

A SELECTION OF CLOTHING BUCKLES FROM THE WARNER SITE, LIVINGSTON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

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Abstract

Excavations at the historic Warner site, 20LV334, have yielded an assemblage of clothing buckles used for a variety of purposes. The buckles date from the mid 19th to the early 20th century.

Introduction

The Warner site is a certified sesquicentennial farm named after members of the Warner family who have resided in the Brighton, MI area for at least 175 years. The property was first purchased by Timothy Warner, a pioneer from Livingston County, NY, in 1841 for \$384. Over the decades the family improved their fortunes through hard work and financial savviness, beginning as sharecroppers and rewarded later in the 19th century with a comfortable middle class lifestyle. The farm progressed from an eighty-acre untouched “wilderness” to nearly five-hundred acres of cultivated land in six sections of the township. At its peak around 1875 it was listed as the 11th largest farm in the county. The original residence included a log cabin that provided the family with the comforts of home for roughly fifteen years until it was destroyed by fire. In its place, a Greek Revival frame house was built in 1855, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The farm has been the subject of archaeological research for the past six seasons yielding thousands of artifacts from dozens of categories including a variety of buckles. A selection of twenty-one of these buckles will be the focus of this article.



Three generations of the Timothy and Lucretia Warner family taken in 1889 on the front porch of the 1855 Greek Revival home. Courtesy of Dorine Raines.

Few artifacts recovered in an archaeological context are more personal than those related to clothing. Buckles, as lasting parts of personal adornment and attire, typically have distinctive information that can yield intriguing clues. Availability of goods, temporal indicators, personal preferences, and possibly even the outward expression of social status of the site’s occupants over time may be gleaned from this class of artifacts. This article is anticipated at a minimum to offer descriptive and identifying information regarding buckles recovered archaeologically, many of which are representative of those commonly found on other 19th century Michigan historic sites. The background of these identified buckles will also be provided as well as how buckle technology originated and changed over time.

PATENT 1855 BUCKLES BY SHELDON S. HARTSHORN

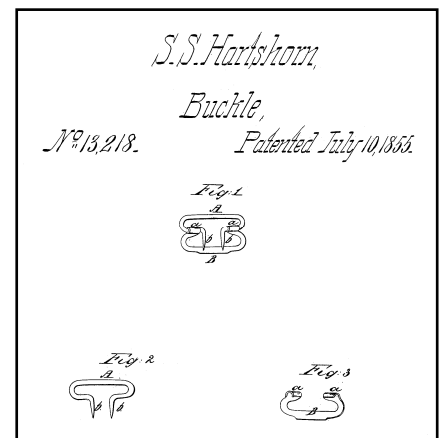


Sheldon S. Hartshorn of Orange, Connecticut was awarded patent number 13,218 for a “Buckle” that consisted of a simple two-piece design (Hartshorn 1855). He is credited with designing and manufacturing the first hinged buckle made in America (West Haven Historical Society 2005:26). An earlier buckle, patented in 1854, was a similar three-piece style. The 1855 design appears to be a further simplification of the 1854 type, using one less part, consisting of a brass bow & steel wire loop.

Not only was the design simplified but the manufacturing process of using wire and stamped metal instead of cast parts allowed the buckle to be produced efficiently and cheaply (Hartshorn 1855). Production of the buckle involved bending the ends of the bow to form a socket that the loop could fit into allowing for hinge-like movement.

In 1855 he received the backing of entrepreneur George Kelsey and begun producing buckles and other products at the West Haven Buckle Company (Sekela 2008). The company was incorporated in 1853 and continues to produce buckles today, including those similar to his 1854 design (West Haven Historical Society 2005:26, West Haven Buckle Co 2011).

Although Hartshorn received several patents for buckles (one in 1854, two in 1855, and one in 1866), the 1855 patent number 13,218 buckle became one of the most commonly used styles of the mid 19th century. Hartshorn died around 1869 but his patent was reissued to the West Haven Buckle Company in 1874 (Kelsey 1874). It was utilized for a variety of purposes including canteen straps, vests, suspenders, pants and various other garment straps for both civilian and military use including Civil War uniforms (TomFolio.com 2011). Despite the ubiquitous success of his invention, financial



Hartshorn's simple two-piece buckle design was America's first hinged type.

gain eluded him mostly due to legal costs of enforcing his patent (Sekela 2008).

Five of Hartshorn's patent 1855 buckles have been recovered at the Warner site. Measurements are provided below for those appearing in photograph above:

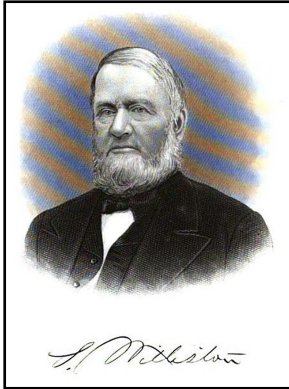
Buckle	Weight	Length x Width
Top:	2.0 g	33.07 mm x 15.10 mm
Middle Left:	3.0 g	30.01 mm x 23.82 mm
Middle Right:	1.0 g	25.02 mm x 32.33 mm
Bottom Left:	3.9 g	39.78 mm x 23.49 mm
Bottom Right:	3.2 g	37.61 mm x 29.37 mm

Three were found in the Civil War era refuse/burn pit, Feature 15. Two of the buckles are in very good condition while the other three are only partially represented and have heavy corrosion. They appear to be made entirely of brass or steel, instead a combination of the two metals with the loop made of steel and the bow consisting of brass as others had described. The buckles fit nicely with other associated artifacts into an 1860s to early/mid 1870s time frame. Buckles of this type have also been recovered at the mid 19th century Thomas Edison house (built in 1838) in Port Huron, MI (Stamps 1994).

PATENT 1855 BUCKLE BY NASHAWANNUCK MFG CO



Samuel Williston (1795-1874) began his manufacturing career with the production of fabric-covered buttons made by hand (HistoricEastHampton.com 2010). By 1835, he partnered with Joel and Josiah Hayden to produce machine made buttons in Haydenville (Sawyer 1875). However, in 1839, he moved the manufacturing operations to his hometown of Easthampton, Mass. It was also here, that two years later in 1841, he built a "gum elastic webbing" suspender factory operated by the Nashawannuck Manufacturing Company (Sawyer 1875, Holland 1855). In addition, he also constructed the Williston Mill next door to produce cotton yarn to supply the suspender factory (HistoricEastHampton.com 2010).



*Portrait of Sam Williston,
inventor and benefactor
from Easthampton, MA.
This image appeared in
Sawyers's 1875 Williston
Seminary Alumni Records.*

In his 1855 History of Western Massachusetts, Josiah Holland suggests that Williston's operations "carry on the largest button manufactory in the United States, if not the world" and enumerates the quantity of raw materials used per year as well as the number of employees involved in the production of suspenders:

"15,000 lbs. of India rubber, 300 bales of cotton, 1,000 dozens leather (mostly sheep skins), 16,000 gross buckles,...They employ 125 hands in the factory, and about 200 families in the adjoining region who 'make up' the suspenders or put the parts together. The annual production is 100,000 dozens of suspenders, valued at \$150,000."

Holland's comments suggest that the parts were made in the factory but were assembled in a cottage type industry within area households. Sawyer also notes that Williston became very wealthy and endowed a large part of his fortune, particularly to institutions of higher learning including seminaries and colleges, estimated to have amounted to \$1,000,000 over his lifetime (Sawyer 1875).

The recovered buckle produced by the Nashawannuck Mfg. Co name follows the Hartshorn 1855 design, though is slightly wider. It is possible that Hartshorn may have sold manufacturing rights to the Nashawannuck Mfg. Co. to produce buckles based on his design, though this seems somewhat counterintuitive as he was manufacturing and selling his buckles made by the West Haven Buckle Company.

The raised lettering inscription "NA(S)HAWANNUCK MFG CO." appears on the obverse side while "PATENT...1855" appears on the reverse. The buckle weighs 3.7 grams and measures 41.09 mm by 20.43 mm. The buckle is in good condition despite an obvious bend in the bow portion and having slight corrosion in isolated areas. It is unclear how long these buckles were produced, however, a similar buckle with the Nashawannuck Mfg. Co. inscription was found at Camp Lawton, an 1864 Civil War POW camp in Georgia (Bynum 2011).

PATENT 1855 BUCKLE



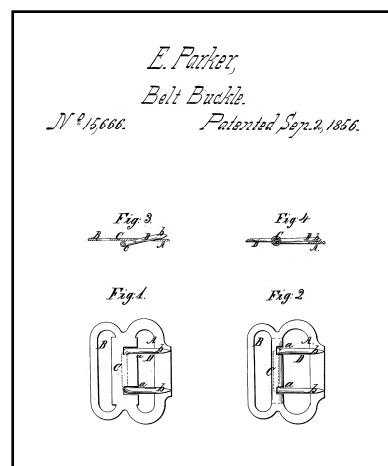
A stamped metal buckle, likely made of brass has the inscription “PATENT 1855”. The buckle is in good condition with minor corrosion appearing sporadically. It has three prongs, presumably to catch a strap and a simple roller device. Decoration on the face includes simple scrollwork and a floral design in the center. Searches on “Google Patents” using a variety of key words yielded no information regarding the maker or patent holder. The buckle weighs 3.2 grams and measures 37.59 mm wide by 28.27 mm long. The likely use for this buckle is for suspenders or various other garment straps.

PATENT 1856 BUCKLE BY EDWARD PARKER



A stamped metal buckle, likely made of brass, has the inscription “PAT. 1856”. The buckle is in good condition, has a nice patina absent of corrosion, however, it is slightly bent out of plane as well as a ninety-degree bend in the attached ring. The double prong moves freely. The entire face is decorated with fine scrollwork, the edges exhibit a reeded or repeating dot pattern around the edges, and the top portion shows several diamond motifs.

Although the recovered buckle is not an exact replication of the buckle described by Edward Parker of Plymouth, Connecticut in his patent for a “Buckle for Wearing-Apparel”, the construction and working mechanism of the buckle found at the site largely follows his design. He was awarded patent number 15,666 on September 2, 1856, a date that corresponds to the patent date listed on the recovered buckle (Parker 1856). Like the Hartshorn buckle, Parker used a wire prong, however, his invention employed a method that utilized metal tabs from the central cross-piece to wrap around the double prong, holding it in place. The loop and bow are constructed from a single piece of stamped metal providing a simple, durable, and cost effective design (Parker 1856). The buckle weighs 6.8 grams and measures 39.59 mm wide by 39.70 mm long. It was likely used for a number of garments including suspenders.

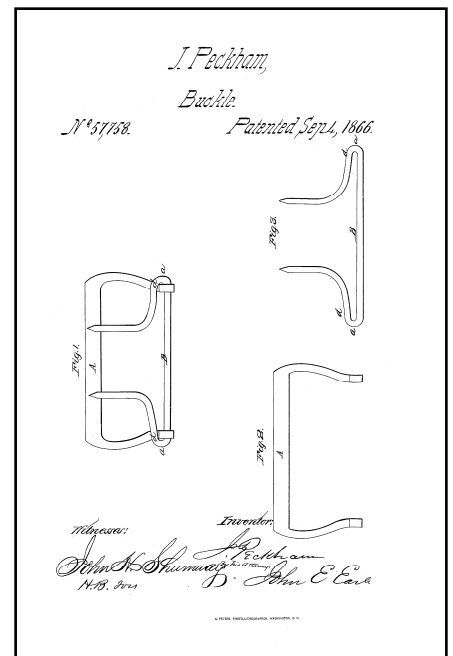


Parker's design wrapped metal tabs from the cross piece around the wire tongue.

PATENT 1866 BUCKLE BY JOHN PECKHAM



John Peckham's buckle appears to be a variant of Sheldon Hartshorn's ubiquitous 1855 design that also consists of two parts made from wire and stamped metal. Peckham, of New Haven, Connecticut, was awarded patent number 57,758 on September 4, 1866 for an "Improvement in Buckles" (Peckham 1866). Like Hartshorn's design, he also used wire and stamped parts to form a simple yet effective buckle. Peckham's design differs significantly only in the attachment of the two parts. Whereas Hartshorn's buckle attaches at the top of the loop/tongue, Peckham's attaches at the bottom, which he claimed "consists in a peculiar formation of the tongue and its connection with the frame, whereby less metal is required than in the ordinary construction, while equal strength and firmness are secured." (Peckham 1866). Peckham suggested that this simple design change saved about fifteen percent metal to construct the buckle. Peckham notes that it was included in a "class of buckles used upon clothing", likely for pants, vests, and suspenders (Peckham 1866). It is unknown how long Peckham's buckle was in production.



Peckham's design was a variant of Hartshorn's 1855 simple two-piece buckle.

The buckle recovered at the Warner site is complete, though one side of the tongue is cracked at the hinge but is in otherwise in good working condition with a nice brown patina devoid of corrosion. Stamped on the top portion of the frame is the inscription "PAT. SEP. 4. - 66.". The buckle was recovered from unit 525 490 S using standard excavation techniques, adjacently south of the Civil War era refuse/burn pit (Feature 15). It was likely associated with the feature and other artifacts found there as it fits nicely into the 1860s to early 1870s time frame of other recovered diagnostic artifacts. The complete brass buckle weighs 1.9 grams and measures 29.16 mm x 19.72 mm.

The bow portion of another Peckham style buckle was recovered, however, it is decorated with simple scrollwork and does not show any patent date. The shape of the bow is nearly identical to the patent 1866 sample recovered as well as the drawing included in Peckham's patent application. It weighs 1.5 grams and measures 30.50 mm x 21.30 mm.

**PATENT 1870 SUSPENDER BUCKLE BY
JOSEPH W. SMITH & THOMAS O. POTTER**

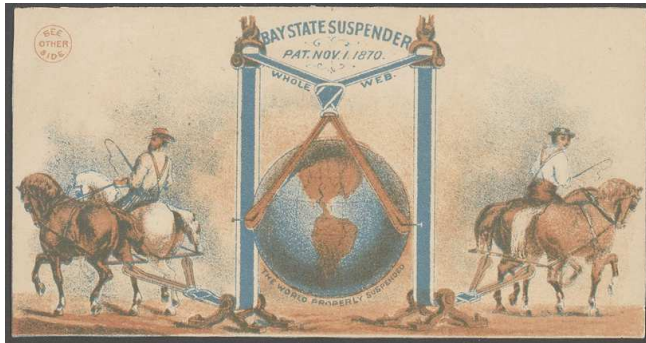


Joseph W. Smith received a patent (No. 108,841) for an "Improvement in Suspenders" on November 1, 1870 (Smith 1870). As early as 1870 Smith partnered with Thomas O. Potter, another inventor of improvements in suspenders, and near this time formed the Bay State Suspender Company located in Boston, Mass (Potter 1869, Greely 1870). Smith and Potter are listed as assignees to Benjamin Greely's patent (No. 100,886) "Improvement in Suspenders" dated March 15, 1870 (Greely 1870). An advertisement listing Smith, Potter, and the Bay State Suspender appeared in the January 25, 1871 *Owosso American* (Michigan) newspaper emphasizing that "This suspender is continuous from one buckle to another." Greely may have worked for or sold his patent to Smith and Potter who made improvements on the original design, and then sold the device under the Bay State Suspender name. Apparently the most important improvement was a system of buckles that allowed for a continuous strap to be utilized eliminating the possibility of tears/separation along sewn or glued seams (Smith 1870).



Advertisement appearing in the January 1871 *Owosso Advertiser*.

The stamped buckle is in excellent condition with a nice green patina. A shallowly embossed inscription appears on the face, though partially illegible, reads "...By Potter Smith Pat Nov 1 1870". Minimal decoration adorns the face and the reverse is absent of any. Although the recovered buckle does not precisely match those shown in Smith's 1870 patent filing, it appears to be one that formed the back connection between the straps placed over the shoulders and the strap connecting the rear of the pants. The buckle weighs 5.2 g and is 49.29 mm x 37.40 mm.



Advertisement for Potter & Smith's Bay State Suspenders.
Image courtesy of Harvard University on Wikipedia.org.

It is unclear how long Bay State Suspender was in operation, however, the advertisement in a mid Michigan newspaper suggests that the product would have likely been available for sale in the Brighton, MI area in just a matter of months after the patent was awarded. The buckle was found above the center of Feature 15 in unit 525 500 E. Though not found in situ, it was recovered from the 0 – 9.36 inch layer that utilized standard excavation techniques. The buckle provides an excellent end use date for the Civil War era refuse/burn pit to the early to mid 1870s.

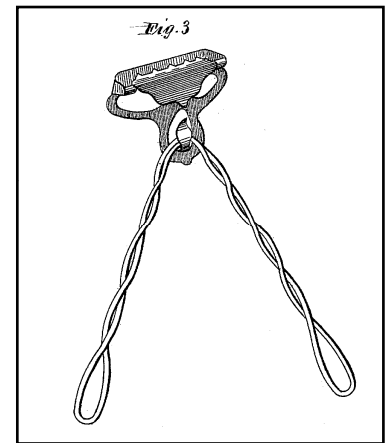
PATENT 1871 SUSPENDER BUCKLE BY JOHN E. SMITH



John Smith, of Waterbury Connecticut, received a patent for the design of a suspender buckle, D4698 on March 7, 1871 (Smith 1871). The design “for ‘suspenders, buckles,’ that is, that class of buckles in which the strap is secured or adjusted by a clamping-jaw,…” (Smith 1871). The recovered buckle is made of stamped brass and is heavily corroded with a moderately textured green patina and was possibly burned. The upper portion appears to show the stamped words “PAT. MARCH 7, 1871” at the top, though portions of the inscription are illegible. The moving “clamp” portion at the top is missing. The left loop is also missing that would have connected the “clamp” with the bottom “hook” section. The shape of the buckle is slightly different than the one listed in the patent with square edges at the top rather than rounded and likely represents a minor stylistic variation produced after the patent was awarded. The buckle was located at the end of the front suspender straps allowing for easy adjustment to the length of the suspender strap as well as fastening/removal from a smaller pre-attached strap/cord on the garment (typically pants). The buckle could also have been made by Abraham Shenfield who also patented (No. 112857) a similar suspender buckle device on March 21, 1871 (Shenfield 1870). It is unknown how

long this type of buckle was in production and common use. The buckle weighs 4.9 g and is 46.75 mm x 38.70 mm.

Given that at least a dozen others were awarded patents for improvements in suspenders/buckles in 1871 alone, it would seem that new options for various garment attachments may have been an important concern at the time. Noteworthy among this list of inventors is none other than Samuel L. Clemens, otherwise known as Mark Twain of literary fame. Fascinated with science, he held three patents including an “Improvement in Adjustable and Detachable Straps for Garments” in December 1871 (No. 121992) (Clemens 1871, Wikipedia.org 2011). Clemens reportedly found suspenders uncomfortable and his invention was used as an alternative to attach various garments including tightening shirts at the waist (Suddath 2010).



A similar buckle patented by H. M. Heineman in 1879 showing garment attachment.

CIRCA 1860-1945 “PARIS SOLIDE” WAISTCOAT BUCKLE



Although fairly common, information regarding the production of “PARIS SOLIDE” buckles is sketchy at best. Alan and Gillian Meredith suggest in their 2011 book entitled Buckles that this style dates to the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Others, such as the United Kingdom Detector Finds Database list a “PARIS SOLIDE” buckle with a similar timeframe, circa 1880-1910 (UKDFD 2007). As the name implies, the “PARIS SOLIDE” buckle was likely made in Paris, France and “Solide” is French for “solid”. Buckles with the “PARIS SOLIDE” imprint have been recovered in the US, United Kingdom, and Australia.

One of the earliest samples comes from the excavation of a Civil War era Confederate submarine, the *H. L. Hunley*, yielded a “PARIS SOLIDE” buckle inscribed with “G. C.”, a royal coat of arms, and “1860” belonging to Lt. Dixon (Hunter 2006). The Hunley was launched in July 1863 and was lost in February 1864. Other early examples including those inscribed with “1856” and “1857” were found by relic collectors on various sites including Civil War encampments. Only descriptions of the buckle as

“PARIS SOLIDE” were provided by the relic hunters, however, no photographs were available to confirm the four digit numbers. The most recent sample, historically documented as part of a WWII era Red Cross cloth bandage used by Lance Sergeant Frederick Walter Dove while serving in Papua New Guinea and Australia dated circa 1942-1945. These two discoveries of “PARIS SOLIDE” buckles suggest production and worldwide distribution over several decades.

Several unassociated examples have been found to display a series of four numbers on the frame. It is unclear if the numbers refer to the year the buckle was produced or some type of style/model enumerator such as “1856”, “1857”, “1860”, “1869”, “1871”, “1872”, and “1886”. Other inscriptions besides “PARIS SOLIDE” include “G. & C.”, “BD&R”, “Exirac” and a royal coat of arms. The meanings behind “G. & C.”, “BD&R”, and “Exirac” are not currently understood.

Another documented example lists the words “BIRMINGHAM MADE” along with “PARIS” (UKDFD 2007, Meredith 2011). It is unclear if “BIRMINGHAM” refers to the manufacturer name or location, however, Birmingham, England gained prominence as a manufacturing powerhouse during the industrial revolution and became well known for making all sorts of metallic objects (especially brass, copper, and steel) including buttons, buckles, and locks (Beresford 1960).

Professional, well-documented archaeological and historical samples, especially those attributed to a specific person ranging from the Civil War (Lt. Dixon on the *H. L. Hunley*) to WWII (Lance Sergeant Frederick Walter Dove of Australia) suggest that the time frame is significantly wider than previously thought, as early as 1860 (and possibly a few years earlier) to as late as the mid-1940s, a span of over eighty years. It also appears likely that the four-digit number refers to the year of manufacture as interpretation as a date appears to match contemporaneously with the age of sites and the artifacts found along with it.

This type of buckle was used to provide tension adjustment on the rear straps of men’s waistcoats (vests) to provide a smooth closed front behind the jacket opening (UKDFD 2007, Meredith 2011). An intact example is found on the back of a suit waistcoat made by James Neal, of Cambridge, England dated to 1906 (Manchester Art Gallery 2009). Other applications of the buckle include use for men’s pants and as well as women’s clothing such as corsets (Meredith 2011).

Two buckles of this style were recovered at the Warner site. One is made of a cupreous material, likely brass, while the other is ferrous in composition, likely steel or iron. The brass sample exhibits the words “PARIS” and “SOLIDE” but does not have an emblem, initials, or four-digit value. It is in good condition with a nice patina however both prongs are slightly bent. Concretions on the iron sample obscure any inscriptions if they exist, preventing positive confirmation that it is a “PARIS SOLIDE” type, however, it matches precisely with the brass sample found at the site and other unassociated examples.

The brass sample was found using metal detecting techniques. A sixteen quarter unit excavation area located several feet to the south produced artifacts ranging from the 1840s log cabin period to diagnostic artifacts from the 1890s preventing any precise dating by association within the last half of the 19th century. It weighs 5.0 grams and measures 31.36 mm by 22.17 mm.

The iron sample was recovered from feature 12, unit 560 535 S. It weighs 4.0 g and measures 28.93 mm by 20.72 mm. The surface is marred with rust, but is in otherwise good conditions without any bends or breaks. Feature 12 has been interpreted as a privy dating from the late 19th century to early 20th century.

If indeed used as vest buckles, those recovered at the site likely date to the late 19th century or very early 20th century as photos of Warner family members from 1889 to around 1906 show several men wearing waistcoats/vests. The use of waistcoats for middle class men, especially the Warners, waned in the decades after 1900.

PATENT 1892 AND 1895 “BOSTON GARTER VELVET GRIP” CLASP



George Frost and Company first began manufacturing the “Gentlemen’s Boston Garter” sock supporters in 1878 using a design recently patented by F. Barton Brown (Suffolk Univ. 2006). Brown received at least four patents in 1878 for various garment clasps and supporters. The company, located in Boston, was family operated including George Frost’s son, George A. Frost, who had previously worked in the “ladies furnishing” part of the business. By 1891, the firm became known as the George Frost Company. During the 1890s to early 1900s the company became quite successful in marketing and selling a number of upscale clothing accessories including the trademark “Boston Garter” sock supporter and the “Velvet Grip” clasp (Suffolk Univ. 2006). The “Boston Garter” device included the use of the “Velvet Grip” clasp and the product was marketed specifically to adult men to provide support for calf length socks. The “Velvet Grip” clasp itself was also promoted to women and children for supporting hosiery.

HistoricalBoysClothing.com (2010) explains that the support/clasps were marketed differently due to stylistic differences based on age and gender:

“Before boys got their first long trousers, they wore garters of a different type--either (a) pin-on hose supporters for long stockings

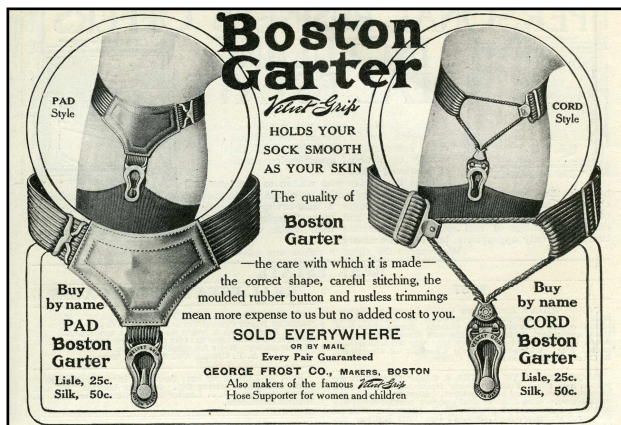


Boston Garter advertisement from 1899 touted as the “STANDARD for MEN’S WEAR”

attached to underwaists or waist union suits or (b) round garters to be worn around the leg just below the knee to hold knee socks in place. Once they had abandoned knickers or short pants and had got their first "longies" (usually at about age 17 or 18), they could begin to wear garters like those of adult men."

The Warner family portrait dated 1889 depicts all of the adult men wearing full length pants, however, young to middle age boys wore either skirts or knee length pants with long knee high socks or stockings as described by HistoricalBoysClothing.com.

The "Velvet Grip" clasp was designed by Edward S. Smith of Waterbury, Connecticut who received patent number 488,135 for "Method of Making Garment-Catches", awarded on December 13, 1892 (Smith 1891). The device utilized a rounded, stamped metal V shaped slot that received fabric designed to hold in place without tearing or cutting (Smith 1891). One of the assignors to the patent was George Frost who lauded in advertisements that the device "Holds your sock as smooth as your skin" (Frost 1912). It appears to have replaced the obtrusive clasps originally developed by Brown in 1878 and was touted as the "Improved" version that "Lies flat to the leg. Does not tear the stocking, and will not fasten accidentally.". The product came in two styles, pad or cord, and utilized either silk or lisle straps. The cost was the same for pad or cord regardless of the strap type, however, those with silk cost 50 cents in 1912 (\$11.14 in 2010) while the lisle version was half that at 25 cents (\$5.57 in 2010) per pair.



An advertisement for Boston Garter products from 1912 showing two different styles.

The recovered metal clasp is in good condition and has a silvery luster. It has the following inscription stamped on the face: "VELVET GRIP", "Boston Garter", "PAT. 12-13-92.", and "12-31-95". A Maltese Cross appears on the face of the connecting link of the strap and clasp. The back of the connecting link also has the numbers "6.9.". Little information is available regarding the "12-31-95" inscription and no patent listings for either Smith or Frost were found for December 31, 1895. A patent for a garment supporter utilizing a stud to wedge the fabric in the catch was awarded to De Ver H. Warner on that date for a "Garment-Supporter", number 552,214. It weighs 3.9 grams and measures 49.7 mm long by 17.81 wide. The recovered clasp/catch likely

dates to the late 19th century or early 20th century as "Boston Garter" advertisements have been found in catalogs dating from the mid 1890s to as late as 1926 (HBC.com 2007). The recovered clasp was from the cord type and given the cost per pair might be considered a sign of middle to upper middle class lifestyle enjoyed by the Timothy Warner family late in the 19th century.

ART NOUVEAU STYLE CLASPS



Two buckles, defined as clasps based on the attachment mechanisms, have been recovered. Wikipedia.org (2012) provides clarification for differentiation between buckles and clasps:

“Although any device that serves to secure two loose ends is casually called a buckle, if it consists of two separate pieces with one for a hook and the other for a loop, it should be called a clasp. Clasps became increasingly popular at the turn of the 19th century with one clear disadvantage: since each belt end was fixed to each clasp piece, the size of the belt was typically not adjustable unless an elastic panel was inserted.”

The top clasp appears to be stamped brass with a decorative floral pattern. The back has a hook and a loop and may have been used to fasten a women’s belt. The face is made with two pieces and no maker’s mark or patent date appears on the back. It exhibits a strong Art Nouveau pattern and likely dates to the latter quarter of the 19th century to early 20th century.

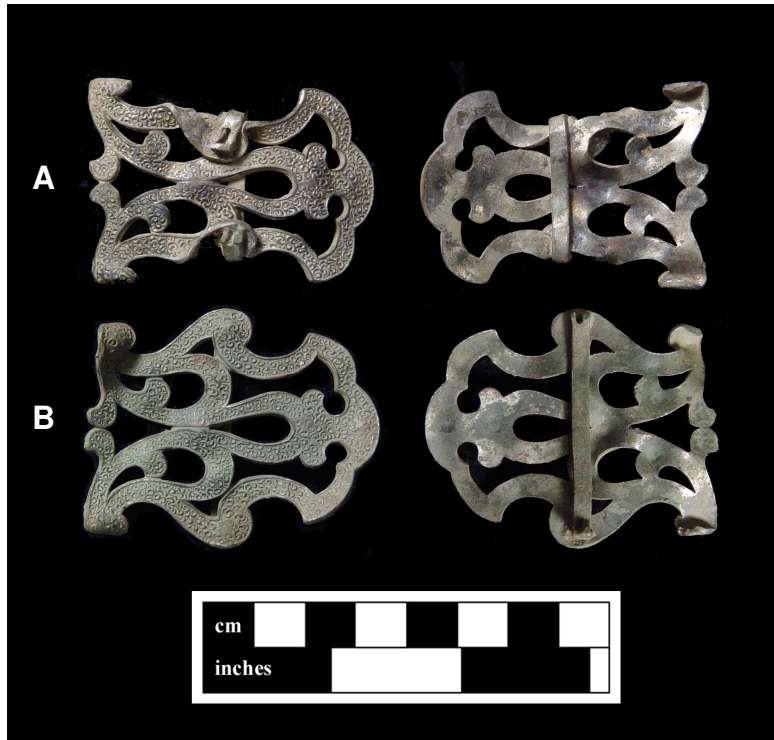
At bottom, the stamped metal clasp decorated with floral and scrollwork designs was recovered from the front yard. It appears to be gold plated and has a loop and tab on the back. The clasp is in good condition with much of the gilt plate remaining. It weighs 7.7 g and is 46.46 mm by 30.82 mm. No maker’s mark is evident, but the Art Nouveau style may suggest a late 19th century/early 20th century manufacture time frame. Other examples from this period utilize a metal clasp that hooks to the tongue on the buckle. This buckle was likely used as part of a belt accessory for finer women’s clothing.

MISCELLANEOUS UNIDENTIFIED BUCKLES



Several other buckles absent of any definitive maker's marks have also been recovered. The buckle at left is made of a ferrous material and is similar to vest adjustment straps. It appears to have a "chape" or "cap" attached to the bar that fit into a slotted end of the belt/strap allowing for easy removal and interchangeability (Wikipedia.org 2012). The buckle device at right has the words "PAT APP FOR" inscribed. It appears to also be made of brass, and may have served as a junction of three straps possibly for some type of suspender or garter. It is also possible that the item did not serve as a buckle but rather as a pull-tab for a zipper or a drawer for an item such as a jewelry box. Metrics for the buckles are as follows:

Buckle	Weight	Length x Width
Bottom Left:	6.3 g	29.65 x 22.48
Bottom Right:	2.9 g	39.93 x 23.10



A matching pair of “white metal” buckles were recovered over 150 ft apart from opposite sides of the house using metal detecting techniques. The finds were plotted with triangulation and unit numbers assigned. Buckle “A” weighs 18.3 g and is 56.5 mm long while buckle “B” weighs 18.2 g and measures 57.73 mm long. They are 1.30 mm in thickness. The buckles appear to be stamped metal in a filigree pattern with a textured scroll-like design on the face. A single piece of rectangular metal forms a loop on the back. Ear-like extensions on buckle “A” in the middle are bent toward the face and the loop on the back of buckle “B” is detached on one side. Buckle “B” also exhibits minor bends at the proximal end. Otherwise, they are in good condition and the surface is absent of corrosion. The buckles are somewhat large, ornate, and relatively heavier than those attributed for typical use in apparel. It is currently unknown exactly what these buckles were used for, though several suggestions for fastening some type of luggage, trunk, or handbag have been offered.

Discussion

A wide range of buckles have been recovered that span gender, economic, and temporal indices. The most common type found at the site, however, are those associated with suspenders. By mid century, the method for fastening various parts of clothing, especially suspenders, changed in earnest. Victorian fashion dictated high waisted pants that were originally held in place with straps made of tightly woven wool attached with leather loops and buttons (Saddath 2010). New styles of metal buckles that allowed for the easy adjustment of the straps quickly gained in popularity. Further developments made especially during the 1870s (over a dozen patented in 1871 alone) allowed not only for adjustment of the straps but also for easy removal and attachment. Vests, which also utilized buckles, were often worn over suspenders to conceal what were considered “undergarments” as late as the 1930’s (Saddath 2010).

The assemblage recovered at the Warner site consists of a sampling of this technological development of buckles over several decades, especially those attributed to suspenders and vests. It is also representative of those commonly found on other 19th century farmsteads. Several, absent of any maker's marks, are not as well understood as others. The condition of the buckles also varies, typically based on the material used with those made of copper/brass found in the best condition. Some appear to have been intentionally discarded and burned, especially those recovered from Feature 15, the Civil War era refuse/burn pit.

Initial spatial analysis suggested that buckles might have fallen off clothing hung on outside clotheslines in the backyard like many of the buttons. This could be the case in some instances, however, as further excavation continued toward the house in subsequent seasons, buckles were found further away from the clothesline area. The buckles are found throughout the sheet midden area but are also concentrated in or coincide with relatively shallow refuse pits interspersed throughout the midden region. One interpretation is that old clothes were burned in accumulated refuse piles along with broken dishes and other household items.

An especially concentrated refuse pit, Feature 15, yielded hundreds of mid 19th century artifacts that were precisely triangulated for position. Besides the large quantities of ceramics and butchered bone, the pit yielded buckles along with minimally circulated coins. The combination of buckles and low denomination coins may suggest that clothing was burned/deposited for disposal. Stratigraphy was preserved with older buckles and coins found at deeper levels below their more recent counterparts. For example, an 1863 III cent piece was found at the bottom of the pit while the patent 1870 Smith & Potter buckle was found in the topmost level.

The manufacturing locale of recovered buckles is dominated by the New England states of Connecticut and Massachusetts. For much of the 19th century, this area was the hub of manufacturing activity churning out finished goods ranging from buttons to pocketknives to tools. It is likely that clothing and various accessories, including the buckles, made their way from the east coast first to Detroit and then onto frontier towns such as Brighton as early as the 1850s. At least one buckle is apparently of foreign manufacture, the "PARIS SOLIDE" from France or England. Below is a table of several of the recovered buckles along with documented use dates and manufacturing location.

BUCKLE NAME/TYPE	EARLIEST USE DATE	LATEST USE DATE	MANUFACTURING LOCATION
Hartshorn	1855	at least through 1874	Connecticut
Nashawannuck	1855	possibly through 1864	Massachusetts
Parker	1856	unknown	Connecticut
Peckham	1866	likely through 1870s	Connecticut
Smith & Potter	1870	unknown	Massachusetts
Smith	1871	at least through 1879	Connecticut
Paris Solide	1856	1945	France or England

Intensive efforts to recover artifacts have included excavation of nearly 4000 square feet in three distinct areas of the site, metal detecting over the living space of the adjoining yards, and the documentation of twenty features. Given the number of family members and the long occupation (over 170 years), it would seem that more buckles and clasps should have been recovered from the site, especially

considering that just one pair of suspenders would consist of at least three buckles. Perhaps future excavations will shed more light on the use and eventual deposition of artifacts related to clothing, including an even larger sample of buckles.

Conclusions

The range of buckles recovered at the Warner site largely matches those found on other excavated 19th century Midwest farmstead sites. Many of the samples appear to be male oriented, related to everyday work clothing items such as suspenders and vests. Further, the buckles are examples of economically mass-produced products representing a shift in manufacturing processes during America's industrial revolution in the 19th century. They exhibit little to distinguish any real socio-economic status consisting of types commonly used by working/middle class farmers. Two exceptions, the "Boston Garter" and the unmarked Art Nouveau style clasps, might be considered associated with finer apparel despite also being mass-produced. Background research on the buckle assemblage suggests that finished goods were manufactured in New England, particularly from the states of Connecticut & Massachusetts, and made their way to Michigan for most of the last half of the 19th century.

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