DAACS Cataloging Manual: Buckles

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Introduction

This section is based largely on the following dissertation:

2002   White, Carolyn L. *Constructing Identities: Personal Adornment from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1680-1820*. Ph.D. dissertation. Boston University. "Identification Guide for Clothing Fasteners," pp. 185-241.

1. Main Buckle Table

1.1 Artifact Count

Do **not** batch buckles.

1.2 Buckle Type

Note: The following descriptions are summarized from White 2002. She often mentions "chape form" – she is referring to the combination of buckle pin, hook, and tongue. DAACS is not using the term "chape" – pins, hooks, and tongues should be cataloged as individual elements. The next section contains more detailed cataloging information.

- **Knee**

  Knee buckles were used to hold the breeches in place below or above the knee and to hold up the stockings. Knee buckles are generally much smaller than shoe buckles and are not convexly curved the way shoe buckles usually are. On knee buckles, the pin is between the short sides of the frame so the buckle can be oriented vertically. Knee buckles are often square or oval in shape. They are usually not as elaborately decorated as shoe buckles often are, although knee buckles and shoe buckles were occasionally made in matching sets. The chape form of knee buckles is also distinctive (see White 2002:222).
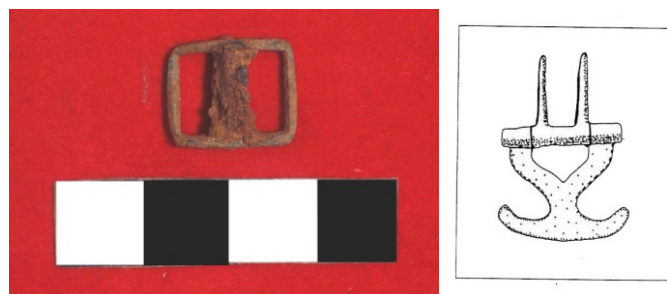

Figure 1: Knee Buckles
Drawing source: White 2002, Fig. 6.12, p.226

- **Shoe**

  Shoe buckles are one of the most common type of buckles seen on archaeological sites in America. They are usually rectangular and curved to fit the top of the foot, although shoe buckles can be seen in a variety of shapes and sizes. A wide range of decorative techniques, including stamping, casting, and engraving, was also used to embellish shoe buckles. Also, be sure to identify the shape of the buckle's chape in the Buckle Form table, as various chape forms can have chronological significance in the dating of shoe buckles (see White 2002:219). The chapes pictured in the Hook section are shoe buckle chapes.

Figure 2: Shoe Buckle

- **Spur**

  Spur buckles (sometimes referred to as 17th-century belt buckles) usually have double-looped, trapezoidal frames, although occasionally one sees rectangular or D-shaped frames. Spur buckles are sometimes decorated with elaborate rosette or floral patterns, and often have hook attachments for spurs.
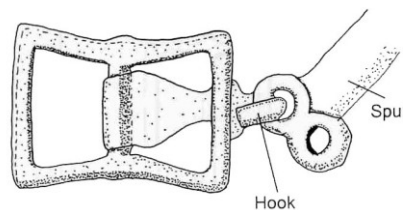

Figure 3: Spur Buckle
Drawing source: White 2002, Fig. 6.20, p. 237

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- **Stock**

  The stock was a cloth that wrapped around the neck and was buckled in the back. Stock buckles were made from a variety of materials including silver and plated copper or tin alloys. They were often elaborately decorated, including designs set with gems or pastes. The frame is usually rectangular or oblong, with the pin attached between the shorter sides of the frame. The chape usually has a hook with three or four studs, and its tongue usually has three or four prongs.
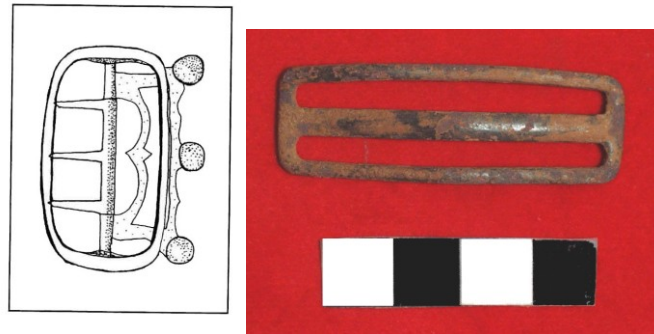

Figure 4: Stock Buckles
Drawing source: White 2002, Fig. 6.14, p.229

- **Unidentifiable**

  Use "Unidentifiable" for any buckle that cannot be identified as either "Unid: Harness/Utilitarian" or "Unid: Clothing."

- **Unid: Harness/Utilitarian**

  The term "Unid: Harness/Utilitarian" has been created for buckles that can be identified as harness or utilitarian buckles, but for which further identification is impossible. Harness and utilitarian buckles are usually larger and sturdier than most clothing buckles. They are almost always undecorated.

Figure 5: Unid/Utilitarian Buckle

- **Unid: Clothing**

  The term "Unid: Clothing" has been created for buckles that can be identified as clothing buckles, but for which further identification is impossible. This category also subsumes several different specific types of buckles, including hat buckles, belt buckles, baldric buckles, and some cinch buckles. These types of buckles are easily confused and difficult to identify; therefore, a buckle from any one of these types should simply be cataloged as "Unid: Clothing." If you are completely sure that you have, for example, a belt buckle, Buckle Type should still be "Unid: Clothing," but describe the buckle as a belt buckle in the Notes.

- **Overall Buckles**

  These should be cataloged in the **GENERAL ARTIFACTS** table. Form should be "Overall, fastener."

1.3 Completeness

Choose either "Complete" or "Incomplete."

1.4 Buckle Frame Plating

The default for this field is "None." If a buckle is plated, choose "Gilt," "Silver," or "Tin".
You do not need to add gilding into the Decoration Tab (unlike with buttons).
If you cannot tell if the buckle is plated, choose "Unidentifiable."

1.5 Object Weight

Weigh the buckle. This measurement should be in grams, to the nearest tenth.

1.6 Burned?

Choose "Yes" or "No." The default is "No." Ignore the "N/A" option.

1.7 Mended?

Choose "Yes" or "No." The default is "No." Ignore the "N/A" option.

1.8 Post-Manufacturing Modification

Choose "Yes" or "No." The default is "No." Ignore the "N/A" option.

Post-Manufacturing Modification is a field seen in all of the different artifact categories. Use this field when an artifact appears to have been physically modified in order to change its original function.

Catalog the object as it would be cataloged in its original form. Enter Yes under *Post-Manufacturing Modification*, and describe in the notes how the object has been modified.

1.9 Conservation

The default is "No Conservation." If a buckle has been conserved, enter "Yes" into this field and describe the conservation in the *Notes* field.

1.10 Marks?

The default for this field is "None." If there is a mark, enter into this field exactly what appears on the buckle. If there is a non-letter mark on the buckle, describe this in the *Notes* field.

2. Buckle Form Table

The Buckle Form table is used to describe the various elements or parts that make up the buckle. The Buckle Form table consists of the following fields:

- *Buckle Part*
- *Element Type*
- *Material*
- *Buckle Length*
- *Manufacturing Technique*
- *Buckle Width*
- *Shape*
- *Pin, Center Point Measure*

Note: The **Buckle Form** tab should always be filled out, no matter how incomplete a buckle you may have.

Since many of the selections made in the **Buckle Form** fields are interrelated and dependent on the buckle part being described it is most logical to describe the function of the **Buckle Form** table on the basis of buckle parts:
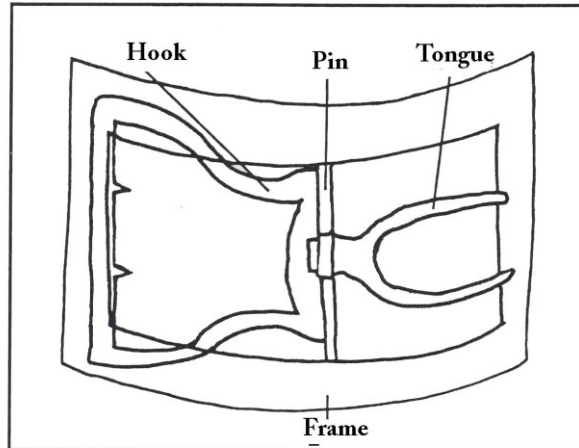
Figure 6: Buckle Parts
Drawing source: White 2002, Fig. 6.2, p. 188

Enter a separate line for each of the following buckle elements (if present):

2.1 Frames

Frames are the buckle parts most often recovered on archaeological sites. Always enter a frame into the Buckle Form tab, even if you can't determine the buckle's shape or measurements.
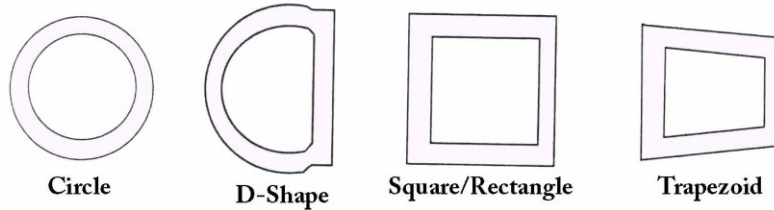
*Buckle Part***:**   "Frame"
 *Material***:**   "Copper Alloy", "Gold", "Iron", "Pewter", "Silver", "Steel", "Missing", "Unidentifiable"

Note*:* Many buckle frames were made from a material known as "pinchbeck." This is an alloy made from four parts copper to one part zinc. Pinchbeck frames should be cataloged into DAACS as Copper Alloy.

*Manufacturing Technique***:**   "Cast", "Forged", "Stamped", "Unidentifiable"
 *Shape***:**   "Circle", "D-Shape", "Oval"," Trapezoid"," Square/Rectangle", "Unid: Angular". (See Figure 7)

Note*:* Use "Unid: Angular", if you can't tell, for example, whether a buckle is square/rectangular or trapezoidal.

Single-Framed:

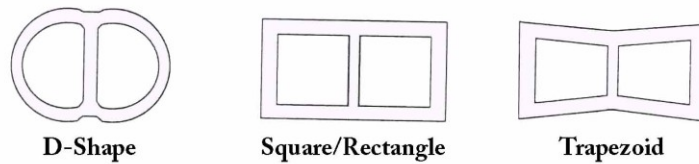Circle D-Shape Square/Rectangle Trapezoid

Double-Framed:

D-Shape Square/Rectangle Trapezoid

Figure 7: Frames shapes
(Not Pictured: Oval)

Image adapted from White 2002, Fig. 6.3

*Element Type***:**   Choose either "Single Framed" or "Double Framed." (See Figure 7)

*Buckle Length / Buckle Width***:**   For buckle frames, any complete measurement should be taken. Thus, the frame length could be recorded even if the frame width is incomplete.

Pin, Center Point Measure: DAACS measures the distance from where the pin intersects the frame to the outside edge of the buckle. You can still take these measurements even when the pin itself is missing, as long as you have a pin terminal and at least one outside edge intact.

Note: Leave this area blank if there is no pin terminal or if the buckle has a Type 5 pin terminal (where the pin serves as one side of the frame).

2.2 Hooks

The hook, often referred to as the *roll*, is a moveable part attached to the pin. It serves to secure the leather or strap to the buckle. Hook shapes are often used to identify specific buckle types. For example, the above buckle type descriptions often refer to specific "chape forms" – in DAACS, this generally refers to the hook shape.
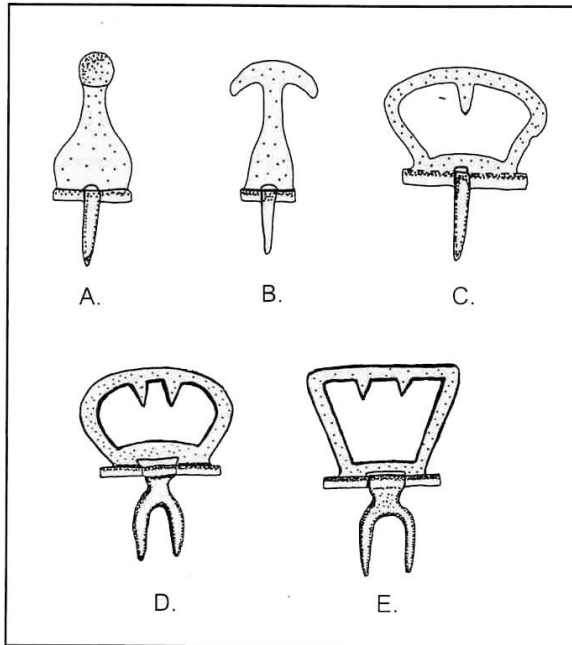
Part: "Hook"

| *Material:* | "Copper Alloy", "Gold", "Iron", "Pewter", "Silver", "Steel", "Missing", "Unidentifiable" |

Manufacturing
Technique: "Cast", "Forged", "Stamped", "Unidentifiable"

Shape: Using the examples in Figure 8, select one of the following hook shapes "Anchor", "Stud", "Loop".

A. "Stud" hook shape with single-pronged tongue.

B. "Anchor" hook shape with single-pronged tongue.

C. "Loop" hook shape with single-pronged tongue.

D and **E.** "Loop" hook shapes with double-pronged tongues.

Figure 8: Hook Shapes
Image source: White 2002, Fig. 6.9, p. 219

NOTE: The hook shapes pictured above are all from shoe buckles.

Element Type: "Not Applicable"
*Buckle Length / Buckle Width***:** For buckle hooks, any complete measurement should be taken. Thus, the hook width could be recorded even if the hook length is incomplete.
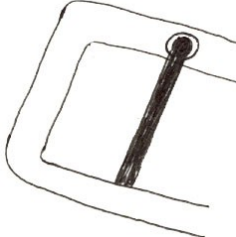
2.3 Pins

The pin can be either moveable or cast as part of the frame. It anchors the hook and the tongue to the rest of the frame.

Note that the center part of a double-framed buckle should be cataloged as a pin. Also, the pin and the tongue are occasionally cast together as one piece. In this case, enter the appropriate data separately under Pin and Tongue, but indicate in the Notes that they have been cast as one piece.

Note: Include the pin in the Buckle Information table even if the pin is missing, as one can still determine the pin terminal type for a missing pin. This is the only buckle part for which this protocol applies.

Part:	"Pin"
Material:	"Copper Alloy", "Gold", "Iron", "Pewter", "Silver", "Steel", "Missing", "Unidentifiable"
Manufacturing Technique:	"Cast", "Forged", or "Unidentifiable"
Shape:	"Type 1, Type 2, Type 3, Type 4, or Type 5 Pin Terminal" (See Figure 9)

Figure 9: Pin Terminals

Type 1 Pin Terminal The protruding lobe into which the hole for the pin is drilled is the width of the entire frame (White 2002:189)	 Image source: White 2002: Fig. 6.4
Type 2 Pin Terminal The protruding lobe into which the hole for the pin is drilled is only a thin piece of metal flush with the outside edge of the frame (White 2002:189)	 Image source: White 2002: Fig. 6.4
Type 3 Pin Terminal See image.	
Type 4 Pin Terminal On double-framed buckles, the pin is cast as part of the frame	

Type 5 Pin Terminal On single-framed buckles (usually square/rectangular), the pin also serves as one side of the frame. Primarily seen on utilitarian/harness buckles.	
Type 6 Pin Terminal The pin is welded onto the frame. Pictured here is a copper alloy frame with an iron pin welded onto its backside.	

Element Type: This field records the relationship of the pin to the frame. Note if it is oriented along the "long axis" (the pinhole is located on the long side of the buckle), the "short axis" (the pinhole is located on the short side of the buckle) or whether it is "equidistant" (in the middle of a square frame).

NOTE: Even if a pin is missing, you might be able to tell the pin's orientation. You can also determine pin length for missing pins as long as you have both pin terminals. The following is an example of how to catalog a missing pin:

Buckle Element	Material	Manufacturing Technique	Shape	Element Type	Element Length	Element Width
Pin	Missing	Unidentifiable	Type 1 Pin Terminal	Equidistant	20	
Frame	Iron	Forged	Square	Single Framed	20	20

Buckle Length / Buckle Width: As mentioned above, you can take pin length measurements as long as you have both pin terminals (or a complete pin). Of course, the pin must be present to take width measurements. In the Notes, remember to enter distance measurements from the pin terminals to the outside edge of the frame.

Pin, Center Point Measure: DAACS measures the distance from where the pin intersects the frame to the outside edge of the buckle. You can still take these measurements even when the pin

itself is missing, as long as you have a pin terminal and at least one outside edge intact.

Note: Leave this area blank if there is no pin terminal or if the buckle has a Type 5 pin terminal (where the pin serves as one side of the frame).

2.4   Tongues

The tongue is the prong that secures a loose strap end to the buckle. Earlier buckles had single-pronged tongues, while most 18th-century and later buckles have double-pronged tongues. Occasionally one sees nicks cut into the frame where the tongue prongs lie (these do not need to be noted in DAACS).

Part:	"Tongue"
Material:	"Copper Alloy", "Gold", "Iron", "Pewter", "Silver", "Steel", "Missing", "Unidentifiable"
Manufacturing Technique:	"Cast" or "Forged"
Shape:	"Straight"
Element Type:	"Single Prong" or "Double Prong" (see Figure 8).
Buckle Length / Buckle Width:	For buckle tongues, any complete measurement should be taken. Thus, the tongue width could be recorded even if the tongue length is incomplete.

3. Buckle Decoration Table

The Buckle Decoration table should be filled out for any type of decorative technique seen on the buckle. Buckles with decoration should always be imaged.

3.1 Decorative Technique

Choose from the following list:
- Cast/Molded
- Enameled
- Engraved
- Jewel/Inlay
- Stamped

3.2 Decorative Motif

Using the drop-down list, select the appropriate decorative motif. Options are:

- Beaded
- Foliate

- Geometric
- Lettering

- Military Emblem
- Notched and Grooved
- Openwork
- Ornamental Grooves

- Ribbed
- Scrolls
- Unidentifiable

Where necessary a more detailed description can be included in the notes field.