figures 136–138 illustrate the construction and silhouette of these loose-fitting staple garments, which also clothed workers of European descent.

Although utilitarian garments changed relatively little during the eighteenth century, they varied in texture and color, particularly in urban areas like New York. Descriptions of clothing in advertisements for the return of Africans who escaped from Manhattan households (Table 50) indicate that breeches were cut from a range of durable fabrics. The coarse, German-made osnaburg linen so ubiquitous in the plantation colonies (Earle 1894:175) outfitted Andrew and York, breeches-wearing New Yorkers who fled from bondage in 1733 and 1749. Breeches were also made from firmly woven worsteds and long-napped shags, sturdy woolen fabrics available in blue, green, red, scarlet, and yellow, along with somber brown and black. The old, red quilted petticoat that Fanny wore in 1758 may have been kin to the one pictured in Figure 138; Sal wore a blue version in 1766. The petticoat Suck wore in 1761 was black on one side and light colored on the other. Petticoats and short gowns were striped in blue, red, purple, black, and green.

Domestic and imported linen mingled with woolens and cottons produced overseas. Solids and stripes abutted checks and prints. When Hector escaped in 1750 he wore a coarse linen shirt and trousers with a twilled-woolen Kersey pea jacket lined in red. Pompey fled from bondage in 1763 dressed in a checked shirt and striped trousers. Pleasant absconded in 1781 wearing a brown short gown lined in white and a petticoat cut from red moreen, a worsted cotton or wool with a wavy or watery surface. A flowered red-and-green flannel petticoat and a blue, cloth jacket outfitted an unnamed 14–15-year-old girl in 1780.

Familiarity with the clothing Africans wore was not difficult to come by. Europeans and Africans typically lived under the same roof and often worked

alongside one another in homes, shops, warehouses, and industrial yards (Foote 2004:72–75). And although there is a fragmentary quality to the evidence from newspaper advertisements, in general, black New Yorkers had meager, long-suffering wardrobes, as did working people everywhere (Kidwell and Christman 1974:19–21). A comparison of three women highlights some of the gaps. Jenney (see Table 50) may have layered her clothing for warmth after deserting the home of carpenter John Bell in December 1737. She owned two petticoats and two waistcoats, jacket bodices that closed at the front with laces, pins, or buttons (on the construction of women’s waistcoats, see Baumgarten [2002:120]). Hannah, prosecuted in 1716 for stealing a silk muslin handkerchief, a bit of calico, and enough Bristol stuff to make a petticoat and a gown, testified that her mistress had not provided her with anything to wear (Goodfriend 1992:122). In contrast, the African woman that George Clarke purchased in 1723 did not want for clothes, nor did she want for a new pair of stockings and shoes. Contention centered on the provision of two blankets, which Clarke’s secretary had been obliged to supply after the seller had refused (McKee 1935:121–122).

Cloth and clothing were vexed issues for many, perhaps all, colonial Americans. Not only was fabric one of the most expensive consumer goods, it crisscrossed social boundaries the rich and the well-born found it increasingly difficult to control (Breen 2004:148–192). Domestic cloth production varied regionally in response to shifting agrarian regimes and nonimportation movements (Ulrich 1998:6–7; White and White 1995a:165–168). Yet the output of home spinners never kept pace with the demands of a growing, fashion-minded population; neither did the output of shop-based swinglers (flax cleaners) and weavers like those Obadiah Wells hired for his spinning factory on Mulberry Street, near the Fresh Water Pond (*New-York Gazette, or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, May 8, 1766, and December 31, 1767; *New-York Gazette and the Weekly Mercury*, May 4, 1772). Finished cloth was the preeminent import during the eighteenth century (Figure 139).<sup>2</sup> It accounted for over one-third to one-half of the annual expenditure on manufactured goods imported from Great Britain (Breen 2004:62; Shammass 1982:267). A mid-century surge in lower-priced textiles brought a wide variety of imported fabrics into the hands of ordinary people

<sup>2</sup> Cloth and clothing also dominated British trade with western Africa, as noted in Chapter 13.



Figure 136. Men's everyday breeches with fall fronts over the center fly. *From left to right:* linen cotton (1765–1785), cotton velvet (1785–1825), and yellow “nankeen” cotton (1785–1815). Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).



Figure 137. Working woman's striped linen wool petticoat (1770–1820) topped by a high-waisted short gown made from cotton linen (1800–1820). Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).



Figure 138. Quilted petticoat (1770–1775) made in New York by Margaret Bleeker Ten Eyck. Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Sarah		November 14, 1732	about 24	female	“callico suit, striped sateen silk waistcoat, 2 homespun waistcoats, petticoat”	
Andrew	Saxon	October 1, 1733	man	male	“linen osnaburg breeches, old coat, shirts w/cross on left breast”	
Johnsey		August 26, 1734	25	male	“homespun jacket, pair of trowsers, speckled shirt”	
Jenney		December 19, 1737	14–15	female	“birds-eyed waistcoat, darkish pettycoat, callico waistcoat w/lg. Red flower and broad stripe”	
Jupiter		January 14, 1740	about 25	male	“cargey coat and jacket, pair yellow leather britches, good shoes and stockings”	
Galloway		October 27, 1740	21	male	“dark grey homespun jacket, lined; linen breeches; new shoes”	
Andrew		June 22, 1747	man	male	“blue cloth waistcoat, green breeches”	
Wan		June 6, 1748	about 25	male	“white pea jacket lined w/blue, osnaburg shirt, sailor’s trousers, a pretty old hat and shoes”	
York		May 29, 1749	about 17	male	“blue and white streaked woolen jacket, coarse osnaburg shirt, old hat, coarse osnaburg breeches”	
Bolton		September 4, 1749	about 30	male	“very ordinary”	
Simon		November 21, 1748	man	male	“blue cloth great coat”	
Sam		October 16, 1749	about 27	male	“homespun coat, short trousers”	
Phoebe		August 13, 1750	about 45	female	“uncertain”	
Hector		October 8, 1750	man	male	“light colored Kersey pea jacket lined w/red, osnaburg shirt, trousers, shoes, stockings”	
Crook		June 8, 1752	about 22	male	“brown homespun jacket, homespun shirt, blue flowered handkerchief on head, no hat, barefoot”	
Lewis	Francois	November 5, 1753	man	male	“white linen shirt, brown yarn stockings, lt. brown cloth breeches w/silk kneebands, yellow cloth jacket w/gilt buttons”	“large sq. brass shoe buckles, gilt jacket buttons”
Jeremy		March 3, 1755	about 21	male	“2 blue coats, turn’d up with red, silver laced hat, sundry other clothes”	
Anthony		March 3, 1755	about 18	male	“darkish bearskin coat, Lt. Cloth jacket, breeches, blue jacket, red breeches, castor hat, sundry other clothes”	“brass buttons”
Holliday		October 27, 1755	about 25	male	“homespun Kersey jacket, felt hat, shoes and stockings”	

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Venture		January 12, 1756	boy	male	“blue watch-coat, pair of buckskin breeches, striped waistcoat w/metal buttons, very dirty old homespun shirt, mixed hose, shoes w/ large buckles”	
Pompey		May 31, 1756	about 14	male	“blue sailors jacket, striped homespun jacket underneath, old brown cloth breeches, old hat and cap”	
Titus		July 26, 1756	29–30	male	“olive jacket, black breeches, white stockings, half-worn pumps”	
Duke		August 30, 1756	man	male	“speckled shirt and trousers”	
Reick		May 9, 1757	man	male	“leather breeches, striped woolen trousers and shirt, yellowish vest, old shoes, no hat”	
Charles		May 30, 1757	about 23	male	“osnaburg shirt and trousers, blue jacket without sleeves, castor hat, blue cloth coat, red vest, everlag breeches, several shirts”	
Claus		July 4, 1757	about 35	male	“light col. Silk camblet coat, lined w/shalloon, flowered stuff waistcoat lined w/ same, wash-leather breeches almost white w/washing, light col. Worsted stockings, pr. Homespun blue woolen stockings, 2 pr. Shoes, Garlix shirt, more”	“big brass shoe buckles, brass knee buckles”
Rose		November 21, 1757	35–36	female	“striped homespun joseph, old red cloth petticoat, white yarn stockings, old shoes”	
Hanibal		January 2, 1758	young	male	“brown short jacket w/hooks and eyes, black and white striped homespun double-breasted jacket, leather breeches, old wig and hat”	
Jasper		May 8, 1758	man	male	“brown forest cloth coat, blue waistcoat, leather breeches, all w/flat pewter buttons, old hat, broken yarn stockings, old shoes”	
Fanny		July 3, 1758	woman	female	“small black silk hat, lg. Cross barred blue and white striped stuff gown, old red quilted petticoat, bundle of other things”	
Ohnech		July 24, 1758	28	female	“homespun stole, petticoat, blue short cloak, white cap”	
York		July 24, 1758	man	male	“old shoes, blue, red worsted plush breeches, old trousers, check shirt, blue jacket, small cropt hat w/yellow worsted ringing around”	“carved shoe buckles”
Frank	Francosis	September 13, 1758	about 40	male	“a short blue sailor’s jacket, and trowsers, a checked shirt and old hat”	
Jack		January 29, 1759	man	male	“brown Pea-jacket, a blue under one, a pair of buck-skin breeches”	
Fanny and child		October 1, 1759	(child) 8 months	female	“red and white striped Cotton Gown, a striped blue and white Petticoat , and a cap without any border”	
Harry		December 31, 1759	man	male	“old green jacket and a white one under it, a cap and woolen ribbed stockings”	“iron collar around his neck (not visible without exam)”
Pompey		February 18, 1760	man	male	“white coat, ozenbrigs shirt, cloth trowsers”	

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Glasgow		March 17, 1760	about 18	male	"blue great coat, plain white swan-skin jacket, pair of trowsers, pair of Lt. Blue stockings joined in the middle, new pair of shoes"	
Tom		June 30, 1760	14 or 15	male	"osnabrigs shirt and trousers, deep blue broad cloth jacket, the fore-parts lined in two colors."	
Suck		February 26, 1761	about 20	female	"homespun short gown with different colored stripes, a blue and white handkerchief, a quilted petticoat, one side light coloured the other side Black,"	
Prince		February 26, 1761	man	male	"Brown bearskin pea jacket double breasted lapel, lined with light coloured cloth, a short double breasted red waistcoat brass buttons, a pair of cloth"	
Lens		June 18, 1761	17	female	"homespun Josey and pettycoat, no shoes or stockings"	
Windsor		July 23, 1761	about 23	male	"brown frock livery coat with yellow collar, white shirt, waistcoat, black shag breeches, speckled stockings, new shoes, gold lac'd hat; new beaver hat"	
Charles	Roberts	April 29, 1762	28 or 30	male	"2 or 3 coats or suits, dark brown cloth coat (worn) dove colored cloth or fine frize, light blue-gray summercoat of grgam, camblet, . . ." (other)	"waistcoat with silver cord"
		August 19, 1762	about 30	male	"light colored cloth pair of breeches, jacket with flash sleeves, long striped trowseres, check shirt w/ chitterstrings"	"wears rings in his ears"
Tom		August 26, 1762	man	male	"Lt. Brown sagathee coat, crimson waistcoat, breeches, Lt gray stockings, white shirt, felt hat, stockings"	
Jack		September 9, 1762	man	male	"blew surtout coat w/yellow buttons, black knit breeches, black stockings, check shirt"	
Jack		September 23, 1762	13 or 14	male	"white shirt, black stocking breeches, white waistcoat, Lt. Brown stuff waistcoat w/dirty silver cord, no sleeves, black stocking waistcoat, black castor hat, no shoes or stockings."	
Pero		September 30, 1762	19	male	"white jacket, strip'd trowsers, a hat, but no shoes"	"had bobs in his ears"
Salvavus		October 14, 1762	about 22	male	"Lt. Blue double breasted jacket, lined white flannel, Lt. Colour'd breeches, oznabrig shirt"	
Joe		December 23, 1762	24	male	"brown coat with red lining, red double breasted vest, thicksett breeches, felt hat"	
Siro		January 7, 1763	man	male	"brown coat, green jacket. Leather breeches, blue stockings, shoes but on the top and sew'd up again"	
Lucretia		March 5, 1763	woman	female	"black petticoat, white apron, speckled handkerchief, blue waistcoat, laced cap, blue shot cloak"	

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
		July 28, 1763	man	male	“oznaburgh jersey, petticoat”	“beads round her arms and neck”
		July 28, 1763	man	male	“oznaburgh frocks, trowsers”	
		July 28, 1763	woman	female	“oznaburgh frocks, trowsers, brown cloth jacket without sleeves”	
Pompey		August 15, 1763	20	male	“check shirt with white patch, linsey woolsey double breasted jacket- no buttons, red cap, long striped trowsers, no shoes, linen neckcloth”	“has a hole in each ear”
Tom		August 18, 1763	30	male	“red waistcoat faced with white, gray coat faced with red”	
Wall		August 25, 1763	40	male	“red coat, manchester velvet jacket, thread stockings, new shoes”	
Baptist		September 1, 1763	about 40	male	“good cloaths, green striped jacket, holland skirts,”	
Sam		September 29, 1763	about 30	male	“narrow brimmed hat cock’d on one side, Lt. Brown coat, short shirts, scarlet breeches, black worsted stockings “	“pewter buckles”
Lester		October 27, 1763	about 40	male	“white flannel jacket and drawers, duck trowsers, homespun shirt”	
Caesar		October 27, 1763	about 18	male	“white flannel jacket and drawers, duck trowsers, homespun shirt”	
Isaac		October 27, 1763	about 17	male	“white flannel jacket and drawers, leather breeches and homespun shirt”	
Mingo		October 27, 1763	about 15	male	“white flannel jacket and drawers, duck trowsers and homespun shirt”	
Hannah		February 9, 1764	about 19	female	“green jacket, old home-spun petticoat, red and white handkerchief about her neck, men’s shoes, old black crape gown, old flowered apron, check one”	
Harry		September 20, 1764	man	male	“Lt. coloured double-breasted jacket, coarse white linen shirt, short wide trowsers, half worn shoes”	“steel buckles and a scotch bonnet”
		November 8, 1764	man	male	“new blue jacket , new stockings and shoes without any buckles”	
		November 8, 1764	man	male	“new blue jacket and breeches, new stockings and shoes without any buckles”	
Pegg		December 13, 1764	about 40	female	“red cloak, white hat, pair of men’s shoes, callico gown, [a variety].”	
Cate		June 27, 1765	woman	female	“striped home-spun petticoat, double purple and white callico, short gown, old stuff shoes without stockings”	
Sharp		July 4, 1765	about 20	male	“blur sailor’s jacket, checked shirt, oznabrigs trowsers, old beaver hat (cock’d), pair of old shoes, no stockings”	
Toby		July 11, 1765	about 21	male	“brown fustian jacket, ozenbrigs shirt and trowsers and an old beaver hat”	

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
John		January 16, 1766	about 30 years	male	“good castor hat, ozenbrigs shirt, black crape caravat, brown bearskin great coat, cloth upper jacket lined with red striped linsey, green napt, possesses one white shirt, stockings”	“figure brass buttons, square steel buckles”
Sal		April 24, 1766	about 28	female	“purple calico gown, striped cotton short ditto, purple and white calico Joseph, old plain gown, blue quilted petticoat, green pettistone ditto”	
Bill		May 1, 1766	about 20 or 22	male	“old red cloth jacket, home-spun trowsres”	“iron collar”
Charles		June 26, 1766	man	male	“brown jacket, blue short waist coat underneath, pair of trowsers, sailor’s round hat”	
John	Baptist	October 8, 1768	about 45 to 50	male		“has holes in each ear for earrings”
Norway		August 1, 1768	about 33	male	“a blue coat with silver thread buttons, reddish mix’d color cloth waistcoat, white plush breeches”	
Spier		December 10, 1770	about 15	male	“blue cloth coat, short white ditto under it, old knit yellow breeches, shoes stockings, hat sewn up all around”	
Syme		March 18, 1771	about 24	male	“old thickset coat, old beaver hat, old watch coat, other olds cloaths”	
Bristol		September 2, 1771	about 15	male	“tow-cloth jacket, trowsers, oznabrigs shirt, barelegged”	
Cato		October 19, 1772	about 22	male	“ozenbrigs shirt, jacket trowsers, new felt hat, shoes stockings”	
Phillis		January 4, 1773	woman	female	“Lt. coloured calimaco gown, check apron, black silk cloak, black peelong bonnet”	
Jack		January 11, 1773	about 33	male	“brown double-breasted short Forrest Cloth Jacket, plain brass buttons, lined with red baize, red baize under jacket, leather breeches, blue yarn”	
Dick		January 11, 1773	19	male	“beaver hat (smartly cocked) new Lt. coloured coat and green cuffs, buckskin breeches, ribbed stockings (mixed colour)”	“silver buckles”
Prince		October 13, 1774	20	male	“brown thickset suit, band on his hat, his hair tied up behind”	“silver loop button, large tupee before”
John	Rattan	December 8, 1774	about 33	male	“Lt. coloured cloth coat, blue cloth waistcoat and breeches”	
Joseph	Low	November 27, 1775	man	male	“possesses several suits of good cloaths”	
Daniel		February 5, 1776	about 9	male	“old brown surtout coat, cotton check shirt”	
Prince		July 15, 1776	about 21	male	“blue cloth jacket, white home-spun shirt, trowsers”	
James		July 22, 1776	man	male	“old gray bearskin short coat, check shirt, linen breeches, worsted stockings”	

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Caster		August 19, 1776	about 35	male	“white linen trowsers, tow shirt, pair of old shoes”	“brass buckles”
Tom		September 9, 1776	about 50	male	“pair of brown tow trowsers, striped woolen shirt, felt hat half worn, new shoes waistcoat four parts- brown/white”	“Buckles”
York		October 14, 1776	about 19	male	“old brown cloth jacket w/ plain yellow metal buttons, red cloth collar , brown cloth waistcoat w/ small yellow metal buttons, check shirt, trowsers”	“shoes w/ yellow buckles, old round hat w/ gold ed.”
Will		November 11, 1776	19	male	“white linen jacket w/ sleeves, blue cloth breeches, white stockings, and a hat half worn; Has knapsack full of clothes; possesses broad cloth coat etc”	
Ned		November 13, 1776	about 12	male	“blue under jacket, whiteish wilton coat, new blue duffle trowsres, check shirt whiteish stockings”	
Fortune	Brookman	December 9, 1776	about 20	male	“red plush waistcoat, snuff coloured long trowsers”	
Caesar		January 6, 1777	about 30	male	“wears a dirty looking cloth coat with buttons of the same colour, round hat with high crown, wears boots in wet weather; has a variety of clothes”	“set of silver shoe and knee buckles of open work”
Loui		March 3, 1777	about 20	male	“short blue coat lapelled w/ yellow metal buttons, white waistcoat and breeches, white flannel trowsers, good shoes, stockings, white shirt,”	“white cap bound with red”
Joe		April 28, 1777	young fellow	male	“green cloth coat, waistcoat leather breeches”	
Sam		May 19, 1777	about 28	male	“property of the heirs of the late Widow Hester Weyman”	
Chess		May 26, 1777	about 20	male	“blue coat breeches, fond of dress”	
Pompy		June 2, 1777	about 17	male	“red jacket, ozenbrigs shirt and trowsers, shoes, stockings, jockey cap”	
Frank		June 14, 1777	18 or 19	male	“brown coat with a cape, old black breeches, may alter his dress: 2 check shirts, pair of trowsers”	
Dick		July 28, 1777	man	male	“dark gray coat, jacket, white and check shirts, sundry strip’d trowsers, red and white striped jacket”	
Jerremy		August 4, 1777	about 25	male	“black breeches & stockings, white cloth coat w/ [ . . . ]d buttons, beaver hat”	“silver buckles in his [ . . . ]”
Fortune		August 18, 1777	about 23	male	“osnaburgh Trowsers, spotted flannel jacket”	
Tom		September 22, 1777	about 14	male	“striped jacket, trowsers, check shirt, no shoes or stockings, jacket tied with pieces of tape in place of buttons”	
Bet		October 20, 1777	woman	female	“homespun pettycoat, callico short gown”	
Peter		November 3, 1777	about 13 or 14	male	“suit of brown fustian, suit of claret coloured fine cloth <sup>2</sup> /3rds worn, round hat, several pair stripped trowsers, etc.”	

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Alick		January 3, 1778	about 15	male	“check shirt, reddish coloured jacket, onzaburg trowsers, leather cap”	
		January 24, 1778	about 13	male	“red coat (turned up w/green), green trowsers, blue jacket, coarse hat with gold band”	“stone buckle”
Diona		May 16, 1778	18	female	“blue striped waistcoat, blue petticoat, black hat, short red cloak w/ ermine on the fore part”	
Jem		May 16, 1778	about 14	male	“hat, brown vest and trowsers”	
Phillis		June 6, 1778	about 25	female	“black and white striped wooly jacket and petticoat and white bonnet”	
Hannah		August 1, 1778	about 14	female	“ozenbrig petticoat and shift, brown and blue short gown and an old green bonnet”	
Belinda		February 12, 1780	about 21	female	“brown jacket, red petticoat, white handkerchief, high cap”	
Robert	Kupperth	March 29, 1780	about 19	male	“old regimentals”	
Tom		April 15, 1780	about 15 or 16	male	“had on a brown thicksett jacket and osnaburg trowsers, old round hat shoes and stockings”	
		May 3, 1780	14 or 15	female	“had on flowered red and green flannel petticoat and blue cloth jacket”	
York		May 20, 1780	about 12	male	“short brown waistcoat, check shirt, woolen trowsers nearly white, blue cap”	
Toney		June 17, 1780	boy	male	“brown sailor’s jacket, striped Holland trowsers, check shirt and a bound hat”	
Cain		July 5, 1780	about 26	male	“brown short coat, w/white metal buttons, brown waistcoat, white breeches, cock’d hat, black silk handkerchief about his head; has sundry other wearing apparel”	
Tom		August 5, 1780	about 16	male	“thicksett jacket, and osnaburgh trowsers”	
Scip		September 2, 1780	about 14	male	“check shirt, pair of striped trowsers”	
Fortune		September 2, 1780	about 18	male	“small round hat bound w/ silver lace”	
Jenny		September 6, 1780	about 14	female	“black callimanco coat, white linen wrapper and cap; carried all clothes with her”	
Rose		September 20, 1780	woman	female	“green fluff petticoat, a red & white callico short gown, red silk handkerchief, black sattin bonnet”	
Will		October 18, 1780	about 17	male	“blue jacket [. . .] up with red, canvas pair of breeches”	“silver plated buckle”
Bob		November 1, 1780	about 12	male	“onzaburg frock, red jacket”	
Tony		December 13, 1780	22	male	“short blue coat, white metal buttons, striped jacket, long pair of blue trowsers”	
Sim	Sampson	January 27, 1781	about 18	male	“white jacket, black hat w/red ribbon, pair of boots, long blue and white trowsers”	

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Pleasant	Queen Ann	March 3, 1781	woman	female	“red moreen petticoat, brown short gown w’/ white lining, pair of brown ribbed stockings”	
Prussia		March 21, 1781	about 21	female	“had a quantity of cloaths with her”	
Tom		May 2, 1781	boy	male	“brown cotton jacket, black velvet Jockey cap, blue breeches, shoes and stockings”	
Charles	Macaulay	May 5, 1781	about 16 or 17	male	“old red jacket, white flannel one under it, pair of white fearnought trowsers, a sailor’s round hat”	
Pameila		June 27, 1781	18	female	“short purple callicoe gown, pink petticoat”	
Duff		May 30, 1781	boy	male	“red waistcoat, check shirt, osnaburgh trowsers, no shoes, nor hat”	
Luce		July 21, 1781	about 28	female	“homespun short gown and petticoat”	
Sarah		July 25, 1781	about 19	female	“white short gown and a cotton petticoat”	
York	Revers	July 25, 1781	about 21 or 22	male	“brown coat with red cuffs and collar, and osnaburgh trowsers”	
Jack		July 25, 1781	about 12	male	“blue coat faced with red”	
Jane		August 15, 1781	about 19	female	“two Lt. coloured callico short gowns, black callimanco skirt and old stuff shoes”	
		August 25, 1781	boy	male	“coarse round hat, small striped jacket w/out sleeves, check shirt, pair of Russia [. . .] trowsers open at foot	
Mattis		August 25, 1781	about 22	male	“three check shirts, osnaburgh trowsers and frock, pair of mottled nankeen breeches patched on the Rt. Knee, striped jacket, round hat.”	
Jacob		September 1, 1781	near 14	male	“red jacket, osnaburgh trowsers, check shirt, no hat or shoes”	
Jack		September 1, 1781	14	male	“check shirt, trowsers”	
Bristol		October 3, 1781	about 14	male	“homespun linen shirt and trowsers”	
Diana		October 10, 1781	about 14	female	“short red callico bed gown, osnaburgh petticoat, blue handerchief”	
James	Herbert	October 10, 1781	34	male	“brown jacket”	
Tom	Whit[. . .]en	October 10, 1781	23	male	“green jacket”	
Peg		November 17, 1781	18	female	“blue cloth jacket w/ long sleeves (in the form of a riding dress) w/ bright yellow buttons”	
Tom		December 8, 1781	boy	male	“long scarlet coat, double lapelled w/ gilt buttons, red jacket, double breasted, white breeches, grey worsted ribbed stockings, strong shoes, cap”	“white metal buttons”
Cudjoe		January 5, 1782	boy	male	“blue jacket, trowsers”	
Rachel		January 9, 1782	woman	female	“dark callicoe short gown, homespun petticoat without cloak or hat”	

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Polly		January 9, 1782	13	female	“off without shoes, stockings, and wore a blue baize frock”	
Jane		February 9, 1782	about 15	female	“pale green callimanco petticoat, red short gown, scarlet cloak with hood”	
Lissa		February 13, 1782	about 24	female	“brown short gown, brown serge petticoat, blue short cloak unbound with a cap to it; possesses 2 callico long gowns, other . . .”	
Charlottee		March 6, 1782	19	female	“white gown and petticoat”	
		March 13, 1782	boy	male	“black super-fine broad cloth coat, waistcoat, black silk breeches & stockings, beaver hat with crape around it”	
Tom		March 23, 1782	boy	male	“suit of morning”	
Joe		April 20, 1782	man	male	“blue short jacket, straw hat”	
James		April 24, 1782	16 or 17	male	“cap [red, Lt. coloured] short brown coat, white dimity jacket, homespun linen trowsers”	
Phillis		May 15, 1782	woman	female	“brown strouding jacket, black shirt, cheque apron, blue stockings, men’s shoes”	
Bacchus		June 8, 1782	about 12	male	“white jacket, striped trowsers, no shoes or hat”	
Caesar	Augustus	June 15, 1782	man	male	“regimental blue coat w/ red collar, red waistcoat, linen trowsers, round hat”	
Jack		June 15, 1782	about 15	male	“blue and white striped linen jacket. Pair of parson’s grey board cloth trowsers, white homespun linen shirt, small round hat”	
David		July 17, 1782	13 or 14	male	“scarlet waistcoat and trowsers”	
		July 27, 1782	about 24	female	“shift and under petticoat”	
		August 3, 1782	13 or 14	female	“white short gown, black calimanco skirt, no cap, black bonnet”	“pair of ear bobs in her ears”
Tony		August 17, 1782	24	male	“short Lt. coloured wilton coat, callico jacket, pair long brown silk trowsers, pair new shoes, round black hat”	
Adam		August 17, 1782	19	male	“wore an officers old red coat faced with white, gold basket button, brown jacket and trowsers”	
John	Jackson	September 25, 1782	about 22	male	“Lt. coloured Fustian jacket, waistcoat, breeches, cock’d hat, green and red short outside jacket, pair of black silk breeches”	
Peter		October 2, 1782	boy	male	“white linen shirt, white cloth waistcoat without sleeves, striped Holland trowsers”	
Cato		October 12, 1782	boy	male	“blue short jacket, linen with green, and long linen trowsers”	
Jack		October 16, 1782	10	male	“coarse white shirt, trowsers, old light brown cloth jacket, round hat, without shoes or stockings”	

**Table 50. Clothing Worn by Enslaved Persons Who Escaped from New York City Households as Described in Newspaper Advertisements, by Date (continued)**

First Name	Surname	Advertisement Date	Age	Sex	Clothing	Other Adornment
Jack		October 16, 1782	boy	male	“blue waistcoat, striped jacket, canvas trousers, grey stockings, without a hat”	
		October 26, 1782	about 13	male	“check shirt, oznabrig trousers, old red coat w/ black collar and cuffs”	
London		October 30, 1782	14	male	“white wollen waistcoat, breeches, and a shirt”	
Billy		January 13, 1783	about 20	male	“common dress of a sailor, viz, a blue jacket, pair of blue trousers, round hat, check shirt”	
Nancy	Blond	February 15, 1783	woman	female	“green baize wrapper, light coloured petticoat, bundle of other clothes”	
Seth		March 15, 1783	about 14	female	“red baize jacket, petticoat, high heel’d shoes”	
EBB		April 9, 1783	18	male	“brown coat (French fashion), grey cloth coat, black breeches, large brimed bound hat”	
Duff		April 28, 1783	boy	male	“brown jacket, new fustian trousers, new wool hat”	
Jack		May 10, 1783	about 23	male	“check shirt, blue waistcoat, blue coatee w/ red cape, long white trousers, white stockings”	
Cesar		June 14, 1783	about 26	male	“Lt. coloured cloth waistcoat, no sleeves, white metal hole buttons, pair of jean breeches, shoes stockings, half worn white hat”	
Poll		June 14, 1783	about 13	female	“red cloath petticoat, Lt. Blue short gown, home made”	
Luce		June 29, 1783	about 30	female	“green striped fluff gown (washed), dark blue moreen petticoat, gauze cap, pink ribbons, no hat, dark purple callicoe gown”	
Jack		July 9, 1783	between 11 and 12	male	“osnaburg shirt, tow trousers”	
Lucy		August 13, 1783	about 28	female	“2 short gowns, 2 petticoats, 1 striped bottom short gown, yellow ground callicoe, black petticoat, one green”	
Venus		August 13, 1783	5 or 6	female	“tow cloth frock”	
		August 16, 1783	little boy	male	“blue coat w/ red cuffs and collar, fustian trousers, with buttons all down the sides”	
Madlane		October 3, 1783	about 12	female	“striped woollen rapper, dark blue petticoat w/ white flowers, bare footed”	
Kate		October 22, 1783	woman	female	“callico short gown w/ blue and yellow horses, carriages & soldiers, several caps w/ long ears”	
Thomas		November 3, 1783	man	male	“blue sailors jacket, green under waistcoat, whitish woollen or oznabrig trousers”	
Cuffey		November 5, 1783	man	male	“brown surtout-coat”	
Johannis		November 5, 1783	man	male	“blue & white striped linen jacket, with shoes and stockings”	



tion for theft and the keeping of disreputable drinking establishments rose in tandem as the century advanced (see Greenberg 1974:138–140). Africans, in turn, deserted their posts, sometimes with a master’s or a mistress’s clothing in tow.

Eighteenth-century attire was not always easy to parse. Consider, for example, the garments Sarah possessed in 1732 (see Table 50). Her wardrobe included a suit (a term usually reserved for a complete outfit cut from the same cloth), a petticoat, and three waistcoats, two made from homespun and the third from striped satteen silk. “Homespun” and “silk” evoke separate worlds, one characterized by frugality and the other by wealth. Yet these commonplace words were unstable signposts for the fabrics they named. Textile terminology and fiber content varied from place to place. Homespun, for English speakers, described cloth that was unmilled and coarsely woven, but in American usage, homespun meant “homemade.” The quality of homemade cloth reflected the skills of the sorter, the carder, the spinner, the washer, and the weaver. Its texture ranged from coarse to fine, and it attired housewives as well as servants and the enslaved (Baumgarten 2002:78, 114–115; Ulrich 2001:84–93).

“Sateen silk” was ambiguous, too. Sateen denoted a cotton textile with a shiny, satinlike face. Satin was a twilled silk. Silk was sometimes blended with wool. Sarah’s owner, merchant Joseph Reade, may have been hedging his bets about whether her striped waistcoat had been cut from the genuine article or a lower-priced imitation, but he did not claim that she had lifted her clothes (for eighteenth-century fabric terminology, see Cunnington et al. [1960] and Montgomery [1984]).

Like all clothing worn during the eighteenth century, Sarah’s garments were sewn by hand. She may have cut and stitched them herself. Sarah worked as a domestic, as did many of the women interred at the African Burial Ground, and Reade said that she was handy with all kinds of housework. She probably sewed the family linens. Sheets and undergarments (shifts, drawers, and nightshirts) were typically made at home (see Kidwell and Christman 1974:25).

Ready-made garments supplemented the apparel women stitched in parlors and kitchens. Some of the ready-made items black New Yorkers wore were geared to sailors and soldiers (Kersey pea coats, wide-legged trousers, and regimental attire). Other items were marketed to the public at large (men’s shirts and waistcoats, women’s cloaks and quilted petticoats, and knee-length woolen and cotton stockings). Whether



Figure 140. Self-enclosed casing for a drawstring, on a gown with set-in sleeves (1800–1810). Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).

imported from England or locally produced, ready-made clothing often “bore the mark of a second-class product” (Kidwell and Christman 1974:31). Unlike bespoke suits and gowns, ready-made garments were not cut and draped with a particular person in mind. The generalization holds for leather breeches, which were the province of specialized tailors like John Baster. Like many ambitious artisans who hung out their signs in Manhattan, Baster sought patronage from gentlemen who wore custom-fitted leather breeches for leisure and sports (see Baumgarten 2002:125). But “all sorts” of breeches could be had at Baster’s shop opposite the Old Slip Market. The phrase was a tailor’s deft way of conveying his willingness to supply ready-made items for workingmen (*New-York Gazette*, October 5, 1761).

Despite its loose fit, utilitarian attire registered a few fashion trends. The waistlines on women’s short gowns migrated upward toward the end of the 1700s—the short gown pictured in Figure 137 has a high, or “Empire,” waist (on the design and construction of the short gown, see Kidwell [1978]). Necklines and bodices continued to be fastened primarily with drawstrings made with cords and tapes (Figure 140).<sup>3</sup> Leather and cloth breeches rode low on the hips. After 1730, breeches acquired a fall, or flap front, over the center fly, which increased the number of buttons needed to keep the breeches in place (Tortora and Eubank 1998:232).

**Buttons:** Attention to appearance included buttons as well as clothes. The writers of runaway advertise-

<sup>3</sup> Only one woman listed in Table 50 had buttons on her clothes: Peg, who escaped in 1781. The buttons were bright yellow, and they fastened a long-sleeved, blue cloth jacket. References to buttons on short gowns are scarce, suggesting that buttons were atypical (Kidwell 1978:56). An example of a short gown fastened with pins can be found in Chapter 11.



Figure 141. Example of a salesman's sample card, circa 1780, for buttons made from pinchbeck, a copper alloy that retains its polish (source: Albert and Kent 1949:392).

ments noted the color, size, and placement of buttons on men's attire and remarked when buttons were missing from a garment, or when alternative fasteners were used. Pompey's linsey-woolsey double-breasted jacket, mentioned in an advertisement published in 1763, was bereft of buttons. Tom's striped jacket was tied with pieces of fabric tape when he escaped in 1777. In 1762 advertisements, Charles and Jack both had waistcoats that fastened with silver cord. Hanibal's brown short jacket was described as having been closed with hooks and eyes in a 1758 advertisement.

Although the runaway advertisements lack the visual clarity of a salesman's sample card (Figure 141), they highlight one of the ornamental contributions buttons made to everyday clothing. Practical fasteners doubled as adornment by playing upon color contrasts. White and yellow metal buttons fastened brown, blue, and red jackets, surtouts (overcoats), and waistcoats (Jasper, 1758; Jack, 1773; Cain, 1780; Tony, 1780; Jack 1762; Prince, 1761). Yellow and gilt buttons enlivened blue and scarlet coat lapels for Louis in 1777 and Tom in 1781. Nor-

way's blue coat sported buttons covered with silver thread in 1768.

Metal buttons and cuff links also carried eye-catching designs. A gold button with a "basket" motif fastened the old red officer's coat Adam wore in 1782. The motif may have resembled the cross weave stamped on the metal-capped bone buttons from Burial 181, or on the sample attached to the salesman's card (see Figure 141, middle column, second row from bottom). Eleven of the breeches' buttons from Burial 259 were ridged. Three of their stylistic kin appear on the card (see Figure 141, column one, second row from top; column two, fourth row from bottom; column three, third row from bottom).

Not all button faces, of course, were designed for the light of day. Buttons covered with thread and cloth joined the ranks of undergarment fasteners in the decades after 1650 (Cunnington and Cunnington 1981:16). Although a variety of undergarments were available for men as the eighteenth century progressed, the routine use of ready-made and custom-fitted underwear within and across occupational groups is not known. Men's underdrawers are a case in point. Cut full from plain-weave cotton or woolen flannel, underdrawers fastened with fewer front buttons than breeches and lacked the flap over the center fly. But long-tailed shirts tucked into trousers often performed the work of underdrawers. Under waistcoats and undershirts also added warmth to men's attire. Based on examples from costume collections, the latter were cut like outer shirts and fastened with a covered button at the neck or with covered buttons down the front (see Baumgarten 1992). Workingwomen's undergarments consisted of a chemise or a slip beneath a petticoat and a gown. The chemise and the slip typically fastened with tapes, strings, or ribbons (Tortora and Eubank 1998:236).

Ready-made clothing would have come with buttons already attached, but home sewers and ordinary consumers in need of fasteners might have scrutinized the wares in a peddler's sack, a market stall, a dry goods store, or a specialty shop. Henry Whiteman, a brass button maker who served his apprenticeship in Philadelphia, prospered in mid-eighteenth-century New York. Ten years after gaining a foothold in Manhattan's lively garment sector, Whiteman supplied buttons at wholesale and retail prices under a Buttons and Buckles sign (*New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*, September 17, 1750; *New-York Gazette*, October 13, 1760). Edward Andrews, a London-trained cutler, carried a



Figure 142. Gold octagonal cuff links on an infant's shirt sleeve (1730–1760). Colonial Williamsburg Collection (The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation).

choice assortment of buttons for gentlemen, ladies, and others (*New-York Gazette and the Weekly Post-Boy*, Supplement, May 18, 1752). Braziers like Thomas Yates and William Scandrett offered sundry kinds of buttons and cuff links at reasonable rates (*New-York Gazette*, November 19, 1759, and April 16, 1764).

Popular styles of buttons and cuff links could be had in a range of materials and sizes. Burials 238, 341, and 398 had copper-alloy versions of the gold octagonal cuff links shown in Figure 142.

Buttons were also recycled. For example, the bone buttons from Burial 313, which may have been covered with fabric or thread, might originally have been button backs that were modified or reused. Recycling, modification, and functional substitution—using a readily available item to perform the task of an item that has become scarce—were a commonplace of African and African diasporic life during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see Posnansky 1999:31–33). Personal adornments were modified and recycled, too, as explained in Chapter 13.

## The Button, Cuff Link, and Aglet Assemblage and Associated Cloth

The assemblage included 133 buttons or portions of buttons, 3 aglets, and 1 grommet or eyelet from a clothing fastener. Cuff links were also recovered, including 2 sets (2 pair of linked faces) and 3 single pairs (two faces only). Materials represented among the clothing fasteners included copper alloy, pewter, bone, and wood.

## Recovery, Condition and Treatment, Chain of Custody

Almost all the buttons and cuff links were recovered during the field excavation of the burials. A few were found during cleaning of skeletal remains in the laboratory (the pewter button from Burial 174; bone-backed buttons and bone button fragments from Burials 181, 238, and 257; copper-alloy buttons associated with Burials 379 and 387; a possible button ring from Burial 313 and a cuff-link remnant from Burial 392). In some cases, items were identified as button or cuff-link fragments only after initial cleaning (the shanks from Burial 10; the button ring from Burial 171; a copper-alloy button from Burial 276; a domed button from Burial 379). All of the aglets were recovered in the field but were identified as pins at the time. They were recognized as aglets only after research on eighteenth-century clothing had been conducted and the archaeological literature had been searched for examples of clothing artifacts from the period when the burial ground was in use.

Several items were recorded in the field but were missing from the laboratory at the time the Howard University Archaeology Team came on board. Among the items logged as “missing” were the cuff links from Burials 181 and the pewter button attributed to Burial 361.

Textiles were found in association with a number of the metal clothing items, as listed in Table 51. Conservators noted a textile impression in association with the bone-and-copper-alloy buttons from Burial 181. Subsequent examination indicated that the metal faces of these buttons were impressed with a cross-weave design. Field notes on Burial 6 indicated possible textile fragments had adhered to the cranium, but none was recovered.

Bone buttons were generally very stable. They were cleaned and treated with a barrier coating. Metal buttons were normally desalinated in deionized baths and mechanically cleaned with a scalpel, then vacuum impregnated with BTA and B-72. The cuff links from Burials 238 and 341 were treated with a 1 percent solution of formic acid to loosen and soften the corrosion products and then cleaned a second time in deionized water. The aglets received the same treatment as the pins. The staff at John Milner Associates took an initial series of photographs.

Buttons, cuff links, and aglets were reexamined by Howard University Archaeology Team personnel

**Table 51. Textile and Leather Fragments Associated with Clothing Fasteners**

Burial No.	Catalog No(s).	Type of Fragment	Comments
10	234-B.012	wool, plain weave	Location was not recorded, but the fragment would most likely have been attached to a button.
22	344-B.004	linen	Location was not recorded. An aglet and pins were recovered with the burial. The linen fragment may have been part of a shroud.
194	1109-B.002	organic matter	A fragment of organic matter, possibly a leather button cover, was associated with a copper-alloy shank. The shank may have been from a poorly preserved bone or wooden button.
203	1174-B.001–1174-B.008	leather button covers	Eight wooden buttons were evidently covered in leather.
259	1249-B.002–1249-B.004, 1249-B.006, 1249-B.011, 1249-B.012, 1249-B.017, 1249-B.019, 1249-B.021–1249-B.024	wool, linen, and possible leather	Woven, fine wool fragments were associated with some of the breeches' buttons. One of these had a well-preserved buttonhole. Conservators identified linen fragments, but did not record which buttons these fragments were associated with. Wooden buttons appeared to have leather covers.
278	1275-UNC.001	textile (missing)	Conservators noted a textile fragment attached to the back of a copper-alloy button, but it was not given to the Howard University Archaeology Team.
326	1854-B.009	organic matter	Field records state that a small fragment of cloth, as well as a bit of possible hair, had adhered to one of the buttons. A small fragment of organic material was cataloged (not photographed) but was not identifiable.
371	1875-B.002	wool, weave undeterminable	Fragment was associated with an iron button that appears to have been intrusive to the burial.
379	1906-B.001	possible leather button cover	The preserved remains of one of the buttons (No. 1906-B.001) may have been from a leather cover or, alternatively, from the outer portion of a wooden crown.
392	2039-B.001–2039-B.003, 2039-B.006, 2039-B.007, 2039-B.011, 2039-B.012	wool, fine weave with an S twist; one of the fragments included a button-hole	Fragments of fine wool were recovered in association with the bone-button backs. One fragment from a button at the right knee included a well-preserved buttonhole 1 mm wider than the associated button.
403	2067-B.004	textile, simple weave, black color	It is not clear whether the cloth fragments were associated with particular buttons.
415	2097-B.003, 2097-B.005, 2097-B.007, 2097-B.008	wool buttonhole fragment; wool fragment attached to coffin wood; possible leather	Because of a laboratory processing error, it is not possible to identify the specific button associated with the wool buttonhole. Another woolen fragment was attached to coffin wood.



Figure 143. Diagram showing the process for covering a button blank or button ring with cloth (drawing by Alliah Humber).

during 1998–1999 and in 2001, and all fragments were counted. Jon Abbott took final high-quality photographs of the buttons and cuff links in August 2001. At that time, the assemblage was packed by the Bronx Council of the Arts and shipped by Artex to its art-storage facility in Landover, Maryland, pending preparation for reburial. The assemblage was reinventoried by the Army Corps of Engineers at the Landover facility in 2003, and then transshipped back to New York. Items that National Park Service staff selected for replication were sent to Colonial Williamsburg for study; these included buttons and cuff links from Burials 6, 10, 181, 214, 250, 313, 392, 403, 405, and 415.

Items not selected for replication were sent to Jon Abbott for digital photography in September 2003. A series of high-quality digital photographs was taken from many angles for each individual item, allowing for future analysis. All clothing-related items were placed in coffins for reburial in October of 2003.

## Typology

In this section, we categorize the types of clothing fasteners represented in the assemblage. The types are based on materials employed in the manufacturing process (organic, metallic, or composite) and structural attributes (Table 52). An attempt will be made to correlate these types with those represented in the following published sources: Noël-Hume (1969), South (1964), Hinks (1988), Cotter (1968), Stone (1974), and Olsen (1963). Other attributes may be more important for understanding button acquisition and use; for instance, the number of parts (which may reflect cost/expense of manufacture), decoration, the potential for reuse

and modification, durability and longevity, cost, and availability of specific imports. We note these attributes in the inventory where possible.

The key characteristics of the buttons and cuff links are summarized in the typology in Table 52. Because of the small quantity of aglets and cuff links recovered, no attempt was made to ascribe these objects to particular types.

**Type 1: Bone Backs or Molds for Thread-Covered Buttons:** Type 1 buttons are flat disks cut from animal bone with a single, centrally located, drilled hole. The preferred raw material appears to have been the wide, flat, rib bones from large mammal species. Sections of these bones were easy to secure, thereby preventing movement during the cutting process. The button blanks were cut and the hole drilled at the same time by the use of specially designed metal bits that were outfitted on a hand or powered drill press (see the Diderot illustration of a mid-eighteenth-century French manufacturer in Albert and Kent [1949:28]). With the use of more refined bits, this process would also form the offset rim on the back face for the attachment of a metal cap. It should be noted that once the button and hole were finished, the button blanks could be used “as is”; those that were not finished or considered defective could be put to an alternative use. Also called a “thread-back” button, these types of fasteners could be used either plain faced with a thread shank or with a cloth or thread covering that was sewn directly onto the garment (Figure 143; Albert and Kent 1949:44–45). Small diameter sizes, in the range of 9–15 mm, were worn on waistcoats or shirts, and larger sizes, measuring 16–29 mm, were intended for coats. It is assumed these types of buttons were of low cost and easy to manufacture.

Table 52. Button Types Recovered at the African Burial Ground

Button Types	ABG Type	Noel-Hume/ South Type <sup>a</sup>	Hinks Type <sup>b</sup>	Olsen/ Cotter Type <sup>c</sup>	Stone Type <sup>d</sup>	Description
Organic buttons						
Bone backs or molds for thread covered buttons <sup>e</sup>	1	15 (1726–1865)	9A1w waistcoat or shirt, 9A1c coat (1680– 1810)	nonfunctional button blank	Cat. 1, Type 1	Cut, flat disk with a single central hole; with or without turning marks and off-set rim on at least one face; small diameter for waistcoat or shirt, 9–15 mm; large diameter for coat, 16–29 mm.
Composite buttons						
Copper-alloy ring for thread-covered buttons <sup>f</sup>	2	not listed	9B1 (1750–1840)	not listed	Class V, SA T1 (?)	Copper-alloy ring with soldered ends; provides framework for thread or cloth covering; shirt button.
Composite button with a nonmetallic cap, wood back, and copper-alloy wire loop shank <sup>g</sup>	3	not listed	with single-hole type 9A2—but states single hole was not functional	not listed	Class V, SA (?)	Turned and cut wood disk with a single central hole; circular recessed area on one face; copper-alloy-wire shank held in place with a wire flange or crimped end; possibly covered with leather or cloth, may also be painted or stained a dark color.
Composite button with a stamped metal cap, bone back, and copper-alloy wire loop shank <sup>h</sup>	4	4 (1726–1776)	5B3 (1750–1810)	Type B variant 1700–1790	Class III, SA	Stamped sheet-metal cap; usually decorated; with bone back; finely turned on both sides with a single central hole; concave front and convex back; offset rim. Wire loop shank: exterior portion of shank appears round in cross section, whereas the ends of shank (within the space between front and back of the button) are flattened and splayed outward; shank is loose fitting.
Composite button with a stamped metal cap, with perforated (four-hole) bone back	5	3 with cap (1726–1776)	5B2 (1750–1810)	Type B (1700–1790)	Class III, SA	Bone back; finely turned on both sides with four holes; concave front and convex back; also has an offset rim. No shank; cap has been removed so as to be used as a simple sew through.

**Table 52. Button Types Recovered at the African Burial Ground (continued)**

Button Types	ABG Type	Noel-Hume/South Type <sup>a</sup>	Hinks Type <sup>b</sup>	Olsen/Cotter Type <sup>c</sup>	Stone Type <sup>d</sup>	Description
Metal buttons						
Cast 2-and 3-piece all metallic buttons with wire loop shank	6	Types 7, 8, 9, and 11 (1726–1776); Type 11 also occurs in mid-nineteenth century	Type 2 (1690s to early nineteenth century)	Type C, D, and E (1750–1812)	CI, SD	Cast two-piece button; crown cast around a separate wire-looped eye in a raised or cone-shaped boss; mold marks have been removed by hand filing or machine spinning the back.
	7	Types 2 and 6 (1726–1776)	Type 3 (1680s–1770s)	not listed	CII, SA	Cast three-piece button; cast front and back; flux joined after a separate wire-loop eye is inserted through back plate; shank is either braised or loose; without holes (one or two) on back.

<sup>a</sup> From Noel-Hume (1969); South (1964).

<sup>b</sup> From Hinks (1988).

<sup>c</sup> From Cotter (1968); Olsen (1963).

<sup>d</sup> From Stone (1974).

<sup>e</sup> Found in 1770–1780 contexts.

<sup>f</sup> Post-1750 manufacture in England.

<sup>g</sup> Hinks (1988:89) has noted that wood buttons were found on inexpensive clothing.

<sup>h</sup> Found in ca. 1784 contexts (Hinks 1988:125–126).

A total of 19 buttons of this type were recovered from eight burials at the African Burial Ground: Burials 37, 171, 238, 257, 313, 333, 353, and 385. None of the examples in the collection was decorated, and no textile remains were recovered in association with any of the buttons. In most cases, these were the only type of button found with the individual. They were not used in conjunction with metal caps.

**Type 2: Copper-Alloy Rings for Thread- or Cloth-Covered Buttons:** Type 2 buttons are composed of small copper-alloy rings manufactured of drawn wire and covered by thread or cloth. The ends of the wire were apparently braised together to form a 10–12-mm-diameter ring. Also known as Dorset buttons, this type of button was made in England in the seventeenth century; production continued into the mid-nineteenth century (Albert and Kent 1949:90; Luscomb 1967:57).

Two buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground, from Burials 171 and 313. None of the examples in the collection contained the thread covering, nor were any textiles found in association with the buttons.

**Type 3: Composite Button, Wood with a Non-metallic Covering and Copper-Alloy Wire Loop**

**Shank:** Type 3 buttons are composed of a wooden body, a metal shank, and possibly a cloth or leather covering sewn over the button face. The buttons are cut from fine-grained hardwoods, such as apple, yew, or boxwood, that are lathe-turned into long, dowel-like rods. Individual buttons blanks are then sawed from the dowel's end. A single central hole is drilled through the wooden disk (Albert and Kent 1949:26). On the examples recovered from the New York African Burial Ground, the front face of the button contained a circular recessed area, evidently required to secure and provide space for the copper-alloy wire shank. Finally, the button's face and the exposed ends of the shanks were covered with leather or cloth. Painting or staining the button a dark color was an alternative surface treatment. These buttons measured approximately 16 mm in width.

To prevent the shank from pulling through the button face, the wire loops were attached and held in place in a variety of ways. In some of the specimens recovered from the New York African Burial Ground, the ends of the shank appear to have either been splayed or twisted; in others, the ends were crimped to form a wider protuberance or, possibly, a piece of wire was wound around the ends of the shank. Beyond

the use of pin shanks (a wire that is pushed through the body of the button and is looped back to form a shank), the type of shank observed at the New York African Burial Ground has not been detailed in the literature on button manufacture.

A total of 23 buttons of this type were recovered from five burials (Burials 10, 194, 203, 214, 259, and 379) at the New York African Burial Ground.

**Type 4: Composite Button with a Stamped Metal Cap and Bone Back with Single Hole for a Copper-Alloy Wire Loop Shank:** Type 4 buttons consist of a die-stamped, copper-alloy sheet-metal cap, usually decorated, covering a bone back and a fastener composed of a copper-alloy wire loop shank. The bone backs were finely turned on both sides with a single, central hole, a concave front, a convex back, and a well-defined, offset rim. The loose fitting wire loop shanks were placed within the concave space between the cap and front of the button back prior to the cap's attachment. There was some variation in the shape of the wire loop shank: in one example from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.006), the exterior portion of the shank appears round in cross section, whereas the ends of the shank (within the space between the front and back of the button) were flattened and splayed outward. The caps are decorated by either die stamping or repoussé and subsequently gold plated. This type of button was manufactured throughout the eighteenth century, according to Albert and Kent (1949:29).

Four buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground, all from Burial 181. No textiles were found in association with any of the bone-backed buttons.

**Type 5: Bone-Backed Buttons with Multiple Perforations (Originally Composite Buttons with Stamped Caps):** Type 5 buttons are very similar to Type 4 buttons, the main difference being the manner in which the button was attached to the garment. As originally designed, the button was manufactured with a die-stamped, copper-alloy, sheet-metal cap, usually decorated, that was fitted over a bone back. The back was finely turned on both sides with a concave front and convex back and a defined, offset rim on the back. Each of the specimens contained four drilled holes and a shallow central impression on the back, which is produced during the manufacturing process. In contrast to the Type 4 loop shank set in a single hole, the holes in the Type 5 back are laced with thread, catgut, or wire to form a shank.

Only the bone backs were present in the burial ground assemblage. There was a slight greenish tinge on some of the examples. It is possible that the buttons' metal components had been removed and the bone backs reused as simple sew-through buttons. Alternatively, all trace of the metal caps had decomposed beyond recognition. No other components of these buttons, such as pieces of metal caps or wire shanks, were present in the assemblage. This was a common button type during the eighteenth century.

A total of 11 buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground, all from Burial 392. Fragments of fine wool were recovered in association with the bone button backs. A wool fragment from a button at the right knee included a well-preserved, thread-finished buttonhole.

**Type 6: Cast Two-Piece, All-Metallic Buttons:** Type 6 buttons consist of a cast, two-piece button with the crown cast around a separate, wire-looped eye in a raised or cone-shaped boss of metal. This type also includes specimens in which the loop shank was braised directly to the button's back. The crown face was usually flat or slightly convex, occasionally with a beveled or cupped back edge. In most specimens, any marks derived from the manufacturing process had been removed as a result of the back being hand filed or machine spun. For the latter method, individual buttons are set in a collet or chuck—a device used for holding cylindrical objects in a lathe—and spun at a high speed; a handheld chisel is used to cut and trim excess metal castings from the back and boss (Olsen 1963:552). This type of button was usually covered with cloth or decorated with a variety of motifs produced during the manufacturing process. Decorated buttons without cloth covers were also given a high polish or, alternatively, were plated with gold or tin.

A total of 35 buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground from a total of 13 burials (Burials 6, 10, 181, 191, 243, 250, 259, 276, 278, 325, 366, 403, and 405).

Two of the buttons of this type found with Burial 6 were decorated with anchors and gilt. As described in the inventory, the two specimens did not match, although based on their locations, they are believed to have adorned a jacket or coat. Anchor buttons were used on British naval officers' uniforms from 1774 and may have been more generally available in New York just before, during, and after the Revolution (see Troiani [2001:9–10] for illustrations of British naval officers' anchor buttons). Because buttons were

Figure 144. Buttons from Burial 6 associated with a man's coat or jacket: *top row*, Catalog Nos. 219-B.001, 219-B.002, and 219-B.003; *bottom row*, Catalog Nos. 219-B.004 and 219-B.008. Largest button is 26 mm in diameter (photograph by Jon Abbott).



often obtained separately from clothing and were typically recycled, we do not identify this man as a naval officer based on his burial in a jacket bearing two anchor buttons. The motifs may have signaled his occupation, whether as a sailor or a member of the navy, but they also may have been chosen for aesthetic or other reasons.

**Type 7: Cast Three-Piece, All-Metallic Buttons:** Type 7 buttons are dome-shaped, all-metal buttons composed of separately cast fronts and backs. The two halves are joined or braised at a high temperature with the aid of a fluxing agent. Prior to joining the two portions, a separate wire loop eye (the third piece) is inserted through a single hole in the back plate and braised or set in place. Distinctive characteristics of this type of button are the presence of an additional small hole(s) on the button's back. These openings allow the heated, expanding gases within the hollow space to escape during the braising process, which would prevent the two halves from joining. This type of button was usually decorated during the casting process, or, as was the case for some specimens from the New York African Burial Ground, the entire button was gilded.

A total of 24 buttons of this type were recovered at the New York African Burial Ground, from Burials 10, 181, 214, 271, 326, 379, 403, and 415. Seventeen of the buttons were in matching sets found with the two individuals in Burials 326 and 415. Evidence of gilding was preserved on buttons in Burial 415.

## Button/Fastener Inventory by Individual Burial

**Burial 6:** Eight buttons were recovered from Burial 6, a Late Group interment of an adult, probably a man, between 25 and 30 years old. Five of the buttons were evidently attached to a coat or jacket in which the individual was buried, but as Figure 144 illustrates, they did not form a matched set. These buttons were, for the most part, dissimilar in decoration and manufacture. The two buttons with anchor motifs did not match (Figures 145 and 146).

Button 219-B.001 was made of cast copper alloy that had been gilded on each side; it had an applied wire loop shank. The 17-mm-diameter button was decorated with an upright foul anchor device on a plain ground. Both the centrally located device and the gilding were well preserved. In finely executed detail, the anchor's rope extended down from the left side of the ring, passing behind the end of the left stock (a guide to anchor terminology is provided in the key to Figure 147). It then looped first to the right, passing in front of the shank, and then to the left, passing behind the shank. The rope continued to the left, passing in back of the bill of the left fluke, then looped to the right below the anchor's left arm and crown. Finally, it passed behind the center point of the right arm, ending with a short section of rope that extended down from the anchor's right bill.



Figure 145. Gilt, copper-alloy button from Burial 6 (Catalog No. 219-B.001). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 146. Gilt, copper-alloy button from Burial 6 (Catalog No. 219-B.004). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

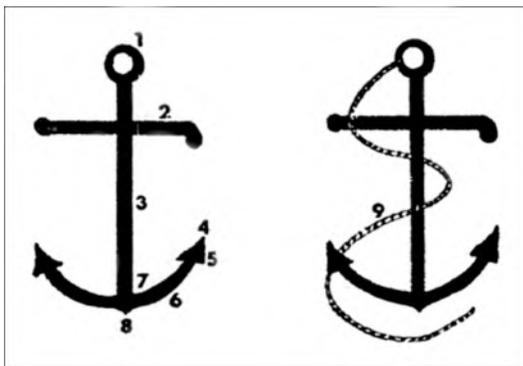


Figure 147. Diagram of anchor device: *left*, upright anchor; *right*, upright fouled anchor. Key is as follows: 1 = ring; 2 = stock; 3 = shank; 4 = bill; 5 = fluke; 6 = arm; 7 = throat; 8 = crown; 9 = rope (source: Luscomb 1974:32).

Button 219-B.004 was comparable to the previous example in terms of manufacture, decoration, and preservation. This button, however, was of heavier construction and had a larger loop shank and a more concave back. The primary differences between the two buttons were in the details of the anchor design, in particular the use of a chain rather than a rope. Overall, the upright fouled anchor on the second button, although just as detailed, was slightly larger in scale and covered more of the button's face. Another minor difference was the distance between the top ring and the shank, which, in the second button, was negligible. The layout of the "chain" in relation to the anchor was essentially identical to button 219-B.001.

Button 219-B.003 was a 17-mm copper-alloy disk with a wire shank fastened to the back during the cast-

ing process (see Figure 144, top row, right). The ends of the loop shank were set in a cast boss of metal and the back had been spun and cut. The gilt button evidently contained a central decoration on a plain ground, but owing to corrosion, no elements survived.

Button 219-B.002 was also a 17-mm copper-alloy fastener with a wire shank attached during the casting (see Figure 144, top row, middle). The lack of cut marks on the back seemed to indicate the button had not been spun. However, the metal boss surrounding the ends of the shank had been hand trimmed or filed in the area adjacent to the long axis of the shank, leaving a mound of metal along one side. The button did not appear to have been decorated beyond a possible high polish.

Button 219-B.008 (see Figure 144, bottom row, right), the final whole button, was of cast copper alloy and was found on the sacrum. The 26-mm diameter button, one of the collection's largest, was manufactured with an alpha loop shank and appeared to have had a stamped decoration on its face. Not only was this button comparable in size to most of the coins recovered from the burial ground, there appeared to be some design elements on the face that were similar to coins of the eighteenth century. Poor preservation, however, makes it impossible to determine whether a coin had been converted into a button or if a coin die had been used to strike the decoration.

Portions of at least three pewter buttons were recovered from the burial (12 fragments, Catalog



Figure 148. Buttons from Burial 10 associated with a man's coat or jacket (Catalog Nos. 234-B.001–234-B.007). Buttons are 17 mm in diameter (photograph by Jon Abbott).

No. 219-B.007). Field notes indicated that a pewter fragment was located on the sacrum. However, the exact size, shape, and type of manufacture of the pewter buttons could not be determined because of their fragmentary state. Field notes indicated possible textile fragments adhered to the cranium, but none was recovered.

**Burial 10:** Thirteen buttons were recovered from Burial 10, which held a 40–45-year-old man. The burial has been assigned to the Late-Middle Group. Seven buttons found on the torso apparently fastened a coat or jacket (Figure 148). One button was located at the right foot. An additional five buttons were inferred from wire shanks (unique objects unassociated with the coat buttons) recovered from the lower right leg. The shank fragments likely represented the remnants of composite buttons constructed of organic materials, such as wood or bone, and metal. In contrast to Burial 6, the coat buttons recovered from Burial 10 formed a matched set.

The coat buttons were cast copper-alloy with a copper-alloy wire alpha loop shank applied during manufacture. All of the buttons measured 17 mm in diameter and, with the exception of a slightly beveled edge, all were undecorated and had evidence of a polished face. The conservators' notes stated that the buttons were possibly tin plated on the front surface. The backs of these buttons were turned and had lost the upper, rounded portion of the eye shank.

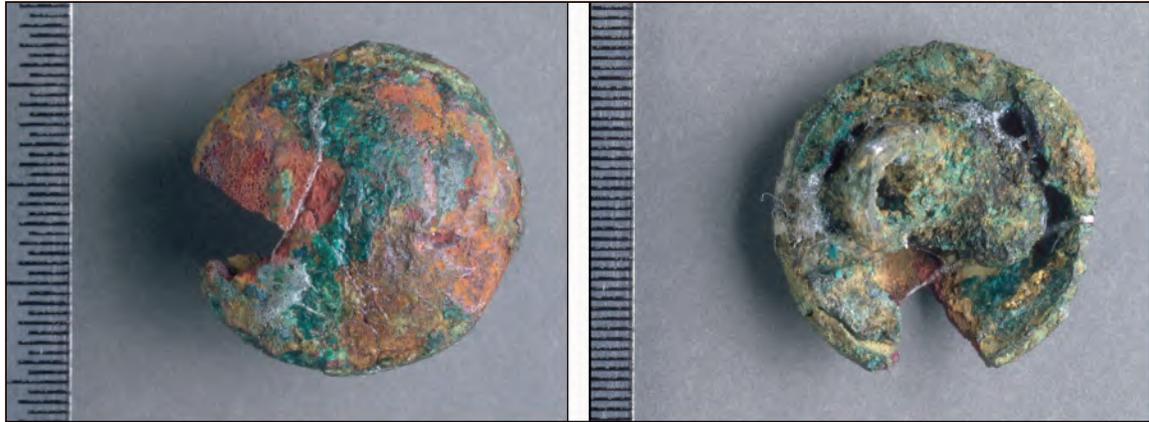
Button 234-B.013 was a domed two-part copper-alloy button with a copper-alloy shank cast in place. Recovered from the area of the right foot, the button measured 16 mm in diameter, and although the face

was corroded, the button did not appear to have been decorated (Figure 149). The front had a ground edge.

The five copper-alloy wire shanks recovered from the right leg were identified in the field as “eyelets.” The lack of any corresponding “hooks” would indicate that the items (Catalog Nos. 234-B.008–234-B.012) were probably the shank portions from composite buttons, which presumably were covered with cloth. The ends of each shank were either bent flat or splayed outward; this would have prevented the shank from pulling through the front of the button. One shank had a tight twist at the end, resembling a continuous loop (Figure 150, Catalog No. 234-B.010; see also Figure 151 for another example of a copper-alloy shank from this burial). Other well-preserved examples of this type of button shank were found with Burials 259 and 379.

The conservation inventory listed a cuff-link fragment, but no such item was present when the Howard University Archaeology Team began its work. It is likely the item was actually one of the buttons or button shanks. A textile fragment (Catalog No. 234-B.012; Figure 152), identified as plain weave wool, was recovered, and although no provenience was recorded, it is likely the fragment was associated with one of the buttons.

**Burial 22:** A single aglet was recovered from Burial 22, a Middle Group interment of a young child between 2.5 and 4.5 years old. The item (Figure 153) was not noted during excavation, and its location on the body is not known. The aglet may have been mistaken for a pin; three pins were recorded clearly in situ on the torso, with an additional one on top of



**a** **b**  
Figure 149. Copper-alloy button from Burial 10: (a) face; (b) back (Catalog No. 234-B.013). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 150. Copper-alloy button shank from Burial 10 (Catalog No. 234-B.010). Length is 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 151. Copper-alloy button shank from Burial 10 (Catalog No. 234-B.008). Length is 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 152. Plain-weave wool textile fragment from Burial 10 (Catalog No. 234-B.012). Length is 20 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 153. Copper-alloy aglet from Burial 22 (Catalog No. 344-B.003). Length is 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 154. Bone button from Burial 37 (Catalog No. 460-B.001). Diameter is 13 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 155. Gilt, copper-alloy cuff links from Burial 158 (Catalog No. 903-B.001). Face diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 156. Turned bone button from Burial 171 (Catalog No. 931-B.002). Diameter is 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

the skull. A tiny fragment of linen was also recovered from the burial.

**Burial 32:** A fragment from a cast, one-piece pewter button was recovered from Burial 32, a Middle Group interment of a man between 50 and 60 years of age. The size and shape of the button (Catalog No. 420-UNK.002) could not be determined. There was no mention or depiction of the button in the field records.

**Burial 37:** A turned bone button with a drilled center hole (Catalog No. 460-B.001) was recovered near the left wrist of the 45–55-year-old man in Burial 37, a Late Group interment. The 13-mm button (Figure 154) apparently had been covered with cloth or thread and had a thread shank, an assessment based on the absence of staining typically found on bone buttons that had copper-alloy metal caps (see Burial 181 for an example).

**Burial 158:** A pair of round gilt copper-alloy cuff links was recovered from each wrist of the 20–30-year-old man in Burial 158, a Late Group interment. The pair from the left wrist (Catalog No. 903-B.001) is shown in Figure 155. It matched the pair from the right wrist (Catalog No. 903-B.002). The cuff links measured 17 mm in diameter and had cast U-shaped shanks, possibly diagnostic of the seventeenth century or the first half of the eighteenth century (Noël Hume 1961:383). With the exception of the gold plating and a possible raised edge, there were no discernable decorative elements.

**Burial 171:** Three buttons, two made from animal bone and one represented by a copper-alloy button ring, were recovered about the body and within the coffin from Burial 171, a Late Group interment of a man between 44 and 60 years of age. The bone buttons each had a single, central drilled hole. The larger of the buttons (Catalog No. 931-B.002) was found beside the right femur. It measured 22 mm in diameter and was turned on both sides with a relatively wide offset rim (Figure 156). The offset rim was not as well manufactured as the examples of this button type from Burial 181.

The smaller bone button (Catalog No. 931-B.001), from the right scapula, measured 10 mm in diameter and was a less “finished” object. In addition to being turned only on one side, leaving a rough, natural surface (the inner wall of the bone), the edge of the button was left untrimmed from the cutting tool (Figure 157). The absence of metal shanks or any evidence of metallic staining on the bone buttons indicated they were thread or cloth covered and attached with a thread shank. The edges of the sewing holes,



Figure 157. Turned bone button from Burial 171 (Catalog No. 931-B.001). Diameter is 10 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 158. Copper-alloy button ring from Burial 171 (Catalog No. 931-B.003). Interior diameter is approximately 12 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

particularly on the smaller button, were worn and abraded. It is possible these buttons were originally button backs that were modified or reused, either by removing the metal cap or by reusing buttons that had lost their shanks.

The remains of a copper-alloy ring were found on the sternum. The ring (Catalog No. 931-B.003) may have functioned as the frame for a thread or cloth button (Figure 158). The curved fragments were identified initially as shroud pins. The smaller of the bone buttons may have fastened a shirt collar, but the locations of the buttons do not strongly indicate a particular item of clothing they might have been used for.

**Burial 174:** Burial 174, another Late Group interment, held a man between 17 and 18 years of age. Two highly degraded pewter buttons (Catalog Nos. 940-B.001 and 940-B.002) were recovered during the cleaning of the skeletal remains at the Cobb Labora-

tory, Howard University. The buttons were located on the lumbar vertebrae and the right innominate. The exact size and shape of the buttons could not be determined because of the fragmentary nature of the items, and there were no identifying attributes to suggest method of manufacture. Based on their locations, they may have fastened breeches.

**Burial 181:** Burial 181, a coffinless burial assigned to the Late Group, held a man between 20 and 23 years old. Six buttons—three made from copper alloy and three made from copper alloy and bone—were recorded in situ (Figure 159). A seventh button, also a bone-and-copper-alloy composite, was recovered in the laboratory, but the provenience is unknown. In addition, laboratory records indicate that copper-alloy cuff links attributed to this burial were treated by the conservator but were subsequently noted as missing. No cuff links were mentioned in the field notes or

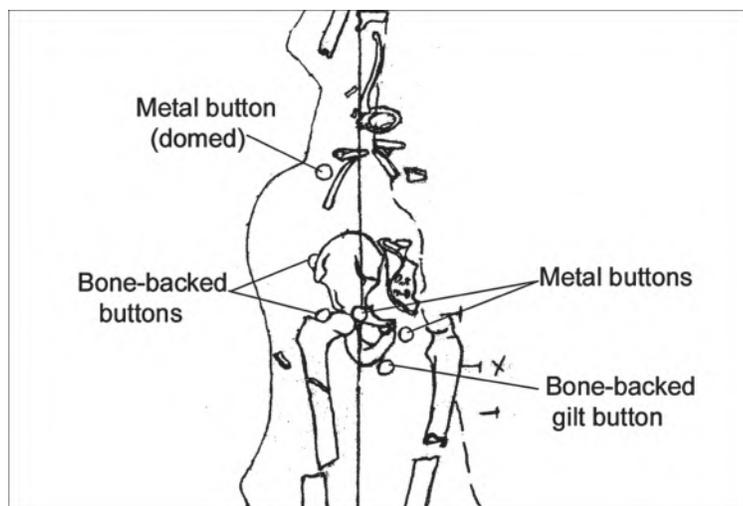


Figure 159. Detail of the disturbed Burial 181 with buttons in the pelvic area. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot (in situ drawing by M. Schur).



Figure 160. Copper-alloy, with zinc and nickel, button from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.001). Diameter is 20 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 161. Copper-alloy, with zinc and nickel, button from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.008). Diameter is 29 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

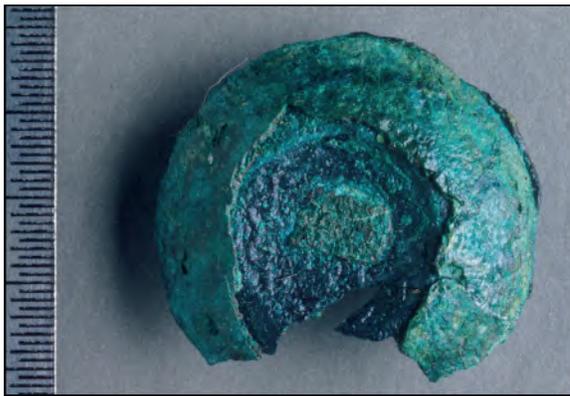


Figure 162. Copper-alloy button from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.009): (a) face; (b) back. Diameter is approximately 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

depicted on field drawings, and none was found in the laboratory when the Howard University Archaeology Team began its work.

The three metal buttons (Catalog Nos. 967-B.001, 967-B.008, and 967-B.009) varied in manufacture and size. Button 967-B.001 (Figure 160) was a cast one-piece copper-alloy button that evidently contained zinc and nickel. It had a spun back and a drilled shank. The relatively flat disk, found at the head of the man's right femur, measured approximately 20 mm in diameter. The button appeared to have been decorated, but no design elements were identified because of the extensive corrosion.

Button 967-B.008 (Figure 161), also from the pelvic area, was a slightly concave, cast disk of copper alloy with zinc and nickel. It measured 29 mm in diameter. The button had an applied loop shank and

the back was evidently spun. There were no decorative elements on the button's face.

Button 967-B.009 (Figure 162) was the front portion of a copper-alloy domed button with a stamped decoration. The button, which measured approximately 22 mm in diameter, was probably of a cast, two-piece construction, with a braised or flux-joined seam. No remains of the button's back or the shank were recovered in the field. The cast, central decoration was located within a circular recessed area, 13 mm wide, and appeared to have had an overlapping scalloped design, possibly representing the petals from a stylized Tudor Rose. The back of the object contained a large, off-center mass of metal. The untrimmed mass was evidently a part of the manufacturing process.

The four composite buttons had stamped copper-alloy faces and turned bone backs with looped copper-al-



Figure 163. Copper-alloy button, with bone back, from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.002). Note remains of the button's cap and impressions of crisscross pattern to the left of the bone back. Fragments of the impressed and gilded decoration of the cap and impressions on soil clods are in the upper left portion of the photograph. Diameter is 25 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

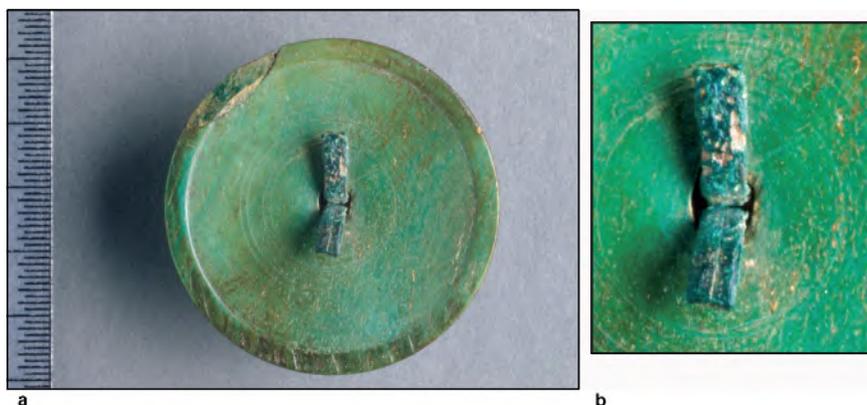


Figure 164. Copper-alloy button, with bone back, from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.003). Diameter is 25 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 165. Bone and copper-alloy button from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.005). Note the repoussé (raised impression) decoration on the preserved fragment of the cap. Fragment is attached to the end of the shank, which rests against the front, concave side of the bone disc. Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Figure 166. Bone and copper-alloy button from Burial 181 (Catalog No. 967-B.006): (a) back; (b) detail of flattened shank. Diameter is 25 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



loy wire shanks (Catalog Nos. 967-B.002, 967-B.003, 967-B.005, and 967-B.006; Figures 163–166). All of the items appeared to have been decorated with repoussé or impressed designs. The best-preserved button (967-B.002, see Figure 163) bore a simple cross-weave pattern finished with gold plating. The design was discernable on fragments of the metal cap and was also impressed on small fragments of soil that adhered to the button.

Buttons 967-B.002, 967-B.003, and 967-B.006 measured approximately 25 mm in diameter, although they would have been slightly larger with the thin, sheet-metal caps in place. The bone backs for these three examples were identical in type of manufacture. Concentric turning marks and a narrow, offset rim were evident on each side of each button back. There was a slight concavity to the button back's inner surface, whereas the opposing surface was convex. Each had been stained by the decomposition of the copper-alloy caps.

Button 967-B.005 (see Figure 165) was slightly smaller in size than the other composite buttons. This example measured 16 mm in diameter. Portions of the front cap were in place, as well as a complete copper-alloy loop shank. Although the button face appeared to have been decorated, no design elements or any evidence of gilt were preserved.

The composite buttons from Burial 181 yielded some interesting manufacturing details. Unlike the flat bone disks found on other burials, the front side of the bone button back was concave to provide a space for the ends of the wire loop shank. In one example (Catalog No. 967-B.006) the ends of the wire loop shank were flattened (see Figure 166). The shank's ribbonlike shape may have served the purpose of making the end of the shank wider and therefore less likely to pull out. This is in contrast to the "sew-through" portion or eye of the shank, which was formed of rounded wire. Placement of the ends of the wire shank through the bone back preceded the attachment of the metal cap. These examples do not appear to have had metal back plates.

Although Burial 181 was disturbed, the button locations in the pelvic area of the skeletal remains are suggestive of trousers. The four matched, composite specimens may have fastened the trouser front. The two flat metal buttons may also have been from this garment. The domed button was found slightly further up the torso area and may not have fastened the trousers.

**Burial 191:** Burial 191, a Late Group interment of a man between 25 and 30 years old, contained one copper-alloy button. Located at the left ilium, the button measured 17 mm in diameter and was cast in one piece with a loop shank (Figure 167). Although the back of the flat disk appeared to have been spun, the front face had a few raised features that suggest the button was decorated. In particular, the raised, wavy lines are suggestive of a crown and/or shield, design elements found on contemporaneous coins.

**Burial 194:** A single copper-alloy button shank was found near the head of the right femur of the 30–40-year-old man in Burial 194, a Late Group interment. An organic fragment, possibly a leather button cover, was associated with the shank. The shank may have been from a poorly preserved bone or wooden button.

**Burial 203:** Burial 203, a Late Group interment, held an individual between 12 and 18 years old. The skeletal remains offered no clear indication of the individual's sex, but the material and positioning of the button fragments recovered with the individual



Figure 167. Copper-alloy button from Burial 191 (Catalog No. 1081-B.001). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

were typical of eighteenth-century knee breeches, suggesting that Burial 203 was a young man. Field records depict buttons at distinct locations on the individual: at the knees, the wrists, and the pelvic area.

The button fragments from Burial 203 represented a total of eight separate wood buttons, which had copper-alloy wire shanks and evidently had been faced with leather (Catalog Nos. 1174-B.001–1174-B.008). Field notes refer to 14 buttons, which were depicted on the in situ drawing. The discrepancy in count between the field staff and the laboratory staff may have stemmed from counting displaced fragments as individual buttons (Figure 168; note the bottom right specimen fragmented into two layers). In general, the shank portions of the buttons were less well preserved than the crowns.

The eight buttons were identical in terms of manufacture and material. Based on an overall assessment of the recovered fragments, the wooden button disks measured approximately 14–15 mm in diameter and appeared to have been manufactured from a fine-grained wood species.

Although the button stock was evidently lathe turned and subsequently cut into thin disks, there were no surviving features of this process on the face or back of any of the buttons. Unlike the turned bone discs used for button backs (e.g., Burial 181), which had a concave front side to allow space for the ends of the wire loop shank, these buttons had a circular, shallow, recessed area on the button face (Figure 169). The recessed area provided a space for the ends of the wire loop shank. The loop portion of the shank would have been on the button's flat back (Figure 170).

The copper-alloy wire shanks from these buttons were poorly preserved, as noted, and no complete

Figure 168. Wood buttons apparently faced with leather, with copper-alloy shanks, from Burial 203 (Catalog Nos. 1174-B.001–1174-B.008). Diameters are 13–15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 169. Front of wood button from Burial 203 (Catalog No. 1174-B). Note the recessed area on the front of the face: the hole for the shank had apparently been enlarged by wear. Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 170. Back of wood button from Burial 203 (Catalog No. 1174-B.007). Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).

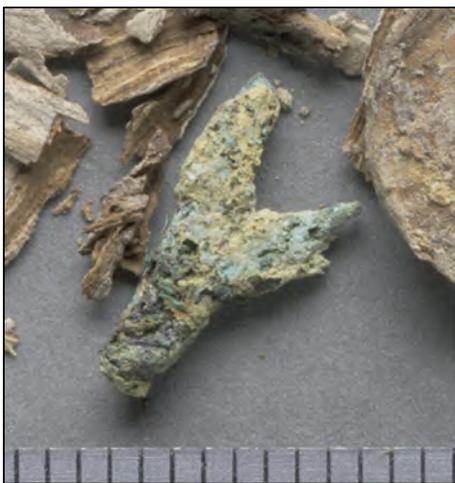


Figure 171. Detail of copper-alloy button shank fragment from Burial 203 (Catalog No. 1174-B). Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).

shanks were recovered. Based on the best-preserved example (Figure 171), the ends of the wire shank were tightly twisted but not splayed, thus raising the question of how they would have been held in place. It is possible that the ends of the shanks were missing because of corrosion. It is also possible that a piece of wire had been wound around the end of each shank to prevent it from pulling through the central hole. An example of this type of shank was found with Burial 379.

The eight composite wood and metal buttons were apparently finished with a small piece of material, which was identified as leather by the conservators. The material covered the recessed face of the wood disk and was probably tightly sewn over the back of the button, as illustrated in Figure 143. Although the wooden disk buttons did not have the overall green staining associated with copper-alloy covers on bone discs (as in Burial 181), the rust present on many of the fragments may indicate that the wood button was



Figure 172. Wood button from Burial 203 (Catalog No. 1174-B). Note the corroded ends of the copper-alloy shank. Diameter is 14 mm. Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 173. Copper-alloy aglet (with hair adhering) from Burial 213 (Catalog No. 1190-B.001). Length is 15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 174. Copper-alloy button back from Burial 214 (Catalog No. 1191-B.002): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 21 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

capped with a thin sheet of poorly preserved, iron-based metal (Figure 172).

**Burial 211:** A turquoise enamel cuff link face was recovered near the chin of the adult in Burial 211, a Late Group interment of a probable man. This item is described and illustrated in Chapter 13.

**Burial 213:** One aglet (Catalog No. 1190-B.001) was recovered from Burial 213, a Middle Group interment of a woman between 45 and 55 years of age. The aglet (Figure 173) was found on the left parietal with hair adhering to it (field records identified it as a straight pin). The presence of an aglet on the skull may indicate lacings on a cap, or a shroud drawstring. Alternatively, it may have been displaced from the collar area. Note that the aglet recovered from Burial 22 may also have been located on the skull.

**Burial 214:** Burial 214 was assigned to the Late Group. It held a man between 45 and 55 years old. Artifacts recorded in situ included a copper-alloy

button back (Catalog No. 1191-B.002) near the right shoulder, several button shank fragments, a straight pin, and a coin and a knife handle (the latter items are described in Chapter 14).

The button back was from a 21-mm-diameter domed button of two-piece construction, with a braided wire shank. The ends of the wire loop shank appear to have been flattened or crimped prior to the attachment of the button's front face (Figure 174). Two degraded copper-alloy shank fragments (Catalog No. 1191-B.004), possibly from button 1191-B.002, were also recovered, but their provenience is unclear. Two iron shank fragments were also recovered from the pelvic area during laboratory cleaning of the skeletal remains (Figure 175). A third shank fragment and the remains of a wooden button, Catalog Nos. 1191-SBH.001 and 1191-SBH.002, respectively (not pictured), were recovered from a flotation soil sample taken from the head area.



Figure 175. Possible iron button shank from Burial 214 (Catalog No. 1191-B.004). Scale is in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 176. Copper-alloy cuff links from Burial 238 (Catalog Nos. 1224-B.001 [bottom] and 1224-B.002 [top]): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 177. Detail of decorative motif on cuff-link faces from Burial 238.

The location and fragmentary nature of the clothing-related artifacts from Burial 214 was the result of a later trash pit that affected the central part of the grave shaft, disturbing the pelvic area.

**Burial 238:** Burial 238, a Late-Middle Group interment, held a 40–50-year-old man with a set of cast copper-alloy cuff links. One pair was found on the

right radius (Catalog No. 1224-B.001) and the other pair, beneath the left radius (Catalog No. 1224-B.002; Figure 176). The cuff links were octagonal in shape with flat faces and backs and a small rear lip. The faces measured 15 mm across, and each had a cast, flat shank with a drilled eye. The copper-alloy wire loops connecting the cuff links measured approximately 16 mm in length. The apparent raised semicircular design or letter, which may be a by-product of corrosion, was located adjacent to one end of the shank. A possible maker's mark was noted on the back of one of the faces (Catalog No. 1224-B.001) but is not visible in the photograph.

The four faces had identical decorations (Figure 177). Along the outer edge were two narrow octagonal bands. The outermost band was decorated with what may have been an egg-and-dart motif, or possibly a stylized Tudor Rose, whereas the inner band was undecorated. The center had a circular band with a decoration that repeated the design of the octagonal band. The innermost circle appeared to be stippled.



Figure 178. Bone button from Burial 238 (Catalog No. 1224-B.003). Diameter is 8 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 179. Copper-alloy button from Burial 243 (Catalog No. 1230-B.001). Diameter is 27 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 180. Copper-alloy button from Burial 250 (Catalog No. 1239-B.001). Diameter is 20 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

In addition to the cuff links, a very small single-hole bone button (Catalog No. 1224-B.003) was recovered overlying the fifth and sixth cervical vertebrae. The turned button measured 8 mm and appeared to have had an offset rim (Figure 178). The lack of any metallic shanks from the burial or any evidence of metallic staining on the bone button indicates this was a cloth or thread-covered fastener, probably attached with a thread shank.

**Burial 243:** Burial 243 was a Late Group, coffinless interment of a man between 40 and 50 years of age. A single button (Figure 179) was recovered from beneath the upper part of the man's skull. The copper-alloy button (Catalog No. 1230-B.001) was cast, with an applied shank, and measured 27 mm in diameter. The loop portion of the shank was missing. Although the button was heavily corroded and fragmentary, there was a hint of a raised, annular edge decora-

tion. Based on the location of the item, the relation of this burial to other grave cuts, and the presence in the grave shaft of household and industrial waste material, including glassware, ceramics, tannery and slaughterhouse debris, the artifact was probably the result of secondary deposition.

**Burial 250:** Burial 250, an Early Group interment, held an adult of undetermined sex and age. A copper-alloy button (Catalog No. 1239-B.001) and a small iron mass (Catalog No. 1239-B.003) with a large black glass bead (No. 1239-B.004, described in Chapter 13) were found in the central portion of the coffin interior, possibly near the pelvis. The copper-alloy button (Figure 180) measured 20 mm in diameter and had a braised shank, although the loop portion of the shank was missing. With the exception of a small raised nipple centered on the face, the button was undecorated. Another item, originally identified by conservators as a highly degraded pewter button, was subsequently identified as a tack associated with the iron and glass object. Field recording was minimal for this burial; the precise location of the button and its association with possible clothing is impossible to reconstruct. Although the button may have fastened a burial garment, the apparent juxtaposition of the objects in this burial suggests a possible alternative function, such as a memento or talisman.

**Burial 257:** Burial 257 held a man between 30 and 40 years old who has been assigned to the Late Group. Two whole bone buttons were found in the process of screening the grave fill. Field notes state that one of the buttons was originally located in the sacrum area. A portion of a third bone button was recovered in the laboratory during the cleaning of the left acetabulum (hip joint). The two whole buttons (Catalog No. 1246-



Figure 181. Bone buttons from Burial 257: *left*, fragment (Catalog No. 1246-B.002); *right*, two whole buttons (Catalog No. 1246-B.001). Diameters are 12–13 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

B.001) and the portion of the third button (Catalog No. 1246-B.002) are shown in Figure 181.

All three buttons were cut from animal bone and measured between 12 and 13 mm in diameter, with worn or minimal turning marks and no evidence of an offset rim. The lack of offset rims and metal components, such as shanks or caps, or any evidence of metallic staining on the bone, suggest that these buttons were cloth- or thread-covered with thread shanks. It is also possible they were button backs that were never made into buttons or that the shanks and covers had been removed. The buttons may have fastened undergarments, but the lack of good provenience information precludes assignment to particular garments or speculation about other ways the items may have been used (such as strung).

**Burial 259:** Burial 259 was a Late Group interment of a 17–19 year old identified as a probable woman. Eighteen buttons or parts of buttons were recorded

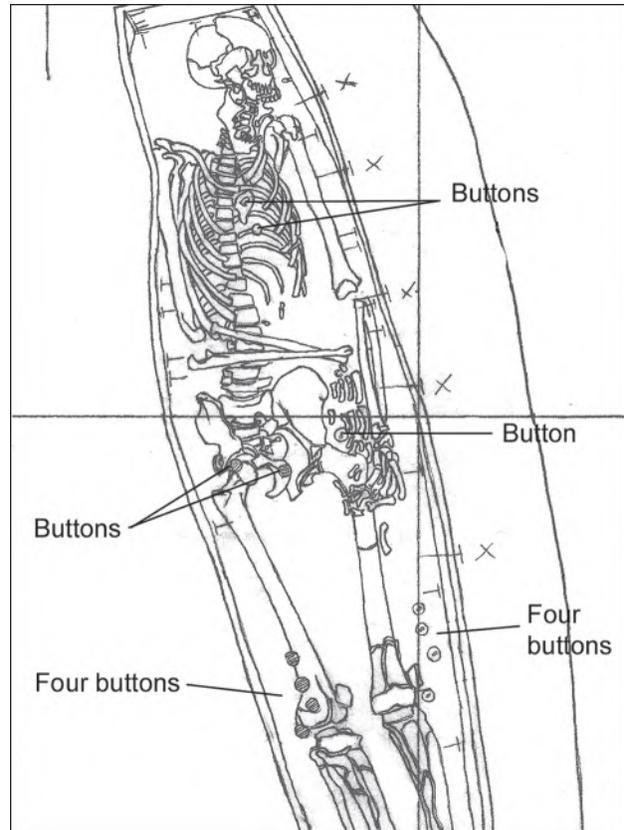


Figure 182. In situ drawing of Burial 259 showing button locations. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot (drawing by M. Schur).

in situ with the skeletal remains (Figure 182). There were four buttons with an identical face design aligned along the end of each femur, just above the knees, and three more of the same buttons were found in the pelvic area (Catalog Nos. 1249-B.009, 1249-B.010, 1249-B.013 [which includes two specimens], 1249-B.017, and 1249-B.019–1249-B.023).



Figure 183. Copper-alloy buttons, with parallel ridged and milled decoration, from Burial 259: *top row*, Catalog Nos. 1249-B.009, 1249-B.010, and 1249-B.013; *middle row*, Catalog Nos. 1249-B.017, 1249-B.019, and 1249-B.020; *bottom row*, Catalog Nos. 1249-B.021, 1249-B.022, and 1249-B.023. One additional specimen (Catalog No. 1249-B.005) is not pictured. Diameter is 18 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 184. Tin-plated, copper-alloy button from Burial 259 (Catalog No. 1249-B.013). Diameter is 18 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 185. Copper-alloy button from Burial 259 (Catalog No. 1249-B.010); photograph shows boss and wire loop shank. Total boss/shank length is 8 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Two smooth-faced buttons and a button shank were also found on the ribs (Catalog Nos. 1249-B.11 and 1249-B.12). Three more button shanks were recorded on the vertebrae and two on the pelvis (Catalog No. 1249-B.016).

The button locations at the hips and knees indicate the individual was buried wearing breeches. The two buttons on the ribs may have been from a shirt.

Ten of the copper alloy breeches buttons are shown in Figure 183. The ones that had been lying facedown on the coffin floor (all on the left side of the body; see Figure 182) had wood adhering to their faces. The buttons measured 18 mm in diameter and were of cast copper alloy, with a parallel, ridged decoration with milled impressions. The buttons were subsequently spun and finished with tin plate (Figure 184). The copper alloy wire shanks were cast in a high cone shaped boss (Figure 185).

Portions of two of the buttons on the ribs, identified as metal in the field, were recovered and subsequently were identified by project conservators as leather with

woolen fibers adhering. They were apparently made of wood, possibly with leather covers (Figure 186). The five copper-alloy shanks recorded separately in the field represent five additional buttons, which also may have been made of wood that did not survive. Based on the shank morphology, the ends would have extended through the button and were crimped or tied off with a wire to create a flange, so as not to pull through the button face (Figure 187; also see Burials 203 and 379 for comparative examples).

Woven textile fragments and leather adhered to several buttons and to the coffin wood where buttons had lain against the bottom board (Figures 188 and 189). Several of the textile fragments were not identified, but those associated with the breeches buttons were of wool. There were also fragments of linen, labeled as “from buttons” (Catalog No. 1249-B.003), but conservators did not record which buttons they were associated with.

**Burial 271:** Burial 271 was assigned to the Middle Group. It held a man between 45 and 57 years old who



Figure 186. Possible leather-covered wood buttons from Burial 259 (Catalog Nos. 1249-B.011 and 1249-B.012). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 187. Copper-alloy button shanks from Burial 259 (Catalog No. 1249-B.016). Length is 10 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 188. Textile from Burial 259, retrieved from coffin wood sample (Catalog No. 1249-CWB) (photograph by Jon Abbott).

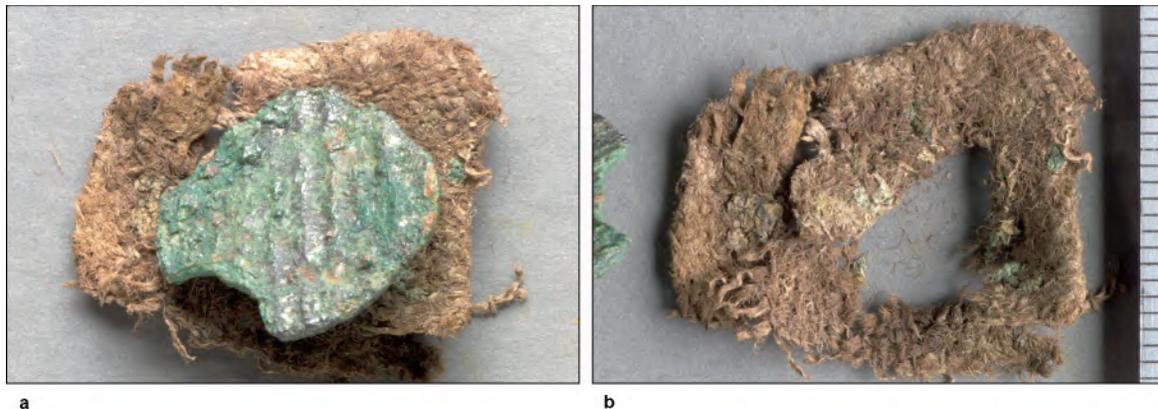


Figure 189. Copper-alloy button and wool textile from Burial 259 (Catalog No. 1249-B.017). The button was removed from associated cloth to show the buttonhole, which did not appear to have been top stitched (compare to the example from Burial 415). The ruler at right is measured in millimeters (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 190. Bone button, with offset rim, from Burial 313 (Catalog No. 1516-B.001 [1 of 2]). Diameter is 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 191. Bone button from Burial 313 (Catalog No. 1516-B.002). Diameter is 13 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

was interred in a coffin with a hexagonal shape. Two copper-alloy domed buttons, each with an outside diameter of 14 mm, were recovered from the screen during excavation. The first button was of one-piece, solid-cast construction with a high shank (Catalog No. 1267-UNC.001). The second button consisted of small fragments of the dome, which appeared to have been decorated, and a portion of the shank (Catalog No. 1267-UNC.002). Because the items were found in the screen, it is impossible to state whether, or how, they were directly associated with the man's remains.

**Burial 276:** Burial 276 was a Late Group, coffinless interment of a woman between 20 and 24 years of age. Although no artifacts were directly associated with the individual, the grave shaft contained a relatively heavy secondary deposit of industrial waste from nearby tanneries/slaughterhouses and ceramic manufacturers. Also in the grave shaft were faunal remains, personal items, and domestic ceramics and glassware from the second and early part of the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The field notes referred to a possible coin recovered from slightly above the body, near the woman's right rib cage. Upon closer inspection, however, this item was identified as a button (Catalog No. 1273-UNC.001). It was of cast copper-alloy and measured 20 mm in diameter, with a curved face and an applied loop shank. The conservators treated seven fragments from the button's face, some of which were gilded. The button did not appear to have functioned as a clothes fastener or to have been deliberately placed with the woman but was present in the grave's back fill owing to redeposition.

**Burial 278:** This Late Group, coffinless interment

held a man between 45 and 55 years old. The association of this burial with a cast copper-alloy button was problematic. The button was cataloged in the laboratory, but its provenience was not recorded in the field. Although there were no artifacts directly associated with this individual, the grave shaft contained a secondary deposit of material including faunal remains, personal items, and domestic ceramics from the second and early part of the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

The button (Catalog No. 1275-UNC.001) was a cast, copper-alloy disk that measured 16 mm in diameter. It had a slightly curved face and an applied loop shank. The majority of the shank was missing. The conservator's notes stated that the back of the button exhibited gold plating and was associated with fabric. No cloth fragments were in the collection handled by the Howard University Archaeology Team.

**Burial 313:** Three buttons manufactured from animal bone and another possible one represented by a small copper-alloy ring were recovered about the body and within the coffin of Burial 313, a Late Group interment of a man between 45 and 55 years old. The three bone buttons, each with a single, central drilled hole, were found lying on the coffin bottom at the top of the man's head. Two measured 22 mm in diameter (Catalog No. 1516-B.001; Figure 190), and a third (Catalog No. 1516-B.002; Figure 191) measured 13 mm in diameter. The smaller example was identical in manufacture to the two larger buttons. Turning or cut marks were visible on both sides of each button. One of the larger specimens had a narrow offset rim, but the rim was not as well manufactured as the examples of this type found



Figure 192. Copper-alloy button and shank fragments from Burial 325 (Catalog No. 1577-B.001). Diameter is 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

with Burial 181.

The absence of metal shanks or any evidence of staining on these bone buttons indicate that they were covered with cloth or thread and probably attached with a thread shank. It is also possible these buttons were originally button backs that were modified or reused.

The copper-alloy items (not photographed) identified as fragments of a possible button ring were initially cataloged as three curved straight pin fragments. They were found during laboratory cleaning of skeletal remains, in soil among the left ribs.

The location of the bone buttons near the top of the cranium suggests that they did not function as clothing

fasteners. There is no way to know whether the possible button ring represented a clothing fastener.

**Burial 325:** A single copper-alloy button was found on the left upper sacrum of Burial 325, a Late Group interment of a man between 25 and 35 years old. The button's copper-alloy loop shank was found in two pieces on the lower right sacrum. Both the button disk and the two shank fragments were designated Catalog No. 1577-B.001. The cast button measured 22 mm in diameter. It is possible that the face was decorated with a bust or human figure in portrait (Figure 192). The face was gilded, and the back was spun flat, with a braided loop shank. Field records indicate that unidentified organic material was associated with the objects, but none of the material was recovered.

**Burial 326:** Four buttons (Catalog Nos. 1584-B.001–1584-B.003 and .006) were recorded in association with Burial 326, a Middle Group interment of a man between 45 and 55 years old. (In addition to the buttons, three lead buckshot [3-mm size] were recovered in association with the man's remains.) All of the buttons were made of copper alloy with a cast, hollow-dome construction. Two measured 19 mm in diameter (Catalog Nos. 1584-B.001 and 1584-B.002; Figures 193 and 194) and the other two, 23 mm (Catalog Nos. 1584-B.003 and 1584-B.006). They were all found in the pelvic area and between the tops of the femurs, near the hands. The larger pair was poorly preserved but appeared to have

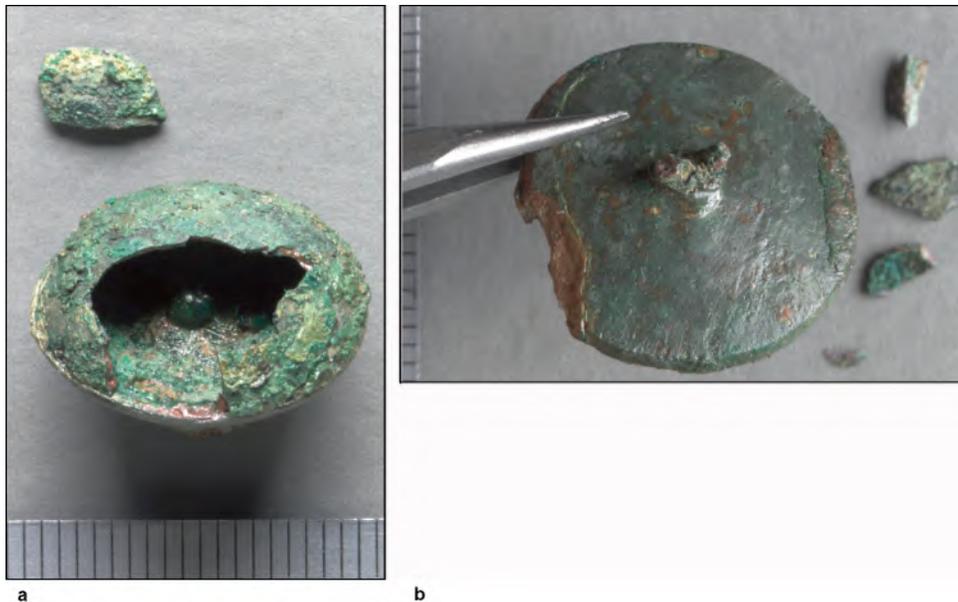


Figure 193. Copper-alloy button, with cast hollow-dome, from Burial 326 (Catalog No. 1584-B.001): (a) face; (b) back. Diameter is 19 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 194. Back of copper-alloy button, with hollow-dome, from Burial 326 (Catalog No. 1584-B.002). Diameter is 19 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

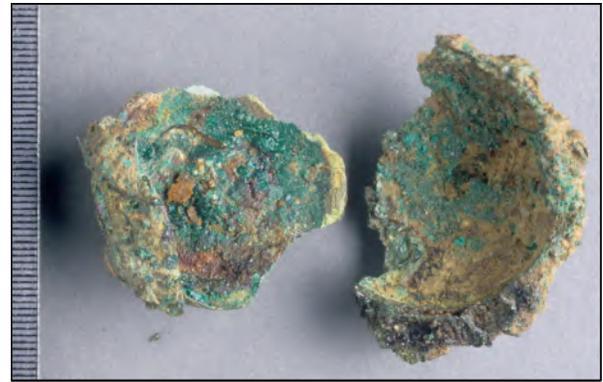


Figure 195. Face of cast-copper-alloy button from Burial 326 (Catalog No. 1584-B.006). Mended diameter is 23 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

been ovoid in shape. The button locations suggest either trousers or sleeve links.

On the best-preserved item, one of the two 19-mm buttons, the loop shank was of drawn wire manufacture and was braised on the button's back (see Figure 194).

Items 1584-B.003 and 1584-B.006 consisted of three fragments from two apparently oval, cast copper-alloy buttons (Figure 195). The items were manufactured in at least two parts and were domed. No decoration was apparent on any of the pieces. It was not possible to determine the manner in which the shanks had been attached. The pieces from Catalog No. 1584-B.006 had undergone mending by conservators in the lab but were separated at the time of the final inventory.

Field records state that a small fragment of cloth as well as a bit of possible hair had adhered to

one of buttons. A small fragment of organic material was cataloged (Catalog No. 1584-B.009; not photographed) but was not identifiable. Finally, an intrusive, steel ball bearing (1-mm diameter) was recovered.

**Burial 333:** Six bone button disks were found in association with Burial 333, a Late-Middle Group interment of a man between 45 and 55 years old. The disks were positioned on and around the pelvic region. Three had outside diameters of 11 mm, two of 13 mm, and one of 20 mm (Figure 196). (The original catalog listed four at 13 mm and one at 11 mm.) The center holes measured 2–3 mm in diameter.

All of the buttons had been cut from animal bone and had a center-drilled hole and worn or minimal evidence of turning marks on one or both sides. A possible narrow offset rim was present on one of the smaller buttons (Figure 197). The edge, however,



Figure 196. Bone buttons from Burial 333: *top left*, Catalog No. 1613-B.001; *top right*, Catalog No. 1613-B.002; *bottom row*, Catalog No. 1613-B.003 (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 197. Bone button from Burial 333 (Catalog No. 1613-B.001). Diameter is 11 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 198. Copper-alloy cuff links from Burial 341 (Catalog No. 1652-B.001): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 18 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

did not follow along the entire circumference of the button, and it was likely that a fault was introduced in the cutting of the button blank. The absence of offset rims and metal components, such as shanks or caps, or any evidence of metallic staining indicated the buttons had originally been covered with cloth or thread and probably had thread shanks.

**Burial 341:** Burial 341, a Middle Group interment, held a man of undetermined age. A pair of cast copper-alloy cuff links was found on the distal left radius (Catalog No. 1652-B.001). The cuff links had an octagonal-shaped design, but the flat, possibly untrimmed crowns appeared circular when viewed from the back (Figure 198). Unlike the octagonal cuff links from Burial 238, these lacked a rear lip, and they were slightly larger in size. The crowns measured 18 mm across and had cast, flat shanks with hand-drilled eyes. The copper-alloy wire loops connecting the cuff links measured approximately 18 mm in length.

The faces had identical decorations. Along the outer edge was a narrow octagonal band decorated with an egg-and-dart motif or possibly a stylized Tudor Rose.

The central portion of each crown consisted of a circular band with a decoration that repeated the design of the octagonal band. Within this circular band was a circular area, apparently stippled.

**Burial 342:** Burial 342, a Late Group burial, held the remains of a woman 25–35 years old. A copper-alloy aglet (in two pieces) was identified in the laboratory (Catalog No. 1660-B.001), but its location within the burial is not known. Two straight pins were recorded in situ during excavation, one on the cranium and one on the sacrum, and two pins were accounted for in the lab. It is possible, however, that one of the pins identified in the field was actually the aglet. No decoration was visible on either of the fragments. However, as is evident from the photograph in Figure 199, the object was constructed of rolled sheet metal and the ends of the tube were slightly wider than the midsection.

**Burial 353:** Burial 353, a Middle Group interment, held the remains of a man between 24 and 34 years old. Fragments of a turned bone button were recorded in situ next to the left sciatic notch. Owing to wear

Figure 199. Copper-alloy aglet from Burial 342 (Catalog No. 1660-B.0012). Scale is in 0.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



a



b

Figure 200. Copper-alloy button, with applied loop shank, from Burial 366 (Catalog No. 1830-B.001): (a) face; (b) side view with shank. Diameter is 20 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

and/or corrosion, the exact diameter of the button (Catalog No. 1723-B.003) could not be determined. The button had a single, centrally located, drilled hole. The lack of any metal shanks in the burial or evidence of metallic staining on the button indicates it was a cloth- or thread-covered fastener, probably attached with a thread shank.

**Burial 361:** Burial 361 was an Early Group interment of man between 33 and 57 years old. A pewter button was recovered with this burial, from just above the right scapula/humerus. It was given a number in the field (361.1) and was cataloged when first accessioned in the laboratory but subsequently was noted as missing. The item was never located or examined by the Howard University Archaeology Team.

**Burial 366:** Burial 366 was a Middle Group interment of an adult between 34 and 62 years of age whose sex could not be determined. The deceased had been buried with the hands over the upper thighs. A

single one-piece button was recorded in situ on the right wrist (Catalog No. 1830-B.001). It was 20 mm in diameter, of copper alloy and had an applied alpha loop shank (Figure 200). A narrow, plain band along approximately 50 percent of the button's preserved edge may have been decorative or may have been untrimmed excess from the casting process.

**Burial 368:** Burial 368, which held a child 10.5–13.5 years old whose burial was assigned to the Middle Group, was found with a small (11 mm diameter) ring (Catalog No. 1868-B.001) just below the chin, at the throat (Figure 201). This item was tentatively identified as part of a fastening of some kind or a grommet. It was of sheet-copper alloy that had been rolled over.

**Burial 371:** Burial 371 has been assigned to the Middle Group. It held the remains of a woman between 25 and 35 years of age who was interred without a coffin. Two button or cuff-link faces of copper alloy decorated with enamel (a turquoise background



Figure 201. Possible grommet made of copper alloy (in situ) from Burial 368 (Catalog No. 1868-B.001). Diameter is 11 mm (photograph by Dennis Seckler).

and white-and-pink surface decoration) were found beneath her left humerus. The items, which we categorize as adornment rather than clothing fasteners, are described and illustrated in Chapter 13.

A metal button was also recovered from Burial 371, but its location within the grave was not noted in the field records. The domed, stamped, circular iron disk (Catalog No. 1875-B.002) was 12 mm in diameter and had a 2-mm central hole (Figure 202). A small fragment (broken into pieces) of rust-encrusted textile, identified as wool with an undeterminable weave, was found adhering to the button face. The button (possibly used for upholstery) is evidently lacking the pin shank and appears to be of a type manufactured in the second quarter of the nineteenth century (Noël Hume 1969:90–91). Based on the lack of provenience and the high degree of disturbance to Burial 371, the button is considered to have been intrusive.

**Burial 379:** Burial 379, which held a man between 30 and 40 years old, was also assigned to the Middle Group. Field notes stated that following the removal of skeletal remains, a bone button with a copper-alloy shank was found below the distal end of the left ulna. The item (Catalog No. 1906-B.001) was subsequently identified in the laboratory as a leather button, possibly a backing (not photographed). Based on comparable items from Burial 259, the preserved remains may



Figure 202. Iron button with associated textile fragment from Burial 371 (Catalog No. 1875-B.002). Diameter is 12 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

have been the leather covering or the outer portion of a wood button with a copper-alloy loop shank. The shank (Catalog No. 1906-B.002) was well preserved (Figure 203). It was made of copper-alloy wire, which was then shaped by hand. The inside surface of the loop had been flattened, as had the joined ends. The ends of the 10-mm-long shank, which would have extended through the button disc, are slightly wider than the shaft and may have been hand crimped or possibly wound with wire to create a flange that fastened the shank.

A second button (Catalog No. 1906-B.003), of entirely different manufacture, was found during laboratory cleaning of the right innominate. It was an undecorated, two-piece, copper-alloy domed button with a soldered loop shank extending through the back of the button. The front face of the button measured 17 mm in diameter (Figure 204). Most of the back portion of the button was not preserved, but conservators treated the loop shank. The ends of the wire shank, attached before the front and back button sections were joined, were splayed outward.

**Burial 385:** Burial 385, a Middle Group interment of a 40–60-year-old woman, had two tiny bone buttons. One came from the coffin floor between the right first rib and third thoracic vertebra, and the other came from loose sand examined after removal of the right ribs. The buttons (both Catalog No. 1964-B.001) were of turned bone and measured approximately 8 mm in diameter. Each of the buttons had a single drilled hole with very little evidence of turning on either side (Figure 205). The lack of offset rims and metallic components, such as shanks or caps, or any evidence of metallic staining indicates they were probably cloth- or thread-covered fasteners attached with a thread shank.



Figure 203. Copper-alloy loop shank from Burial 379 (Catalog No. 1906-B.002). Length is 10 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 204. Copper-alloy dome button from Burial 379 (Catalog No. 1906-B.003). Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

Such buttons are typical of undergarments. As noted for previously described burials, it is also possible these buttons were originally button backs that were modified or reused, either by the removal of the metal cap or by reusing a button that lost its shank.

**Burial 387:** Burial 387 was an Early Group burial of a man between 34 and 44 years of age. A fragment of a cast copper-alloy cuff link or button was recorded in the laboratory from an unknown provenience within this grave. It was not photographed and was not recovered after the collapse of the World Trade Center. The item cannot be associated definitively with the remains in Burial 387, owing to the lack of field provenience and possible mixing from Burial 366. Excessive corrosion made it impossible to obtain the item's overall dimensions or observe manufacturing details.

**Burial 392:** Eleven buttons, some in fragments, were recorded in situ with Burial 392, a Late-Middle Group interment of a man between 42 and 52 years of age who was buried with his head to the east in a rectangular coffin (Figure 206). Four well-preserved bone-button backs, with associated cloth, were found adjacent to the outside of the right knee (all Catalog Nos. 2039-B.002; Figure 207), and three that were poorly preserved were found on or under the left knee (Catalog Nos. 2039-B.005 [Figure 208], 2039-B.006, and 2039-B.008 [Figure 209]). Another three were located adjacent to the right hand: two buttons assigned Catalog No. 2039-B.010 (Figures 210 and 211) and Catalog No. 2039-B.011, and one more was found near the left hand (Catalog No. 2039-B.009; Figure 212). The button backs from the right hand were 2.1–2.2 cm in diameter, and the others examples measured 1.5–1.6 cm. One octagonal copper-alloy cuff-link face (Catalog No. 2039-B.004) was recov-



Figure 205. Bone buttons from Burial 385 (Catalog No. 1964-B.001). Diameter is 8 mm (whole specimen) (photograph by Jon Abbott).

ered from the right clavicle, and a highly degraded portion of a second face was found in the laboratory when the cervical vertebrae were cleaned (not shown).

The locations of the bone-button backs suggest the deceased was laid to rest in pants or breeches, and the possible links at the shoulder may have fastened a shirt at the neck.

The bone disks were cut and turned, and each had four drilled sew-through holes. A slight central indentation on each was probably the result of the manufacturing process. There was a slight variation in the location of the drilled holes. In the best-preserved examples, the backs had a slight convex dome with a narrow offset rim; the front faces were concave to allow space for threading. The presence of a slight greenish tinge on some of the examples (see Figure 207), possibly metallic staining, suggests that they may once have had metal caps. No metal components, such as caps, were preserved, nor were any fragmentary remains noted in the field records.

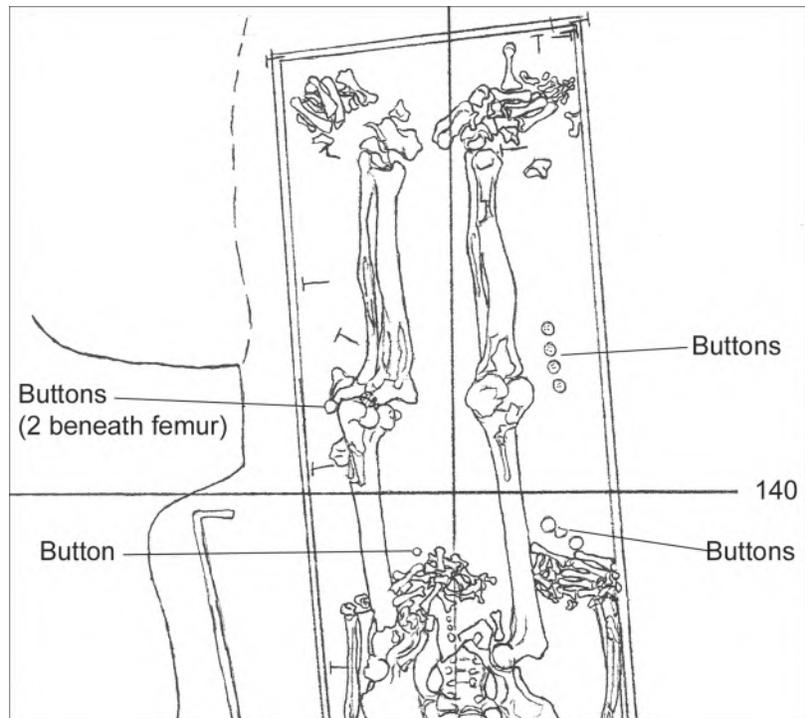


Figure 206. Detail of Burial 392 with buttons at knees and hips. North is to the right, as is the convention throughout this report. This burial was oriented atypically, with the head to the east. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot (in situ drawing by M. Schur).



Figure 207. Bone buttons from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.002). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott). Selected for replication.

Fragments of fine wool were recovered in association with the bone button backs. One from a button at the right knee included a well-preserved buttonhole (Catalog No. 2039-B.001) (Figure 213). The buttonhole, which measured approximately 1 mm wider than the buttons, does not appear to have been edged or finished with thread (for an example of a finished buttonhole, see Burial 415). The project conservators recognized that the fiber had an S-twist.

The cast copper-alloy cuff-link face (Figure 214) found at the right shoulder appears to have had loop shank that was cast in place. The cuff link's face

measured 16 mm in diameter and appears to have had an impressed, centrally placed decoration. A narrow, undecorated band was evident along the edge of the preserved portion of the cuff link. Most of the shank was missing, as was the link. The cuff link may have been used as the top button on a shirt.

**Burial 398:** Burial 398 consisted of redeposited human remains from an adult between 25 and 35 years of age. Among other items, including nails, nail fragments, straight-pin fragments, and a ring, was a portion of a button or cuff link. Another button, found to the north of the main concentration of



Figure 208. Bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.005). Diameter is 15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 209. Bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.008). Diameter is 15 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 210. Bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.010 [one of two]). Diameter is 21 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 211. Mended bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.010 [one of two]). Diameter is 21 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 212. Bone button from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.009). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 213. Wool buttonhole from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.001). Width is 33 mm; buttonhole is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 214. Copper-alloy cuff link from Burial 392 (Catalog No. 2039-B.004). Diameter is 16 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 215. Copper-alloy button or cuff link from Burial 398 (Catalog No. 2061-B.003). It is 12 mm at widest part (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 216. Pewter button from Burial 403 (Catalog No. 2067-B.001 [one of two]): (a) front; (b) side view. Diameter is 23 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

bone, was noted and mapped but was cataloged with Burial 403.

The copper-alloy cuff link (Catalog No. 2061-B.003) had an octagonal-shaped face with a cast design consisting of a series of circular impressions, possibly stars, within narrow octagonal bands around a circular central decoration. Additional fragments included portions of a copper-alloy-wire link and possibly the remains of a loop shank (Figure 215).

**Burial 403:** The remains in Burial 403, from a man between 39 and 65 years old, were fragmentary and damaged as a result of construction activity at the site during the field program. Items recovered with this interment were scattered among the skeletal remains, and it is not clear whether the items were in direct association with the deceased. Two buttons were photographed and drawn in situ before being collected in the field, but three buttons were mentioned in the field notes. Later, four buttons were cataloged in the laboratory. It is likely the fourth button was

one that was noted in the field records for Burial 398 (see above).

Two of the buttons were of pewter with a high tin and lead content. They were of cast construction, had applied loop shanks, and measured 23 mm in diameter (Catalog No. 2067-B.001; Figure 216).

A third button (Catalog No. 2067-B.002) was plain, of cast copper alloy with a flat face and a loop shank set in a low boss, 22 mm in diameter. The back of the button appears to have been spun (Figure 217). The fourth button (Catalog No. 2067-B.003) was an undecorated, copper-alloy cast, domed type of two-piece construction with a brazed shank and soldered seams; it measured 17 mm in diameter (Figure 218). This button's back had two small holes and appeared to have been gilded.

In addition to the buttons, fragments of black cloth with a simple weave were recovered, although it is not clear whether these were associated with particular buttons (Catalog No. 2067-B.004; Figure 219).

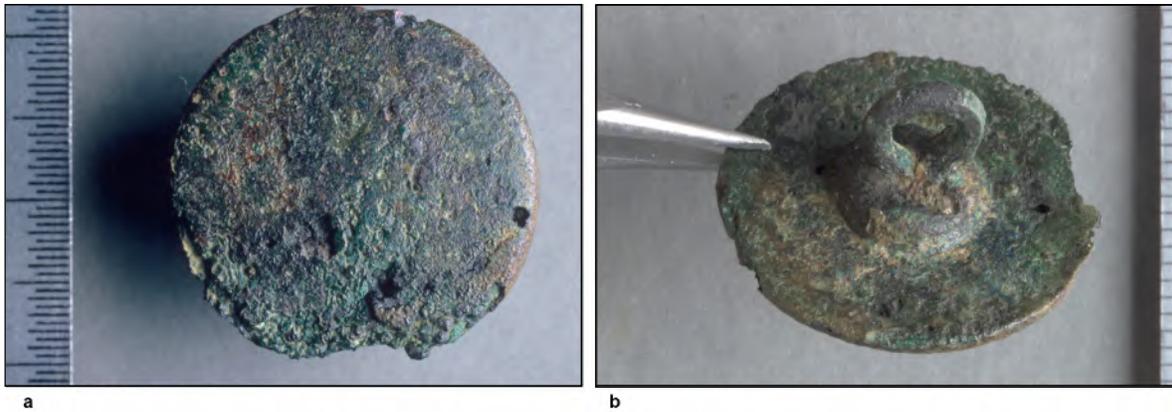


Figure 217. Copper-alloy button from Burial 403 (Catalog No. 2067-B.002): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 22 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

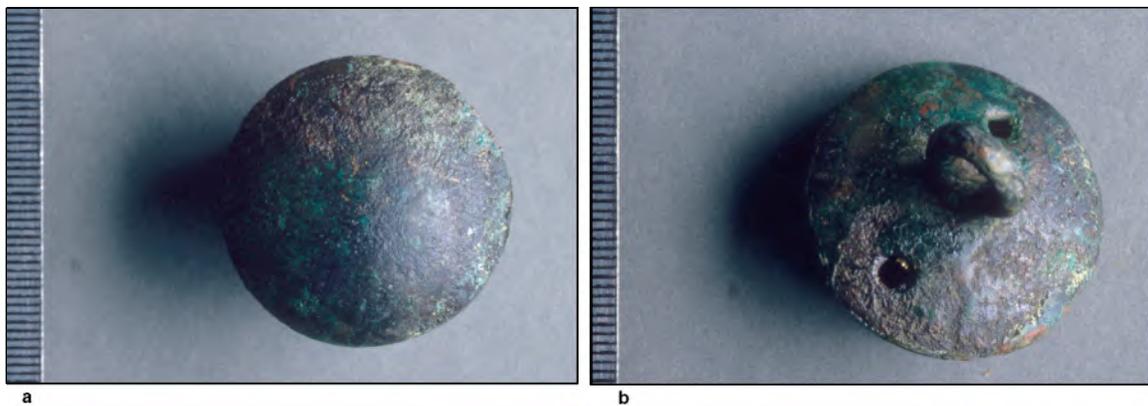


Figure 218. Cast 2-piece copper-alloy button from Burial 403 (Catalog No. 2067-B.003): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 219. Textile from Burial 403 (Catalog No. 2067-B.004). Scale is in 0.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

**Burial 405:** Burial 405 held the remains of a 6–10-year-old child. A single button was recorded in situ below the right wrist and was identified in the laboratory as a Britannia large button made of spun white metal with an applied copper-alloy loop shank (Catalog

No. 2071-B.001). The face measured 30 mm in diameter (Figure 220). The placement and size of the button suggest it did not function as a fastener for clothing. It may have been a talisman or item of adornment that



Figure 220. Spun-white-metal Britannia button with copper-alloy shank from Burial 405 (Catalog No. 2071-B.001). Diameter is 30 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

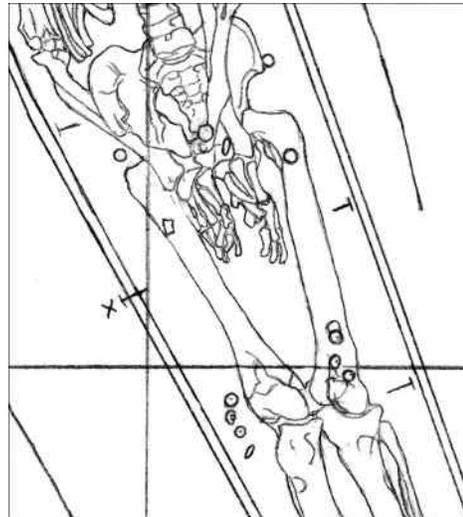


Figure 221. Detail of Burial 415 drawing, buttons at knees and hips. Scale is 1 inch = 1 foot (in situ drawing by M. Schur).

was perhaps worn on a string or as a bracelet or may have been placed in the hand of the deceased.

**Burial 415:** The 35–55-year-old man in Burial 415, a Middle Group interment, was buried wearing knee breeches, possibly of woolen cloth, and apparently with a fall or drop flap in front. The field drawing of the remains showed 14 buttons in locations consistent with breeches of this style: 4 over the left knee, 4 outside the right knee, 2 above and on the proximal left femur, and 2 above and on the proximal right femur (Figure 221). Two additional buttons were noted as located beneath the sacrum. There is, however, a discrepancy between the field count of 14 and the number of buttons (13) that were inventoried in the lab. It is likely the field number was inaccurate owing to a button having been broken and counted as 2.

Although each button was labeled and its exact location (and the elevation of selected items) recorded in the field, this information did not follow individual pieces through the laboratory conservation process, and there is no way now to know with certainty what buttons, which were not of identical manufacture and size, were at each location on the body.

Ten of the buttons (all Catalog No. 2097-B.004) were hollow cast and measured 17 mm in diameter (Figure 222). Two holes were present in backs (from which heated gases could escape during manufacture).

The face and back of each button were joined, and the buttons had a hollow center and a separate wire loop shank that was braised to the back. Remnants of the gilding process were observed on some of the buttons, but no other decoration was apparent.

The three remaining buttons were of similar manufacture but lacked the back holes. Two (both Catalog No. 2097-B.006) measured 23.5 mm in diameter (Figures 223 and 224). One of these was broken, and may account for the fourteenth button mentioned in the field records. The final button inventoried (Catalog No. 2097-B.003) measured 18 mm (Figure 225). It had a remnant identified by conservators as leather adhering to the back, and a fabric fragment was also processed in association with the button (Figure 226).

Wool cloth (Catalog No. 2097-B.005) was recovered with one of the buttons, but owing to a laboratory processing error it is not now possible to determine to which specific button it belonged. The cloth was in two layers, one to which the button attached and one containing a sewn finished buttonhole (Figure 227 has a detail of the buttonhole).

Another fragment of textile was recovered adhering to coffin wood (Figure 228). This may also have been from clothing, although the presence of a shroud cannot be ruled out (there were pin fragments found at the cranium).



Figure 222. Copper-alloy buttons from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.004): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 223. Copper-alloy button from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.006 [one of two]). Diameter is 23.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 224. Copper-alloy button from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.006 [one of two]). Diameter is 23.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).

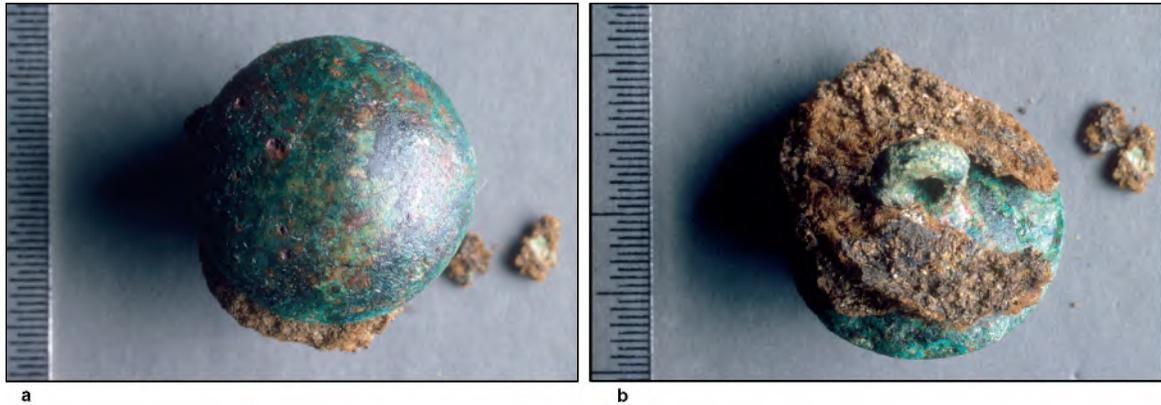


Figure 225. Copper-alloy button, with leather, from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.003): (a) front; (b) back. Diameter is 18 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 226. Textile from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.007). Scale is in 0.5 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 227. Wool textile from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.005): (a) left, fabric to which button was sewn; right, fabric with buttonhole (width is 21 mm); (b) detail of buttonhole finished with lighter-colored thread (photograph by Jon Abbott).



Figure 228. Wool textile from Burial 415 (Catalog No. 2097-B.005). Width of fragment is 17 mm (photograph by Jon Abbott).