

Exploring the Collection: A Survey of Arms and Armor Recovered from James Fort

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Introduction:

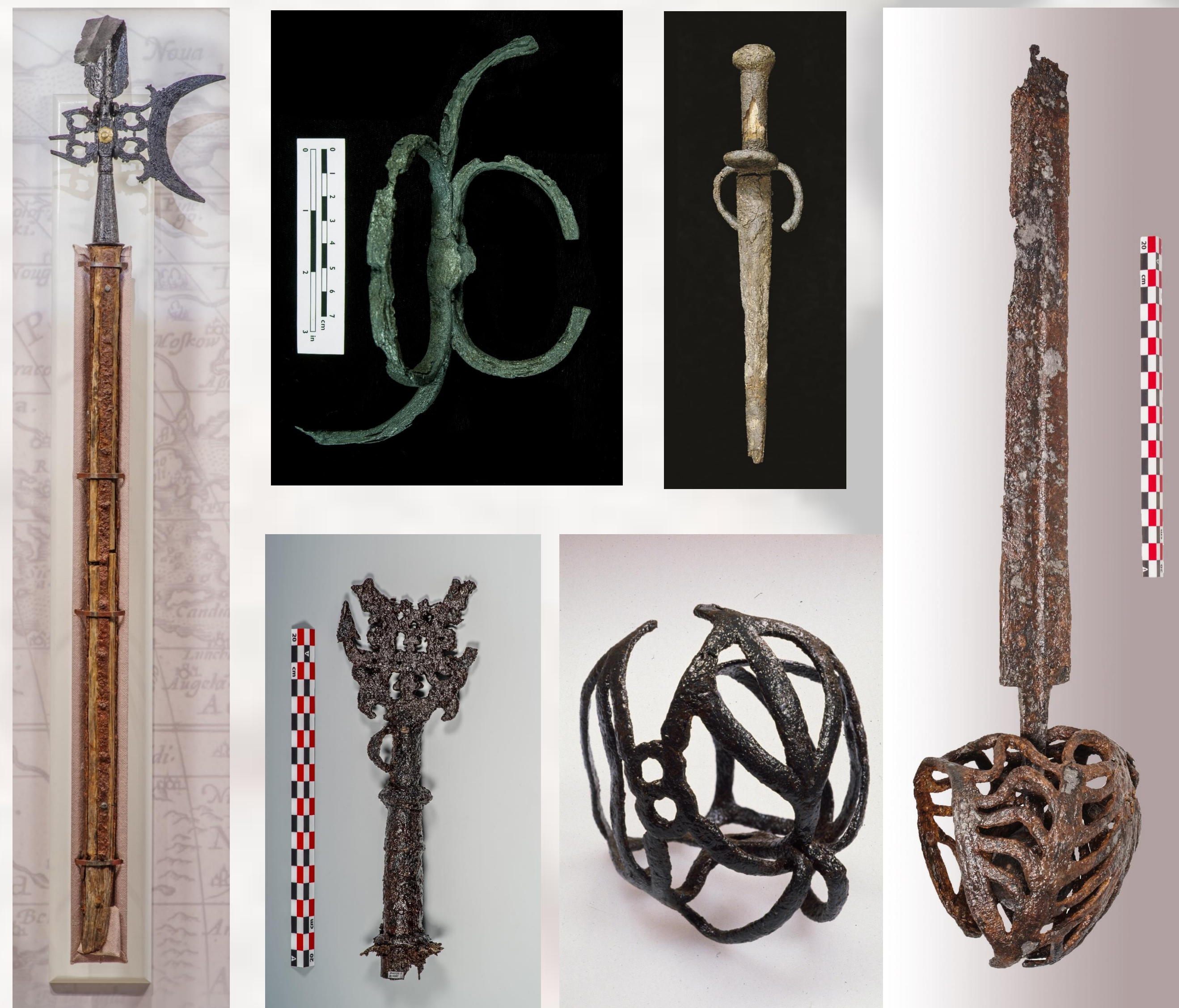
Archaeologists have recovered thousands of pieces of arms and armor from the early 17th century James Fort at Jamestown, North America's first successful English settlement. This poster is designed to provide a brief view of this segment of the collection as it stands and what we hope to do next.

Reference Collection:

Curatorial staff are currently working to build a reference collection that shows the breadth and depth of the artifacts recovered from James Fort. The arms and armor functional categories have not yet been addressed. The author has started on the lead shot and related production materials and will soon begin the remaining arms-related artifacts, which are to be completed in the next few years.

Arms: Edged Weapons

The collection includes bladed weapons such as swords, rapiers, and daggers, as well as polearms including halberds, pikes, bills, and even a decorative partisan.



Arms: Projectiles

The collection contains a number of projectiles, attributed to both the indigenous population and the colonists. These include arrowheads and crossbow bolts, as well as artillery related projectiles such as falconets.

Photographs taken by Jamestown Rediscovery Staff including Chuck Durfor and Michael Lavin.



Arms: Firearms

The above roman lock pistol is the most complete firearm from the collection. However, there are various parts from matchlocks, flintlocks, wheellocks, snaphaunces, and pistols. There are also artifacts that are associated with the use of firearms. These include gunflints, musket rests, bandoliers, powder flasks, ramrods and worms, and bone inlays.



Arms: Lead Shot and Production Materials

The final component of the arms collection is the lead shot and shot production artifacts. In addition to over 100 bullet molds, there are several melting pans, thousands of "drips", and other lead waste. The collection also contains thousands of sprue sections, both with and without shot still attached.



Research:

Curatorial staff will continue to research and publish on the collection, but it is also open to outside researchers. We welcome requests to use the collection as a comparative example or as a main site for theses, dissertations, and other academic or independent research. The arms and armor categories represent just a small fragment of the materials recovered from James Fort.

Armor:

Jamestown's collection of armor includes plate armor, jack of plate, brigandine armor, and even a few fragments of chain mail. Most of these are fairly fragmentary, but there are several more substantial pieces such as the ones below.



The collection also includes other armor-related artifacts such as gauntlets, buckler fragments, and helmets. Two of the more intact objects are shown below.



Useful Sources:

Peterson, Harold,
2000 *Arms and Armor in Colonial America 1526-1783*. Dover Publications, Mineola, New York.
Straube, Bly
2006 'Unfitted for any modern service'? Arms and Armour from James Fort. *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 40(1): 33-61.

Resources:

<https://historicjamestowne.org/>
<https://www.youtube.com/c/JamestownRediscovery>