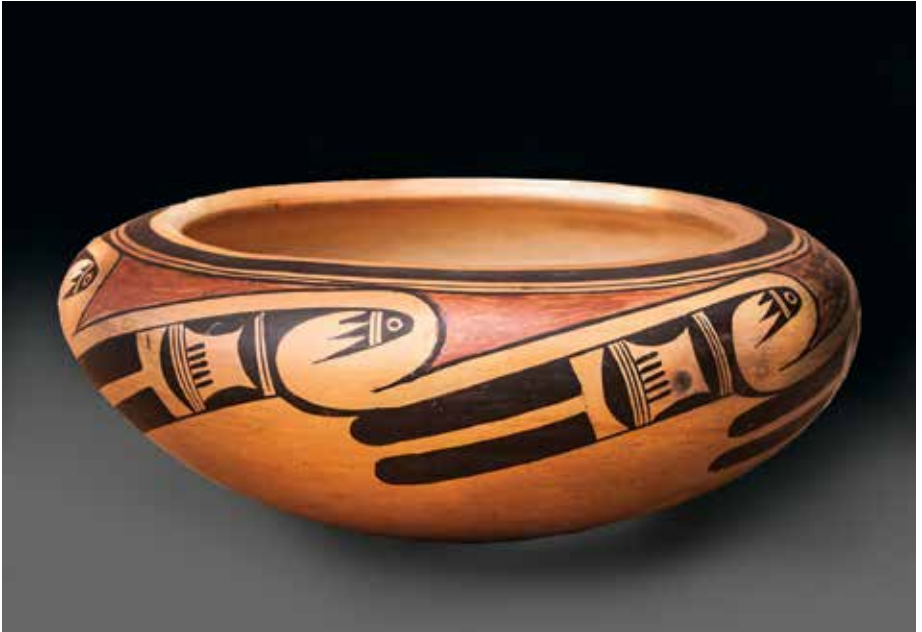


# THE HOPI BOWL



*Pottery Discussion #7*

*Allan Hayes*

*Summerhouse Indian Art*

The bowl on the front of this Discussion is by Nellie Douma, Nampeyo's middle daughter. It's just over 9" wide. She made it about 1935, and it says about all you need to know about this almost exclusively Hopi shape.

A few days ago, I got the bowl in the picture below. It's by somebody else, it's from the same time period and it's a bit bigger, 10-1/4" in diameter. I put it on the site, and it sold almost immediately, as have most of the other examples I've put out for sale.

It got me wondering about why I've seen so many pieces in this shape from Hopi and why, since it seems such a pleasant, natural shape, I've seen so few from anywhere else.



The shape stays constant at Hopi. It's a shallow bowl with an incurved rim, usually about ten inches in diameter but occasionally done in a smaller, tourist-friendly size.

My belief that the shape was pretty much confined to Hopi wasn't much more than a hunch, so I thought I'd check it out. I expected to find out that a lot of people made it in a lot of places at a lot of different times.

Since these Discussions are all about the connections between the ancient and the new, I started digging for prehistoric examples, I wanted to find out how the shape started, how it got to Hopi and wherever else it might have gone. Earlier in this series, I found examples going back well over a thousand years, and I expected to find the same.

I didn't. The really old ones had flared rims, straight or nearly straight sides, or were really jars, too tall to be called bowls.



The earliest piece I found in the right shape was this 10" diameter. Pinedale Polychrome from about 1280. I saw a little black and white picture in an old book on Anasazi pottery and added color based on what I know about the type, so the color here may be a bit off.

Normally, I wouldn't associate a Pinedale piece with Hopi, but according to Field Museum records, it came from Homolovi, a 100% Hopi prehistoric Pueblo south of the mesas near Holbrook.

It got me thinking about my own book. On page 43 of my *Southwestern Pottery* Second Edition, I showed a piece that came from Homolovi and called it Homolovi Polychrome. When the people at Homolovi saw the book, they told me it wasn't a Homolovi piece, but was a Cibola type. Now I'm thinking that it, too is probably a Pinedale.

The same book gave me the only other early piece I found, and it's

unquestionably Hopi. It was a 9" Jeddito Black on yellow bowl from 1400.



And that was it until about 1500. Then Hopi started making Sikyatki Polychrome, and the shape appeared over and over. Here's one.





And here's what it looks like from the side. The shape isn't quite as pure as it is on Nellie Nampeyo's bowl on the front cover, or, for that matter, on the Jeddito bowl on the previous page, but there's no doubt about the intent. This bowl is 12" in diameter.

The Sikyatki one below is 11". Around 1500, they made so many of these at Hopi that this once-scarce shape became almost common.





These two Sikyatki shallow bowls are about the same size as the other two: 10" and 10-1/2" diameter.

Between 1400 and 1600, Sikyatki Polychrome was the dominant Hopi pottery style, and the variety and imagination of its designs ultimately became the basis for modern Hopi pottery. Its days were numbered, however. Other types replaced it.

In the 19th century, hard times caused a lot of Hopis to move to neighboring Zuni, and the Hopi potters came up with a new style using Zuni slips and Zuni designs.

The style was called Polacca Polychrome, and the elegance of Sikyatki seemed forgotten.

It wasn't. As early as the 1880s, Thomas Keam, the local trader, had potters including Nampeyo recreating the old designs and, after some experimentation, returning to the original Sikyatki materials. Later Polacca pieces still used the Zuni slip which tended to crackle, but the designs and shapes started looking more and more like Sikyatki.

Late in the 19th and early 20th century, Nampeyo and her colleagues received most of the credit for bringing the old style back and creating what observers called the Sikyatki Revival.

Today, the term is almost forgotten. Now, it's just Hopi pottery.



**T**hese are Polacca Polychrome pieces from 1885, 1890 and 1895. The surface may be the Zuni crackling white slip, but the design and shape leave Zuni far behind. They're smaller than the earlier pieces, between 7" and 8-1/4" wide, but everything else follows the script. They're all Hopi shallow bowls with incurved rims and Sikyatki designs.



Between 1885 and 1900, they made a lot of these shallow bowls. As a measure of how common they were during those years, I didn't have to search for any of those Polacca pieces. They all found their way into our own collection, and we never went out of our way to find them.

Then Nampeyo and the Sikyatki Revival took over. Polacca was history, and the order of the day was true traditional Hopi pottery.

Here's Nampeyo from 1900, 8" diameter. The materials were now the correct traditional ones, and the shape persisted in the new order.



The shallow bowl was firmly implanted in the Hopi pottery vocabulary. Potters kept making them, and a few decades later, the Hopi Bowl reached its heyday.



The bowl on the front cover by Nampeyo's daughter and the bowl on the first page that started this inquiry were both made in the 1930s.

Shortly before 1930, Mary-Russell Farrell Colton made a lot of noise about Hopi art, and the Hopis listened. She insisted on a quality level for anything the Museum of Northern Arizona would sell, weavings, jewelry, pottery or anything else.

One of her edicts was that the Museum wouldn't accept any pottery with weak red paint, and the almost universal appearance of strong reds helps us date a lot of Hopi pottery as post-1930. In the 1930–1940 decade, the Hopi Bowl became a star player.



We used this dazzling 11-1/2" example from 1940 by Lena Charlie as the title piece for the What to Look for In a Pot chapter in the Second Edition of our *Southwestern Pottery, Anasazi to Zuni*.

Potters outside the Nampeyo family made them too, and they made a lot of them. This 7-1/4" diameter piece was made about 1935 by Grace Chapella, who stood next to Nampeyo and Paqua Naha at the highest level of Hopi pottery royalty.



We kept finding pieces. I have no idea who made the two below, but they're both fine examples, and they suggest how high the standards were in the 1930s. We never sought out these bowls, and the fact that so many drifted through our collections also suggests how many they made during those years

They made most of them about the same size. The one on the left is 11" in diameter, and the one on the right is a little bigger, 11-3/4".



They also made them in tourist sizes. These two redware pieces are a variety the books call Sichomovi Polychrome. That distinguishes it from the standard yellow Sikyatki revival ware they made in Hano, the next village over. They're 6-1/4" and 5-1/2" in diameter.



The one on the left is decorated with the designs of the day, but the one on the right goes way back into Hopi history. The design looks like 14th century Citadel Polychrome, a long forgotten Hopi type.

They never stopped making these at Hopi, but after 1940, they didn't make them as often. The next examples didn't come from our collections. We had to dig in a lot of books to find them.

This piece by Carol Namoki looks to be about 10" in diameter. We found it in a 1990s *Plateau* magazine from the Museum of Northern Arizona. The caption told us it was in a 1969 exhibition.





This one is by Dextra. Of all the Nampeyo family potters, Dextra Quotskuyva, Rachel Namingha's daughter, achieved recognition that gave her stature that approached Nampeyo's. She made this 9-1/2" example in 1972.

The 11-1/2" one on the left below was made around 1978 by another Hopi superstar, Rondina Huma, and the 8-1/2" one next to it came twenty years later, in 1998. It's again from the Nampeyo family, by Dextra's daughter, Hisi Quotskuyva.



The Nampeyo family kept at it. The one below was made about 2010 by Jake Koopee, one of the most highly regarded 21st-century Hopi potters.

It seems fitting that this discussion started with a piece by Nellie Nampeyo, and the that Hopi section of it ends with one made 75 years later by her great-grandson.



It hasn't been difficult to show that the Hopis made a lot of these. It makes no sense at all, though to think that nobody else made such a simple and obvious shape.

I set out to find those others and looked through the more than 4,000 pots in our joint collection.



So who else made them? We rifled through our collections and a lot of books and came up with these.

Two of them were prehistoric. This 9-1/2" diameter bowl from about 1520 fits all the requirements, but I found it in Lanmon & Harlow's encyclopedic *The Pottery of Zuni Pueblo*.

It's Zuni, but it owes everything to Hopi. The type, Matsaki Polychrome, was Zuni's unashamed imitation of Hopi yellow pottery.



The other prehistoric came from left field. I found the bowl at the top of the next page in another Harlow & Lanmon book, *The Pottery of Zia Pueblo*, and it doesn't have anything to do with Zia. It was made about 1480 in the glaze-paint style of the day at San Lazaro, an abandoned Pueblo south of Santa Fe. It has a deeper-than expected approximation of the Hopi shape, but there's little else about it that





connects it either with the Hopi or with the Zia the book was about.

However, we did find two modern Zia pieces. The one on the left below is from our collections, is 9-1/4" in diameter, and was made about 1930. The 9" diameter one on the right came from the Zia book. It dates from 1943 and is attributed to Tomasita Medina.



We found a couple of other pieces from farther up the Rio Grande. The one on the left is a 10" Santa Clara bowl from 1965 by Teresita Naranjo, and the one on the right is a 7-3/4" bowl made in 1994 by Lorenzo Gonzales of San Ildefonso. The Gonzales one isn't quite the right shape. It's too deep, too jar-like.



I found other black-on-black and carved pieces from Santa Clara and San Ildefonso, but of all the ones I saw, only the bowl by Teresita Naranjo on the previous page came close to the Hopi shape.



They came a lot closer down in the Arizona desert. Maricopa potter Mabel Sunn and her daughters made several snake-wrapped bowls like this around 1970, all about 7" in diameter. Daughter Gertrude Stevens made this one.

And that was it. I can't claim it was a definitive or exhaustive search, but I did go through our 4,000-plus pot joint collection and a whole bunch of books. All I came away with was the seven pieces on these last three pages, two more Sunn-family snake bowls, and some not-quite-the-right-shape blackware from Santa Clara and San Ildefonso.

I'm okay with calling the shape "The Hopi Bowl."

Page 3 and Page 4 top image from *Anasazi Painted Pottery* by Paul S. Martin (Field Museum Collection) Images were black & white and have been colored.

Page 4 bottom and Page 5 top from *Canvas of Clay* by Edwin Wade and Allan Cooke

Page 5 bottom from *Beauty from the Earth* by J. J. Brody

Page 6 left from *Painted Perfection* by Martha Streuver

Page 6 right from *Re-Creating the Word* by Barbara Moulard (Bill Schenck collection)

Page 8 from *Painted Perfection*

Page 10 top borrowed from John Barry

Page 11 bottom from *Plateau Magazine, Hopi and Hopi-Tewa Pottery*

Page 12 top from *Painted Perfection*

Page 12 bottom left from *Generations* edited by James Nottage (Helen Cox Kersting Collection)

Page 12 bottom right from *Canvas of Clay*

Page 13 from *Generations*

Page 14 from *The Pottery of Zuni Pueblo* by Dwight Lanmon and Francis Harlow

Page 15 top and right center from *The Pottery of Zia Pueblo* by Harlow and Lanmon

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