

War of 1812 Buttons from Fort Johnson and Cantonment Davis, Hancock County, Illinois



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Abstract

Recent archaeological investigations at Fort Johnson and Cantonment Davis, two War of 1812-era American military posts in Hancock County, Illinois, uncovered a diverse artifact assemblage that includes a wide array of button types. Of the 318 recovered buttons, 68 percent exhibit military insignias, including those attributed to the infantry, army general service, riflemen, artillery, light artillery, and dragoons. In addition to describing the assemblage, what these buttons can and cannot tell us regarding the occupations of the two military posts is discussed.

Recent archaeological excavations at two War of 1812-era American military posts, Fort Johnson and Cantonment Davis (see Nolan et al., this volume), recovered a diverse artifact assemblage that includes a wide array of button types. Originally intended to be simply a fastening device for clothing, buttons can also serve as identification and status markers in both military and civilian contexts. Military insignias on buttons denote rank, branch, and nationality, while the material from which buttons are manufactured can indicate class rank, function, or even military branch. A single-hole bone button implies different connotations than a gold-plated brass specimen bearing an eagle grasping arrows and an olive branch in its talons, as does a pewter button bearing the initials "US" or a pewter button containing the script initial "I." Military buttons were also highly prized trade items in some Native American societies (Moore and Haynes 2003:79, 163–164).

The standard reference for American military buttons utilized for this analysis is Alphaeus Albert's *Record of American Uniform and Historical Buttons* (Albert 1977). In his book, Albert assigns a code consisting of letters and numbers to each specific button type and their varieties. For example, the cast pewter infantry button consisting of the script initial "I" on the button's face and manufactured between 1812 and 1815 is assigned the code GI36. A script "I" button manufactured with a five-pointed star within an oval below the "I" is coded GI36A. If the prime point of the star is orientated

up, the button is coded GI36A1, and if the prime point is positioned down, the button is coded GI36A3. Some script "I" buttons do not contain a star within the oval, and these are coded GI36D; others exhibit a six-pointed star (as opposed to a five-pointed star) within the oval (GI36B). While appearing cumbersome at first glance given the multitude of different button varieties that exist, Albert's coding system allows collectors and researchers to easily discuss each specific variety without significant confusion as to type.

No reference manual is exhaustive, however, and some button varieties are omitted from Albert's book. Additional primary sources consulted for this analysis published after Albert include Tice's *Uniform Buttons of the United States, 1776–1865* (Tice 1997) and Wyckoff's *United States Military Buttons of the Land Services, 1787–1902* (Wyckoff 1984); other button sources utilized herein include, among others, Olsen (1963), Polhemus (1977), South (1964), and Stone (1974).

War of 1812 Uniforms

Buttons of course did not exist as an entity unto themselves, but were primarily attached to articles of clothing. Determining the number of uniform buttons associated with a United States soldier at any specific time during the War of 1812 is not an easy task, however. Major stylistic revisions occurred to most uniforms during 1812 and again in 1813 (Chartrand 2011:29–51), which also changed the number of buttons present on some uniforms. As such, it is feasible that, depending on when and in what quantity the new uniform styles reached a specific military unit, members of an individual regiment could be sporting varied uniform styles.

As is the case today, different branches of the United States military in the War of 1812 possessed multiple uniforms to be used on different occasions and during different seasons of the year. The enlisted man, however, was supposed to be issued a standard allotment of clothing. According to the May 1814 edition of *Military Laws and Rules and Regulations for the Armies of the United States*, "upon enlistment every non-commissioned officer, musician, and private of the artillery and infantry, shall receive annually the following articles of uniform clothing, to wit: one hat, one coat, one vest, two pair of wollen and two pair of linen overalls, one coarse linen frock and trowsers for fatigue clothing, four pair of shoes, four shirts, two pair of socks, two pair of short stockings, one blanket, one stock and clasp, and one pair of half gaiters" (USA 1814:63).

Uniforms evidently did not always reach each enlisted man, however. There were uniform shortages during 1812 and 1813 (Chartrand 2011:38–



Figure 1. Reproduction War of 1812 U.S. uniforms at Fort McHenry, Baltimore, Maryland. Image courtesy of the National Park Service.

41), and as late as May 1814, Brigadier General Winfield Scott promised his men stationed at Buffalo, New York, that every effort was being made to secure cloth to have uniforms made for those without them, further urging them to “make up in drill and discipline what they lacked in appearance” (Whitehorne 1991:29).

Most War of 1812 military uniforms (Figure 1) were laden with buttons (e.g., Chartrand 2011; Katcher 1990; Kredel 2005; McBarron 1939, 1940a, 1940b, 1941; Ogden 1998), the majority of which were contained on the most visible part of the uniform: that is, the coat or coatee. Prior to the War of 1812, the uniform coat front contained a double row of nonfunctional buttons, with nine buttons in each row, as well as buttons on the collar, shoulders, cuffs, pockets, and tails (Chartrand 2011). In 1812 and 1813, however, the uniform design underwent significant changes, and in 1814 an officer’s field coat could have a single row of 10 buttons in front, two buttons on each side of the collar, two epaulette buttons, four buttons on each cuff, four buttons on each of the two pockets, two hip buttons, and four buttons on the skirt (McBarron 1940a:58, 1940b:186). While much variation existed due to changing styles prior to and throughout the War of 1812

(e.g., Chartrand 2011; USA 1814:257–258), each 1814 coat could therefore contain 38 buttons. Of these 38, only the 10 coat front and the two epaulette buttons were actually functional, with the remaining examples serving only a decorative purpose. Enlisted men's coats "were of the same fashion as those of the platoon officers" (McBarron 1940b:186; USA 1812, 1814), and as can be seen from the numerous formal portraits of military figures from that time (e.g., Fredriksen 2000, 2009), officer's dress coats exhibited even more buttons.

In addition to the coats, breeches could exhibit four buttons at each knee and also along the waist; gaiters and half gaiters had buttons stretching along the outside seam; a type of overall called a *sherryvallies* had open outside leg seams that buttoned from top to bottom (McBarron 1940a:60); and jackets, vests, shirts, wollen and linen overalls, suspenders, and even caps and hats contained buttons. (For numerous illustrations and photos of military and civilian clothing worn during the first decades of the 1800s, see Chartrand [2011], Moore and Haynes [2003], and Troiani [1998].) While the exact number of buttons associated with any given soldier in uniform varied with season (e.g., summer as opposed to winter), branch of service, and particular uniform style throughout the war, the number was obviously very high and could far exceed 50 for most enlisted personnel in the field. It is not surprising, therefore, that buttons are commonly found among the remains of many early nineteenth-century military posts.

Uniform coats/coatees and vests were typically issued with a homogenous button assemblage containing similar sizes and motifs, but this was evidently not always the case for other uniform components. As early as 1805, there were complaints from military inspectors regarding mismatched uniform buttons, most notably on the trousers and overalls (Moore and Haynes 2003:162). Moore and Haynes cite several examples of pre-War of 1812 trousers exhibiting different button styles and conclude that "buttons placed on overalls and trousers represented a potpourri of designs and numerals, with infantry and artillery styles sometimes being used on the same garment" (Moore and Haynes 2003:163).

Lost uniform buttons were also apparently not always replaced with a button of identical design. This is illustrated by the excavation of Snake Hill, a War of 1812 battlefield cemetery near Old Fort Erie in Ontario, Canada (Pfeiffer and Williamson 1991). Snake Hill included 28 interments, at least one of which exhibited replaced buttons whose design did not match the remaining buttons. Burial 1 contained primarily script "I" buttons, but also contained a button exhibiting an eagle within the line of script "I" buttons comprising the front row of coat buttons (Thomas and Williamson

1991:75–76). Most of the burials, however, did exhibit a fairly homogenous assemblage of button designs on each particular article of clothing, and it was these buttons that played the pivotal role in determining each burial's nationality.

In addition to members of the regular U.S. Army, Fort Johnson also housed militiamen and rangers. Men of the militia on the western frontier were typically not issued uniforms (Brenner 2012; Chartrand 2011; Katcher 1990; Kredel 2005; McBarron 1939; Pfeiffer and Williamson 1991) and generally wore frontier civilian clothing that would have likely included some variation of a short frock coat, hunting shirt, and trousers (Chartrand 2011:78–81; cf. Moore and Haynes 2003:197–205). While the Militia Act of 1792 stipulates that “every free able-bodied white male citizen” between the ages of 18 and 45 supply themselves, at their own expense, with arms and associated accouterments, no mention is made of uniforms or clothing for the general militia. Laws of the Illinois Territory also did not specify uniforms for its militia (Chartrand 2011:79–80, 123). The rangers at Fort Johnson, who probably were raised from both the Illinois and Missouri territories, were likewise not issued uniforms (Chartrand 2011:61).

While some militia units could afford to have their own uniforms during the War of 1812 (Albert 1977; Chartrand 2011; Katcher 1990; McBarron 1939; Tice 1997), formal militia uniforms on the western frontier during the war were for the most part nonexistent (Chartrand 2011). Intended to be satirical in nature, David Claypoole Johnston's 1819 engraving “A Militia Muster” portrays the irregular dress of the American militia of the eastern United States shortly after the War of 1812 (Figure 2). More applicable to the Illinois Territory during the 1810s, Chartrand (2011:73) pictures an Indiana militiaman's clothing during the war, and numerous examples of frontier clothing common in the early 1800s likely utilized by the militia and rangers can be seen in Moore and Haynes (2003).

Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis Button Analysis

Between 2004 and 2011, an assortment of 318 buttons was recovered from the Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis location during archaeological investigations (Nolan 2009; Nolan et al., this volume). Buttons were recovered during the excavation of auger tests and “profile windows” (n = 10 buttons); multiple metal detecting surveys (n = 75 buttons); the excavation of 1-x-2-m test units and the cultural features contained within (n = 231 buttons); and within the recently tilled garden of the site's current owners (n = 2 buttons) (Tables 1–3). The flotation samples from the 2011 investigation were not yet



Figure 2. An 1828 lithograph of David Claypoole Johnston's 1819 engraving titled "A Militia Muster." Public domain image; original curated at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

processed at the time of this analysis; thus any buttons within those samples are not included herein.

Only one concentration of similarly sized buttons exhibiting comparable insignias was noted during excavation, suggesting that entire coats, vests, or other intact uniform components were not typically abandoned at the fort/cantonment within the excavated areas. Ten 14-mm-diameter infantry script "I" buttons were found in close proximity to one another within the lower level of Hand Unit 5, suggesting a vest may have been discarded in this area. Half of these script "I" buttons, however, exhibit missing or broken shanks, indicating they may not all have been attached to a garment. Six plain conical pewter buttons with intact shanks recovered from the lower level of Hand Unit 20 may also indicate that a clothing item was discarded in that area. Hand Units 5 and 20 both intersect a probable structure basin that is likely associated with the fort (see Nolan et al., this volume). Almost two-thirds of the piece-plotted buttons found during the metal detector surveys are from spoil associated with the construction of a 15-m-wide sewer line trench that impacted the site in the 1990s, indicating that the distribution of these piece plots cannot reliably be used to delineate activity areas within the site.

(Text continues on page 317)

Table 1. Inventory of Buttons Recovered from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis.

Provenance	Bag	Size (mm)	Albert #	Years	Obverse	Reverse	Damage
Surface	800-18	15	AY36	1813–1814	Regiment of artillerists, 1st regiment		Shank missing
Surface	800-18	21	RF3	1812–1814	Regiment of Riflemen, eagle w/ script R on shield on breast		Shank bent
Backdirt	900-19	14	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		
Piece Plot	PP2	21	----		Plain, brass	"will stand their colour" and four-leaf clovers, squiggly line	Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP3	20	RF3	1812–1814	Regiment of Riflemen, eagle w/ script R on shield on breast		Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP17	20	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP18	20	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Edge clipped, shank broken
Piece Plot	PP19		GI36A1	1812–1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Edges clipped, shank broken
Piece Plot	PP20	19	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank broken
Piece Plot	PP23	20	GI36A1	1812–1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Edge clipped
Piece Plot	PP25	19	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Bent, shank missing
Piece Plot	PP26	10	GS1	1810–1832	Ball button, brass		
Piece Plot	PP27	15	----		Plain, brass	wreath	
Piece Plot	PP28	19	----		Plain, brass, gilded, two piece	two holes	
Piece Plot	PP29	20	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Edge clipped
Piece Plot	PP30	20	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP31	14	GI36A3	1812–1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP32	19	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Bent, shank broken
Piece Plot	PP35	13	?		Two piece, silver plated, eagle faces left, one arrow in right talon, olive branch in left talon, no stars on shield, 13 stars around perimeter		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP39	14	GI36A3	1812–1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
Piece Plot	PP41	19	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP42		GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Bent
Piece Plot	PP44	19	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP45	20	GI36D	1812–1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		
Piece Plot	PP46	18	----	1760–1785	Plain, tombac	spun	
Piece Plot	PP47	20	GI36A3	1812–1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP49	20	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank bent

Table 1. Inventory of Buttons Recovered from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis. (Continued)

Provenance	Bag	Size (mm)	Albert #	Years	Obverse	Reverse	Damage
Piece Plot	PP50	14	GI30AV	1808–1830	Army, General Service, small US in Roman letters		Bent
Piece Plot	PP52	14	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP54	20	GI36D	1812–1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		
Piece Plot	PP55A	15	----		Pewter		Deteriorated, shank broken
Piece Plot	PP55B	20	GI36D	1812–1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP56	17	----		Plain, brass		Bent
Piece Plot	PP57	20	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP60	20	GI36A3	1812–1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP62	19	----		Plain, brass	"London" and stars	Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP65		GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Edges clipped, shank missing
Piece Plot	PP68	20	RF5	1814–1815	First Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 1		Edge slightly clipped, shank bent
Piece Plot	PP72	20	RF3	1812–1814	Regiment of Riflemen, eagle w/ script R on shield on breast		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP74	19	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP77	14	----		two hole pewter		
Piece Plot	PP79	15	----		two hole pewter		
Piece Plot	PP81	23	----		Plain, pewter		Edges clipped, shank bent
Piece Plot	PP83	19	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Bent, shank missing
Piece Plot	PP84	16	GI51G	1812–1815	Infantry, Officer, eagle w/ arrows and shield at right	"AM Pasley Boston" and stars	Edge slightly clipped
Piece Plot	PP87	25	----		Plain, brass, silver plated		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP88	14	GI32	1808–1811	Infantry, 2nd regiment		Edges clipped, shank missing
Piece Plot	PP89	20	GI36A1	1812–1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank broken
Piece Plot	PP95	19	----		Plain, brass	"London" and stars	Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP96	22	----		Plain, brass	crown, wreath, and stars	Bent, shank bent
Piece Plot	PP99	19	GI30A	1808–1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Bent, shank broken
Piece Plot	PP100	14	AY36	1813–1814	Regiment of artilleryists, 1st regiment		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP101		----		Plain, pewter		Half missing, shank broken
Piece Plot	PP103	13	GS1	1810–1832	ball button?, pewter		Shank missing, smashed
Piece Plot	PP106	15	?	1812–1815	Infantry, Script I, oval below, eight-pointed star		Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP109	23	----		Plain, brass, silver plated	"Strong Plated" and stars	Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP114	20	GI36A4	1812–1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank missing

Piece Plot	PP118	20	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP121	20	RF5	1814-1815	First Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 1		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP123	19	----		Plain, brass, gold plated	"Best Quality Double Gilt" and wreath	
Piece Plot	PP125	20	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Edges clipped, shank missing
Piece Plot	PP131	21	----		Plain, brass, silver plated	"Plated" and eight-pointed stars	
Piece Plot	PP132	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
Piece Plot	PP142	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP143	15	----		Plain, brass	crown, wreath, four-leaf clovers	Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP144	14	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank broken
Piece Plot	PP145	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank broken
Piece Plot	PP146	19	GI36C	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, oval below, eight-pointed star		Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP147	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Bent
Piece Plot	PP148		GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edges clipped
Piece Plot	PP4156		GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edges clipped, shank bent
Piece Plot	PP4157		GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Edges clipped, shank broken
Piece Plot	PP4158	20	GI36D	1812-1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP4159		GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Edges clipped, shank missing
Piece Plot	PP4161	19	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
Piece Plot	PP4162	14	----		Plain, brass	wreath	Shank bent
Piece Plot	PP4163	14	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank missing
Piece Plot	PP4166	16	----		Plain, brass, silver plated	wreath and illegible writing	Shank missing
Auger Test	AU C-12	14	GI30AV	1808-1830	Army, General Service, small US in Roman letters		
Auger Test	AU D-9	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edge slightly clipped, shank missing
Auger Test	AU D-9E	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Slightly bent, shank missing
Auger Test	AU E-8	20	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
Auger Test	AU F-8N	21	----		Plain, brass, silver plated		
Auger Test	AU AA2-220		RF7	1814-1815	Second Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 2		
Auger Test	AU AA5-3		GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Half missing, shank missing
Profile	900-5	12	----		Bone		
Profile	900-5	19	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank missing
Profile	900-5	19	GI41A	1812-1815	Infantry	"Giles Richards"	Shank missing
Feature 1	F1-1	20	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank broken
Feature 1	F1-4	14	GI30AV	1808-1830	Army, General Service, small US in Roman letters		
HU 1	HU1-1	14	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 1	HU1-1		GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Edges clipped

Table 1. Inventory of Buttons Recovered from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis. (Continued)

Provenance	Bag	Size (mm)	Albert #	Years	Obverse	Reverse	Damage
HU 1	HU1-1	15	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank missing
HU 2	HU2-5		GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Heavily damaged, shank missing
HU 2	HU2-7	20	RF9B	1814-1815	Fourth Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 4		
HU 2	HU2-7	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 2	HU2-7	14	----		Plain, brass	"Gilt" and stars	
HU 2	HU2-8	10	----		Bone		
HU 2	HU2-10	15	RF7	1814-1815	Second Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 2		
HU 2	HU2-10	11	GS1	1810-1832	Ball button, brass		Back missing
HU 2	HU2-11	20	RF3A	1812-1814	Regiment of Riflemen, eagle w/ script R on shield on breast	stars	
HU 2	HU2-13	14	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank bent
HU 2	HU2-13	14	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank bent
HU 2	HU2-15		GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Half missing
HU 2	HU2-15		GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Half missing
HU 2	HU2-15	22	----		Brass, "weave" pattern		Shank bent
HU 2	HU2-19	16	----		Plain, brass, silver plated		
HU 2	HU2-19	14	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 2	HU2-19	19	----		Plain, brass	wreath	Bent
HU 2	HU2-21	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
HU 2	HU2-21	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
HU 2	HU2-21	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 3	HU3-1	20	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Shank bent
HU 3	HU3-1	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank missing
HU 3	HU3-2	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 3	HU3-4	15	GI36D2	1812-1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		Edge clipped
HU 3	HU3-4		GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Heavily damaged, shank missing
HU 4	HU4-6		?				Heavily damaged, shank broken
HU 4	HU4-7	20	RF3A	1812-1814	Regiment of Riflemen, eagle w/ script R on shield on breast	stars	
HU 4	HU4-8	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Edge clipped
HU 4	HU4-8	14	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 4	HU4-8	16	----		Plain, brass		Shank missing

HU 4	HU4-8	15	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank missing
HU 4	HU4-8	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edges clipped, shank missing
HU 4	HU4-9	13	----		Plain, brass	"Gilt" and wreath	
HU 4	HU4-10	14	----		Plain, brass, silver plated		
HU 4	HU4-10	14	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank bent
HU 4	HU4-13	14	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Shank broken
HU 4	HU4-15		GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Heavily damaged
HU 5	HU5-1	19	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Portion missing, shank missing
HU 5	HU5-2	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 5	HU5-3	14	----		Plain, brass	"Gilt" and stars	
HU 5	HU5-3	14	----		Plain, brass	"Double Gilt" and stars	
HU 5	HU5-3	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing, two holes drilled in center
HU 5	HU5-3	14	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		
HU 5	HU5-3	15	GI36D2	1812-1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		
HU 5	HU5-3	14	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Shank broken
HU 5	HU5-3	14	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Edge clipped, shank broken
HU 5	HU5-3		GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edges clipped, shank missing
HU 5	HU5-3	20	GI36D2	1812-1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		Shank missing
HU 5	HU5-5	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 5	HU5-5	14	GI36E	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, 10-pointed star		Shank missing
HU 5	HU5-7		?				Heavily damaged
HU 5	HU5-7		?				Heavily damaged
HU 5	HU5-9	20	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 5	HU5-9	20	RF5	1814-1815	First Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 1		
HU 5	HU5-9	14	GI30AV	1808-1830	Army, General Service, small US in Roman letters		
HU 5	HU5-9	14	----		Plain, brass		
HU 5	HU5-10	10	----		Bone		
HU 5	HU5-10	14	RF7	1814-1815	Second Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 2		
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank broken
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank missing
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank missing
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank bent
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank broken

Table 1. Inventory of Buttons Recovered from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis. (Continued)

Provenance	Bag	Size (mm)	Albert #	Years	Obverse	Reverse	Damage
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
HU 5	HU5-10	14	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Bent, shank missing
HU 5	HU5-10	15	RF2	1810-1812	Regiment of Riflemen, foliated script letters		Shank missing
HU 5	HU5-11	10	----		Bone		Broken
HU 6	HU6-1	20	RF3	1812-1814	Regiment of Riflemen, eagle w/ script R on shield on breast		Shank missing
HU 6	HU6-1	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 6	HU6-1	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank missing
HU 6	HU6-2	14	GI36D2	1812-1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		
HU 6	HU6-2		GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edges clipped
HU 6	HU6-10	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank broken
HU 7	HU7-5	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edge clipped, shank bent
HU 7	HU7-5	21	DR1A	1808-1815	Light Dragoons, raised foliated script initials		Edge clipped, shank missing
HU 7	HU7-7	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edge clipped, shank missing
HU 8	HU8-4	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edge clipped, shank missing
HU 8	HU8-6		GI36D2	1812-1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		Heavily clipped, shank broken
HU 8	HU8-10	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank bent
HU 8	HU8-13	8	----		Bone		
HU 8	HU8-13	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 8	HU8-13	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Edge clipped, shank bent
HU 8	HU8-13	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank broken
HU 8	HU8-15	21	----		Brass, "weave" pattern	wreath	Shank missing
HU 8	HU8-15	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank bent
HU 8	HU8-15	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Bent, shank bent
HU 8	HU8-15	14	GI30AV	1808-1830	Army, General Service, small US in Roman letters		Shank bent
HU 8	HU8-15	15	RF9B	1814-1815	Fourth Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 4		Shank missing
HU 8	HU8-15	19	----		Plain, brass		
HU 8	HU8-15	16	RF3	1812-1814	Regiment of Riflemen, eagle w/ script R on shield on breast		Shank bent
HU 8	HU8-15	14	----		Plain, brass	"Best" and wreath	
HU 8	HU8-15	12	----		Two piece?, brass		Shank missing
HU 8	HU8-16	13	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		

HU 8	HU8-18	15	AY38A	1813-1814	Regiment of artillerists, 3rd regiment		Shank missing
HU 8	HU8-23	15	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Shank missing
HU 9	HU9-1	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 9	HU9-13/	20	RF9B	1814-1815	Fourth Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 4		Shank bent
	pp1						
HU 10	HU10-1	12	----		Bone		
HU 10	HU10-1	20	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Half missing
HU 10	HU10-2		?				Heavily damaged
HU 10	HU10-4	8	----		Bone		
HU 10	HU10-4	20	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		
HU 10	HU10-4	20	GI36D2	1812-1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		
HU 10	HU10-4	15	----		Plain, brass	"Best Quality" and wreath, stars	
HU 10	HU10-4	14	----		Plain, pewter		Edge clipped
HU 10	HU10-4		?				Heavily damaged
HU 10	HU10-4		?				Heavily damaged
HU 10	HU10-4		----		Plain, pewter, gold plated		Heavily damaged
HU 10	HU10-7	10	----		Bone		
HU 10	HU10-7	12	----		Bone		
HU 10	HU10-7	24	GI49	1812-1815	Infantry officer, silver plated		Shank missing
HU 10	HU10-7	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
HU 10	HU10-7	15	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 10	HU10-7		GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edges clipped, shank bent
HU 10	HU10-7	15	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edge clipped, shank bent
HU 10	HU10-7	13	----		Plain, brass	"Gilt" and stars	Shank missing
HU 10	HU10-7	13	----		Plain, brass	"Gilt" and stars	
HU 10	HU10-7	14	----		Plain, brass, silver plated	"Plated"	
HU 10	HU10-7	11	----		conical pewter		Shank broken
HU 10	HU10-10	14	RF7	1814-1815	Second Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 2		
HU 10	HU10-13	14	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank broken
HU 10	HU10-13		?				Heavily damaged
HU 10	HU10-15	11	----		conical pewter		Shank bent
HU 10	HU10-15	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 10	HU10-15		GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Heavily damaged
HU 11	HU11-1	15	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		

Table 1. Inventory of Buttons Recovered from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis. (Continued)

Provenance	Bag	Size (mm)	Albert #	Years	Obverse	Reverse	Damage
HU 11	HU11-2	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 11	HU11-2		----		Bone		Broken, redrilled
HU 11	HU11-4	15	RF7	1814-1815	Second Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 2		
HU 11	HU11-6	11	----		conical pewter		
HU 11	HU11-9	20	GI36D2	1812-1813	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, without star		
HU 11	HU11-9	11	----		conical pewter		Shank broken
HU 11	HU11-9	14	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		
HU 11	HU11-9	12	GS1	1810-1832	Ball button, brass		
HU 11	HU11-9	10	----		Bone		Edge clipped
HU 11	HU11-12	10	----		Bone		
HU 11	HU11-12	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 11	HU11-12	14	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Shank missing
HU 11	HU11-12	15	RF7	1814-1815	Second Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 2		
HU 11	HU11-12	15	AY36	1813-1814	Regiment of artillerists, 1st regiment		
HU 11	HU11-16	14	----		Plain, brass	"Gilt" and stars	
HU 11	HU11-16	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank broken
HU 11	HU11-18		GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Heavily clipped
HU 12	HU12-4	20	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 12	HU12-4		GI32	1808-1811	Infantry, 2nd regiment		Edges clipped, shank broken
HU 13	HU13-12	14	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Edges clipped, shank missing
HU 13	HU13-13	14	GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Shank missing
HU 13	HU13-16	20	----		Plain, pewter		Edge clipped, shank missing
HU 13	HU13-17	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 13	HU13-17	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 13	HU13-17	19	----		Plain, pewter		Shank broken
HU 13	HU13-17		GI36	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I		Heavily clipped, shank missing
HU 14	HU14-6	12	----		Bone		Edge clipped
HU 14	HU14-10	9	----		Plain, brass		
HU 14	HU14-16	20	----		Plain, iron, four hole		
HU 15	HU15-3	20	?				Rolled into a tube, shank missing
HU 16	HU16-8	20	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Edge clipped, shank missing

HU 18	HU18-2	15	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 18	HU18-10	14	GI36B	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, oval below, six-pointed star		Shank missing
HU 18	HU18-13	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Bent, shank broken
HU 18	HU18-13	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edge clipped
HU 18	HU18-13	14	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
HU 18	HU18-13	14	----		Plain, pewter		
HU 18	HU18-13	11	----		conical pewter		
HU 18	HU18-18	19	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edge clipped, shank missing
HU 18	HU18-20	11	----		Bone		Broken
HU 18	HU18-20	11	----		Bone		Edge clipped
HU 18	HU18-20	20	AY41A	1808-1821	Light Artillery, 1st regiment		
HU 18	HU18-22	20	RF7	1814-1815	Second Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 2		Shank missing
HU 18	HU18-26	9	----		Bone		
HU 18	HU18-26	14	----		Plain, brass	"Double Gilt" and stars	
HU 18	HU18-26	14	----		Plain, pewter		Edge clipped
HU 19	HU19-4	18	----		Cast iron, metal covered		Shank missing
HU 19	HU19-12	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		
HU 19	HU19-12	20	----		Plain, brass, silver plated		
HU 19	HU19-16	15	RF7	1814-1815	Second Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 2		
HU 19	HU19-16	15	----		Plain, pewter		Shank broken
HU 19	HU19-18	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 19	HU19-20	9	----		Bone		
HU 19	HU19-20	14	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 19	HU19-20	20	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
HU 20	HU20-7	14	----		Plain, brass	"Gilt" and stars	Shank missing
HU 20	HU20-9	14	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		
HU 20	HU20-11		GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Edges clipped, shank missing
HU 20	HU20-13	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		
HU 20	HU20-14	20	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank bent
HU 20	HU20-14	10	----		Bone		Broken
HU 20	HU20-16	8	----		Bone		
HU 20	HU20-16	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank bent
HU 20	HU20-16		?				Heavily damaged
HU 20	HU20-16		GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Edges clipped, shank missing
HU 20	HU20-16	12	----		Two piece, brass		

Table 1. Inventory of Buttons Recovered from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis. (Continued)

Provenance	Bag	Size (mm)	Albert #	Years	Obverse	Reverse	Damage
HU 20	HU20-20	15	GI36B	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, oval below, six-pointed star		Shank bent
HU 20	HU20-20	13	----		Plain, brass		
HU 20	HU20-20		GI36B	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, oval below, six-pointed star		Edges clipped, shank missing
HU 20	HU20-20	15	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank missing
HU 20	HU20-20		?				Heavily damaged
HU 20	HU20-20	18	----		Lead, four hole		
HU 20	HU20-20	20	RF5	1814-1815	First Regiment of Riflemen, bugle w/ number 1		
HU 20	HU20-20	20	RF3	1812-1814	Regiment of Riflemen, eagle w/ script R on shield on breast	stars	
HU 20	HU20-22	10	----		Bone		
HU 20	HU20-22	15	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank bent
HU 20	HU20-22	11	----		conical pewter		
HU 20	HU20-22	19	----		Plain, brass, silver plated	wreath	Bent
HU 20	HU20-23		?				Heavily damaged
HU 20	HU20-23	11	----		conical pewter		
HU 20	HU20-23	11	----		conical pewter		
HU 20	HU20-23	11	----		conical pewter		
HU 20	HU20-23	11	----		conical pewter		
HU 20	HU20-24	9	----		Bone		Edge clipped
HU 20	HU20-24	20	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		
HU 20	HU20-24	13	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 20	HU20-24	15	GI36A3	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point down		Shank broken
HU 20	HU20-24	14	GI36A1	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, Oval below, star prime point up		Shank missing
HU 20	HU20-24	10	GS1	1810-1832	Ball button, brass		
HU 23	HU23-2	23	----		Plain, brass	"standard colour" "treble gilt" and wreath, eagle	Shank bent
HU 23	HU23-11	13	----		Black glass		Shank bent
HU 23	HU23-13	19	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 23	HU23-13	14	GI30A	1808-1830	Army, General Service, US in Roman letters		Shank missing
HU 23	HU23-13		GI36B	1812-1815	Infantry, Script I, oval below, six-pointed star		Edges clipped
HU 26	HU26-2		----		Plain, pewter		Edges clipped, shank missing
HU 26	HU26-2	18	----		Plain, iron, four hole		

Table 2. Breakdown of Buttons Recovered from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis by Button Diameter (in mm).

Diameter (mm)	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Albert #																		
DR1A														1				
GI30A					2	11	1					28	14					
GI30AV						5												
Total					2	16	1					28	14					
AY36						1	2											
AY38A							1											
AY41A													1					
Total						1	3						1					
RF2								1										
RF3									1				4	1				
RF3A													2					
RF5													4					
RF7						2	4						2					
RF9B							1						2					
Total					2	6	1						14	1				
GI32						1												
GI36						7	1						2					
GI36A1						8	2					1	4					
GI36A3						24	6					3	13					
GI36A4													1					
GI36B						1	1											
GI36C												1						
GI36D													4					
GI36D2						1	2						3					
GI36E						1												
Total					43	12						5	27					
GI41A													1					
GI49																		1
GI51G									1									
Total									1			1						1
Infantry?					1		1											
Total Military					3	62	23	2				34	56	2				1
Insignias																		
Bone	3	3	8	2	4													
Plain brass		1			2	4	11	3	3	1	1	7	1	3	1	2		1
"Weave" brass														1	1			
Plain pewter						3	2					1	1			1		
Two-hole pewter						1	1											
Four-hole lead											1							
Iron											2		1					
Glass						1												
Ball/bullet			2	1	1	1												
Conical pewter					11													
Grand Total	3	4	10	14	7	9	77	29	5	1	4	42	59	6	2	3	1	1

Table 3. Breakdown of Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis Buttons Exhibiting Military Insignias by Military Branch

Albert #	#	Branch	Regiment
AY36	3	Artillery	First
AY38A	1	Artillery	Third
AY41A	1	Light Artillery	First
DR1A	1	Dragoons	
GI30A	59	Army General Service (AGS)	
GI30AV	5	Army General Service (AGS)	
GI32	2	Infantry	Second
GI36	17	Infantry	
GI36A1	19	Infantry	
GI36A3	54	Infantry	
GI36A4	1	Infantry	
GI36B	4	Infantry	
GI36C	1	Infantry	
GI36D	4	Infantry	
GI36D2	7	Infantry	
GI36E	1	Infantry	
GI41A	1	Infantry	
GI49	1	Infantry	
GI51G	1	Infantry	
?	1	Infantry	
RF2	1	Riflemen	
RF3	6	Riflemen	
RF3A	2	Riflemen	
RF5	4	Riflemen	First
RF7	8	Riflemen	Second
RF9B	3	Riflemen	Fourth
?	1	Unknown	
Total	209		
	Total	Percentage	
Artillery	4	1.91	
Light Artillery	1	0.48	
Dragoons	1	0.48	
AGS	64	30.62	
Infantry	114	54.55	
Riflemen	24	11.48	
Unknown	1	0.48	

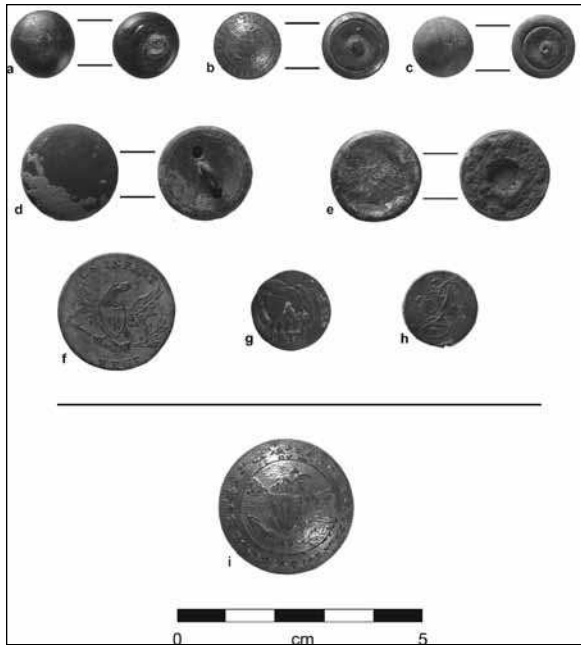


Figure 3. Black glass (a), two-piece (b–d, i), stamped metal-covered (e), and miscellaneous (f–h) buttons from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis. Buttons (b) and (h) are not listed in Albert (1977), while button (f) corresponds to Albert’s GI49 and button (g) to GI51G, both of which are infantry officer buttons. Image (i) is an enlargement of button (b).

Material and Manufacture

The majority of the fort/cantonment buttons are manufactured from either brass or white metal (i.e., lead, pewter, or similar alloys). Some of these buttons were silver-plated, while a few others were gold-plated. Because this plating easily wears away, the number of originally plated buttons cannot be quantified. Typically, War of 1812 soldiers of the infantry and dragoons wore white metal buttons and members of the artillery and rifle regiments wore yellow brass buttons; officer buttons of all the branches were generally silver- or gold-plated (Chartrand 2011).

Other raw material types from which fort/cantonment buttons were manufactured include bone, cast iron, and black glass (see the following section “Buttons without Military Insignias”). Wood, leather, and shell are among other materials sometimes used to manufacture buttons during the early 1800s; none of these button types are yet documented from the site, however.

While most of the fort/cantonment buttons are one-piece brass or pewter flat buttons, four two-piece buttons were also found (Figure 3b–d). Three of these buttons are plain; one (an officer’s button) (Figure 3b) is silver-plated (see the following “Buttons with Military Insignias”) and one plain

button is gold-plated (Figure 3d). The gold-plated two-piece button exhibits two vent holes in the back plate.

Two-piece buttons consist of a back plate inset into the front shell or plate. While the invention of this button type is typically attributed to Benjamin Sanders in 1813 (e.g., Albert 1977:7), Tice (1997:5, Plate A-3) lists several late 1700s American military camps that have produced two-piece buttons. In either case, the newness of this button style probably accounts for its scarcity at Johnson/Davis.

Buttons without Military Insignias

Buttons not exhibiting a military insignia total 98; 11 additional buttons were damaged so heavily that it could not be discerned what designs, if any, were present on the button's face, and these buttons are not included in the following discussion. These plain buttons, while possibly associated with the regular military, could also be derived from non-uniform clothing worn by enlisted men, the militia, or nonmilitary personnel attached to the fort/cantonment. Nonmilitary personnel could include various "camp followers," such as sutlers, officers' wives, officers' servants, washerwomen/laundresses, and even slaves (see e.g., Litt et al. 1993:78–79; Schantz 2009:96–98). Women's clothing at this time, however, typically did not contain buttons (White 2005:57), and thus most of the buttons from the fort/cantonment are likely associated with men's clothing.

Forty plain brass and 11 plain pewter flat buttons were found at the fort/cantonment (Figure 4e–m). In addition to these 51 plain flat buttons, four brass and one white metal (possibly lead) ball buttons (Figure 4c–d) were also recovered. Ball buttons, originally called "bullet" buttons by the military, were worn by general staff officers as early as 1810 (Albert 1977:290) and thus are some of the few plain buttons recovered from the site that are probably associated with military uniforms. Dragoons, surgeons, and the militia also used ball/bullet buttons during the War of 1812 (Chartrand 2011; Olsen 1963:352). Ball buttons were manufactured in two- and three-piece varieties; Wyckoff (1984:64) suggests that the two-piece variety is the earlier form. One of the fort/cantonment ball buttons is of the two-piece variety, while the others are three-piece. Also recovered are 11 conical pewter buttons (Figure 4a–b, Figure 5) that measure 11 mm in diameter. The function of this button type has not yet been positively established (Charles Bradley, personal communication 2012; René Chartrand, personal communication 2012), and they could just as easily not be associated with a military uniform.

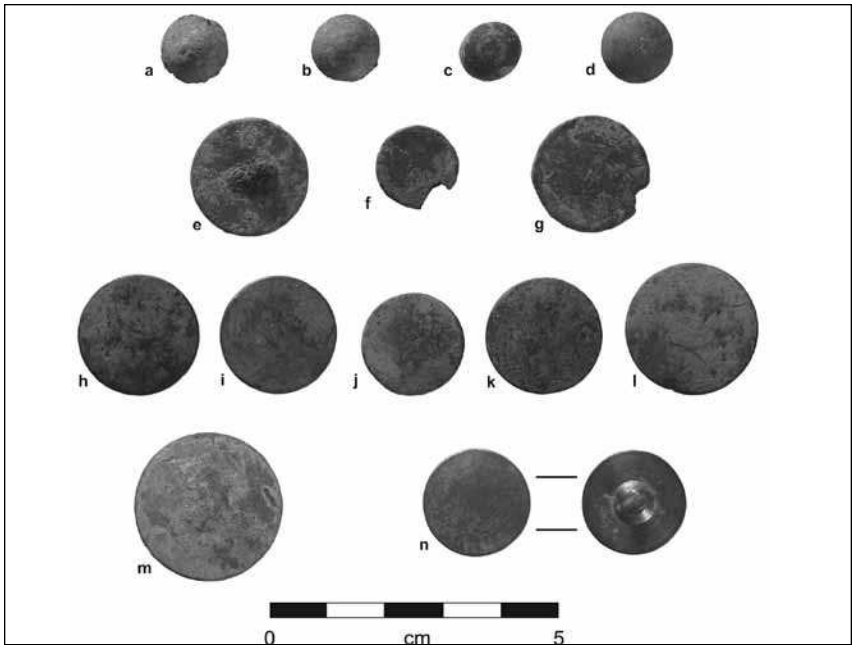


Figure 4. Buttons from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis not exhibiting a military insignia: (a–b) pewter conical buttons; (c–d) ball buttons; (e–l) plain brass buttons; (m) plain pewter button; (n) tombac button.

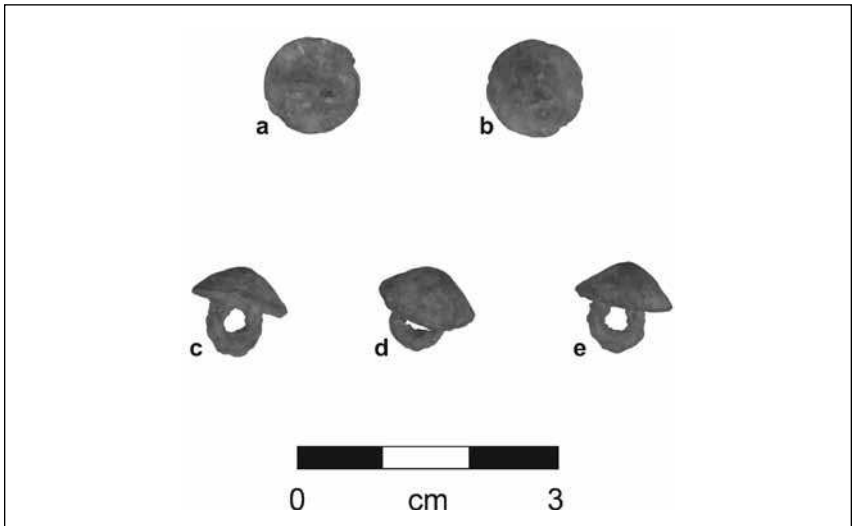


Figure 5. Pewter conical buttons of unknown function from Johnson/Davis. These are of the same type as buttons (a) and (b) in Figure 4.

One plain *tombac* (a type of brass containing a higher than usual percentage of zinc that produces a silver-like appearance) spun-back button (Figure 4n) was found during a metal detector survey. Tombac buttons were popular between 1770 and 1800 (Tice 1997:2) and spun-back buttons were manufactured between ca. 1760 and 1785 (Olsen 1963:552); thus, this button is the oldest recovered from the fort/cantonment.

One black glass button (Figure 3a) was found within Hand Unit 23. While not as common as similar *jet* (i.e., petrified wood that can be polished to a black, glass-like appearance) buttons manufactured during the early nineteenth century, the shank on this specimen is embedded within the button, indicating the material is glass as opposed to jet. Hand Unit 19 yielded a stamped metal-covered button (White 2005:67–69) that consists of an iron core, the front and sides of which are covered in a thin sheet of silver-plated metal (Figure 3e).

Twenty-one bone buttons were recovered (Figure 6a–g), 20 of which exhibit a single central attachment hole. The twenty-first bone button (Figure 6g), which is fragmented into three pieces and stained dark, exhibits numerous attachment holes and may have been broken during the drilling of some of these holes. An engraved line on the front face encircles the attachment holes. This button may originally have been of the four-hole variety, with two additional holes added after manufacture. Eight of the bone buttons are broken.

Bone buttons at the fort/cantonment range in size from 8 to 12 mm (Table 2) and are typically associated with clothing that is generally not publicly seen, such as undergarments (e.g., shirts) (see e.g., Moore and Haynes 2003; Pfeiffer and Williamson 1991). Small-sized single-hole bone buttons at Snake Hill are associated with shirts, while bone buttons larger than 15 mm in diameter are associated with civilian trousers (Thomas and Williamson 1991:72).

Two two-hole sew-through white metal buttons lacking shanks (Figure 6h–i) were found approximately 7 m from one another during the metal detector survey outside the area affected by the sewer line trench. Two four-hole cast iron sew-through buttons (Figure 6l) were also recovered from two hand units. Cast iron buttons were first manufactured in 1786 (Baxter 1966a), and four-hole cast iron buttons are known from other early nineteenth-century military sites (e.g., Polhemus 1977), thus these buttons are also likely associated with the fort/cantonment but may not be clothing buttons. A four-hole sew-through lead button (Figure 6m) was recovered from Hand Unit 20. Four-hole white metal buttons were identified at the War of 1812 Snake Hill cemetery as originating from overalls (Litt et al. 1993; Pfeiffer and Williamson 1991).

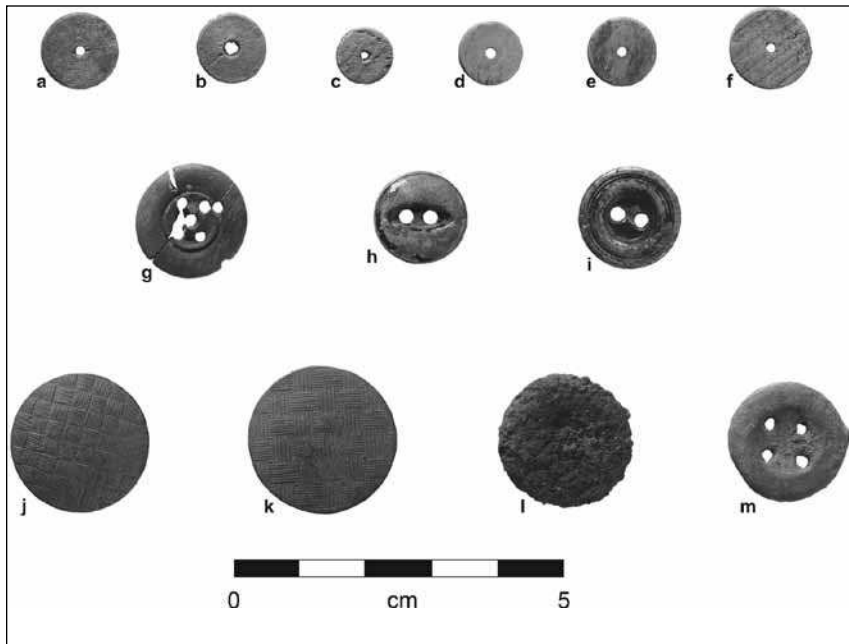


Figure 6. Bone buttons (a–g), two-hole sew-through buttons (h–i), brass buttons displaying a basket weave pattern (j–k), four-hole cast iron button (l), and four-hole lead button (m) from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis.

Of all the fort/cantonment buttons exhibiting a design on the button's front face, only two exhibit a nonmilitary design (Figure 6j–k). Both are brass buttons, one of which measures 21 mm and the other 22 mm, that display a "basket weave" pattern of interlocking lines. One (Figure 6k) exhibits small circles within the weave pattern, while the back of the other is marked with a wreath. These buttons are similar in design to a button variety recovered from British Fort Michilimackinac in Michigan (Stone 1974:Figures 29l–n, 30l–n).

Buttons with Military Insignias

Of the 318 buttons recovered, 208 exhibit insignias associated with six military branches: infantry (n = 114), army general service (n = 64), riflemen (n = 24), artillery (n = 4), light artillery (n = 1), and dragoons (n = 1) (Figures 7–9, Table 3). One additional button exhibiting a military insignia, discussed below, could not be assigned to a specific military branch. At least 27 varieties of military insignias, as defined by Albert (1977), are present within this assemblage (Table 1).

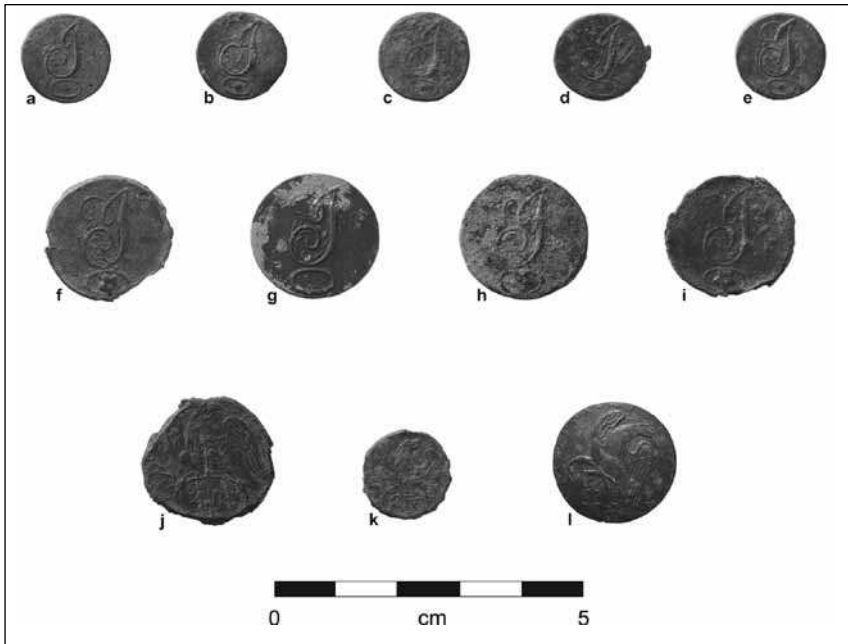


Figure 7. Selected infantry buttons from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis.

The most common insignias include 59 examples of the army general service button exhibiting large “US” letters (Albert GI30A) (Figure 8d–l) and 54 examples of the infantry button exhibiting a script initial “I,” below which is an oval encircling a star with its prime point downward (Albert GI36A3). If we include all of the different varieties of the script “I” button found thus far at the fort/cantonment, this type is by far the most common ($n = 109$) (Figure 7a–i). Script “I” buttons are also the most common button type recovered at Snake Hill (Thomas and Williamson 1991:71–72). Three silver-plated officer’s buttons, two of which are infantry and the third unidentified, were also recovered from the fort/cantonment (Figure 3b, f).

Three of the military buttons from Johnson/Davis exhibit pre-War of 1812 designs, suggesting that older-style uniforms, or possibly only their buttons, were still in use by some soldiers. An example of Albert’s RF2 (Figure 9e) was likely manufactured between 1810 and 1812 (Albert 1977:75–76; Wyckoff 1984:53), and two examples of Albert’s GI32 (Figure 7j–k) were likely manufactured between 1808 and 1811 (Albert 1977:20–21; Wyckoff 1984:4–5).

During the latter part of the War of 1812, additional regiments were formed, with the buttons of each reflecting the regiment’s designation. For example, a single Regiment of Riflemen was established in 1808, but in Feb-



Figure 8. Selected army general service buttons from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis.

ruary 1814 three additional regiments were formed. In May 1815, due to the end of the war, the four regiments were consolidated back into one regiment (Albert 1977:74; Fredriksen 2009:280–290). Thus, any War of 1812 rifleman buttons bearing the regiment numbers 1–4 (Figure 9g–l) were manufactured only in 1814 or early in 1815.

Regiments represented by buttons at the fort/cantonment include the First Artillery (n = 3), the Third Artillery (n = 1), the First Light Artillery (n = 1), the Second Infantry (n = 2), the First Riflemen (n = 4), the Second Riflemen (n = 8), and the Fourth Riflemen (n = 3). Buttons belonging to specific military branches or regiments were not typically found clustered within specific excavated areas.

Interestingly, some of these regiments did not see active duty in the Illinois Territory during the War of 1812 (Fredriksen 2000, 2009), suggesting that either some regiment buttons were attached to clothing ultimately issued to other regiments or personnel that switched regiments were not issued new uniforms to reflect this change. Some of these regiments were also disbanded during the first part of 1815, after the war was over and prior to the establishment of Cantonment Davis, further indicating that uniforms or buttons were reused or were not upgraded. This reusing of old uniforms or



Figure 9. Selected light artillery (a), artillery (b–d), riflemen (e, g–n), and dragoon (f) buttons from Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis.

buttons was common after the end of the war until new uniforms could be issued (John Fredriksen, personal communication 2011; see also Wyckoff 1984:8). This occurrence is not unique to Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis. Buttons were also recovered, for example, from Fort Adams in Mississippi and Fort Dearborn in Chicago from regiments not stationed at those forts (Moore and Haynes 2003:162).

Two buttons exhibit military insignias that are not listed in Albert (1977). The first is a 15-mm-diameter script “I” infantry button that displays an oval below the script “I” containing an eight-pointed star (Figure 3h). While similar to Albert’s GI36C, small circles are adjacent to the script “I,” which GI36C lacks. These circles are present on other script “I” buttons, such as those in the GI34 series, but are not pictured in any of the GI36 series buttons (Albert 1977:22–23). The second button not found in Albert (1977) is a 13-mm-diameter, two-piece silver-plated officer’s button (Figure 3b, i). On the face of this button is a left-facing eagle with one arrow in its right talon and an olive branch in the left talon. The eagle is set against a horizontally

lined background. A shield (escutcheon) lacking stars or letters is positioned on the eagle's breast. The top of the shield (chief) is composed of horizontal lines while vertical lines comprise the shield's base (pale). Thirteen stars separated by dots encircle the perimeter of the button against a crosshatched background. While likely an infantry officer's button, a similar design was not found in Albert (1977); therefore, this button is not assigned to a specific military branch in Table 3.

Backmarks

Ten percent ($n = 32$) of the fort/cantonment buttons exhibit backmarks. These range from motifs such as wreaths, stars, crowns, eagles, and four-leaf clovers, to single words or phrases such as "Will Stand Their Colour," "Gilt," "Double Gilt," "Plated," "Strong Plated," "Best," "Best Quality," "Best Quality Double Gilt," "Standard Colour Treble Gilt," and "London." The most common backmarks include the single word "Gilt" within a ring of stars ($n = 6$); a wreath with no other motifs or writing ($n = 5$); stars alone ($n = 3$); the phrase "Double Gilt" in a ring of stars ($n = 2$); and the word "London" within a ring of stars ($n = 2$). All other backmarks are single occurrences at Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis.

Two are marked with the name of the button's manufacturer: "AM Pasley [sic] Boston" and "Giles Richards." Aaron M. Peasley of Boston was contracted with the military to provide infantry buttons from 1810 until 1823, while Giles Richards, also of Boston, was likewise contracted to supply infantry buttons during 1812 (Albert 1977:466; see also Tice 1997:58–59).

Of these 32 backmarked buttons, the obverses of 26 are plain. The six buttons exhibiting insignias or designs on their obverse and backmarks include two infantry (the A. M. Pasley and Giles Richards buttons just mentioned); three riflemen, all of which exhibit stars on the button's reverse; and one button exhibiting the previously mentioned basket weave pattern on the obverse and a wreath on the reverse.

Sizes

Button diameters at Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis were recorded with digital calipers and rounded to the nearest millimeter. The button assemblage ranges in size from 8 to 25 mm. As mentioned, bone buttons are typically small, occurring only within the 8–12 mm range. Plain brass buttons, however, vary from 9–25 mm in diameter, while the plain shanked pewter buttons occur in 14, 15, 19, 20, and 23 mm sizes.

Buttons with a military insignia at Johnson/Davis cluster in two distinct diameter ranges: 13–16 mm ($n = 90$) and 19–21 mm ($n = 92$) (Table 2). A silver-plated infantry officer's button measures 24 mm in diameter (Figure 3f), which is the largest button exhibiting a military insignia from the site. Other than the 13–16 mm, 19–21 mm, and 24 mm sizes, no other button size was recovered from the fort/cantonment with a military insignia. Generally, War of 1812 military vest buttons are approximately 15 mm (0.5 in) in diameter while War of 1812 military coat buttons are approximately 20 mm (0.75 in) (Albert 1977; Calver and Bolton 1950:148; Moore and Haynes 2003). The exceptions to these are the coat epaulet buttons, which were of the smaller size. Overall and breeches buttons appear to occur in a variety of sizes and motifs (see Pfeiffer and Williamson 1991:Appendix D).

For purposes here, the 13–16 mm buttons are considered "small-sized," while buttons 19 mm or larger are considered "large-sized." Unfortunately, due to the variety of button sizes found on the overalls, it cannot be confidently stated that all large buttons originate from coats and all small buttons come from vests. Small-sized buttons bearing military insignias were also sometimes utilized on gaiters (James Kochan, personal communication 2012).

Comparing the button diameters with the button insignias reveals the following: (1) the most common button type by size at the fort/cantonment is the infantry small-sized button ($n = 55$), followed by the army general service large-sized button ($n = 42$); (2) more than twice as many army general service large-sized buttons were recovered compared to army general service small-sized buttons; (3) almost twice as many infantry small-sized buttons were recovered compared to infantry large-sized buttons; and (4) more than twice as many riflemen large-sized buttons were recovered compared to riflemen small-sized buttons. The ramifications of these percentages are unknown at this time.

Damage

All of the Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis buttons are considered to be lost or discarded items, whether retaining a damaged shank or not. If a button's shank is missing or broken may provide insights into the division of labor at the fort/cantonment, assuming that the majority of the fragmented buttons were damaged during construction/dismantling of the fort or other labor-intensive activities.

Disregarding the 26 sew-through buttons (21 bone, 2 white metal, 2 iron, 1 lead) that were manufactured without shanks, 210 (72 percent) of the remain-

ing 292 buttons displayed some degree of damage. One hundred forty-three (49 percent) exhibit either a missing or broken shank, while an additional 48 (16 percent) contain bent, but intact, shanks. The remaining 7 percent of the damaged buttons exhibit intact shanks but the button's face is bent or clipped. One of the damaged buttons had been rolled into a tube and one "US" general service button missing its shank has two holes drilled completely through it (Figure 10). This latter button may have functioned as a whizzer toy, or the two holes may have been drilled to reattach the button to clothing after the loss of its shank. As previously mentioned, 11 of the 318 buttons were damaged so heavily it could not be discerned what designs, if any, were present on the button's face.



Figure 10. Redrilled army general service button from Johnson/Davis possibly used as a whizzer toy.

Examining the percentages of damaged shanks according to button type reveals the following: (1) two-thirds of the army general service buttons have missing or broken shanks; (2) slightly less than 50 percent of the infantry buttons have missing or broken shanks; (3) a quarter of the riflemen buttons have missing or broken shanks; (4) only one of the eight Second Rifleman Regiment buttons has a damaged shank; and (5) seven of the 40 (18 percent) brass buttons not exhibiting a military insignia have missing or broken shanks.

From these percentages we may infer that personnel wearing army general service clothing may have been doing most of the labor-intensive work, causing buttons to be dislocated from a garment in such a way that the shank broke, while the riflemen, who were an "elite formation" (Fredriksen 2000:12), may have been doing the least labor-intensive tasks. The army general service button bearing the initials "US" is believed by some to have been attached to fatigue clothing (Campbell 1965; Emerson 1996) that would have been worn in place of the standard uniform while off duty or during certain work details that did not require the use of firearms. As noted earlier, fatigue clothing for the artillery and infantry consisted of "one coarse

linen frock and trowsers" (USA 1814:63). At Snake Hill, "US" buttons are restricted to trousers or overalls (Thomas and Williamson 1991:72). Persons wearing nonmilitary clothing also appear to not have been doing labor-intensive activities that would cause buttons to be forcefully removed from the clothing.

Concluding Remarks

This button analysis was undertaken with the goal of answering two main research questions: (1) why are so many buttons present at Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis compared to other military sites of similar age, and (2) are the buttons associated primarily with either the fort or the cantonment? Possible answers to these questions are presented below.

Why are so many buttons present at the site? Buttons are one of the most abundant artifact types recovered during the Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis investigations and are also sometimes found in large quantities at other late eighteenth-century or early nineteenth-century military sites. For example, more than 174 buttons were recovered from Fort Mitchell (ca. 1813–1840) in Russell County, Alabama (Chase 1974:25–26); 419 buttons were found during a two-year investigation at Fort Mackinac (ca. 1780–1895) on Mackinac Island, Michigan (Branstner and Branstner 2002); nearly 650 buttons were collected during multiyear excavations at Fort Hawkins (1806–1819) in Bibb County, Georgia (Elliott 2009:209–215); almost 900 buttons were found at the Tellico Blockhouse (1794–1807) in Monroe County, Tennessee (Polhemus 1977:212); and 1,333 buttons were recovered from Fort Michilimackinac (1715–1781) in Emmet County, Michigan (Stone 1974:45). These forts were occupied for much longer periods compared to the occupation span of Johnson/Davis, and usually a much larger area was excavated compared to Johnson/Davis. At the other end of the spectrum, at Cantonment Wilkinson in Pulaski County, Illinois, which was occupied from 1801–1802 (Wagner 2005), only four buttons were found during the first excavation season, while at Fort Massac (1757–1814), located in Massac County, Illinois (Mansberger 2002), 75 buttons were recovered (Baxter 1966b). Additional buttons were recovered from Cantonment Wilkinson during the second year's excavation there (Mark Wagner, personal communication 2011; see Wagner, this volume).

The density of buttons at Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis is even more remarkable when compared to other approximately contemporary forts or cantonments where the total excavated area is known. At Fort Johnson/Can-

tonment Davis, 231 buttons were recovered from an excavated area of 48 m², resulting in a density of 4.81 buttons per square meter excavated. At Cantonment Wilkinson (Wagner 2005), the density is 0.21 buttons per square meter excavated during the first year's excavation, while at the Tellico Blockhouse (Polhemus 1977), the density is 0.39 buttons. Cantonment Wilkinson was occupied for almost two years by a maximum of approximately 1,430 men (Wagner 2005:24), while the Tellico Blockhouse was in use for 13 years by varying numbers of personnel (Polhemus 1977). While the length of occupation and number of men at both Wilkinson and Tellico exceeds that of Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis, the density of recovered buttons is 16 times greater at Johnson/Davis.

As mentioned earlier, it does not appear that the Fort Johnson/Cantonment Davis soldiers were routinely disposing entire uniform components there. Most of the buttons do appear to be lost or discarded items, however, whether exhibiting broken/missing shanks or not. Buttons without a shank were basically useless as a fastening device and could have been left where they lay or tossed into a refuse pit. Because the fort and cantonment were occupied at both war's end and after the war, uniforms were probably heavily used and likely not in prime condition, which may account for the higher-than-usual button loss compared to other military posts. Shortages of cloth and cotton for uniforms began with an embargo against Great Britain in 1807 (Moore and Haynes 2003:128) and continued throughout the War of 1812 due to the British blockade of American ports. Replacement uniform components were thus scarce (see e.g., Whitehorne 1991:29). In 1814 General George Izard declared that the uniforms were "very bad" and of poor quality (Chartrand 2011:41), and Brigadier General Winfield Scott's 11th Infantry uniforms were described in April 1814 as "deplorable," with many men lacking shoes or hats and wearing "scarcely the vestage [sic] of a coat" (Troiani 1998:95).

With which military post are the buttons mainly associated? While buttons can be general temporal indicators, which buttons are associated with which occupation is almost impossible to discern based only on the button's military insignia, because only a year separates the fort and cantonment occupations. Even if a specific button type was manufactured prior to 1815—the year the cantonment was established—military clothing with its attached buttons was likely used on the western frontier until it wore out, as opposed to being discarded simply due to a style change. In addition to the reusing of old uniforms or clothing, War of 1812 military buttons themselves continued to be used well after the conclusion of the war (see Wyckoff 1984:8).

The riflemen buttons, however, are all likely associated with the cantonment, as opposed to the fort. As mentioned earlier, the four regiments of riflemen were consolidated into one regiment in May 1815, after the war's end. In September 1815 that single riflemen regiment was relocated to St. Louis and put under the command of Colonel Thomas A. Smith (Fredriksen 2000:67), and in April 1816 Smith and his men arrived at Cantonment Davis on their way to establish forts at Rock Island and Prairie du Chien (Fredriksen 2000:69; Mahan 1926:69). It is therefore plausible that most of the riflemen buttons, even those marked with regiment designations that were disbanded prior to the cantonment's establishment, are associated with Smith's riflemen regiment.

Brevet Major Zachary Taylor, who was in charge of 40 soldiers of the 7th Regiment of Infantry (Chartrand 2011:184; Flagler 1877:10; Fredriksen 2009:209) and approximately 300 members of the militia and rangers, established Fort Johnson during his retreat from the Battle of Credit Island. Taylor and his command stayed at the fort for approximately three weeks before departing, leaving Captain James Callaway overseeing 100 militia members for almost three additional weeks. Cantonment Davis, on the other hand, was populated with approximately 825 members of the regular army for most of its existence, possibly doubling that number with the arrival of Smith's men, as well as an unknown, but likely much smaller, number of militia. Since almost 70 percent of the buttons exhibit a military insignia, these buttons are associated with the regular army, as opposed to the militia or rangers who were not issued military uniforms. Most of the recovered buttons exhibiting military insignias are therefore likely associated with Cantonment Davis as opposed to Fort Johnson. No buttons associated with Taylor's 7th Regiment have yet been identified at the fort/cantonment.

In summary, it is feasible that the retreating soldiers, in their haste to leave the fort, did not backfill their abandoned structures after they were burned. Instead, the cantonment soldiers likely leveled these buildings the following year(s) to make the area more livable, or perhaps were using some structure basins as trash dumps. Dismantling and backfilling of the fort's structures by the cantonment soldiers could thus introduce cantonment buttons into the basins of the earlier fort structures. It is interesting to note that archaeological hand units located in areas that Nolan et al. (this volume) identifies with Fort Johnson structures yielded the majority of buttons, while hand units situated far from the Nolan et al. hypothesized structure locations yielded few-to-no buttons. If Nolan et al.'s Fort Johnson structure locations are correct, then it is probable that cantonment soldiers were discarding buttons into these abandoned structure basins during the life of the cantonment.

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