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RESEARCH NOTES AND COMMENTS

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An Unusual Pipe Stem Find from St. Inigoes Manor, Maryland

ABSTRACT

During the spring of 1985, a preconstruction archaeological survey was conducted by the Maryland Historical Trust in a two-acre field known to have been a part of 17th century St. Inigoes Manor in lower St. Mary's County, Maryland. As a result of the survey, two colonial tenant sites were identified, and two unusual and significant artifacts were recovered. The artifacts are two white clay tobacco pipe stem fragments with hand inscriptions that are believed to be the first such finds in Maryland and Virginia.

Historical Background

St. Inigoes Manor was patented in 1634 by Richard Gerard, one of the investors in Lord Baltimore's New World adventure. Gerard soon tired of life in frontier Maryland, however, and, in 1637, he sold the 2000-acre tract of land to the Society of Jesus to serve as the headquarters of their mission effort as well as a major tobacco plantation. A church farm had been established at St. Inigoes by 1637, and large crops of corn and tobacco were being produced in that year. Small tenant farms were present on the manor by 1639. St. Inigoes Manor continued to operate as a large farm with tenants and remained in the possession of the Jesuits until 1942, when the northern 773 acres of the original tract were sold to the United States Navy. Since 1980, the Navy has funded six systematic archaeological investigations in order to protect cultural resources located there.

During the most recent archaeological project at St. Inigoes, two colonial period tenant sites were identified (cf., King and Pogue 1985). The earlier

site dates to ca. 1660–90 and represents the earliest historical archaeological remains found there to date. The second site, located approximately 300 feet away in the same field, dates to the first quarter of the 18th century. The structures at both sites were probably frame with chimneys of wattle and daub; neither structure appears to have had windows or much brick incorporated in the construction. Limited testing at the 18th century site indicates the dwelling there may have been placed on sills laid directly on the ground.

The Pipe Stems

During the survey that located and defined the two colonial sites, two inscribed white clay pipe stem fragments were recovered on the surface of the plowed field under survey. The more informative stem is inscribed "JOHN LEWIS" with an accompanying date of "1666." The second stem has the initials "D.R.," in slightly neater handwork, each letter followed by a period (Figures 1 and 2). Both stems, along with a third unmarked stem, were recovered from the same 10 × 10 foot survey unit. No other colonial artifacts were recovered in association. All three stems have bore diameters of 5/64ths inch.

These artifacts and their archaeological provenience are very unusual. The three pipe stems are located at least 120 feet southeast of the early 18th century tenant site and even farther from the late 17th century site. No other colonial domestic or architectural artifacts were associated with the find. Further, the stem bore diameters are quite small. Stem diameters of that size are relatively rare on 17th century sites in Maryland, particularly those of the third quarter, although one of the stems bears the date "1666." Excavations at the Village Center in St. Mary's City, occupied from 1634 until ca. 1710, yielded 2122 stem fragments of which only 44 (2.1%) had bore diameters of 5/64ths inch (Miller 1983: 75).

Documentary research has identified a John Lewis in St. Mary's County by 1666. Interestingly, he was identified as a planter and householder on nearby St. George's Manor, also owned

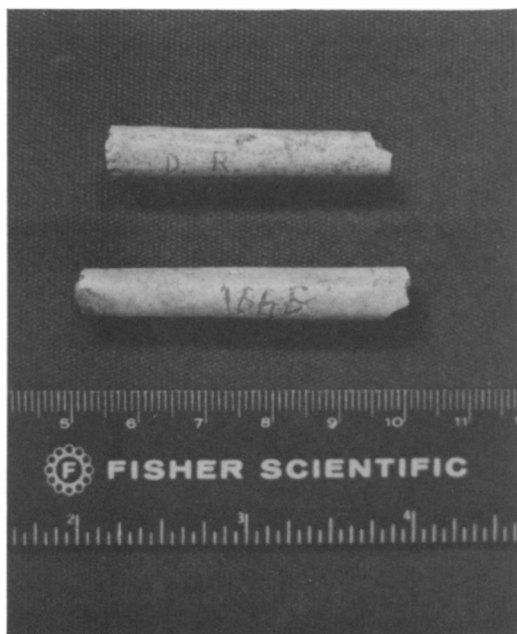


FIGURE 1. Tobacco pipe stems from St. Inigoes Manor: top, "D.R."; bottom, "1666".

by the Jesuits. Lewis immigrated to Maryland from England in 1662 or 1663, and his rights of land were claimed by a Richard Huggins in 1663 (Land Office Patents, Liber 5, f. 367). Lewis died in 1677, and when his will was probated, his belongings included some livestock, pewter tableware, iron cookware, and, of special interest, two books (Inv. and Acct., Liber 4, f. 583).

Based on this information, then, John Lewis of St. George's was probably literate and able to write. Further, he was a tenant on property also owned by the Jesuits, directly across the river from St. Inigoes Manor. In the 17th century, transportation was almost completely water-oriented, and John Lewis could have had ample reason and opportunity to journey to St. Inigoes. His presence in the vicinity of the two tenant sites may be linked to the occupants of the earlier site, occupied ca. 1660–90. Unfortunately, attempts to identify "D.R." were unsuccessful.

The unique nature of the find, along with the lack of associated artifacts and the small stem bore diameters, caused some initial suspicion that the ar-

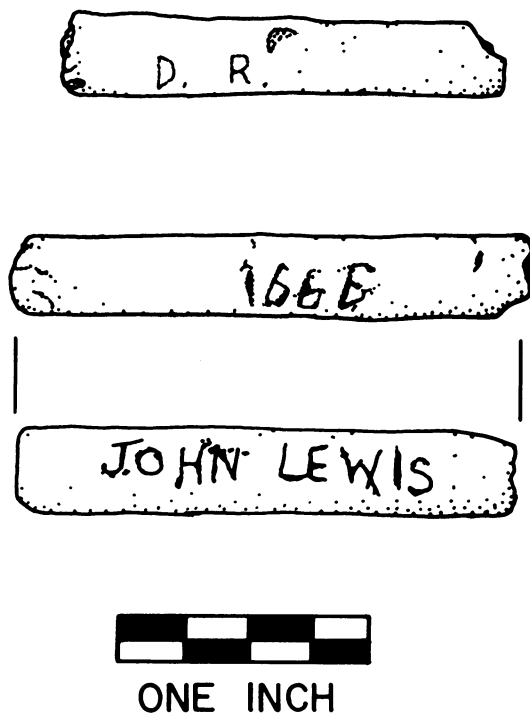


FIGURE 2. Illustration of pipe stems from St. Inigoes; top, "D.R."; bottom, "1666", reverse, "JOHN LEWIS".

tifacts may have been faked. However, when the stems were shown, unwashed, to archaeologists from both the St. Mary's City Commission and the Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum, all were agreed that their outward appearance strongly supported their authenticity. The style of the inscriptions, both letters and numerals, are very similar to styles found in 17th century American documents (Kirkham 1981: 34–6). Further, such a hoax would indicate a sophisticated knowledge of the history of St. Inigoes Manor. As for the small bore diameter, the 1666 date may serve simply to demonstrate once more variation in bore sizes and the use of the technique of measuring them as a relative temporal indicator in samples of larger size.

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