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A REVIEW OF THE JORDAN SISTERS COLLECTION HISTORIC ST. LUKE'S CHURCH ISLE OF WIGHT COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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On August 14, 2008 the staff of *Archaeological & Cultural Solutions, Inc. (ACS)* briefly reviewed the contents of the Jordan Sisters Collection, for gratis, on the occasion of a visit to finalize plans for the re-interment of human remains and their associated artifacts, recovered during the July 2007 archaeological excavations off the northwest corner of St. Luke's Church (Outlaw *et al.* 2008). The review of the Jordan Sisters Collection allowed comparisons to be made between artifacts systematically excavated in the archaeological investigations and material casually collected by Sarah Elizabeth Jordan, Ella Imogene Jordan, and Susan Dawley Jordan when the church was restored in the 1950s.

The collection was stored in miscellaneous, variously labeled, containers such as cardboard boxes, paper bags, envelopes, and cups. *ACS* sorted the window glass chronologically by century (17th-19th c.), then temporarily re-bagged this and other materials with their original labels for storage until acid-free packaging can be obtained.

Most of the material is architectural, and consists primarily of window glass, but also includes nails and turned lead fragments, as well as mortar, concrete, and brick fragments. Two molded ornamental bricks of different shapes made to surround windows also are included. Hardware from the pews and a nineteenth century coffin handle, are present. Further, the collection contains solarized glass (1880-1916), Native American pottery, and a Kirk Corner Notched projectile point from the Early Archaic Period (7,500 BC-6,900 BC).

In general, the Jordan Sisters Collection mirrors material collected from the recent archaeological investigations by *ACS*, including the three different types of window glass, as well as wrought and cut nails. By far the most informative object type was the turned lead found in an envelope labeled "Jordan Sisters interior of church found June 1955." Although a very small fragment of turned lead (window came) was found during the 2007 archaeological work outside the church, the Jordan Sisters Collection, all from the interior of the church, contains three separate larger segments, and two segments, and two attached segments that once held the corner of a glass window pane (see Figure 1). Given their greatly fragility, continuing deterioration, and importance, these early artifacts were cleaned and stabilized by *ACS*. It was during this process that the

following embossed inscription was found in the channel of two of the joined pieces:
·W·M·1685·R·D· (see Figure 2).

Although the names matching these master and journeyman or vice-maker and glazier initials (WM and RD) are unknown, this evidence indicates that these St. Luke's casement windows were made no earlier than 1685 (Egan *et al.* 1986:307). Interestingly, one of the English Glazier's charters was dated 1685, showing a continuing concern for "quality control" in the craft, perhaps expressed by the identification of who was specifically responsible for their production by way of marks, as in other crafts. The leads are probably the same age as the small, undated fragment discovered by ACS in the drainage trench in 2007. Fortuitously, the dated fragment is nearly the same length as the side of a complete window pane recently discovered at the Nicholas Spencer archaeological house site at Hotwater, in James City County, where the Governor's Council met in 1683 (see Figure 3). This diamond-shaped glass window pane is 6" high and 4-1/10" wide, and provides a possible restoration parallel for St. Luke's.

These dated window leads suggest that the extant brick church may have replaced an earlier, perhaps wooden one, on the one-acre donation of land by Michael Fulgham to the Lower Parish of Isle of Wight County in 1683, where it now stands (King 1993:303). It may have been constructed with required substantial funds from Joseph Bridger's large estate around the time he died, in 1686. This situation would not be uncommon, as the first four churches at the capital of Jamestown were not all constructed of brick and their building footprints were in the same general location as the surviving 17th century brick tower. Further, it is typical in Europe to find that earlier versions of churches lie below surviving examples.

In sum, this very significant dated find adds to the many important contributions the Jordan sisters have made to the preservation of this church and its history. St. Luke's remains Virginia's oldest surviving church (Upton 1997:59).

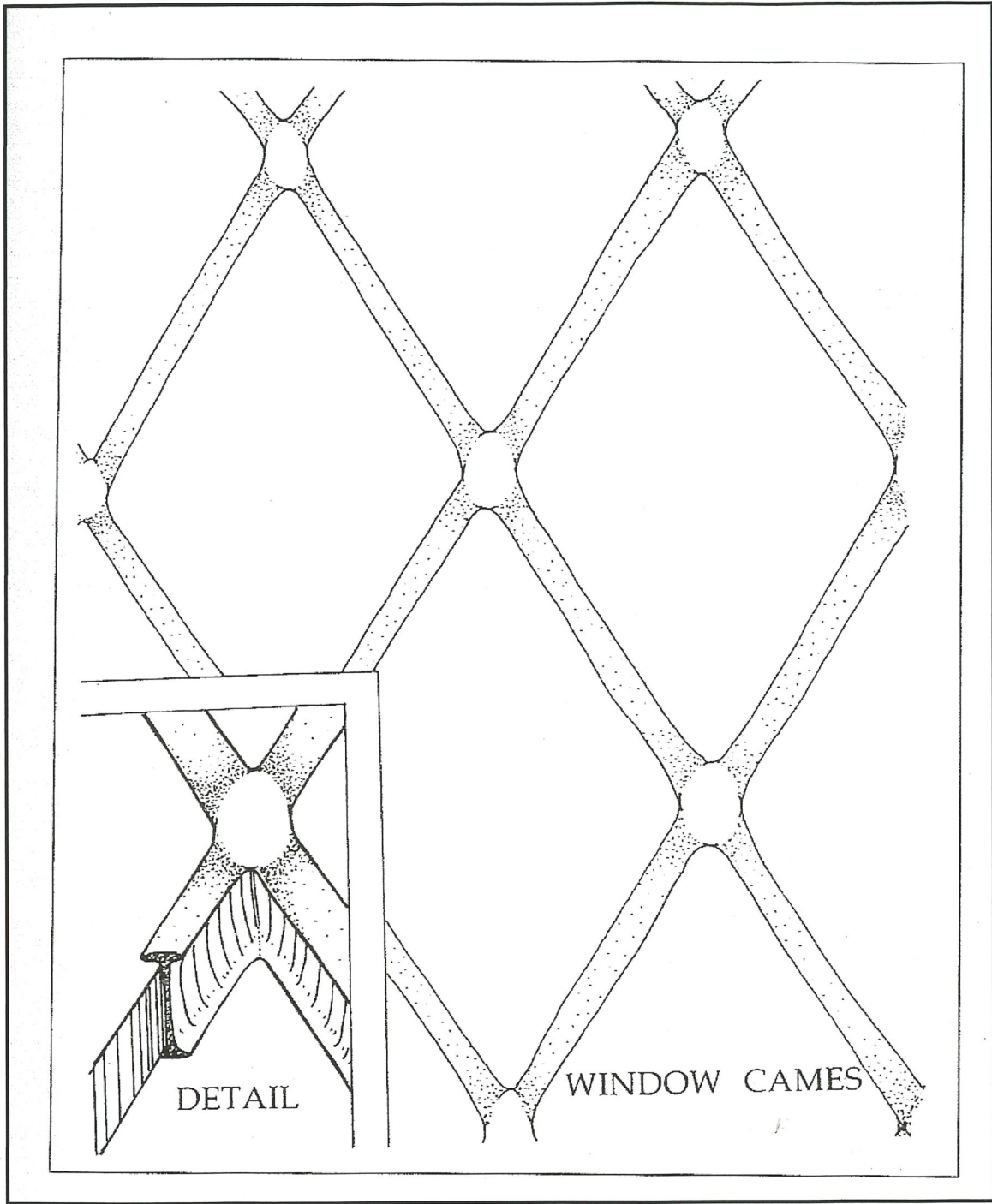


Figure 1. Turned lead showing the method of securing glass (Source: Deetz 1993:109).



Figure 2. Detail of inscription in base of turned lead channel (·W·M·1685·R·D·).



Figure 3. Dated window came from St. Luke's Church superimposed on complete window pane from the Nicholas Spencer archaeological site, James City County, Virginia.

References

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1986 "Marks on Milled Window Leads." In *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. 20, pp. 303-306, London, UK.
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CONSERVATION RECORD

ST. LUKE'S CHURCH

Provenience: Jordan Sisters Collection, Interior of St. Luke's Church

Artifact Description: 4 window came fragments: The largest fragment was actually large segments of window came joined together at a cross section.

Measurements: Fragment 1: 61.87mm Long x 5.81mm Wide x 0.28 mm Thick (Thickness was measured on unfolded edge);
Fragment 2: Bowed: 50.53mm Long x 6.63mm Wide x 0.91mm Thick;
Fragment 3: Two leads connected by center piece: Longest lead: 87.19mm Long x 6.98mm Wide x 0.62mm Thick; Smallest lead: 71.14mm Long x 6.57mm Wide x 0.54mm Thick
Fragment 4: 19th century repair window came: 66.87mm Long x 4.72mm Wide x 1.19mm Thick

Weight: Fragment 1: 5 grams; Fragment 2: 5 grams; Fragment 3: 15 grams;
Fragment 4: 5 grams

Artifact Photograph before conservation:

Fragment 1: Front View and Reverse View



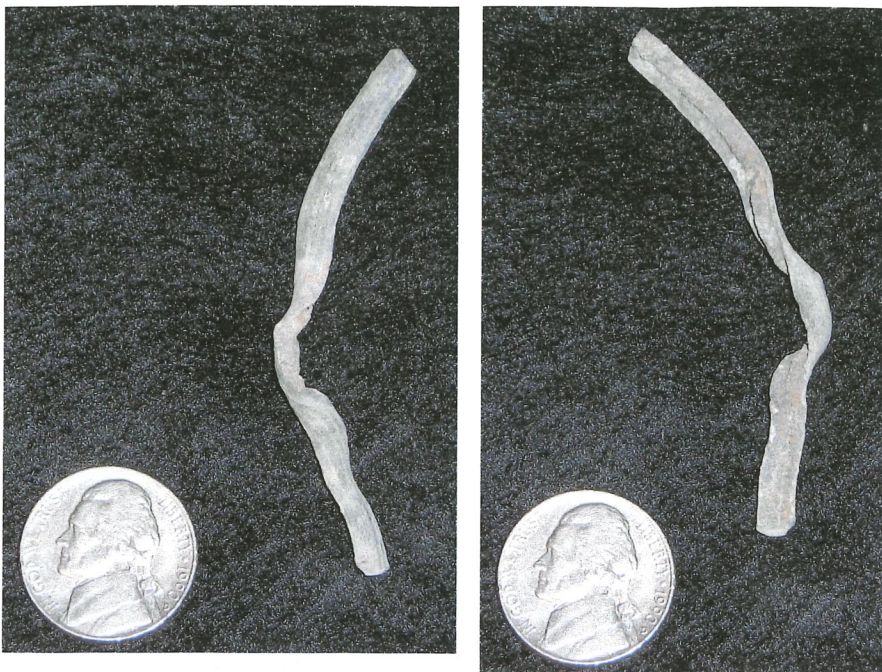
Fragment 2: Front View and Reverse View



Fragment 3: Front View and Reverse View



Fragment 4: Front View and Reverse View



Condition Description: The lead was fragile and corroded. Dirt was observed in the center of the folded came.

Conservation Procedures:

- 08/14/08 Window came was examined at St. Luke's Church. It was noted that some of the came fragments were beginning to crumble along the edges.
- 08/16/08 Lightly brushed with a soft, natural bristle brush to remove loosened dirt and corrosion. Rinsed in distilled H₂O.
- 08/23/08 The folded leads were heated to soften the brittle lead and then unfolded so that the corrosion along the center channel could be removed. The lead was lightly brushed to remove loosened soils with a soft, natural bristle brush. It was then rinsed in distilled H₂O. Artifacts were placed in a small tray, covered with a white paper towel and allowed to completely air dry. It was noted that the largest segment of came contained initials and a date on the interior channels which read, "W·M·1685·R·D"
- 08/24/08 Three coats of an acrylic coating were sprayed over the entire surface area of the window came fragments. It was allowed to air dry between coats. The artifacts were allowed to air dry. The conserved artifacts were photographed then placed in an acid free bags labeled with the

provenience along with an acid free identification tag with the provenience written in archival ink.

Post-conservation photographs:

Fragment 1: Unfolded and Conserved, Front View and Back View



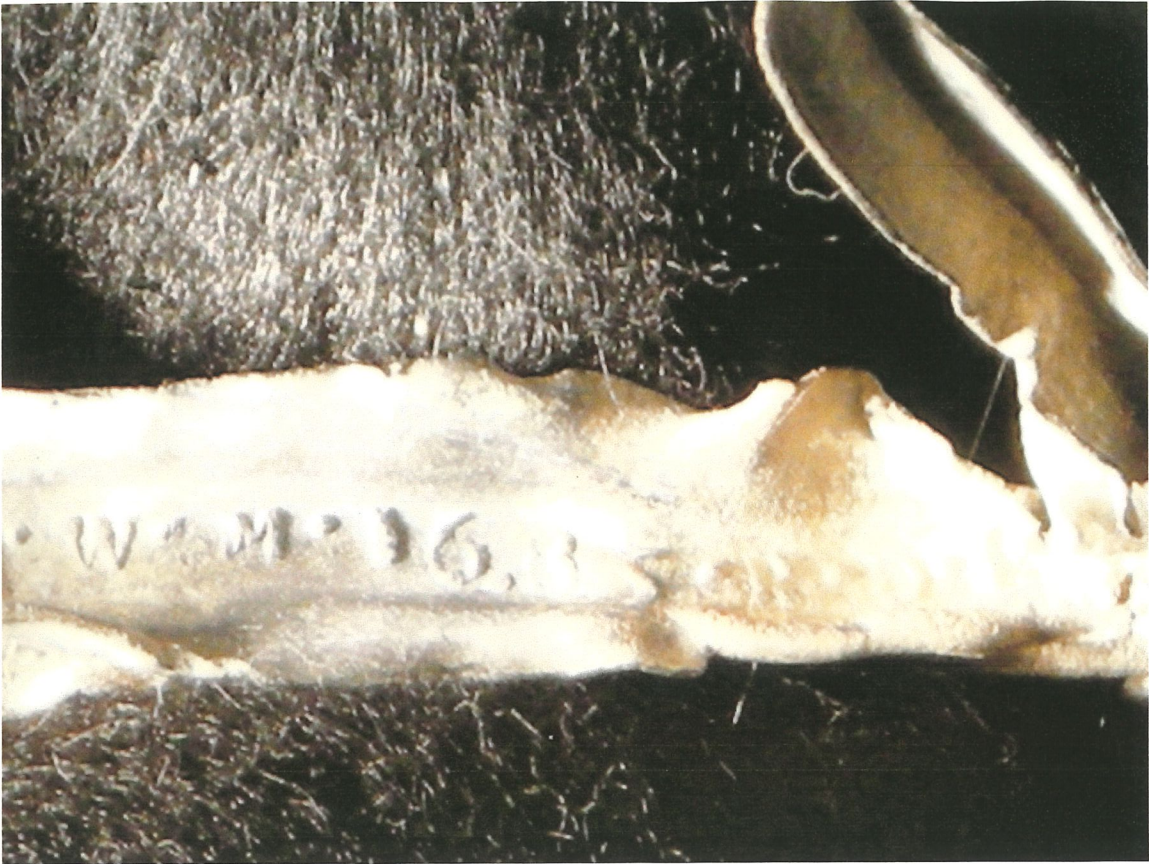
Fragment 2: Unfolded and Conserved, Front View and Reverse View



Fragment 3: Views of Came showing Inscription







Fragment 4: 19th century repair came, Front View and Reverse View

