

Among Canadian Indians the making of pottery has, for probably two centuries at least, been a lost art. Pipe-making from clay seems to have lingered after the production of vessels had ceased, for these were among the first to be displaced by European art; in this case, that of the coppersmith. Dishes of clay varied in size from that of a wine-glass to thirty gallons in capacity. The former may have been but the playthings of children—the larger ones were used for various domestic purposes. Among the first evidences that present themselves in most cases in connection with the site of an ancient Iroquois or Huron-Iroquois village are numerous fragments of pottery, and occasionally the searcher is fortunate enough to procure a perfect or almost perfect specimen from one of the communal graves. In most cases the attempts at ornamentation have been confined to the outside of the vessel, but now and again an inch or even more on the inside of the lip has had a simple pattern impressed upon it.

Among the numerous specimens from Balsam Lake in the Laidlaw collection there are several peculiarities to which some reference may be made. The deeply notched markings that in most cases surrounded the vessels, separating the ornamental upper portion from the plain part underneath (plate I.) have been made by a blunt, square-edged tool, and the lower edges of the separating bars have also been squared. The prevalence of this style is noteworthy, because not far to the west of Balsam Lake the corresponding portions of the patterns seem to have been crenated by simply pinching the clay between the finger and thumb—indeed, in a few instances, the marks of the finger-nails have been left. It will also be observed that the angle of all the square notches is in the same direction. It is seldom that any effort has been made to impress a pattern on the edge of a vessel, but we find an example of edge-markings on Fig. 5, where the depressions have been produced by means of a tool similar to the one that was used to make the short horizontal markings in Figs. 12 and 17, plate II. A totally different kind of edge-ornamentation will be seen at Figs. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 14, plate II, where, in the last enumerated deep angular notches extend some distance down the side. In Figs. 13, 16, and 20 to 23 plate I, the band marks appear to have been made with the finger-tips.

In plate II several characteristic patterns may be seen. Figs. 2 and 6 are peculiar, and Figs. 12 and 17 illustrate a style of marking not found elsewhere in Ontario, so far as I know, the short horizontal depressions being arranged in three's. The lining in Fig. 18 is of an unusual pattern. Unfortunately the fragment does not show the complete figure, but the missing portion probably corresponded in its angles with the part found.

Loops or lugs for lifting or suspending purposes are seldom found on clay vessels in Ontario, but upward projections on the lip are not uncommon, as in plate III, and these portions are generally made thicker than other parts of the margin. Sometimes the whole collar or upper part of the vessel here forms an unbroken angle on the outside as at Figs. 1 to 9, at other times this is relieved by a single groove, Figs. 10 to 13, or by two or more, as in Figs. 14 and 16. In Figs. 17 and 18 deep notches occupy the places of the single grooves. On the larger vessels there may be as many as four of these projections, but on the smaller objects of this kind sometimes only one has been formed. On the whole of the Balsam Lake pottery there is a curious blending of the Huron with something that appears to be of a different origin.