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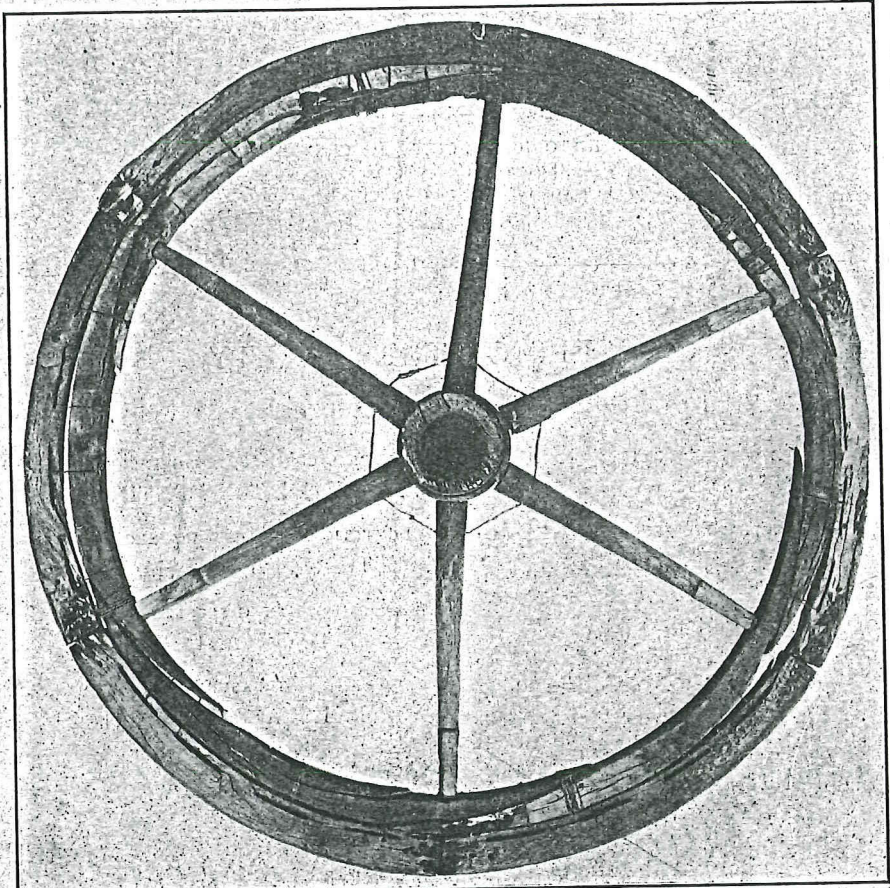
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R. L. Calver*

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THE PEWTER SOCIETY

THE BRITISH ARMY BUTTON IN THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By WILLIAM L. CALVER

PART I

Among the numerous objects which comprise the debris of the British camps of our Revolutionary War period within the city limits of New York, and elsewhere, none are deserving of greater interest than the uniform buttons of the regiments that participated in the struggle. These little mementoes of the various corps of the British Army present in America during the War of Independence are remarkable for the variety of types which they display; for the general chastiness of their patterns; and for the perfection of workmanship exhibited in the fabrication of their dies. All this might truly be said of the civil, dress, buttons of the late eighteenth century, for the productions of that "Augustan Age of buttonmaking" spell excellence in their designs, while they attest the supreme excellence of the craftsmanship of the period. The military buttons of which we treat have, however, the added attractions of historical association and direct relationship to the individual corps of the enemy. More than this, when found, as all of our specimens were, *in situ*, they constitute a record of the itineraries, or scenes of action, of the regiments which their numerals represent.

For a period of about forty years the writer has made a study of these adjuncts of the old British uniforms, and now, with ardor unabated after so long a quest, he believes that few lures have held their devotees in so enduring a thrall.

While the interest in these mementoes is chiefly historical, there are interests heraldic, military, and patriotic, and aside from these there is a sentimental interest—the charm and magic that goes with objects which have spanned the centuries and have been associated with great deeds.

The British, late eighteenth century military buttons are distinguishable by the numeral they bear, or by the initial letters of the corps, as described below.

Numerical titles were bestowed on the regiments of the British Army in 1751; previous to that time they had been named for their

colonels; and it was decreed in 1767 that the number of each regiment be placed upon the buttons of its uniforms.

At the time when the first numbered button order was issued—the 21st of Sept., 1767—it was stated that the number of each regiment was to be placed on the buttons of the uniforms of the

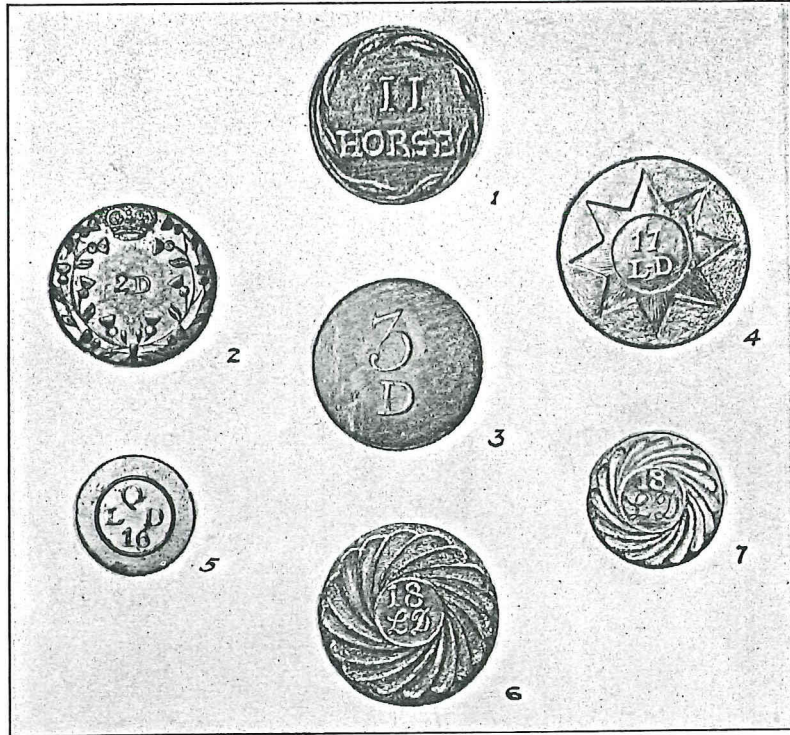


Plate I

Officers' buttons of British Cavalry regiments. No. 1 found at Somerville, Mass., others on camp sites on the west bank of the Harlem River, 201st to 213th Streets, New York City.

officers and men of the British Army. The Royal Warrant of Dec. 19, 1768, as it pertained to the cavalry, reads as follows: "The number of each regiment to be on the buttons of the uniforms of the officers and men, except the regiments of Dragoon Guards. The initial letter of the title of those corps to be on the buttons." For the infantry the warrant directs: "The number of

each regiment to be on the buttons of the officers and men." The private men's coats were to be looped with worsted lace and have white buttons.

The above warrant quoted was the last Royal Warrant issued up to the time of the American Revolution.

We cannot say positively that the uniform buttons of the British soldiery were first numbered in 1768. There are evidences that numerical designations were placed upon the buttons of some regiments earlier than the date mentioned above. We may pre-

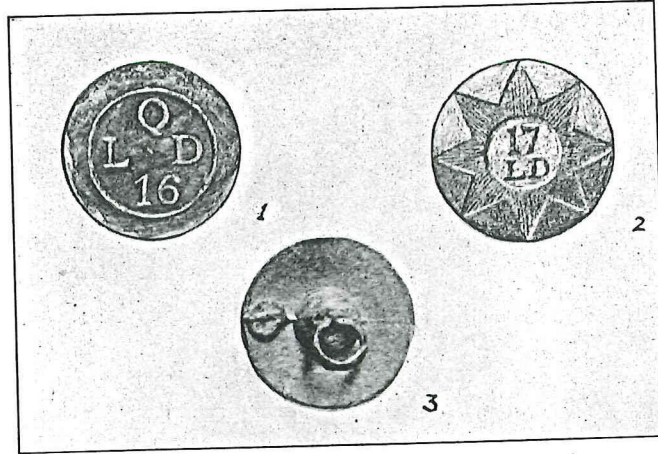


Plate II

Privates' button of the 16th Queens' Light Dragoons; and the 17th Light Dragoons. Also back of privates' button, showing iron wire shank.

sume that in this detail the British followed quite closely after the French, who prescribed numbered buttons for the troops of the line Dec. 11, 1762. We must confess that we find no specimens whatever of numbered, or inscribed, buttons from the uniforms of the French corps present in America during the War of Independence, while we have secured buttons of practically every regiment of the British Army present on these shores during the war.

There can be no doubt that the British regulations as they pertained to the buttons were strictly observed, and the practice was promptly adopted by the Americans at the beginning of hostilities.

The results of the order were far reaching. The numbered buttons identified alive, or dead, the officers or men who wore them; rendered desertion or any dereliction of duty more difficult, and to a considerable degree made for *esprit du corps*. The units of the army came hither, then, marked for identification, and the buttons which we find today represent the first inscribed types worn by the old regiments. From the camps and barrack sites, or haply from scenes of conflict, or from an occasional grave, we

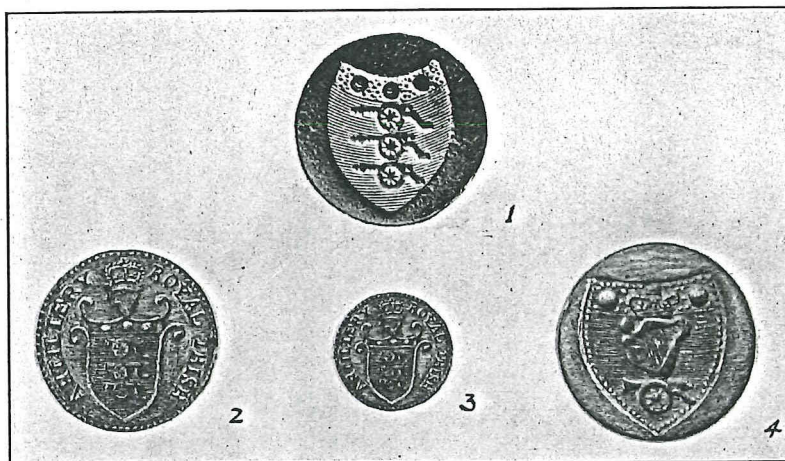


Plate III

One button of the Royal Artillery; and three specimens of the "Royal Irish Artillery." Specimen No. 1, found at Fort Erie, Niagara River. No. 2 from Lake Champlain. No. 3 from camp of Burgoyne's Army at Somerville, Mass. No. 4 from Fort George, Niagara River.

gather the little metallic discs whose numerals constitute a roll of the British Regiments in America.

Some few regiments, as will be seen, by referring to the plates, had their numbers expressed upon their buttons on a plain surface, or field. Some buttons had a plain field with a cord, or milled border, while others again bear profuse decorations. A close study of the more elaborate designs on the old buttons of the army reveals some fine examples of eighteenth century decorative art; and a scrutiny of these in turn discloses the fact that in many instances the diemakers attempted to reproduce, in metal, a vogue of the period,—that of elaborate embroidery on wearing apparel. This

is particularly noticeable on such specimens as the officers' buttons of the 17th, 22d, and 54th regiments. We find within the camps many buttons of the officer type bearing no numerals, yet having designs wrought in imitation of embroidery. These buttons we ascribe to General Officers.

The officers' buttons have, as a rule, thin *repoussé* silver, or gilt, faces, and bone backs. The space between the face and the cone-like back was filled with a paste or cement, but before the button was assembled a stout cord, or bit of gut, was passed through four holes in the back and knotted on the inside of the button, and by

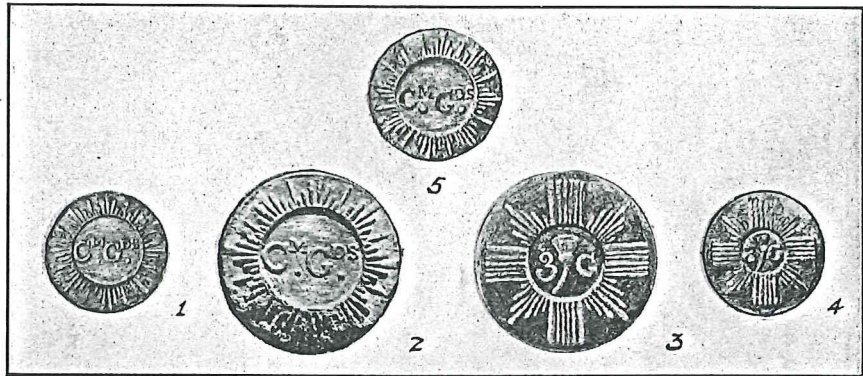


Plate IV

Buttons of the Coldstream Guards; and of the 3d Guards. No. 5, officers' button. The four others of private soldiers. From camps in New York City.

means of the loops thus formed the buttons were sewn to the uniforms. Note specimen No. 8, on plate VI.

Some few specimens of officers' buttons were one-piece, flat, solid; and had metallic shanks. Note specimens of the 17th, 71st, and 76th regiments, on plate IX.

The privates' buttons were universally of white metal, or pewter, and had as a rule iron wire shanks, which were cast into a boss on the backs of the buttons. See plate II. The button itself was, in the old days, either flat or slightly convex, and this style of button remained in use in the army down to the year 1855.

We find many specimens of private soldiers' buttons with the iron shanks well preserved; but most often the shanks are rusted away.

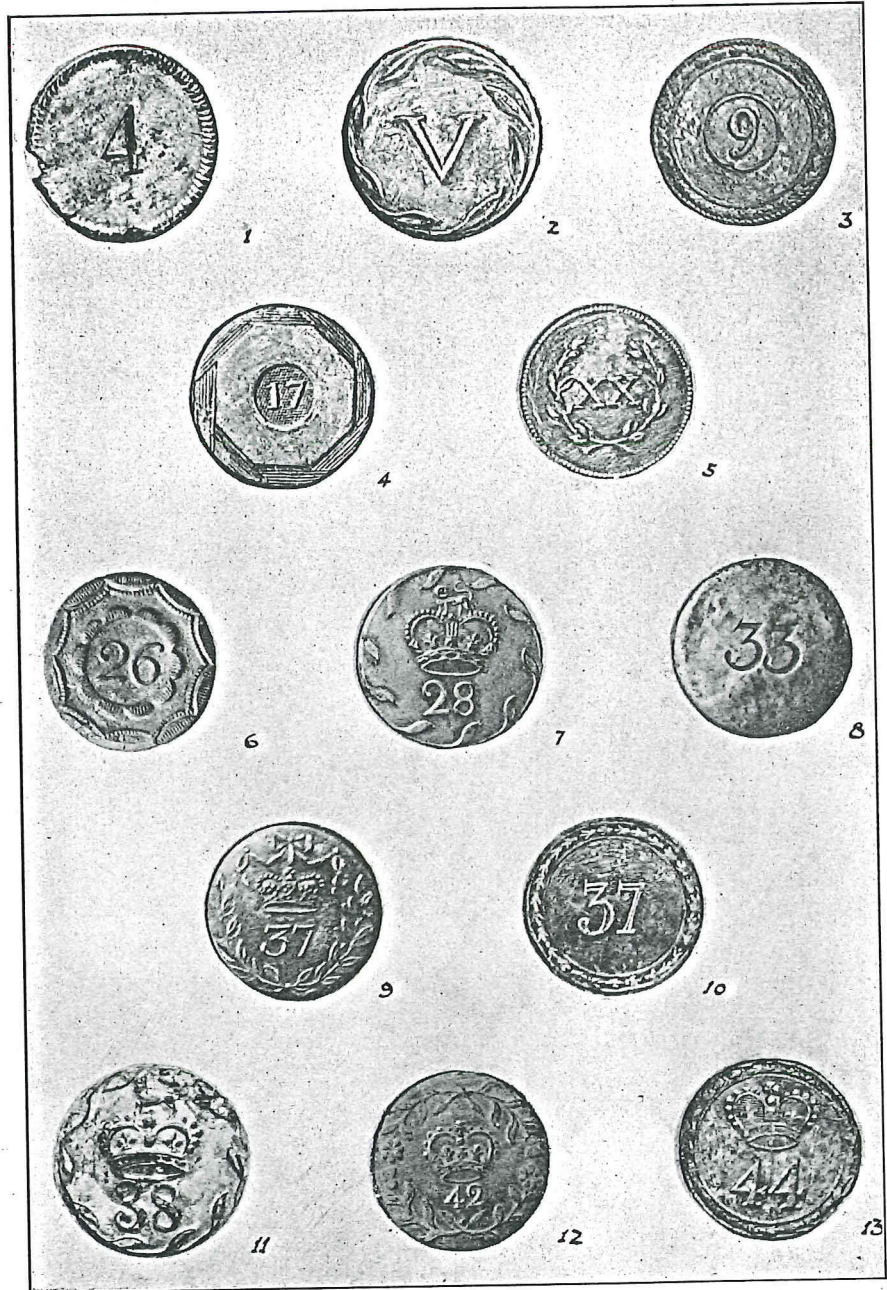


Plate V

Officers' buttons of British regiments.
 Specimen No. 1 is from Ticonderoga. No. 2 found at Fort Erie, Niagara River. No. 5 found in the camp of Burgoyne's Army at Somerville, Mass. No. 13 is on the 44th regiment officer's coat in the National Museum at Washington, D. C. All others found on sites in New York City.

In addition to the buttons referred to as of "officer," or "privates," we have to figure a type distinct from either of these. The variety in question is very rare—in fact, no two of a regiment have been recovered. They have white-metal convex faces, and



Plate VI

Officers' buttons of British regiments. Specimen No. 7 found at Fort George on the Niagara River. All others from Revolutionary sites in New York City. No. 8 shows back of officer's button.

tinned iron backs, with iron wire shanks. The specimens so far recovered are of the 17th, 33d, 37th, 38th, and 57th regiments. See plate XI. It is surmised that these were worn by some particular officer of the regiment who had a special button of his own, regardless of what was worn by the other officers, or the men. It was the guess of the late S. M. Milne that these hollow buttons were worn by the Quartermaster Sergeants of the regiments.

The very remarkable thing about the collection herein figured is that it was garnered almost entirely from sites within the limits of the Greater New York, and that to this day such sites have escaped the hand of "improvement," and remain in an almost primitive condition. Furthermore it has been the button-hunters' good fortune that invariably the sites have been a "no-man's-land" where the explorers could work undisturbed by owner or overseer.

The specimens presented herewith are mostly the writer's own finds. The few that have come to hand indirectly are all absolutely

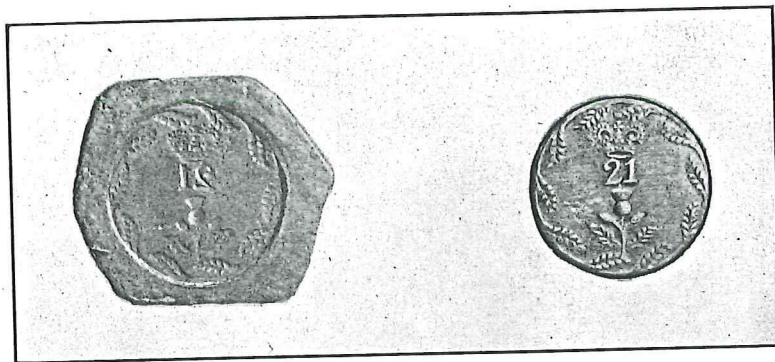


Plate VII

Original die, or matrix, of officer's button of the 21st British regiment; with face of button from same. Found in the American camp, known as "Camp Robinson's Farm," in the Hudson Highlands, opposite West Point. Officers' buttons of this type have been found at Saratoga; they date 1777.

of authentic origin,—and indeed in no case has any specimen come from others than companions in the chase.

As a rule Arabic numerals were used in expressing the regimental number upon the buttons,—almost universally so with those of the officers; but in a few instances, such as in the case of the 4th, 5th, 9th, and 20th regiments the private soldiers' buttons show Roman numerals. In one instance only has the writer found the Roman numeral upon an officer's button, and the specimen shown, No. 2, on plate V, coming, as it does, from Fort Erie, may date a few years after the Revolution; for the regiment came to Canada in 1787, and served at various stations—principally along the Niagara frontier, until 1797, when it returned home. Apparently before it returned to England the 5th regiment adopted

solid bronze buttons for the officers, for such a specimen was also found at Fort Erie, opposite the City of Buffalo. Just how, and where, regimental buttons are found we shall describe a little further along in our story, but meanwhile we must hasten with the rounding out of the first installment of this paper.

Frequently the designs upon the officers' buttons differed from those upon the buttons for the men's uniforms, and in all cases the designs are found to be well executed. By referring to the plates it will be seen that certain regiments had several types of buttons for the men, and there is no doubt whatever, from the writers' observations, that these various types were in use at the same time. Rarely, however, do we see a variation in the officers' buttons. The 37th and the 38th regiments are the exceptions we figure

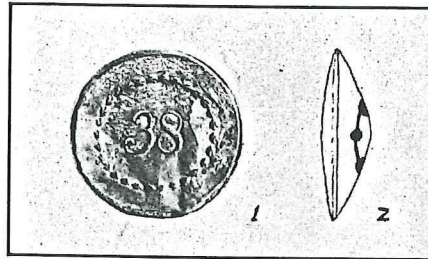


Plate VIII

Rare type of officer's button of the 38th British regiment. Found at Fort Washington, New York City.

herewith. The types were certainly contemporary, for they were found in the same refuse pits. The 37th officer buttons here shown (see plates V and X) are from the British fort at Richmond, Staten Island—though similar specimens were found in the British camp at Prescott Ave., Manhattan; while the 38th officers shown are from the dump at Fort Washington, at 183d Street, and Pinehurst Avenue. According to one of Washington's spies the 37th regiment was slated for service at Richmond fort for the winter of 1778-79. The 38th was at Fort Washington in 1781.

The officers' buttons were "gilt," or "silver," to match the lace upon the uniforms, and these details were carefully noted in the inspection reports of the day. For instance: the "inspection returns" preserved in the Record Office state that when the 33d

Regiment was last inspected at Dublin, July 17, 1775, before quitting for America, the officers had silver epaulettes and lace. The 63d Regiment also on its inspection at Dublin, May 14, 1774, had silver lace and epaulettes. By "gilt" the reader will understand, of course, that the buttons were gold plated, but where silver is mentioned it was actually the pure metal itself that was employed in some instances, and we refer now to the officers' buttons of the 33d and the 37th regiments. Note specimen No. 8 and No. 10,

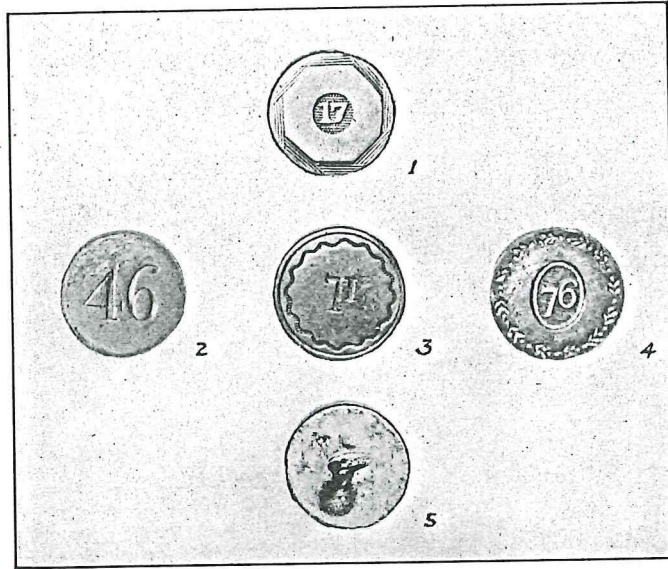


Plate IX

Flat, solid type of officers' buttons of British regiments. Specimen No. 1 of the 17th regiment of foot. No. 2 46th foot. No. 3, 71st foot, known also as "Frazer's Highlanders." No. 4, 76th foot, or "Macdonald's Highlanders." No. 5 shows back of above buttons.

plate V. The gilding upon the exceedingly delicate faces of such officers' buttons as the 49th and 57th Regiments—see No. 3 and No. 4, plate VI—show up well to this day.

We read that the first order to the Hessians on their arrival in America was to remove all silver from the uniforms, and that "this had already been done by the British, who greatly feared the unerring aim of the American riflemen." The order was probably not strictly carried out, for we find both the silver buttons and the

accompanying lace in camps occupied up to the close of the war. The lace was made in a great variety of patterns which are discernible to this day in the specimens unearthed.

It was the good fortune of one of the writer's companions to find within a camp of the American troops in the Hudson High-

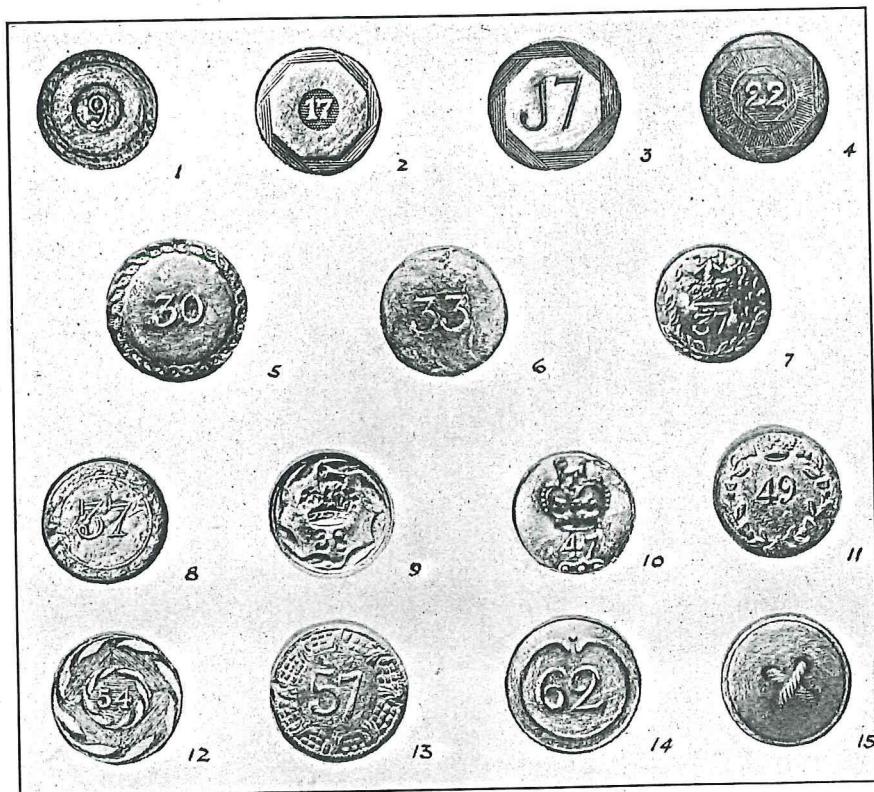


Plate X

Officers' buttons—small type—of British regiments. Specimen No. 1 is from the camp of Burgoyne's Army Somerville, Mass. No. 14 from Ticonderoga. All others from camps in New York City.

lands an original die, or matrix, in which were fabricated the officers' buttons of the 21st British Regiment, and within the die when found was the face of a button which shows every detail of the beautiful design worn by the 21st upon its officers' buttons in 1777. See plate VII. The Master-tailor of the 21st foot, upon the de-

parture of his regiment for America, took no chances in going to the wilderness, and went prepared for any eventualities. The die was probably a portion of the spoils of Burgoyne's camp, and was carried away from Saratoga by some New England soldier who afterwards abandoned it in "Camp Robinson's Farm," in the Highlands,—opposite West Point.

Reverting to decorations upon buttons we would call attention to the officers' button of the 49th, where we see a wreath of thistles

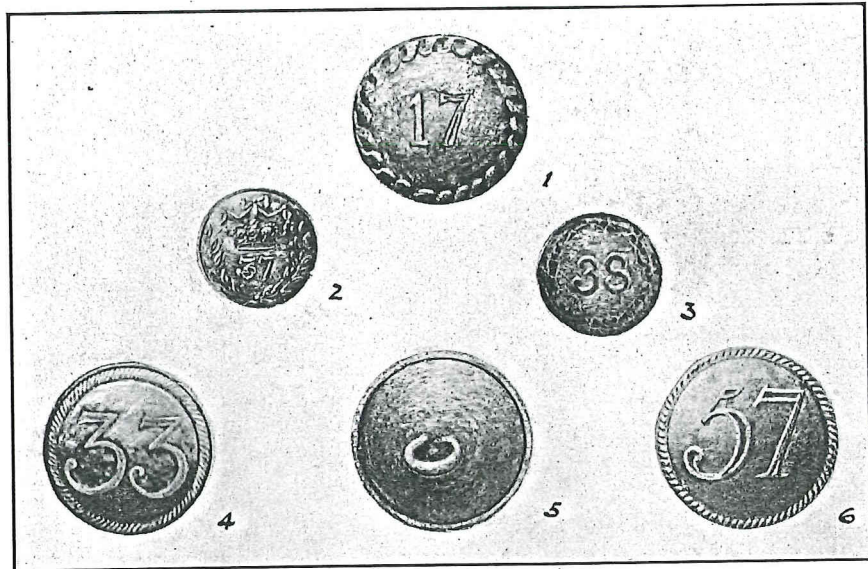


Plate XI

Rare type of two-piece, hollow, British regimental buttons. Found on Revolutionary camp sites in New York City.

upon the button of a purely English regiment. Colonel Maitland, who was of a Scottish family, when he equipped his regiment, chose the thistle design, as he had a right to do. And be it known that in those days when the Colonel raised and equipped his regiment his pay was what he could "save" on the equipment. The thistle remained upon the buttons of the 49th regiment for upwards of fifty years.

There were about fifty regular British regiments in America

during the war, and the records of the services of the various corps are borne out by the buttons as we find them in one place or another. Of the privates' buttons only two specimens have been found of regiments not in America. These are of the 32d, and of the 50th regiments, and both are from the British site at Richmond, Staten Island. The wearers of these buttons had certainly been drafted into some other regiments than their own, and this was probably due to some peculiar fitness of the candidates for special services. The 32d button is in too poor a condition for reproduction—the 50th is shown in its proper order, numerically, with the privates' buttons on plate XIV.

Privates' buttons of regiments of Burgoyne's army—such as 20th, 21st, 24th, 29th, 47th, and 62d, found within New York City camps, may be attributed to men who were temporarily absent from their regiments at the time of the surrender at Saratoga, or to prisoners of war who managed to elude their American guards and succeeded in joining Sir Henry Clinton's forces in New York.

Officers' buttons of the 9th and of the 47th regiments of Burgoyne's army have also been found in New York City. The former was found at 182d Street, west of Broadway, and the latter at Fort Richmond, Staten Island. The greater surprise, however, is the finding of buttons of such corps as the 2d and 3d Dragoons,—and the 18th Light Dragoons; all of which turned up at 201st and 211th Streets, on the west bank of the Harlem River. These regiments did not serve in America, and the officers who wore the buttons probably served with the 16th or 17th Light Dragoons; for buttons of the former three Cavalry regiments were found in company with those of the two latter regiments on camp sites along the Harlem shore. These buttons are shown on plate I, and upon the same plate is shown the officers' button of the "II Horse," found in the camp of the Burgoyne captive army at Somerville, Massachusetts. This corps, which had no service in America, was made into the "5th Dragoon Guards," in 1788.

Within the Somerville camp was found one button of an officer of the "Royal Irish Artillery." This button is shown as No. 3 on plate III, in company with larger specimen No. 2 of same corps, found on Lake Champlain. Seventy men of the "Royal Irish Artillery" served with distinction in America in 1777. The corps

was entirely distinct from the "Royal Artillery," with which it was finally amalgamated in 1801.

On plate III, specimen No. 4, is seen another type of button of "Royal Irish Artillery." This we sifted from the refuse outside the earthworks of Fort George, near the mouth of the Niagara River; and for comparison is shown specimen No. 1, on same plate, which is of the "Royal Artillery." This we found on the Niagara shore before Fort Erie. Specimen No. 1 probably belongs to a period a little later than the Revolution, for amongst the thousands of uniform buttons from the War of Independence sites no inscribed buttons of the Artillery, or any bearing a device suggestive of that branch of the service, appear.

While buttons of the Coldstream Guards, and of the 3d Guards, are fairly common on the old sites in New York City, rarely are specimens of either corps found in good condition. We were so fortunate as to secure one specimen—a small one—of an officer of the "Coldstreams," which was recovered from the camp at 192d Street, adjacent to Fort George. The design—see No. 5, plate IV—is precisely the same as upon the privates' buttons, specimens of which are shown as No. 1 and No. 2, on plate IV. The larger specimen of the Coldstream privates' button is from the ditch of the fort at Richmond, Staten Island; the smaller button is from a dug-out hut in the British camp at Prescott Avenue, Manhattan. This hut was doubtless the one referred to in the journal of an ensign of the Coldstreams, wherein that youngster tells of the sufferings of the officers before their shelter was completed in the winter of 1779-80.

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*British Army Buttons, Part II
Wm. L. Calver*

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THE PEWTER SOCIETY

THE BRITISH ARMY BUTTON IN THE
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BY WILLIAM L. CALVER

PART II

A remarkable feature of the discoveries of British regimental buttons in our Revolutionary Camps is the certainty that they will appear where ordinary camp refuse abounds. The worn-out, or out-of-style garments with their metallic buttons went to the dumps along with the worse-for-wear shoes with their fancy buckles, the damaged accoutrements with their buckles and badges, the empty rum bottles, the broken crockery, the meat-bones, and the oyster shells.

Not infrequently we have found the numbered buttons about hearths of the dugout huts where, evidently, before quitting their shelters the British soldiers had burned their infected regimentals.

Prodding the grassy hillside with our steel sounding rod we locate the ancient refuse pits, or come upon the stone fire-places of the huts. Sifting the soil, or ashes, we recover a great variety of discarded objects; but most of all we rejoice when inscribed buttons come to light. Not often are the buttons in perfect condition; but we are repaid for our exertions if we are able to decipher and place on record a tasteful eighteenth century design.

The camp at Prescott Avenue is "the green hillside within Kingsbridge," appointed as the camping place for the 2nd Battalion of the 71st Highlanders in November, 1776.

Within this camp we located, and excavated, nearly fourscore huts, and in the greater number of these we found buttons bearing regimental numbers. These buttons represent a long list of British regular regiments, as well as some few Provincial Corps.

Occasionally a dug-out hut would abound with refuse—to such an extent in fact that it was evident that after its abandonment as a domicile it had been utilized as a ready made receptacle for whatever material the soldiery wished to discard. In one such prolific hut we found about two hundred and seventy-five buttons. A few of these were officers' buttons of the 17th foot, in good con-

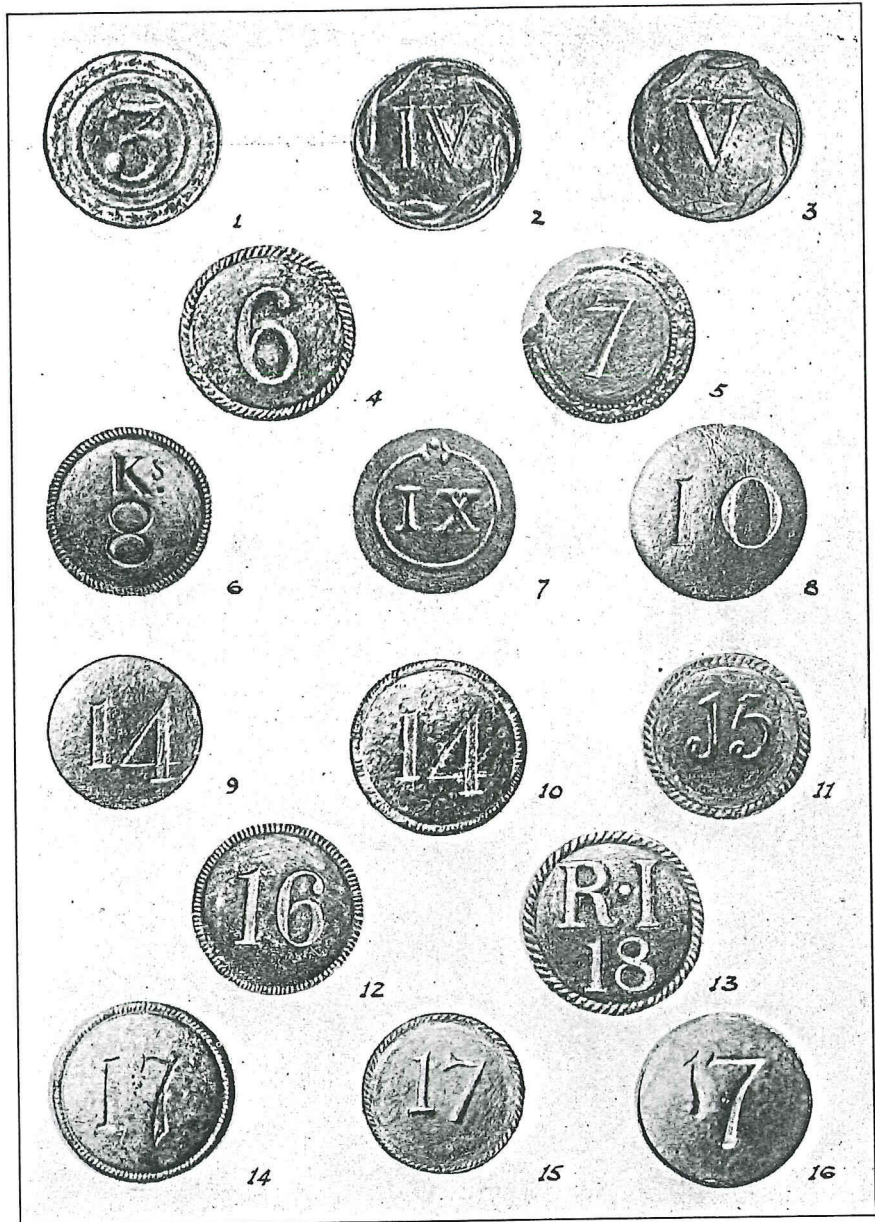


Plate XII

Private soldiers' buttons of British regiments. Specimens No. 5 and No. 11 found on Constitution Island, Hudson River, at West Point. No. 6 and No. 13 found at Fort Erie. No. 7 found at Saratoga. The others found in camps in New York City.

dition, but the greater number were private soldiers' buttons in the last stages of decay.

In a view of the north end of "York Island" made by Von Krafft, a young Hessian officer, in 1779, several hut camps are shown. The camp at Prescott Avenue is designated "Camp of the 17th Regiment"; and while it is evident, from the great number of 17th buttons found that this corps was stationed for a considerable period upon the ground, many other regiments resorted to the camp and left their buttons there. Buttons of the 57th regiment abound at Prescott Avenue, and as this regiment spent much time "under canvas" in New York its buttons are found in every important camp hereabouts.

The 71st regiment we have already referred to as being at the 17th camp. Many 71st privates' buttons have been sifted out of the soil at Prescott Avenue—yet few specimens come out in good condition. One officer's button of the 71st was found and it is shown on plate IX.

Conspicuous among the finds made at Prescott Ave. were a dozen buttons of the 52nd regiment, which had been strung on a cord and had fallen in a cluster beside the most northerly hearth along the avenue. The iron shanks of these buttons, as aligned by the cord, had rusted together and are shown as found in plate XIX.

Other finds of special interest made in the 17th regiment camp are the privates' buttons of the 27th regiment showing thus early the Castle, and bearing the familiar name "Enniskillen"; and officers' buttons of the marines,—see No. 2 and No. 5, plate XX. Lack of space forbids our setting forth in detail all the button finds made in the 17th Camp, as it does also our finds in other important camps; but we purpose publishing a table which will show at a glance the several old camps and the regimental buttons they have yielded.

Thirty years ago, and up until quite a recent date, the camp site at Fort George yielded many British buttons. They came to light from time to time in a truck garden at the junction of the present Audubon Avenue, and 192nd street. After the site was abandoned by the gardener, about eight years ago, the writer and several of his friends operated there and discovered that below the plowline there still remained much undisturbed refuse of the



Plate XIII

Private soldiers' buttons of British regiments. Specimens No. 1, No. 6, and No. 10 found at Somerville, Mass. No. 2 and No. 12 found at Fort Erie. All other specimens found in camps in New York City.

Fort George Camp. Many buttons were recovered, but owing to the dampness of the soil, as well as to the action of fertilizers used in tillage of the ground, very few specimens were found to be in even a fair condition. We secured, however, the fine example of the 63rd private shown as No. 11, on plate XV. There were found also at that time very poor specimens of buttons of the 23rd—the “Royal Welsh Fusiliers,” such as is shown as No. 16, on plate XVII. The photograph was made from a button of a later period, but the old die, apparently, remained in use for the space of forty years or more.

About twenty years ago there were found at Fort Tryon, along Fort Washington Avenue, very fine specimens of privates' buttons of the 17th; the 57th; and the 74th regiments, see No. 14, plate XII; No. 5, plate XX; and No. 2, plate XVI.

All of the buttons shown on plate XVI are of Scottish regiments raised in 1775, '76, and '77. The first three are of “Highland” regiments and were known as “Frasers”; “Argyle”; and “Macdonalds”; respectively. Specimens No. 4 and No. 5, plate XVI, are of the “Royal Edinburgh Volunteers,” No. 6, plate XVI is of 82nd regiment which we find mentioned as the “Edinburgh Regiment.” No. 7 on the same plate is of the 84th regiment known originally as the “Royal Highland Emigrants.” This corps was raised in 1775, apparently in Canada and Nova Scotia, and to some extent possibly in the state of New York. It received its numerical title, the “84th,” in 1778, and Sir Henry Clinton was appointed its Colonel in Chief. The first six buttons on plate XVI were found in camps on Manhattan Island. Specimen No. 7—that of the 84th regiment, was found on Carleton's Island; as was also No. 8 which is supposed to be of the above corps. The smaller button of the 84th shown as No. 26, on plate XVIII, was found at Fort George on the Niagara River.

British regimental buttons are found associated with American uniform buttons on the various Revolutionary sites at West Point or in its immediate vicinity. On Constitution Island there came to light buttons of the 7th; 16th; 40th; and 59th, regiments; while at the West Point redoubts there were recovered specimens of the 15th; 20th; 28th; 35th; 44th; 49th; and 60th regiments. These were all private soldiers' buttons; but at Redoubt No. 4

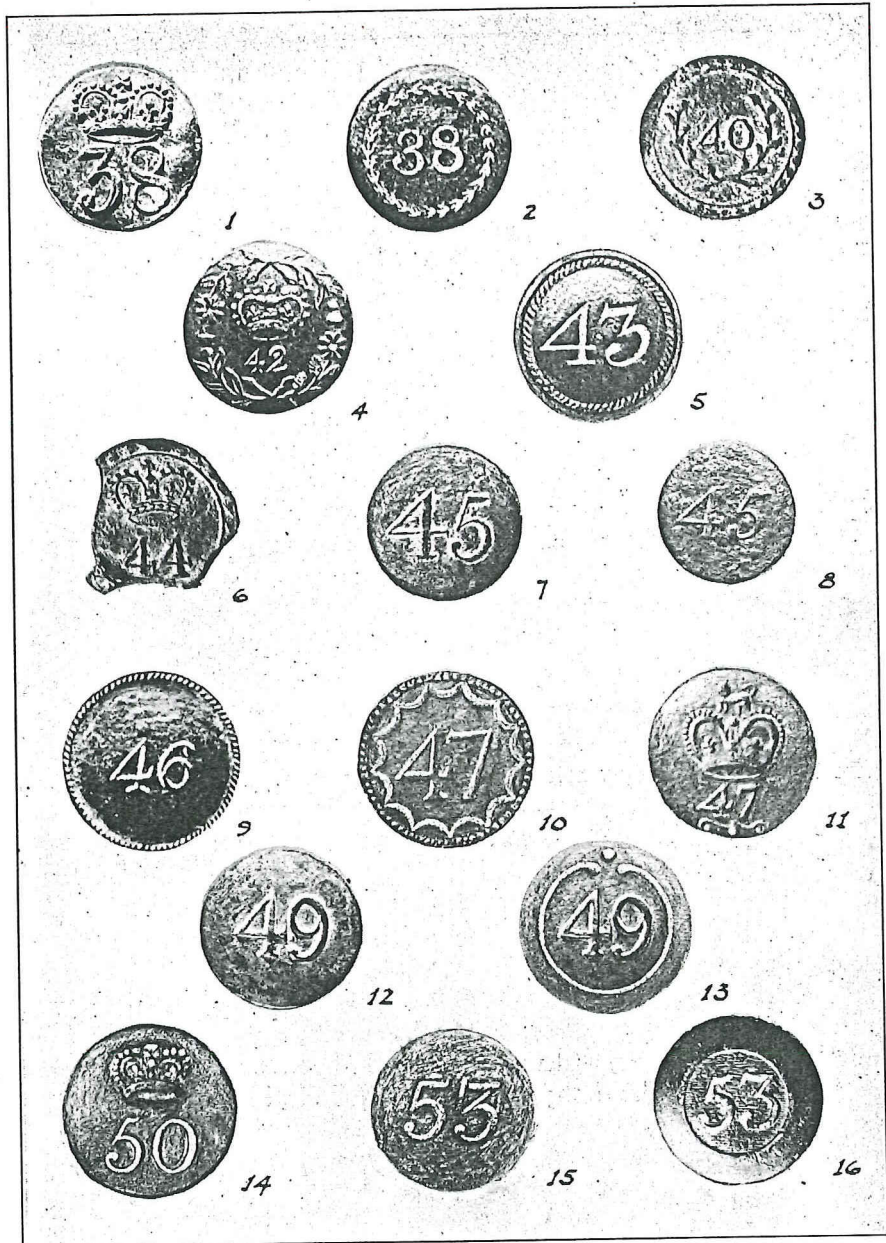


Plate XIV

Private soldiers' buttons of British regiments. Specimen No. 15 found at Saratoga. No. 16 found at Fort Erie. All other specimens found in camps in New York City.

two remarkable finds were made, consisting of leaden copies—evidently of American manufacture—of the officers' buttons of the 57th and 64th British regiments. Mention is made of British prisoners at West Point in 1778, but it is not improbable that destitute New England troops wore captured British uniforms—even undyed, and with the original buttons upon them.

Naturally along the route of Burgoyne's Army various regimental buttons turn up, yet Burgoyne's forces are well represented in the buttons from Fort Erie where detachments were probably stationed, and thereby escaped the fate of the main army. In the year 1902 an important discovery of British buttons was made at Somerville, Mass., by Mr. George O. W. Servis, the city engineer, while engaged in grading Prospect Hill Park, where the "Convention troops" had remained in camp in Massachusetts until November, 1778, when they began their long jaunt southward, arriving at Charlottesville, Virginia early in the following year. Mr. Servis' finds have a value in fixing the date of British buttons of like numbers and designs found on other sites. At Somerville, Mr. Servis secured officers' buttons of the II Horse; of the 6th, and the 20th foot, as well as the "Royal Irish Artillery." Of privates' buttons from Somerville we note specimens of the 9th, 20th, 24th; 31st, and 53rd regiments. During the summer of 1910 we found the numbered buttons of a dozen regiments at Kingsbridge, within the British Military work known as "Fort No. 4." This work was demolished by the British September 18th, 1779. The buttons were all found within the quadrangular earthwork and were of the following regiments: 4th, 10th, 17th, 24th, 26th, 28th, 44th, 52nd, 54th, 57th, 64th, and 71st, and the designs on these specimens were such as are shown on the regimental buttons on plates XVII and XVIII.

Throughout the field seasons of 1909, '10, '11 and '12 the writer and his friends operated along the line of Bennett Avenue, just north of 181st Street, and within the area between Bennett Avenue and Broadway, where there had been a dumping place for refuse from a barracks, or the hut camp, at Fort Washington. Much of the ground on the westerly side of Broadway at that point was low, and at all times the soil was wet; consequently few of the many buttons recovered were well preserved. These were, however,

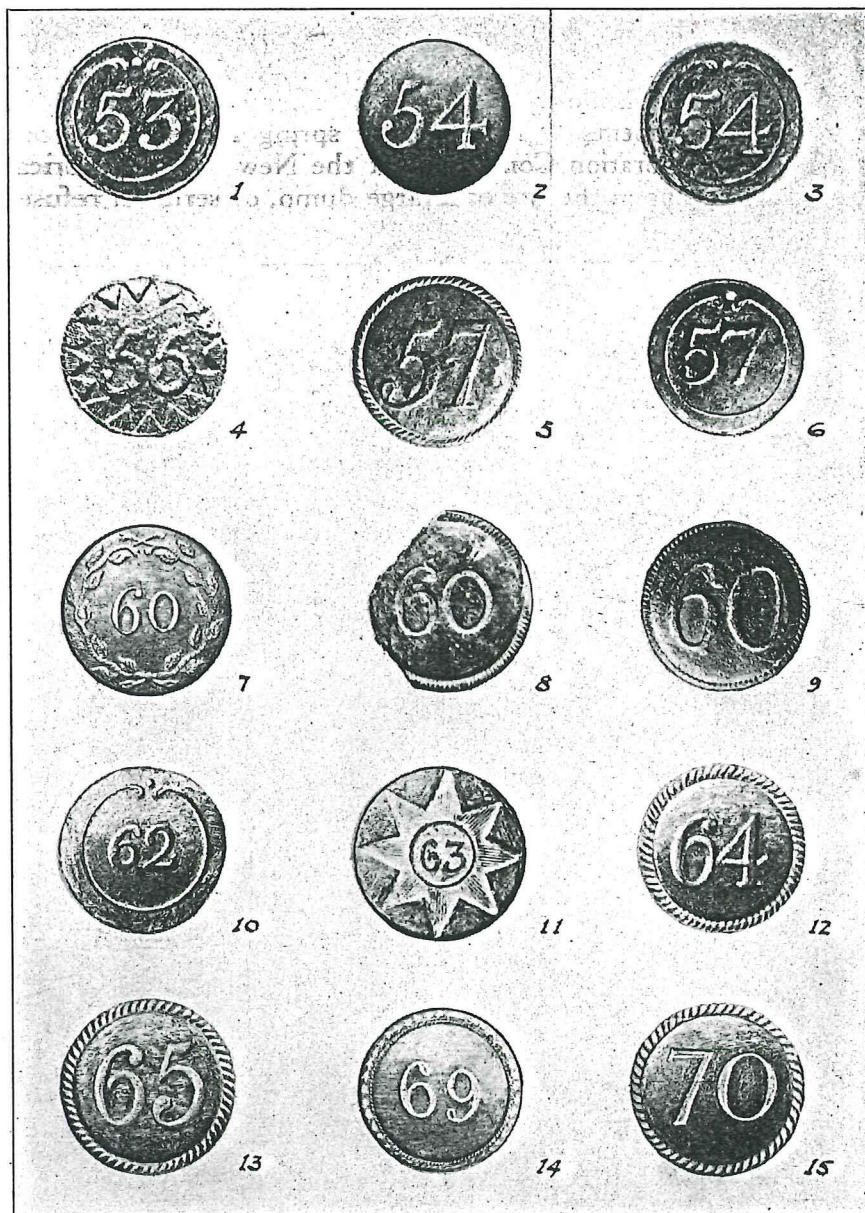


Plate XV

Private soldiers' buttons of British regiments. Specimen No. 7 found at West Point; and similar specimens were found at Fort Erie. No. 8 from Ticonderoga. No. 9 and No. 13 from Fort Erie. No. 14 found in ruins of the North Dutch Church, demolished, 1876, William Street, corner of Fulton and Ann Streets. All the other specimens found in camps in New York City.

amongst the lot some very interesting specimens—such for instance as the officers' of the 9th, 33rd, 38th, 45th, and 57th regiments; and very good specimens of privates' buttons of the 28th, 45th, and 82nd regiments. Through the spring and summer of 1922 the Field Exploration Committee of the New York Historical Society labored upon the site of a large dump, or series of refuse pits,

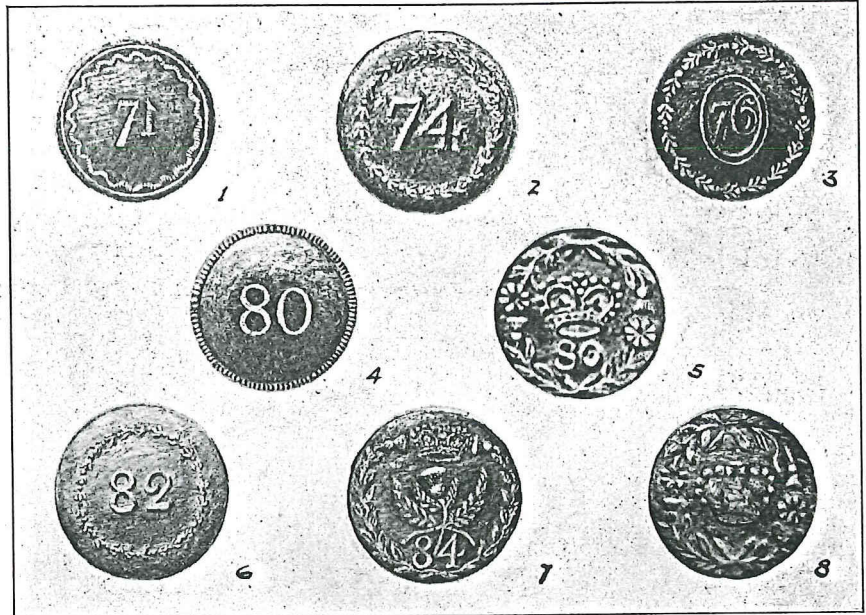


Plate XVI

Private soldiers' buttons of Scottish regiments. Specimens No. 7 and No. 8 from Carleton's Island. All other specimens found in camps in New York City.

at Pinehurst Ave. and 183rd street, where these streets were being graded west of Fort Washington Avenue, and quite near to the original lines of the fort. In the course of the season about five hundred buttons were recovered. These were representative of fifteen British regiments, which had apparently manned Fort Washington after its capture in 1776, and down to the final evacuation in 1781. The officers' buttons found at this point were of the



Plate XVII

Private soldiers' buttons of British regiments. Specimens No. 3, No. 11, No. 22, No. 23, and No. 25 from Fort Erie. No. 4 and No. 12 from camp of Burgoyne's Army, at Somerville, Mass. All the other specimens from British camp in New York City.



Plate XVIII

Private soldiers' buttons (small type) of British regiments. Specimen No. 26 found at Fort George, Niagara River. No. 28 shows back of private soldiers' buttons. With exception of No. 26 all specimens were found in camps in the city of New York.

30th, 38th, 49th, and 57th regiments. The private soldiers' buttons were of regiments enumerated in the footnote on this page.

A great mass of material, military and otherwise, was found during the season of 1922 at Fort Washington; and while it all has historical value the keener interest centers around the inscribed buttons as picturing the personnel of the fort during its long occupancy by the enemy.

Working through several seasons, in recent years, along the hillside near the British fort at Richmond, Staten Island, the members of the Field Exploration Committee uncovered an extensive deposit of refuse from the British camp which had existed as an adjunct to the fort. From the point of view of the button seekers

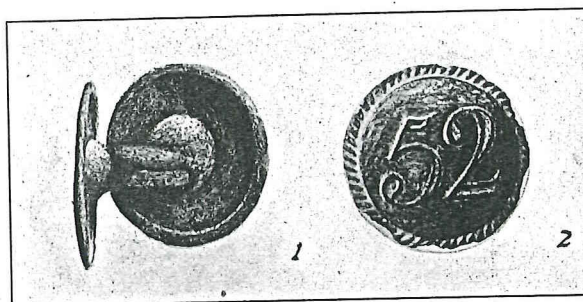


Plate XIX

Twelve private soldiers' buttons which had been strung upon a cord, and fallen beside the hearth, were found in a dugout hut in the British camp at Prescott Avenue. The iron shanks of the buttons as aligned by the cord had rusted together as shown in figure No. 1. The buttons pertain to the 52nd regiment of foot.

the site was ideal,—in its seclusion, but the natural conditions rendered digging operations extremely difficult at times. At some points there were briars, at others brush, while everywhere there was poison ivy. Probably upwards of fifteen hundred buttons were recovered at Richmond in the course of our work, yet only a few hundred had well survived their long burial. Some chemical properties of the woodland soil had proved fatal to the pewter buttons; but the officers' buttons, such as were found, had not suffered

NOTE.—Privates' buttons from Fort Washington: 17th, 22nd, 26th, 33rd, 38th, 42nd, 46th, 47th, 52nd, 57th, 64th, 74th, 80th regiments—and of the marines.

greatly. The long list of privates' buttons from Richmond are shown in the footnote. The officers' buttons recovered were of the 22nd, 33rd, 37th, 46th, and 47th regiments.

In this record of buttons found additional space can only be spared for portrayal of the specimens themselves. We cannot treat at all on the services of the various corps represented in our finds. A glance at the plates reveals some famous regiments—their names are household words. Other corps though conspicuous in

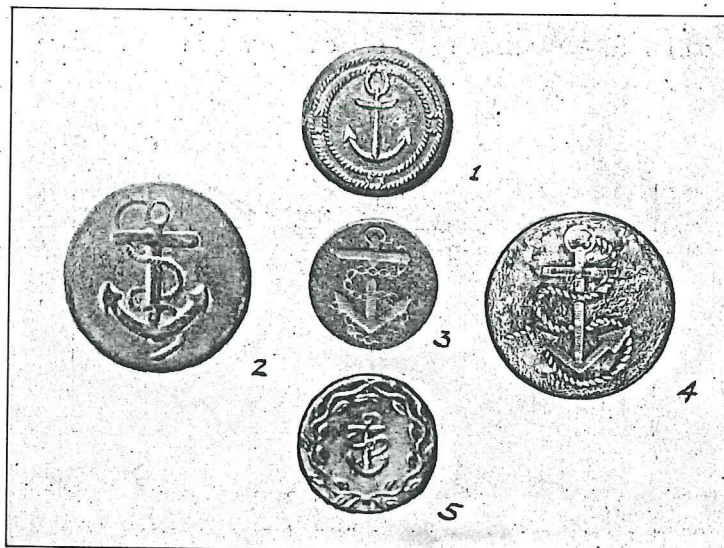


Plate XX

British marine officers' buttons. Specimens No. 1 and No. 3 found in the British camp at Richmond, Staten Island. No. 2 and No. 5 found in the British camp at Prescott Avenue. No. 4 from Carleton's Island.

their day are now quite forgotten. We might truly say, perhaps, that the buttons are the last tangible reminders of their one-time existence.

Happily no confusion arises as to the identity of our specimens, where American, and British, French, or Hessian, soldiery were in

NOTE.—Privates' buttons found at the British fort at Richmond, Staten Island: The Coldstream Guards; 3rd Guards; and the following regiments of foot: 5th, 15th, 17th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 32nd, 33rd, 37th, 40th, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 49th, 50th, 52nd, 55th, 57th, 62nd, 64th, and 71st.

such close touch with each other. The British type is distinct from all others; the American buttons are easily distinguished by their crudeness; the Hessian buttons bore no numbers or inscriptions of any sort, while the French at no time occupied the grounds which yield our specimens. Nor were the sites on which we operate occupied by troops at any time previous to, or subsequent to, the Revolution. A final word as to means of ascribing dates to old buttons of the British army—and that is by makers' names. No makers' names appeared upon the backs of the buttons until about the close of the 18th century. After that the practice became quite universal.



Plate XXI

Pewter buttons of British marines. Buttons of this type are found in the several British camps in New York City.

We have dwelt at some length on the sources from which these buttons were derived; for none but the most careless—we take it—would ignore their *provenance* in the presentation of such an accumulation as we submit herewith. To possess such a collection as our society is able to display is something, but to have the “story” of every individual specimen is of inestimable importance.

The average reader of this paper will probably regard the display of specimens only as historical mementoes, valuable as establishing the presence of this or that regiment here, or there, or as tangible proofs that certain corps had a real existence. To the student of eighteenth century military equipment our finds will prove of interest from several points of view, while by the present members of the older British military organizations these little souvenirs will doubtless be regarded as “a joy forever.”

In this exhibit we have seen fit to include the buttons of the marines, found in the Revolutionary camps. Such specimens are not plentiful; each of the important camps mentioned have contributed only a specimen or two. Plate XX shows the officers' buttons of the Marines; and dealing with No. 1 on this plate we would call attention to the fact that while the design upon this specimen is almost identical with that upon specimen No. 19, on plate IV of Captain Bottet's work on the French buttons, there is a variation in the anchor which establishes our button as being of British origin. The specimen in question is from the camp at Richmond, Staten Island; and from the same camp came speci-



Plate XXII

Officer's button of the 48th regiment, found at Elizabeth, N. J.

men No. 3, on plate XX. This type is unique in having a fouled anchor with chain, instead of the familiar rope cable. We would add also that No. 3 is a flat, one piece, solid, bronze button, while the other specimens have bone backs like the officers' buttons of the army.

The reader will note that the cable border was a favorite decoration on private soldiers' buttons, and that it appears only upon the officer's button of the 45th regiment. So too, while the broken circle is common upon the privates' button it occurs in one instance only upon the officers'—note No. 14, on plate X. The broken circle came into use with the French in 1762, and was employed on the French buttons—in one form or another for a long period. By the British it was used in some instances down until 1881, or so long as numbered buttons were worn by the army.