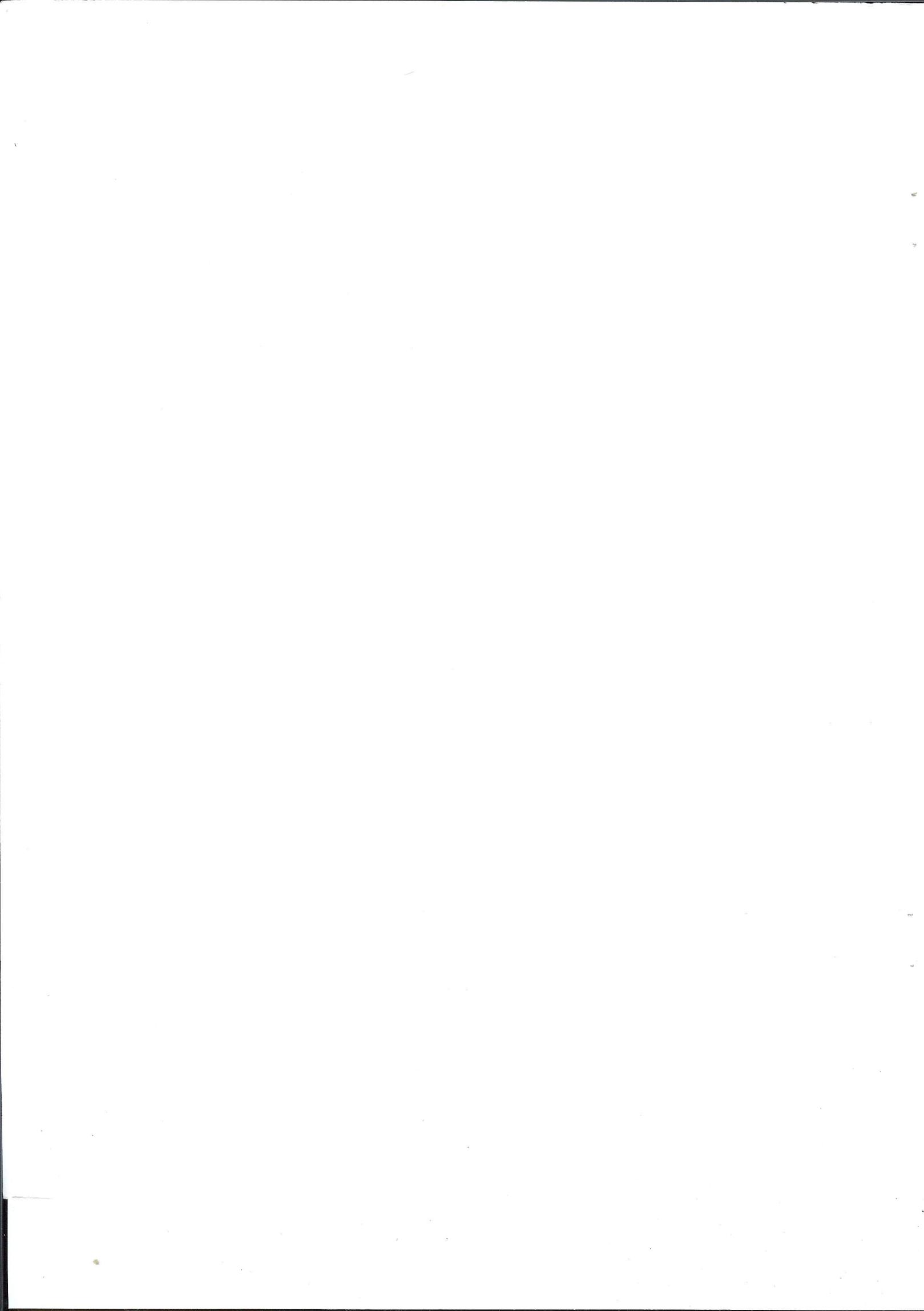


The Elizabeth Powell Site (41FB269)

Fort Bend County, Texas



**Houston Archeological Society
Report No. 25, Part 2
December, 2007**



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Cover Illustration: Obverse and reverse of 1808 ½ Real colonial Mexican coin. Photo by Richard L. Gregg.

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This publication is Part 2 in a 3-part report on excavations at the Elizabeth Powell Site (41FB269). Additional copies of Parts 1 and 2 can be obtained by contacting the Houston Archeological Society, PO Box 6751, Houston, TX 77265-6751. Cost is \$7.00 (\$5.00 plus \$2.00 postage and handling).

Dedication

This document, HAS Report No. 25, including all its parts, is dedicated to the memory of those members of the Houston Archeological Society who are no longer with us who contributed their time, talent and resources, in varying degrees, to help make the Elizabeth Powell project possible. These individuals include Frank Brezik Jr., Richey Ebersole, Bill McClure, Don McReynolds, Mary K Merriman, Bernard Naman, David Pettus, Dudgeon Walker, and, sadly, our most recent loss, Father Edward Bader, CSB.

Acknowledgements

HAS acknowledges Lise Darst, landowner extraordinaire, who allowed access to the site over a 6-year period, as well as Joe Hudgins, who maintained landowner communication and arranged for access when needed, and last but certainly not least, Sheldon Kindall, who served as field site supervisor.

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Chapter 1

Historic Beads from Mrs. Powell's Place

By Melissa May

Manufacturing Techniques

Four beads were found during excavations at the historic Powell site, 41FB269, in Fort Bend County, Texas. Prior to discussing these artifacts, it would be useful to review their methods of manufacture. A report by Kidd and Kidd (1983) is utilized here for identification of the bead types and a synopsis of bead manufacturing.

Although there are several ways to manufacture glass beads, "drawn" and "wound" are the two types used to create the four beads found at the site. If a bead is "drawn," a hollow metal tube is dipped into a vat of molten glass, and a glob (called a "gather") is extracted adhering to the tube tip. The primary vat can contain either clear or colored glass. For a "simple" style of bead, a bubble of air is blown into the primary gather, another metal rod affixed to the opposite end of the gather and the rods moved apart, stretching the glass out to form a very thin elongated hollow glass rod (called a "cane"). When cooled, the cane is chopped into like-sized beads, which are generally then heat-treated and/or tumbled to yield smooth edges.

If the primary gather is a color but is then dipped into a secondary vat of clear glass, it produces a clear casing on the evolving bead. In most classifications, this process still keeps the bead in the "simple" mode of manufacture. However, if the secondary or subsequent vats are of different colors, if the cane is twisted while being drawn, or if paddles are used to facet the cane, then the bead moves into the "complex" category of manufacture. When a bead is drawn one can often spot elongated air bubbles within the matrix of the glass, which helps to identify this method of manufacture. If flat implements (such as paddles) are used to create facets on the gather prior to drawing, when elongated these facets will appear as planed surfaces on the resulting beads. Facets also can be created by grinding planes into the bead, which leaves relict scarified marks on these surfaces.

If a bead is of wound manufacture, molten glass is drizzled around a spinning wire (called a "mandrel"), creating a series of connected beads.

When they are removed from the wire and broken apart, a little tail of glass remains at the end(s) where each bead was connected to the next. Even after heat treating, the vestigial remains of the tailings can help pin down the method of manufacture. Additionally, the air bubbles within the matrix of a wound bead will be helically oriented. The diameter of the cane determines the diameter of the bead. The thinnest diameter and shortest length beads are termed "seed" beads, while those with a longer length are "tubular" beads.

"Seed" bead refers specifically to the size. Descriptors for bead sizes, in general, range from very small, small, medium, medium large, large, and very large. There is no consensus on the exact threshold for the transition from seed to the next level, but those with a greater length/diameter graduate into the "pony," or medium-sized, category.

"Tubular" refers strictly to the shape. Shapes can be tubular, spheroid, barrel, ovoid, hexagonal, circular, round, faceted, thin disc, etc. Some of these shape descriptors, such as "circular" and "round," are synonymous and are used interchangeably in published reports.

Analysis of Beads Excavated at Site

The beads from 41FB269 evidence "corrasion", which is a compendium of corrosion, erosion and

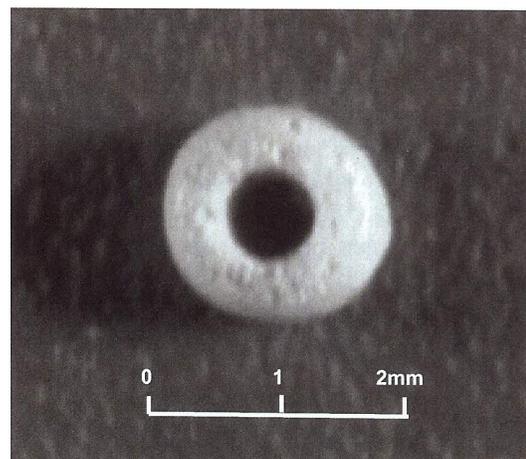


Photo by Richard L. Gregg

Figure 1.1. Bead A, type Ila 12

abrasion. These beads were exposed to all of the above, over the 100+ years since their deposition. Under 15X magnification utilizing a binocular microscope, a few beads appear to have a veneer that flecks off when scraped. This veneer could be the patina that evolves on glass that has been buried in the soil, or a secondary clear glass casing. Seeking further expertise, the beads were submitted to Karlis Karlins of Parks Canada and a regular contributor to the Society of Bead Researchers, for confirmation of, or corrections to, the initial analysis.

Pit AA, Level 3, yielded an opaque, drawn, heat-rounded, milk glass-colored (oyster white and cased with a secondary clear glass per Karlins [personal communication 2006]), simple seed bead. The bead is 2.0 mm in diameter, 1.0 mm in length and has an aperture diameter of 0.6 mm. It conforms to Kidds' type Ila 12 (Bead A, Figure 1.1).

Pit AH, Level 4, yielded an opaque, multi-faceted, tubular, dark root beer-to-black-colored bead of complex manufacture (Bead B, Figure 1.2). It is 6.6 mm long and 6.5 mm in diameter

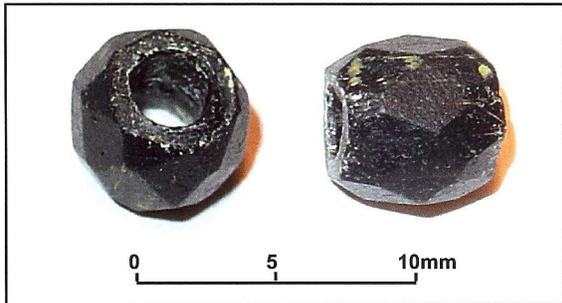


Photo by Linda Swift

Figure 1.2 Bead B, type If1 series

with an aperture diameter of 3 mm. The facets are diamond shaped, six girding the middle, six flanking them above and below with the edges beveled by partial diamonds (or snub-nosed triangles). The facets are not uniformly executed. It is a complex bead due to the faceting of the surface. The primary gather was faceted (by paddle or some other flattening implement) prior to being drawn, which yielded the planed surfaces when elongated. At this point, the bead only had the six central planes girding it.

When the secondary flanking diamond shapes were ground, they defined the edges of the central diamonds. The tertiary/last grinding refined the edges of the flanking diamonds and yielded the snub-nosed

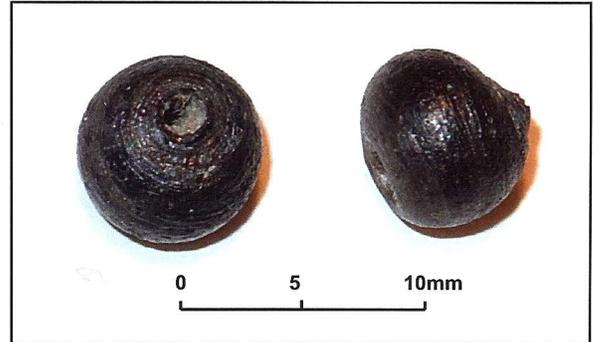


Photo by Linda Swift

Figure 1.3. Bead C, type W1b series

triangular bevels at the edges of the bead. Per Karlins, this bead is described as a black "cornerless-hexagonal, consisting of a hexagonal tube segment with triangular to pentagonal facets ground on the corners." He classifies it as Kidds' type If1.

Pit M1, Level 1, yielded an opaque, spheroid, root beer-to-black-colored, wound bead (Bead C, Figure 1.3). The method of manufacture is confirmed by the tailings left and the helical shape of the air bubbles within the matrix. The bead is 6.25 mm long,



Photo by Linda Swift

Figure 1.4. Bead D, type W1c series

7.7 mm in diameter with an aperture diameter of 1.2 mm. It conforms to Kidds' type W1b series, but since the color is not charted yet, the color designation should be higher than #16, the last one in the current chart.*

Pit M3, Level 4, yielded an opaque, elongated, ovoid-shaped, root beer-to-black-colored bead with a dull black-to-iridescent patina (Bead D, Figure 1.4). Per Karklins, it is olive-pit shaped and wound. It conforms to Kidds' type W1c* series, also having a color that is not yet charted. It is 6.4 mm long and 6.8 mm

in diameter with an aperture diameter of 2.6 mm. The ends are collapsed, probably from heat treating.

Bead B, the bead from Pit AH, Level 4, is the most diagnostic relative to time of occupation. Karlis Karklins (personal communication 2006) stated that "the If1 bead provides the tightest dating of the four. It is a form that appears on sites dating from 1680 to 1910, but the period of optimal use is from 1805 to 1860, with a mean date of 1830. This is based on data from 36 archaeological sites in North America." This dovetails nicely with the timeframe during which the Powell site was occupied.

- * Many additional bead types have been documented beyond those within the Kidds' original typology in the 1983 publication. Until such time as an update is officially published, subsequent types cannot be definitively numbered.

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