

## Clay Pots



## **What Story Does This Oneida Pot Tell?**

The rounded bottom of this ceramic jar is distinctive of Hodinohso:ni clay pots. The square top with four figures, one at each corner is also a tell-tale feature.

What do these designs represent? Since this clay pot was made over four hundred years ago, it is difficult to say what the maker had in mind. However, the designs reflect common philosophy and beliefs of the Hodinohso:ni :

- This earthly world is connected to an upper world that we call the Sky World.
- In that Sky World are Four Sacred Beings who watch over us, and who we can communicate with.
- There are Four Winds from the four directions, each bringing a different kind of weather.
- Underneath the Mother Earth is a water world full of mystery and spirits.
- The clay pot is like a snapshot of that universe, especially when you think that if filled with water, ingredients dropped through the opening, to prepare food for our survival.
- The square top and its decorations could be visual references of the Sky World Beings who impact on our lives.

These figures are mysterious because they do not appear in any other art form. The strips on their bodies are unusual. Sometimes they appear more puffy, or elongated. However, the smiling face belies the mystery of their presence.

Why would make a pot with a round bottom, so that it cannot stand up without falling over? The answer is that this pot was designed to hang over a fire, with a cord wrapped around the neck. Or placed in hot coals to “bake” whatever was placed inside.

Women were the pottery makers in our ancient communities, and they made similar but distinctive styles for each nation. They would find clay running in veins in the ground, collect it in baskets, clean it out and add sand, grit or shell dust to help the clay hold together, then mash the clay to make sure all of the air bubbles are removed.

One air bubble could explode and destroy the pot when it was placed inside a very hot fire to transform the clay from its soft and pliable nature to the hard surface of the finished pot. This firing also made the pot water proof.

There is some evidence that the women would destroy their pots when they relocated their village, and that they would make a new set of pots at their new location.

Since the Hodinohso:ni consider the earth their spiritual mother, clay is part of her sacred flesh. Clay attaches people to a place. So, maybe it was natural to think that the clay from one place should be returned to that place after you have used the pot.

## Ways of Making Clay Pots

The paddle and anvil method of manufacture by joining and malleating small slabs rather than coils.

## Pottery Making Tools



*Iroquois bone pottery incising tool, c.1500-1550. The sides of the pointed upper end have been worn flat by grit in the clay. Notice the incised decorations on the tool which resemble those found on some clay pots. Height: 3 ¾ inches. Jefferson County, NY.*

(<http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/IroquoisVillage/slidetwoa.html>)

## Pottery Types

Archaeologists have invented a very complex matrix of time, materials and cultural changes to define the past. Identify the tribal affiliation and era of any one piece of pottery can be very difficult and time consuming. We will not go into the depth of their analysis.

However, archaeologist Richard MacNeish developed typology for classifying different styles of Iroquoian pottery in 1952. He based his typology on three main features:

- **Decoration** – What designs, motifs and symbols the artist used.
- **Tempering** – What the artist used to make the clay stronger.
- **Surface Finish** - How the artist treated the surface to complete the overall visual effect.

Archaeologists Gary Warwick (1984: 123-25) developed another way to describe the style of the pot that included the following features:

**Sherd Frequency:** number of decorated or mending sherds from the same vessel

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**Rim Form:** collared, uncollared or incipient collared

**Lip Form:** flat or rounded

**Angle of Lip to Interior:** acute, obtuse or right

**Lip Width** (mm): width of sherd at lip

**Rim Orientation:** inflaring, outflaring or straight

**Interior Profile:** concave, convex or straight

**Exterior Profile:** concave, convex or straight

**Collar Height** (mm): distance from base of collar to lip edge

**Collar Base Shape:** angled or rounded

**Collar Base Width** (mm): width of sherd at widest point of the collar base

**Exterior Motif & Technique:** method and pattern of decoration on exterior surface, used in place of the following when the location of the sherd(s) on the vessel cannot be determined (l: [length of each element in mm]; w: [width of each element in mm]; sd: [space density of repeated elements in mm])

**Collar Motif & Technique:** method and pattern of decoration on collar (l; w; sd [as above])

**Neck Motif & Technique:** method and pattern of decoration on neck (l; w; sd [as above])

**Shoulder Motif & Technique:** method and pattern of decoration on shoulder (l; w; sd [as above])

**Interior Motif & Technique:** method and pattern of decoration on interior surface (l; w; sd [as above])

**Lip Motif & Technique:** method and pattern of decoration on lip (l; w; sd [as above])

**Maximum Temper Size** (mm): maximum dimension of the largest visible piece of temper

Interior Carbon Encrustation: present or not present

**Type:** Iroquoian pottery decoration type

As a result he was able to divided into smaller groups the wider variety of styles produced across the territory of Hodinohso:ni, organizing them into locally defined examples, as outlined below:

**Cayadutta Incised** – Designs gouged out of the clay from the Mohawk village site named Cayadutta (in the Mohawk Valley east of Johnson)

**Otstungo Incised** - oblique lines and elliptical notches on the collar base



Richmond Incised

Wagoner Incised - interiorly notched rims and mid-collar decoration of opposed triangles of parallel lines

Syracuse Incised

Onondaga Triangular

Fonda Incised - horizontal lines just underneath the vertical incisions on the rims.

Cayuga Horizontal

Huron Incised

Lawson Incised - Lines on vessels are normally vertical or point up and to the right (most commonly found on Erie and Neutral sites in southwestern Ontario dating to the late prehistoric and historic periods (c. 1500 to 1687)

Lawson Opposed

Warminster Opposed

Long Point Horizontal

Seneca Barbed Collar

Black Necked - Oblique lines extend down and to the right along the neck, to a horizontal line at the shoulder of the vessel.

Middleport Oblique

Pound Necked

Pound Blank

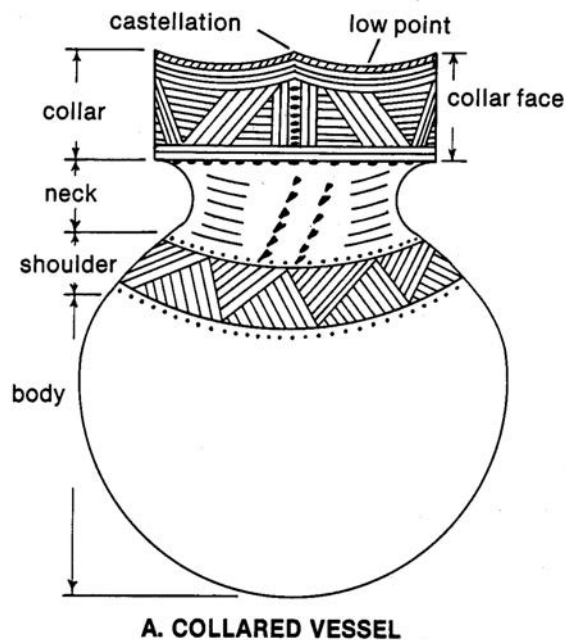
Ripley Triangular

### Other Styles

Rice Diagonal style

McFate Incised - incised, medium high to high bulbous collar with a slightly constricted neck attached to a globular body.

Iroquois Linear - motor habit employed to create the horizontals



### Scholars have given ceramic jars human associations in the naming of its parts:

Collar – the upper band of designs on the pot

Collar Face – the flattened section of the collar – usually four panels

Effigies – Animal, human or spirit figures on the collar

Castellation – the highest peak in the collar design

Neck – the indented section beneath the collar

Shoulder – The section that flares out from the neck

Body – the rounded bottom half of the pot

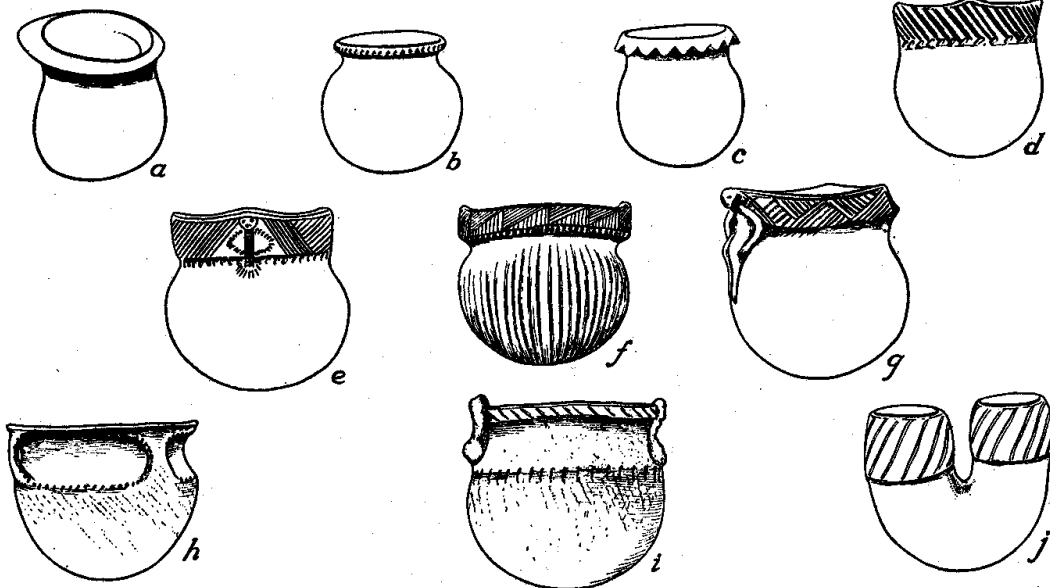
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900 AD – Early Iroquoian Pot, ROM 2005\_5736\_1

SKINNER—IROQUOIS ARCHEOLOGY

PL. III



SENECA POT FORMS

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**Selection for the New York State Museum**



Iroquois clay pot, c.1450-1500, found in a rock shelter. Jefferson County, NY



Mohawk Iroquois clay pot, c.1550-1600, found in a rock shelter. Hamilton County, NY



Mohawk Iroquois clay pot, c.1550-1575, excavated on the Klock site, Fulton County, NY.



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| <b>Traditions and Tribal Groups</b> |  |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Attributes</b>                   | <b>Iroquois Tradition</b>                      | <b>Algonquian Tradition</b>              |
| Castellations                       | Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga                       | Mohegan, Narragansett, Wampanoag         |
| Effigies                            | Seneca, Onondaga                               | Mohegan, Narragansett                    |
| Triangular Designs                  | Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga, St. Lawrence         | Mohegan, Pequot, Narragansett, Wampanoag |
| Decorated Collars                   | Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga, St. Lawrence         | Mohegan, Pequot, Narragansett, Wampanoag |
| Notched Collars                     | Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, St. Lawrence | Mohegan, Pequot, Narragansett, Wampanoag |
| Friiled Collars                     | Onondaga, Saint Lawrence, Susquehannock        | Mohegan, Narragansett                    |

*Late Woodland/Contact Period Ceramic Attributes and Traditions*

**CROSS-MENDING NORTHEASTERN CERAMIC TYPOLOGIES**

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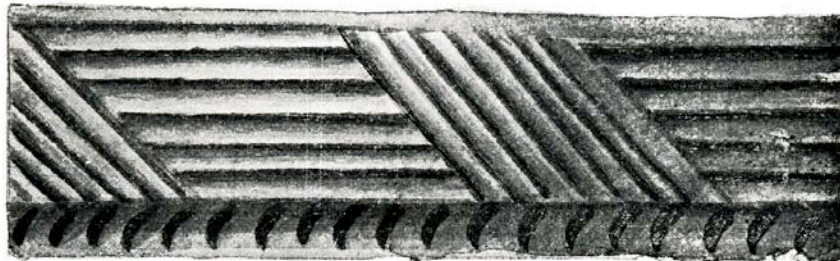
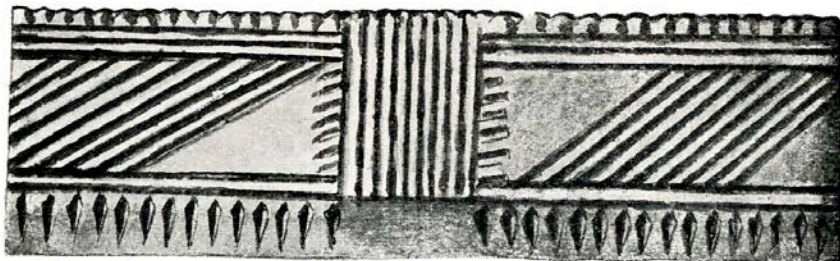
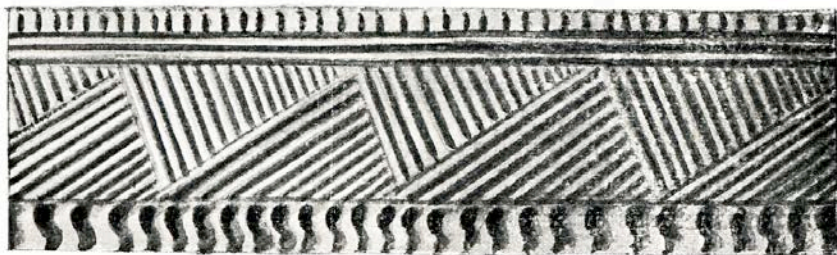
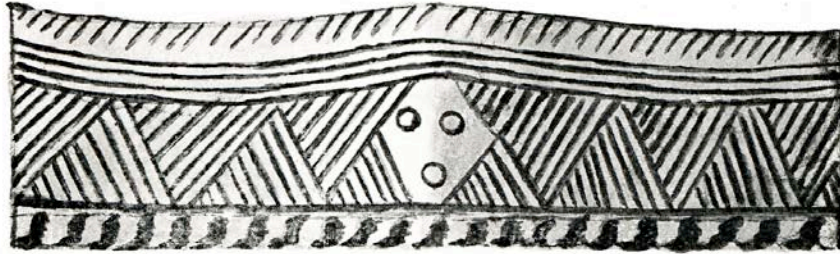
Illustrations by Tara Prindle

Hypertext by Thomas Plunkett

Paper presented at the 1994 Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association, Geneseo, New York.

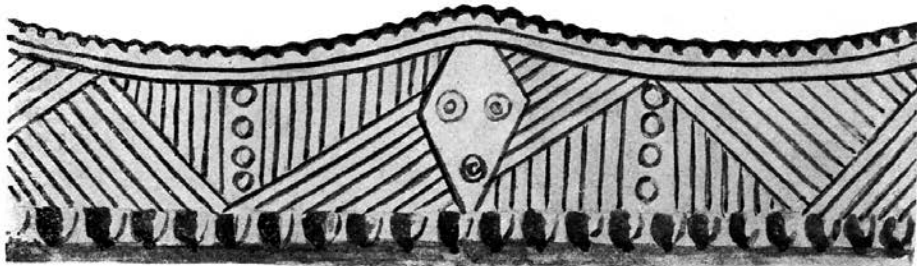
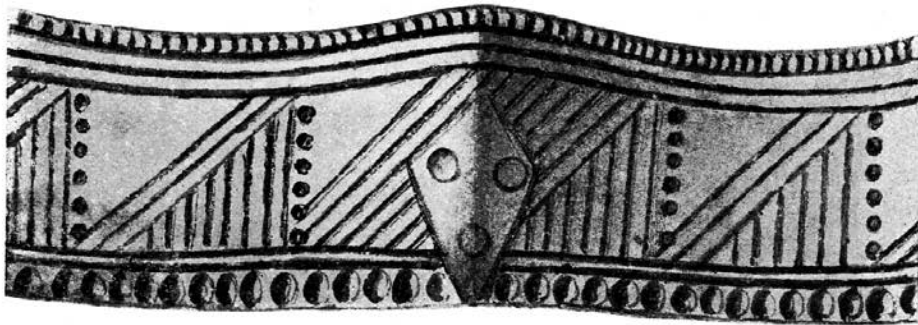
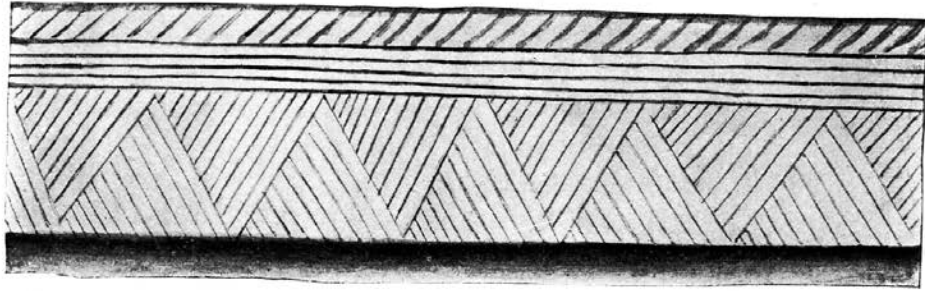
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Collar Designs



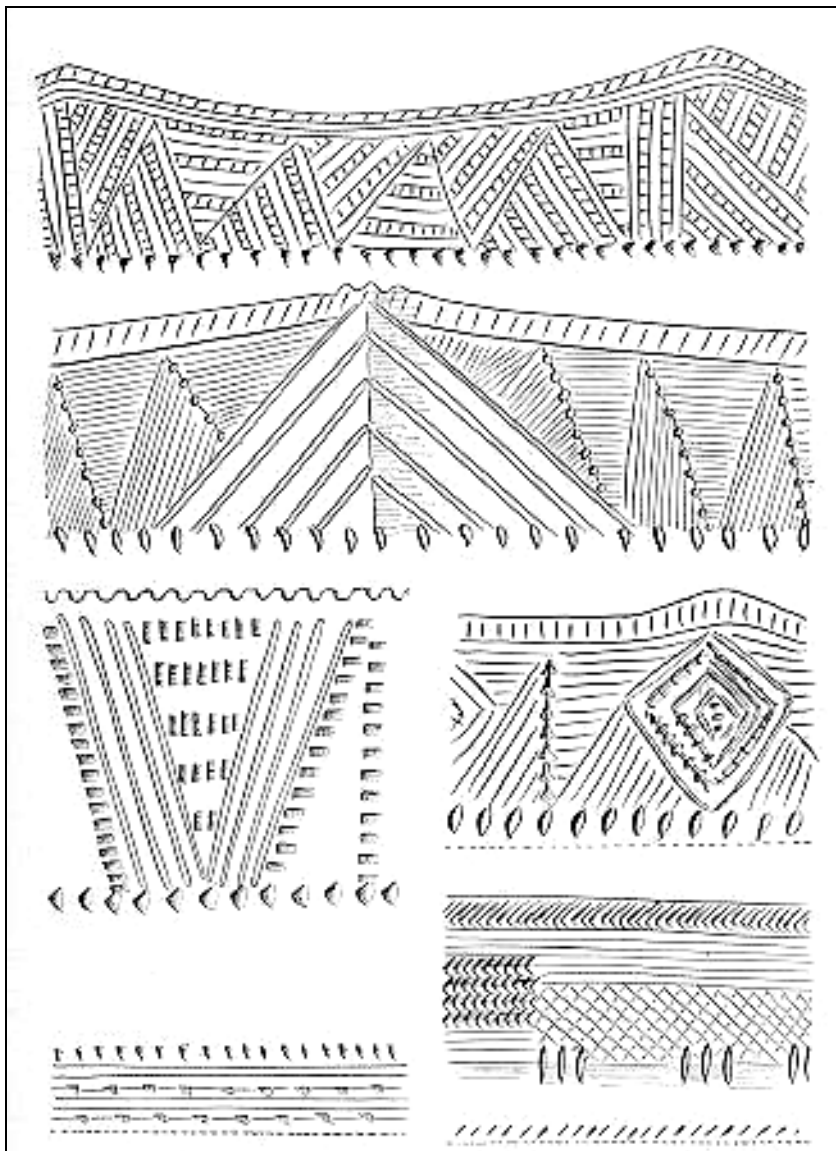
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*Incised Designs From Pottery Vessels*

a, b and d, designs from Iroquoian vessels; c, designs from an Algonkian vessel; e, design from a vessel of the Iroquoian type from a Connecticut rock-shelter, introduced here for comparison.

The Indians of Manhattan Island and Vicinity

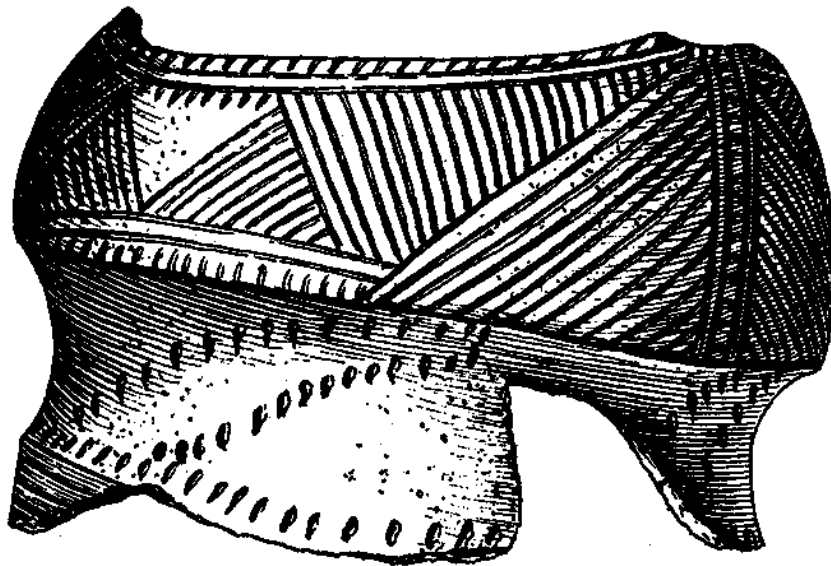
By Alanson Skinner

[American Museum Of Natural History](#)

Editor, Edmund Otis Hovey New York, Published by the Museum, September, 1909



1550 - Jefferson County, NY



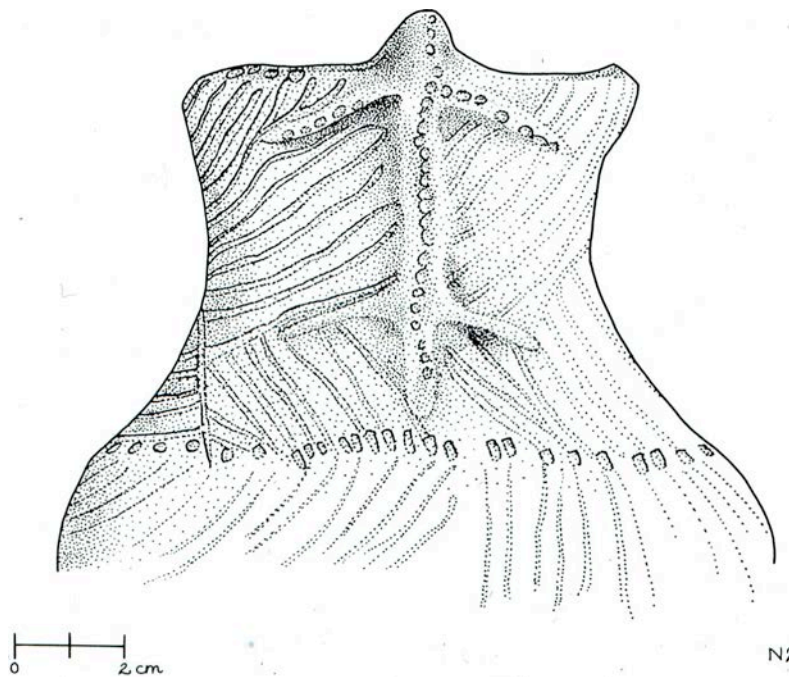
Onondaga Rim from broken pot

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This pot was found in eastern Ontario, near Perth, in the 1890s. It was made by an Iroquoian woman who carefully decorated the outside of the pot while it was still wet, using a sharp bone or stick. She decorated it with motifs made of lines and dots that had been handed down for generations and which indicated her identity. Archaeologists classify these decorations as St. Lawrence Iroquoian. Pots like this are durable and were used for cooking, by placing hot rocks in the food inside the pot. (ROM, <http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/edu/ViewLoitLo.do;jsessionid=359486ED881B379091249C075727AFB7?method=preview&lang=EN&id=243>)





**1450-1580 - Iroquoian Pot, Robert Hall Fleming Museum**



**1500 - Cayuga Pot**



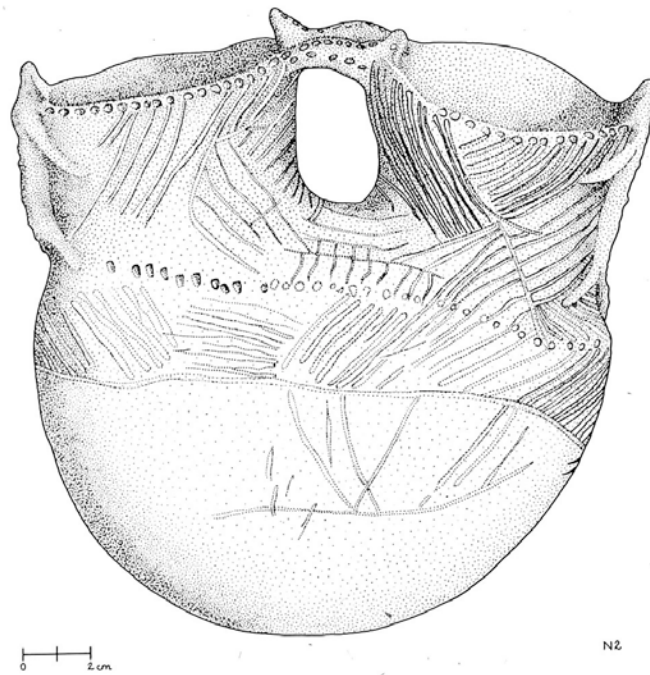
St. Lawrence Pot



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**Double Mouth Jars**



**Tuscarora Jar, North Carolina**

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**Indigenous Knowledge Centre - Hodinohso:ni Art Lessons**

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