

An unrecorded communion flagon by William Will

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THE UNMARKED quart communion flagon shown in Figure 1 recently surfaced in western Pennsylvania. It is undoubtedly the work of William Will of Philadelphia, the most innovative fabricator of American pewter, for its body was made in the same mold as the body of a marked William Will communion flagon (Fig. 2, right) and a marked William Will quart tankard (Fig. 2, center). The thumbpiece of the unmarked flagon is from the same mold as that of the marked flagon (see Fig. 3), but for the spout, lid, and handle Will has substituted standard parts from other forms.

The lid, for example, is the one he used on a marked straight-sided tankard and as the base for an unmarked chalice (see Fig. 4). This lid is $\frac{1}{16}$ inches smaller in diameter than the lid Will used normally on his tulip-shape forms. The handle on the newly discovered flagon is also not the handle found on Will's tulip-shape bodies, but rather the



Fig. 1. Quart communion flagon attributed to William Will (1742-1798), Philadelphia. Pewter, height 8½ inches. The objects illustrated are in the collection of the authors; photographs are by Gordon La Vere.



Fig. 2. Left to right: Communion flagon shown in Fig. 1. Quart tankard made by Will, marked inside on the bottom, WW in two concentric circles; pewter, height 8 inches. Quart communion flagon made by Will, marked inside on the bottom, WW in two concentric circles; pewter, height 8½ inches.

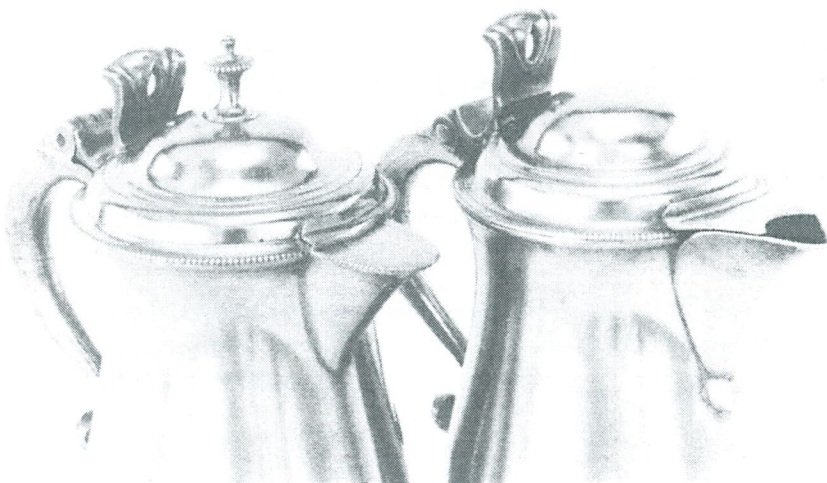
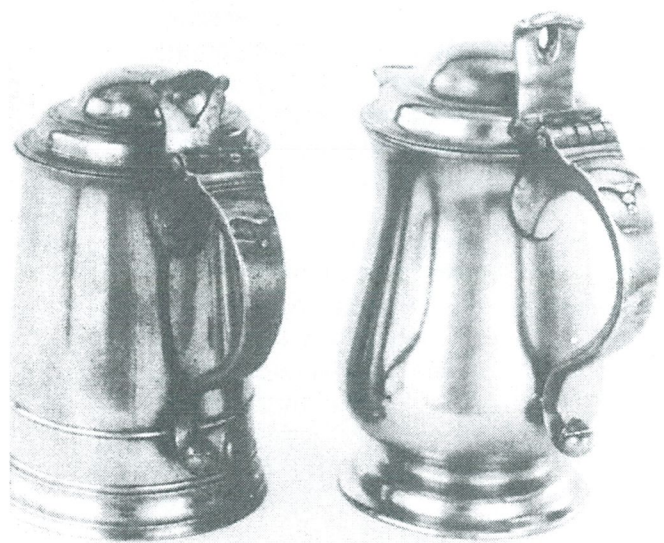


Fig. 3. Left: Detail of the flagon shown at the right in Fig. 2. Right: Detail of the flagon shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 4. *Left:* Quart tankard made by Will, marked inside on the bottom, W^M Will in serrated rectangle; pewter, height 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. *Right:* Flagon shown in Fig. 1 with a chalice attributed to Will resting on it. The same mold was used to make the base of the chalice, the top of the tankard, and the top of the flagon.



Fig. 5. *Left:* Tankard shown at the left in Fig. 4. *Right:* Flagon shown in Fig. 1. The handles of the tankard and flagon were cast in the same mold.



one he used on his straight-sided tankard (Fig. 5). Because the lid and handle are shaped to fit a straight-sided form, there is a small gap beneath the thumbpiece which is not found on the marked flagon (see Fig. 2).

The spout of the newly discovered flagon is from the same mold as that of a tall, narrow, unmarked communion flagon (Fig. 6). The stepped spout covers typical of Will's work are also both from the same mold.

The unmarked communion flagon proves the great versatility of the master pewterer William Will in combining parts from different forms to create a subtle variation on the marked communion flagon. We hope that this article will interest other pewter collectors and encourage them to examine the parts of their pewter objects, for such an examination may allow them to identify the maker despite the absence of a mark.

Fig. 6. *Left:* Flagon shown in Fig. 1. *Right:* Communion flagon attributed to Will; pewter, height 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. The spouts and spout covers were made in the same mold.

