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### Shiny, Lined, and Brown: Building Conservation Context for Harry Jander's Document Restorations

#### INTRODUCTION

From 1947 to 1954, Harry Jander worked in document restoration at the Texas General Land Office, a state agency charged with land and resource management. His treatments on hundreds of maps and paper records were idiosyncratic and easily recognizable. In Jander's self-devised method, documents were coated with a varnish-like protective consolidant (fig. 1). The coating served as an adhesive for a lining made of open-weave nylon mesh. The lining's edges were trimmed with pinking shears, giving them a distinctive, zig-zag shape. Jander then signed many of his treatments with black ink on the verso (fig. 2).

Time was unkind to Jander's treatments. Fifty years later, treated materials had become dark brown, brittle, and translucent. The coating was shiny and waxy, sometimes showing remaining evidence of brushstrokes. A distinctive, medicinal odor wafted from the documents. Staff members at the Texas General Land Office coined a special term to describe these materials: *Janderized*.

Jander was proud and secretive about his methods and materials, saying, "they're safer in my own mind" (*Austin American* 1948). No treatment documentation accompanies his work. These realities have challenged modern-day understanding of his practice. Testing has shown that acetone is an effective solvent for Jander's coating, and many of his treatments have been reversed with successive acetone baths. Nevertheless, many questions remain about the full scope of Jander's materials, goals, and influences.

By modern understanding, Jander's treatment was invasive and challenging to reverse. Its impact on the appearance and structural viability of historical paper seems heavy-handed. Jander's autograph reveals a bravado long since passed from conservation aesthetics. But past mistakes were often made with the best intentions. How should today's conservator assess a past treatment like that of Jander? Was Jander a sole actor who improvised a preservation treatment and misrepresented himself as an authority? Or was he part

of larger preservation trends, acting within the best understanding of conservation science and practice in the 1940s and 1950s?

A complex story like Jander's benefits from a multifaceted research strategy. This study builds upon archival research and chemical analysis to establish conservation context for Jander's work. Through examination of Jander's background, his possible treatment materials, the contemporaneous treatments of his day, the chemistry underlying his work, and analytical testing, a fuller understanding of Jander's rationale and materials may be achieved.

#### WHO WAS HARRY JANDER?

Jander's life story is full of elusive and contradictory details. He spent his early years in eastern and coastal Texas; visited England around the time of World War I; lived in St. Louis, Missouri, in mid-life; and then returned to central Texas around the time of World War II. However, Jander's specific activities in each chapter of his life are somewhat unclear, and Jander's stories about himself sometimes challenge the bounds of believability.

Harry Garnett Jander (fig. 3) was born in the early 1890s and grew up in the small town of Palestine, Texas; (War Department 1943). Between 1911 and 1915, he lived in Galveston, Texas, where he worked as a cashier at a brewery. When a devastating hurricane struck Galveston in 1915, Jander relocated to his father's hometown of St. Louis, Missouri, where he took a job with the YMCA (Alonzo and Tuggey 2019).

In September 1918, near the conclusion of World War I, Jander traveled to England with the YMCA. Sources disagree as to whether Jander remained in England until January 1919 (Alonzo and Tuggey 2019) or for a period of "several years" (War Department 1943). During this time, Jander claimed to have studied at the University of London, although he did not say which member institution of this large educational system was his alma mater (Barnes 1952; Alonzo and Tuggey 2019). During this relatively short period in England, he reportedly received "a Doctor's degree" (Adair 1953) in an unspecified field. Jander spoke of taking an apprenticeship

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