

Hair brooch

1856

Gold, pearl, glass, human hair

JJ.1966.304



This oval brooch contains the hair of William Jay (1789-1858) and Augusta Jay (1790-1857), braided in a love knot. Around the hair, the pin's bezel is encircled by two rows of seed pearls. A seed pearl is generally defined as a small natural pearl, usually measuring less than 2mm in diameter. It is inscribed on the back: *William & Augusta Jay to E.C. Jay, 1856*

It is likely that E.C. Jay was Elizabeth Clarkson Jay (1823-1895), the daughter of Peter Augustus Jay, and niece of William and Augusta. William and Augusta Jay traveled to England in 1856.

Exchanging locks of hair began to become popular in 16th-century France and England as tokens of affection among the upper class. It was very common for Victorian women to exchange locks of hair, especially between dear friends and family whom one may never see again due to the dangers and uncertainty of travel.