

Forty Years Later:
A Reexamination of Maricopa Pottery

by

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ABSTRACT

The Maricopa produce one of the most recognizable types of pottery made in Arizona. Since the late nineteenth century, the ware has been manufactured for sale, and a small number of individuals continue to produce the pottery today. Over the past forty years, the amount of pottery in museum and private collections has increased dramatically. Studying these new collections changes the way in which developments in the pottery are understood.

Previous scholarship identified three phases of development, including a pottery revival in the late 1930s during which the involvement of government and museum personnel resulted in the improvement of the ware and a change in style. An analysis of expanded pottery collections shows that this period was not a revival, but rather part of a more gradual continuum. Hindsight shows that the activities of the 1930s served to publicize Maricopa potters, resulting in an increasingly collectible pottery.

One collector, Adele Cheatham of Laveen, Arizona, compiled a collection that helps to shed light on developments in the 1960s and 1970s demonstrating that there were relationships between the potters' community and residents of Laveen. This indicates that for women in these settlements the manufacture and sale of Maricopa pottery was a common interest and created deeper bonds, some of which developed into close friendships. The eight different potters represented in the Cheatham Collection highlight a shift in generations within the potter

community, showing the importance of teaching and family relationships in transmitting the knowledge of the craft to the next generation.

These relationships have continued to change as the number of potters has dwindled, and instruction of the craft has transitioned from one that was learned in a home setting to one that is increasingly introduced in a classroom. At the same time, this historically female associated craft has shifted to one where men are actively producing pottery. Changes in teaching style, the people producing the pottery and decorative techniques indicate that Maricopa pottery is an art in transition.

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CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1994, the publication of a small popular history, *Dirt for Making Things*, brought a lot of excitement to Maricopa potters and individuals in the museum community of central Arizona.¹ In the book, written by Janet Stoeppelmann, Mary Fernald recounted the story of her interaction with Maricopa potters Mabel Sunn and Ida Redbird whom she met during the early 1970s while conducting research for her Master's thesis. This 1973 anthropology thesis, "A Study of Maricopa Pottery" remains the only academic study on the pottery.² Using museum pottery collections, Fernald identified three phases in the historical development of Maricopa pottery: an early period from 1885 to 1912 when the pottery transitioned from utilitarian ware to a decorative product for sale, a "revival" period from 1937 to 1941 in which the involvement of governmental and museum personnel resulted in an improvement in the quality of the potters' work, and the modern period of the early 1970s when Fernald conducted her research.

Outside of this, written historical documentation on Maricopa pottery is sparse, but the pottery itself serves as an important source of information. During the past forty years, Maricopa pottery collections have

¹ Janet Stoeppelmann, *Dirt for Making Things: An Apprenticeship in Maricopa Pottery* (Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing, 1995).

² Mary L. Fernald, "A Study of Maricopa Pottery" (MA thesis, Arizona State University, 1973).

expanded greatly. Studying these new collections reveals new understanding of the way that the pottery has developed and the influences behind these changes. This thesis is the summary of a project which was begun to research and document a private collection of Maricopa pottery, the Cheatham Collection. Pueblo Grande Museum (PGM) in Phoenix borrowed this collection to use at the center of an upcoming exhibit. To go along with the exhibit, research was done into the background of the collection with the intent to produce a collection catalog. As part of this research other museum collections and historical documentation were surveyed. Interviews were also conducted with active Maricopa potters and people with knowledge of Maricopa pottery.

The historical research into the background of Maricopa pottery makes up the first part of this study. By reexamining other museum collections and newly available sources it becomes clear that there were changes occurring outside of the three development periods identified by Fernald and that rethinking these periods is in order. The second chapter is a condensed museum catalog of the Cheatham Collection. This format helps to examine the environment in which the potters lived and focus more closely on individual potters, topics which have been excluded in the literature. The catalog demonstrates that pottery was something that connected the potters of Maricopa Colony to individuals outside of their

community, particularly the women of Laveen, Arizona.³ The final chapter was the result of the interviews conducted in researching the Cheatham Collection, and these interviews while shedding little light on the collection itself, did reveal current changes in the way that knowledge of Maricopa pottery is produced, who is making the pottery and how the appearance of the pottery is changing today.

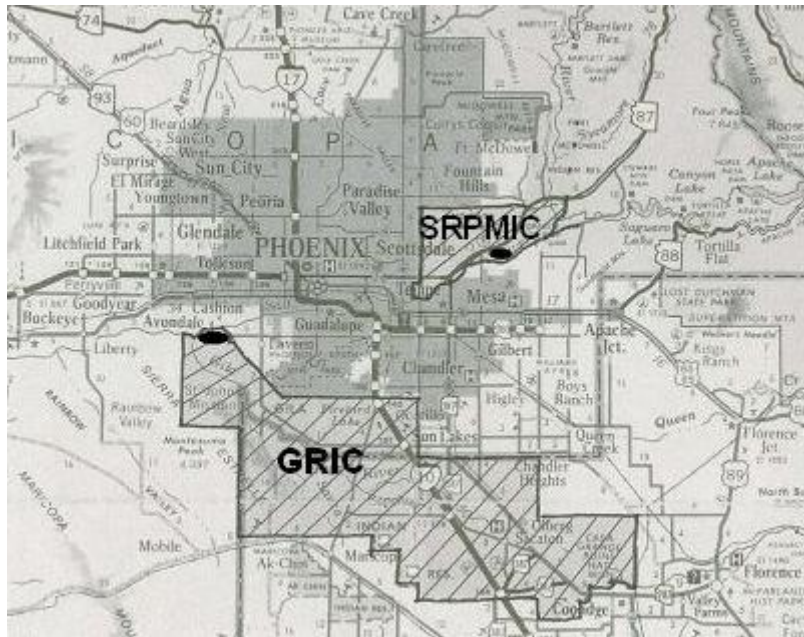


Figure 1.1 – GRIC and SRPMIC in relation to Phoenix. The two black ovals are approximate locations of the Maricopa settlements. Maricopa Colony in the GRIC and Lehi in the SRPMIC.

The Maricopa produce one of the most recognizable types of pottery made in central Arizona, and historically the production of this craft has been restricted to women. The ceramic is characterized by a highly

³ Maricopa Colony is also referred to as Maricopa Village in the historical record. Sometimes it is also referred to as Laveen or simply Maricopa. Maricopa Colony will be used throughout this paper since that is how this area is currently known, the area is now covered by District 7 of the Gila River Indian Community.

polished red or cream colored surface, which is usually ornamented with black designs. Manufacturing is entirely by hand, utilizing the paddle-and-anvil technique, a process which Fernald extensively documented ethnographically. In 1973, Mary Fernald identified Maricopa pottery as a dying craft, and today only a handful of people produce the pottery.

The people identified as the Maricopa are an American Indian tribe made up of less than 500 individuals that share reservation land with the more numerous, culturally distinct Pima. The majority of the Maricopa live in two separate communities, the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) and the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC), both located next to metropolitan Phoenix, Arizona. The GRIC and SRPMIC, while ethnically the same, are politically distinct, a process that began in 1879 when the United States (U.S.) government created a second Pima-Maricopa reservation along the Salt River. The GRIC group of Maricopa refer to themselves as the Pee Posh meaning “the people” and the GRIC Pima refer to themselves as Akimel O’odham (people of the river). The SRPMIC Maricopa refer to themselves more specifically as the Xalychidom Piipaash (people who live toward the water), and the SRPMIC Pima refer to themselves as Akimel O’Odham (or Akimel Au-Authm).⁴

These many different nomenclatures exist; however, only the terms

⁴ Veronica E. Tiller, ed., *Tiller’s Guide to Indian Country: Economic Profiles of American Indian Reservations*, (Albuquerque: Bow Arrow Publishing Co., 2005), 306, 345; there are many different spellings and capitalizations of O’Odham. Xalychidom is an alternate spelling of Halchidhoma which is the spelling that will be used in the remainder of this paper as it is what has been used in the historical sources.

Maricopa and Pima will be used in this paper for the purpose of clarity and because they are the names most commonly used in published sources.

In the early historical record, locating the Maricopa is not a clear-cut task and the attempt to trace them has been a major theme in scholarly literature. The term “Maricopa” first appears in 1846 in documents from the Mexican-American War’s Kearny Expedition, and broadly refers to all the people who speak a Yuman language and live in the Salt and Gila River valleys.⁵ These Yuman speaking people originally moved from the lower Gila and Colorado River area, migrating up to the area where the Gila and Salt Rivers meet.⁶ Though now subsumed under the name Maricopa, these people were actually separate bands with their own identities. While more complex distinctions exist, there are five different bands whose names appear in the historical documentation: the Opa (also referred to as the Maricopa), Kaveltcadom (also referred to as the Cocomaricopa), Halchidhoma, Halyikwamai and Kohuana (also spelled Kahwan).⁷

⁵ Maricopa is an English version of the Spanish term Cocomaricopa possibly from a similar sounding Piman word. Another popularly held theory is that Maricopa is the English version of the Spanish word “mariposa” meaning butterfly. Stoepelmann, xi.

⁶ For an informative article documenting the traditional Maricopa accounting of their arrival in the Salt and Gila River Valleys see Leroy Cameron et al., “Estrella Dawn: The Origin of the Maricopa,” *Journal of the Southwest* 36, no. 1 (Spring, 1994) 54-75.

⁷ The Kearny expedition refers to what is commonly called The Army of the West, led by Stephen Kearny during the Mexican-American War, they passed through the Pima and Maricopa settlements on route from Sante Fe to San Diego; Paul H. Ezell, *The Maricopas: An Identification from Documentary Sources* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1963), 9, 21; Leslie Spier, *Yuman Tribes of the Gila River* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1933; reprint 1970), 2, (page citations are to the reprint

Beginning in the 1600s, the Opa and Cocomaricopa migrated from the Colorado River slowly moving east along the Gila River. By the early 1800s, these Maricopa settled in the Salt and Gila River valleys and were joined in the 1830s by groups of Halchidhoma, Halyikwamai and Kohuana.⁸ The Maricopa lived in close proximity to the Pima, a people who spoke a dialect from the Uto-Aztecan language family. While culturally and historically distinct, these two ethnic groups have been living in geographic proximity for over 200 years and are now politically united, as a result their histories are often intermixed.

Early documentation of the Maricopa is spread over missionary letters dating from the 1600s, as well as expeditionary journals and government reports dating from the mid-1800s, but not until the last decades of the nineteenth century did scholarly publications about the Pima and Maricopa appear. During that period, a surge in anthropological studies, particularly in “salvage anthropology” which focused on documenting native cultures before they disappeared, resulted in a large number of professional and amateur studies. Ethnographies, based on participant observation field work, make up the bulk of these early sources. Ethnographic studies can be neatly summed up as “...the research technique of going to the people it studies for direct observation

edition); John P. Wilson, *Peoples of the Middle Gila: A Documentary History of the Pimas and Maricopas, 1500's – 1945* (Las Cruces, NM: John P. Wilson, 1999), I-5, VI-10.

⁸ Ezell, 10, 18; Spier, 1933, 14, 18, 35, 46; Wilson, I-6, III-10, V-18.

and detailed recording of new data, rather than relying mainly on documents, questionnaires or previously published materials.”⁹ As a whole, ethnographies attempt to describe the entire lives of the people they document, including historical, religious, social and economic data. As such, ethnographies are qualitative rather than quantitative sources, based on an outsider’s understanding or experience of a culture.

The Smithsonian Institution published the first ethnographic study on the Pima in 1871. Written by Frederick Grossman, who served as Indian Agent for the Pima and Maricopa from 1869 to 1871, the article focuses on Pima creation stories, religious beliefs, historical accounts and daily life.¹⁰ Thirty years later, a medical doctor named Ales Hrdlička published a set of observations of the Pimas on the Gila River Indian Reservation. He addressed issues of health, religion, habitation, customs and “manufactures,” including a brief mention of pottery.¹¹ Between 1901 and 1902, Frank Russell from Harvard University conducted research on the Pima for the Bureau of American Ethnology, a branch of the Smithsonian Institution that collected artifacts and ethnographies of American Indians. *The Pima Indians* remains the preeminent source on

⁹ Bernard L. Fontana, et al, *Papago Indian Pottery* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), vii.

¹⁰ Frederick E. Grossman, “The Pima Indians of Arizona,” *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution Showing the Operation, Expenditures and Conditions of the Institution, for the Year Ended 1871* (1871), 407-419.

¹¹ Aleš Hrdlička, “Notes on the Pima of Arizona,” *American Anthropologist* 8, no. 1 (January – March 1906): 39-46.

Pima culture and history.¹² Russell's study places particular emphasis on material culture and linguistics by documenting crafts, songs and stories. Pottery manufacture is addressed, and Russell notes that the quantity of ceramics produced by the Pima was dwindling. Although focusing on the Pima, Russell mentions the Maricopa in several sections, discussing a few of their cultural differences as well as their social and political relationship with the Pima. Following Russell, a cluster of small anthropological publications appeared in the early twentieth century with topics ranging from material culture to sociology.¹³

Until the 1930s, scholarly documentation of the Maricopa existed as part of ethnographic studies of the Pima. Leslie Spier, an anthropologist funded by the University of Chicago and Yale University, published *Yuman Tribes of the Gila River* in 1933 and established the study of the Maricopa as a distinct field. Leslie Spier argued that "The Maricopa have been historically linked with the adjacent Pima. For this reason they have been invariably dismissed as merely Pima-like by earlier writers..."¹⁴ Spier focused on subsistence, architecture, crafts, symbols, social relations,

¹² Frank Russell, *The Pima Indians*, re-edition (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975).

¹³ For example, J.F. Breazeale, *The Pima and His Basket* (Tucson: Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society, 1923); Julian Hayden, "Notes on Pima Pottery Making" *The Kiva* Vol 24, no. 3 (1959):10-16; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service Field Division of Education, *Material Culture of the Pima, Papago, and Western Apache with Suggestions for Museum Displays*, by Ralph Beals, (Berkeley, CA: 1934).

¹⁴ Leslie Spier, *Yuman Tribes of the Gila River* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1933; reprint 1970), x.

religious beliefs and origin stories. Most notably, he recorded a basic history of the migrations of the different bands of Maricopa. Using evidence from the earliest written accounts as well as the accounts of the people themselves, Spier attempts to trace both the people and the term “Maricopa” through history. The variations on names, spellings and general confusion in early reports make this task particularly difficult, and this type of linguistic approach dominated the studies of the Maricopa into the 1960s.¹⁵

Spier’s book is still the major source for information on Maricopa culture. One particular strength of his work is the documentation of tales or stories as relayed by interpreters. *Yuman Tribes of the Gila River* also served as the sole source on Maricopa pottery until the writing of Fernald’s thesis. It contains only seven pages of information and a few illustrations but nevertheless highlights the critical areas of study which Fernald would later follow: form compared to function, documentation of the manufacturing process and the cultural mores associated with pottery production.

While ethnographies contain some historical information, projects sponsored by the federal government in the 1930s are also useful

¹⁵ Multiple later sources focused on this theme, all are anthropological or archaeological including Leslie Spier, *Cultural Relations of the Gila River and Lower Colorado Tribes*, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, no. 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936; Reprint, New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1970); Albert H. Schroeder, “Documentary Evidence Pertaining to the Early Historic Period of Southern Arizona,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (April 1952): 137-167; Paul H. Ezell, *The Maricopas an Identification from Documentary Sources*, Anthropological Papers of the University of Arizona, no. 6 (Tucson, The University of Arizona Press 1963).

sources. U.S. government activity on the reservations increased as a result of irrigation projects from the previous decade and relief agencies to combat the Great Depression. Reports prepared in 1936 by the U.S. Soil Conservation and Technical Cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (TC-BIA) produced an economic snapshot of communities on the GRIC, and specifically one for Maricopa Colony providing detailed information that sheds light on the role of pottery production. Indian Service Home Extension Agents also played an active role on the reservations. Agent Elisabeth Hart worked directly with Maricopa women and left a set of letters that present a unique, albeit paternalistic, view of pottery production. As a whole, these sources focus more on the economic rather than cultural aspects of life, filling a gap left by ethnographic studies.¹⁶

Another group of sources involve land use and water rights. These typically focus on the historic agreements made between the tribes and United States government about disputed boundaries of the reservations and access to natural resources. These studies are particularly useful in that they consolidate and reprint primary source materials that are otherwise available only in widely dispersed archival contexts. The Indian

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture. Soil Conservation Service and Technical Cooperation. Bureau of Indian Affairs. *Community Reports: Gila River Pima Reservation*. Adams, Lucy Wilcox, ed. Albuquerque: October, 1936. US Soil Conservation Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and Technical Cooperation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Pima Economy*, Adams, Lucy Wilcox, Albuquerque: 1936, US Soil Conservation Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; Elisabeth Hart letters, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix; Elisabeth Hart letters, Fred Wilson Collection, 1907-1967, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

Claims Commission (ICC) Act of 1946, allowed tribes to sue the government for grievances and, in the case of the GRIC and SRPMIC communities, for land and water rights.¹⁷ As background for ICC hearings, the government contracted with researchers to prepare reports. The 1961 ICC report by two Southwestern anthropologists, Robert Hackenberg and Bernard Fontana both from the University of Arizona, is an ethno-history that combines historical documents and the aforementioned ethnographies. The authors determined the locations and use patterns of the land now covered by the GRIC.¹⁸ Other similar classes of sources include court cases concerning gaming, land and water rights, environmental assessments related to roadway construction and archaeological site reports.¹⁹

Recently, the GRIC commissioned a history with the purpose of documenting water rights to the Gila River. Covering the period of 1500 to 1945, John Wilson's *Peoples of the Middle Gila* (1999) extensively compiles existing historical documentation to create a picture of the

¹⁷ Decisions were decided in a series of cases in the 1970s and left many issues unresolved, water rights claims continue to be an issue; Edward B. Liebow, "A Sense of Place: Urban Indians and the History of Pan-Tribal Institutions in Phoenix, Arizona" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1986), 49.

¹⁸ Reprinted as: Robert A. Hackenburg, *Pima Maricopa Indians: Aboriginal Land Use and Occupancy of the Pima-Maricopa Indians*, 2 vols. (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1974).

¹⁹ For example Glen E. Rice, ed., *Alicia the History of a Piman Homestead* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, 1983); M. Kyle Woodson, ed., *Archaeological Investigations at the Sweetwater Site on the Gila River Indian Community* (Sacaton, AZ: Gila River Indian Community, 2002); Earl Zarbin, *Let the Record Show: Gila River Indian Reservation Water Rights and the Central Arizona Project* (Tempe, AZ: Earl Zarbin, 2004).

political, economic and ecological development of the GRIC. A classic case of gray literature, these volumes were printed privately by the author and only two copies are available in libraries, one at New Mexico State University and the other at Harvard University.²⁰ While Wilson's work greatly expands the study of Maricopa history, little scholarly work has been published on the period after 1945. A short, well-researched article by Henry Harwell and Marsha Kelly appears in *The Handbook of North American Indians* from 1983 and *The Indians of North America* series released a book on the Pima-Maricopa in 1989, both serve well for a general overview but lack much interpretive context.²¹ Most other information is scattered across small community and tribal publications, newspaper articles and general history books.

In summary, ethnographies dating to the first half of the twentieth century represent most of the scholarly work on Maricopa culture and history. Recently several historical studies have emerged, but the bulk of documentation has been conducted by anthropologists. A few of these ethnographic sources discuss pottery as one small part of life in the community and pay particular attention to vessel construction and use.

²⁰ John P. Wilson, *Peoples of the Middle Gila: A Documentary History of the Pimas and Maricopas, 1500's – 1945* (Las Cruces, NM: John P. Wilson, 1999).

²¹ Henry Harwell and Marsha Kelly, "Maricopa," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 10, ed. William Sturtevant (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983); Henry F. Dobyns, *The Pima-Maricopa* (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989).

Only one scholarly piece focuses exclusively on Maricopa pottery, Mary Fernald's 1973 thesis.

Fernald's work is part ethnographic pottery study and part art history. She based her conclusions on the Maricopa pottery collections housed at Arizona State Museum (ASM) in Tucson, the Heard Museum in Phoenix, and Pueblo Grande Museum (PGM) in Phoenix, as well as pottery on the commercial market at an Indian art store in Phoenix. Her other primary source was a document collection privately held by Byron Harvey, the grandson of Fred Harvey, the Southwest hotel and restaurant magnate. These letters are now held in the Arizona Collection at Arizona State University (ASU) and are available to the public. These collections contain letters and documentation by City of Phoenix Archaeologist Odd Halseth from Pueblo Grande Museum, U.S. Indian Service Home Extension Agent Elisabeth Hart and Indian art dealer Fred Wilson.

The documents detail the period from 1936 to 1941 when Hart, Halseth and Wilson worked with Maricopa potters in an effort to create a pottery "revival." Activities included the distribution of a quality standards checklist emphasizing traits like vessel symmetry, the attempt to start a pottery selling cooperative and a series of publicity events including exhibits and demonstrations.²² Letters note the "drastic improvement" in Maricopa pottery displayed at the 1938 Gallup Inter-Tribal Ceremonial, a large Indian art fair in New Mexico. The museum collections that Fernald

²² See Chapter 2 for a summary of these activities.

surveyed spanned the period from 1885 to 1912 and from 1937 to 1941, with only three vessels dating to the years in between. This led her to conclude that a series of stylistic differences between pieces from the early period and those from the late 1930s when Hart, Halseth and Wilson were active constituted a pottery revival and that this revival was the result of this external intervention.²³

For her ethnographic research, Fernald observed an active potter and detailed the manufacturing of vessels, producing an accurate step-by-step process, later consolidated in *Dirt for Making Things*. Over the past forty years, techniques of manufacture have not changed greatly, and while the process varies by potter, Fernald's ethnographic documentation stands the test of time. Fernald also compared Maricopa pottery to that produced by adjacent tribes concluding that Maricopa techniques are more similar to those used by the Pima and Papago rather than the Yuma (Quechan) and Mohave tribes that share a more similar linguistic heritage. Likewise, she discusses the differences between the ceramics of the Maricopa and the better known pottery of the Hopi and the New Mexican Pueblos, concluding that they are completely different except for their shared experience of a pottery revival.²⁴ She argues that the reason that Maricopa pottery is so varied and unique is the result of informal structure

²³ Fernald, 100.

²⁴ Fernald, 26-34, 99-101.

within the Maricopa community, allowing the potter to freely express themselves.²⁵

Outside of Fernald's thesis, non-archaeological studies specific to historic Central Arizonan ceramics are few. One of the most notable is a 1962 monograph on Papago pottery.²⁶ The authors, all anthropologists, argue that "pottery most readily relates to the economic aspects of a culture: production, distribution and consumption; sex division of labor; entry into a cash market and so forth. The forms of pots reflect their use, and their use reflects numerous aspects of their culture as a whole."²⁷ This book contextualizes Papago pottery by comparing it to wares manufactured by adjacent tribes. The analysis of Maricopa pottery is brief and not very instructional; however, the authors make a compelling argument concerning the transition from utilitarian pottery to pottery made for sale, stating that "[i]f changes in pottery forms occur, one can rest almost assured that there are changes in other areas of cultural life as well."²⁸ This argument is one of the continuing themes that run through Fernald's thesis and the other less comprehensive sources.

²⁵ Fernald,

²⁶ The group referred to in this paper as the Papago call themselves the Tohono O'odham.

²⁷ Bernard L. Fontana, et al, *Papago Indian Pottery* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 133.

²⁸ Fontana et al., 134.

Object specific publications produced by museums and art collectors also are available as resources. Catalogs are routine museum publications, which document the history of objects, the life of the original collector and the importance of the collection as a whole. The guides vary greatly in style and analytical quality; only a few address Maricopa pottery and always as a segment of a larger collection. Usually grouped with other Southwestern pottery, Maricopa pieces generally are overshadowed by prehistoric artifacts and better-known historic wares, like those produced by the Pueblo potters.²⁹ Collection catalogs serve an important function for museums and the public as a whole in that they allow access to materials often inaccessible to the public.

Other object-focused resources include popular art books and coffee-table style publications. These began appearing in the 1960s; private collectors who wanted to become savvier in the dealer-buyer world are the target audience for these publications. Most recently, two picture-heavy art books specifically address Maricopa pottery. The first book, *Southwestern Pottery* (1996), is an instruction guide for people interested in private collecting; the second, *The Desert Southwest* (2006), is a popular pictorial history.³⁰ Both of these books are excellent introductions

²⁹ Sherry C. Maurer, ed., *The Olson-Brandelle North American Indian Art Collection at Augustana College* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana College, 2010); Dorothy K Washburn, ed., and Robert Sayers, final ed., *The Elkus Collection: Southwestern Indian Art*. California Academy of Sciences. (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984).

³⁰ John W. Barry, *American Indian Pottery an Identification and Value Guide, Second Edition* (Florence: Books Americana, 1984); Allen Hayes and John Blom, *Southwestern*

to Maricopa pottery but do not cite sources and provide much of the same information presented in Fernald's two works. However, like museum collection guides, these art books serve to illustrate pieces in public and private hands, allowing for comparison with existing collections.

A few short articles deal specifically with Maricopa pottery. Of these, most are written by museum professionals from various institutions across the Southwest.³¹ Like the small pottery sections in the larger ethnographies, the majority of these articles focus on the manufacturing process. In 2000, Curator Jonathan Reyman of the Illinois State Museum (ISM) wrote a short, but important article, on the pottery of Maricopa potter Mary Juan noting that the ISM's Condell collection had pieces that predated her known work.³² In addition to professional journals, popular magazines like *Arizona Highways* also have carried articles; most focus on Maricopa potters and rely heavily on photographs.³³

Pottery: Anasazi to Zuni (Flagstaff: Northland Publishing Co., 1996); Allan Hayes and Carol Hayes *The Desert Southwest: Four Thousand Years of Life and Art* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2006); Clara Lee Tanner, *Southwest Indian Craft Arts* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1968).

³¹ For examples of short articles on Maricopa pottery by museum professionals see David Kayser, "Take a Smooth Pebble and Hard Work: That's Maricopa Pottery," *El Palacio*, 77, no. 1 (1970): 25-32; Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe, New Mexico Presents "Modern Maricopa Pottery" (28 November 1943).

³² Jonathan E. Reyman, "Mary Juan, Maricopa Potter" *The Living Museum* 62, no. 1-2 (2000): 18-21.

³³ Peter T. Houlihan "Southwest Pottery Today" *Arizona Highways* L, no. 5 (May 1974): 2-6, 24-25; Barry Goldwater "Maricopas" *Arizona Highways* XVI, no. 6 (June 1940); Gladys and Ted Sayles "The Pottery of Ida Redbird" *Arizona Highways* XXIV, no. 1 (January 1948): 28-31.

As sparse as information is on the history of Maricopa pottery, there is even less information available about the individual potters. The first discussion of a named potter occurs in the preface to J.F. Breazeale's material culture publication *The Pima and His Basket* from 1923.³⁴ Previous to this, the identities of individual potters are unknown. A few of the best-known potters from the mid-twentieth century are relatively well-documented. Multiple images, newspaper and magazine articles dating from the 1930s to the 1970s, feature Ida Redbird and Mary Juan, who are the most widely recognized Maricopa potters.³⁵ However, information about other potters, particularly those producing during the Great Depression, is almost non-existent. Fernald documented potters active in the 1970s, mostly Mabel Sunn and, to a lesser degree, her daughter Barbara Johnson, and briefly Ida Redbird. A few of the potters active in the later part of the twentieth and early-twenty-first century, like Phyllis Cerna and Dorothea Sunn-Avery, have been featured in multiple newspaper articles.³⁶ Beyond this, little is known about the potters beyond the pieces they created.

³⁴ J.F. Breazeale, *The Pima and His Basket* (Tucson: Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society, 1923).

³⁵ These articles are detailed in Chapter 2.

³⁶ "Maricopa Potter Continues Traditions Taught by Mother," *Tri-Valley Dispatch*, Casa Grande, Arizona, 10 and 11 February 1988; Angela Cara Pancrazio, "Potter's Work Shapes Life: Tradition Helps Gila River Woman get Off Welfare," *Arizona Republic*, 19 November 2004; Lisa Nicita, Crafting A Cultural Revival :Resort A Showplace For Gila River Artisans, Inspiring Youth To Return To Tradition, *Arizona Republic*, 24 October 2007.

Ethnographic sources on the Maricopa pay particular attention to songs and stories, dedicating less time to a specific type of craft like pottery. Historically oriented analyses tend to focus more heavily on migration, land use, and the political relationships between the tribes and the U.S. government. Pottery specific sources generally focus on the manufacturing sequence but overlook information about the potters themselves or the reasons they produce pottery and where it goes on the market.

Fernald's thesis provides important information on Maricopa pottery and its background; her work also reveals the types of sources and methodology that must be followed to produce a successful study. Since pottery is a tangible product, any study of it must first look at the vessels. Secondly, since the pottery is made by people, the potters themselves must be identified and consulted. Finally, the available historical documentation needs to be tracked down and analyzed.

In the summer of 2009, Pueblo Grande Museum (PGM) in Phoenix was approached about a private collection of Maricopa pottery. This collection was previously unknown to the museum community. Originally collected by Adele Cheatham, a long time resident of Laveen, the grouping contains forty-one pieces of Maricopa pottery of a wide variety of shapes and sizes, most dating to the 1960s and 1970s. PGM borrowed the collection, with the intent of conducting research and featuring it in an upcoming exhibit.

Initial research began by collecting information about known pottery collections in order to compare the pieces in the Cheatham Collection to others by the same artists. For her thesis, Fernald surveyed collections at PGM, Arizona State Museum (ASM) and the Heard Museum. Because of the later date of the Cheatham Collection, pieces from the earliest period of Maricopa pottery were excluded from the collections survey. PGM, ASM and the Heard Museum still have the largest collections of Maricopa pottery in the museum community, just as they did during Fernald's research in the 1970s, but over the past forty years, those collections have changed drastically.

In 1972, Fernald identified only twelve pieces of post-1912 Maricopa pottery at PGM, all from the revival period. Today, the museum has over 100 pieces that date to the 1930s or later. In addition to an expanded pottery collection, the museum holds some original source material, including part of Elisabeth Hart's field journal from her work with the GRIC and SRPMIC. The museum also curates series of photographs dating from 1938 to 1940 documenting the activities of Ida Redbird, Mary Juan and a third unidentified potter. The museum photo collection from the late-twentieth century also contains some images of several potters including Malinda Redbird and Phyllis Cerna conducting workshops for PGM during the 1980s and 1990s.

As of 2009, the Heard Museum collection includes approximately seventy pieces from the revival period or later, a huge change from the

three pieces identified by Fernald. Other than vertical files that contain copies of magazine articles, the Heard Museum lacks written primary source material; however, their photographic archives include some new information. Two accessions of Barry Goldwater photographs contain approximately twenty images of potters, some of which were used in articles and the book *Dirt for Making Things*. Additionally, a partially-processed photographic collection from Fred Wilson, the dealer whom Fernald documented in her thesis, demonstrates the activity of potters involved in previously undocumented publicity events. Finally, the “Native American Artists” image grouping contains images of both Ida Redbird and Mary Juan in the final years of their lives.

Likewise, the collections at ASM have changed drastically since Fernald viewed them. She identified only two pieces of revival period pottery, but today there are at least fifty in permanent storage. In 1976, ASM acquired pieces collected by the Lindermans who were school teachers in Maricopa Colony. The accession includes unsigned pottery and letters from some of the potters active in the 1920s and early 1930s. In addition, ASM also holds the Robert Sayles photograph collection. Sayles, who was the museum photographer for ASM in the 1940s, documented Ida Redbird collecting and processing clay, some of these images were used in a corresponding 1948 *Arizona Highways* article.

Other museums have small collections of Maricopa pottery and related images. The Huhugam Ki Museum, part of the SRPMIC, has an

excellent and growing collection of pieces dating from the 1930s onward and has made the collecting of Maricopa pottery one of its prime foci. Other small pottery holdings outside of the state of Arizona also include some related material that is available through exhibit catalogs, and several museums in California own a few images of Maricopa potters, mostly Mary Juan, Ida Redbird and a few unidentified women.³⁷ All of this material, including previous research conducted by the Curator of Collections at PGM, has been used as sources in this thesis.

Mary Fernald was contacted and consulted to discuss her experiences and pottery collection. During the conversation, Fernald recalled a letter sent to her by Barry Goldwater shortly after the publication of *Dirt for Making Things*. In the letter, Goldwater recalled filming some Maricopa potters decades earlier. The Arizona Historical Foundation (AHF) at ASU holds a Goldwater collection. After searching through AHF's finding aids, a video cassette duplicate of a reel-to-reel film was discovered and contained a clip entitled "Maricopa Pottery." This video, while lacking sound, shows a woman going through the steps of

³⁷ Examples of other collections include those at GRIC's Huhugam Heritage Center, the Denver Art Museum, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, the University of Kansas, Santa Fe's The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology, San Diego's Museum of Man, San Francisco's California Academy of Sciences, Seattle's The Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, Tulsa's Gilcrease Museum. It should also be noted that the SRPMIC's casinos hold excellent collections of Maricopa pottery which are displayed in public spaces. GRIC's casinos have a small number of pottery displayed.

manufacturing pottery.³⁸ The discovery of this video was exciting for several reasons. First, it shows the manufacturing process of a potter from circa 1940, a time in which the only other sources available are still photographs like those held at PGM and ASM. Secondly, the video has not previously been identified in any other source, and AHF was unaware of its existence. Finally, the video served as a natural icebreaker for interviews with current potters, family members of potters, pottery collectors and individuals who knew Adele Cheatham.

A total of twelve interviews were conducted from April through October 2010; most took place at PGM and several were conducted over the phone. The first set of interviews were with active Maricopa potters with whom the staff at PGM had preexisting relationships. Once these interviews were conducted, the potters contacted other people associated with pottery making to see if they would be willing to recount their experiences; this resulted in a few additional interviews. The intent of these interviews was for background information on the Cheatham Collection. However, most of the people interviewed were younger and had little first-hand knowledge of the potters represented in the collection or of the way in which the collection came together. Cultural values impacted the information available as well as who was willing to be

³⁸ Another source in the Fred Wilson collection at ASU suggests that this video may have been used in a 1946 lecture at the Heard Museum. The woman in the video was also documented by Barry Goldwater in a 1940 *Arizona Highways* article with similar image angles, indicating that this video was shot around or before 1940.

interviewed; for some individuals, speaking about the deceased and sharing knowledge with people outside of the community are discouraged. This means that much of the information about historic Maricopa potters is not accessible. Instead, of revealing information about the Cheatham Collection, many of the interviews shed light on teaching relationships and the state of Maricopa pottery as it is today. Additional interviews were conducted with pottery collectors and museum employees who have worked with Maricopa pottery for an extended period of time. The final interviews were with two former residents of Laveen (Laveenians) who personally knew Adele Cheatham and had some knowledge of her pottery collection. These two interviews were particularly important for providing historical context for the community of Laveen and its interaction with potters from Maricopa Colony.

It should be noted that ceramic traditions existed in both the community of Maricopa Colony (GRIC) and the settlement of Lehi (SRPMIC). While the craft has stayed alive in the GRIC, it died out in Lehi around 1980 and only recently have potters remerged in the SRPMIC. Almost all of the information uncovered relates to the potters out of Maricopa Colony. A few interviews provided names of the potters from Lehi, but little other data could be found. That information is presented in the conclusion and highlights the need for further study in Maricopa pottery. The discussion of historic potters in the remainder of this thesis

will refer to those from Maricopa Colony unless otherwise noted; the active potters interviewed include those from both communities.

The following chapters will present information based on historical documentation, pottery collections and interviews. Chapter two will serve as the historical context, providing a basic sketch of major historical events and developments within the pottery, paying particular attention to the gap between the early period (1885 to 1912) and the revival period (1937 to 1941). The third chapter, which was the genesis of this whole thesis topic, will discuss the Cheatham Collection in the style of a collection catalog. First describing the communities of Maricopa Colony and Laveen, Adele Cheatham's collecting history and finally the potters and the pieces they produced. The last chapter will discuss the ways that knowledge of Maricopa pottery has been transmitted, how that is changing today and how the art has evolved in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN POTTERY

Beginning in the late-nineteenth century, Maricopa pottery transitioned from a utilitarian ware used in daily life to a decorative ware for sale. This was the start of many changes in the pottery and was influenced by a series of factors in the nineteenth century. These include warfare, new immigrants, economic transition, the loss of territory, and water shortages, as well as the involvement of governments and missionaries, all of which resulted in major lifestyle transitions. These changes are varied and complex and have been analyzed in detail in other scholarly sources.¹ Historical developments in Maricopa pottery have been addressed only in Fernald's thesis and so expanding the understanding of developments within Maricopa pottery will be the main focus of this chapter. To provide context for these changes in pottery, basic historical themes will be discussed, concentrating particularly on economics which heavily influenced developments in pottery.

¹ For information on warfare see Clifton B. Kroeber and Bernard L. Fontana, *Massacre on the Gila: An Account of the Last Major Battle Between American Indians, with Reflections on the Origins of War* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986); For a historical border study see Eric V. Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2007); For demography see Cary Walter Meister, *Historical Demography of the Pima and Maricopa Indians of Arizona, 1846-1974*, vol. 1, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989); For social and cultural changes see Frank Russell, *The Pima Indians*, re-edition (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975); Leslie Spier, *Yuman Tribes of the Gila River* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1933; reprint 1970); For an exhaustive historical overview see John P. Wilson, *Peoples of the Middle Gila: A Documentary History of the Pimas and Maricopas, 1500's – 1945* (Las Cruces, NM: John P. Wilson, 1999).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Maricopa lived in the Salt and Gila River valleys by the 1800s and other bands of Maricopa joined those already living in the valleys during the 1830s. These newer groups were pressured to migrate due to warfare with other Yuman speaking tribes (also called Colorado River tribes), the Mohave and Quechan (Yuma). In 1852 John Bartlett of the U.S. Boundary Commission Survey wrote in his personal narrative “[t]hey [the Maricopa] came hither for protection, and formed an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the Pimos.”² Despite their geographic proximity and close political and social interactions, the Maricopa maintained their own identity and lived in villages separate from the more numerous Pima.³ The histories of the Maricopa and Pima are combined in historical documentation; this makes it difficult to address issues that specifically impacted the Maricopa.

Up until 1846, European contact was limited to short encounters with missionaries and trappers, but the territory dispute between the U.S. and Mexico brought increased contact with outsiders. The U.S. military expeditions during the Mexican-American War travelled along the Gila River from Santa Fe to San Diego, establishing a trail. Three years later this route was used by large numbers of forty-niners passing through the

² John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua*, vol. 2 (New York: D Appleton and Co., 1854), 262.

³ Bartlett, 222; Wilson, V-18.

Maricopa and Pima villages on the way to California gold.⁴ Later, the creation of stagecoach and mail routes, both to California and from Prescott to Tucson, travelled along these same trails resulting in the establishment of permanent way-stations and trading posts located close to villages. This influx of travelers created a niche market for the sale of provisions, resulting in an economic transition for the Maricopa and Pima from a life based on subsistence to for-profit agriculture.⁵

The land on which the Maricopa and Pima lived was claimed by Spain and then Mexico. However, it was not until the Mexican-American War that things drastically changed. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 set the Gila River as the boundary between the United States and Mexico, and the Gadsden Purchase in 1853 ceded the land south of the Gila River for the United States, creating the border between modern-day Arizona and Mexico. During the 1850s, government surveyors from the U.S. Boundary Commission and Pacific Railroad surveyed the land along the Gila River. Concerned about rights to their land, Maricopa and Pima representatives travelled to meet with the U.S. and Mexican Boundary Commissions and were assured that they would not lose territory.⁶ At that time, the U.S. government dealt with indigenous land claims by creating

⁴ Wilson, VI-9, VII-10.

⁵ Ezell, 4; Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962), 147; Wilson, VI-9, Wilson, VI-9, VII-2, 10; VIII-9, 10; Butterfield Overland Mail and Birch's San Antonio and San Diego Mail Line.

⁶ Spicer, 147; Wilson, VII-13-14.

reservations, and since Maricopa and Pima land was in the same area, the U.S. grouped them together, creating a single reservation in 1859. The first boundary of the Gila River Reservation (now the GRIC) followed along the Gila River, but did not cover all of the lands claimed or used by the tribes, which later created problems when Anglo and Mexican homesteaders moved into those areas during the last half of the 1860s.⁷

Following the American Civil War, settlers from Mexico and the U.S. rapidly moved into the Salt and Gila River valleys, establishing permanent settlements in the form of farms and towns. Developments to the east on the Gila River like Florence and Adamsville, had the greatest impact on the Maricopa and Pima. Florence, founded in 1867 on land historically used by the Pima, began to divert water for crops, which reduced the volume of water available to the villages down river. The reservation system presented major issues for the tribes. Historically, the Maricopa and Pima had the ability to move their villages as environmental needs dictated.⁸

Water shortages from upstream diversion and a period of drought produced a sharp decline in the amount of agricultural production by the tribes during the first several years of the 1870s.⁹ Changes in the water supply resulted in crop failure, leading to confrontation with the new

⁷ Spicer, 147; Wilson, VII-13-14, VIII-22-25.

⁸ Wilson, XI-28, XII-2; Robert A. Trennert, "Phoenix and the Indians 1867-1930," in *Phoenix and the Twentieth Century: Essays in Community History*, ed. G. Wesley Johnson Jr. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 55.

⁹ Wilson, XII-2.

settlers and to a mass migration of native people off of the reservation to areas where water was more readily available, particularly along the Salt River.

As early as 1871, groups of Maricopa and Pima moved farther north and east along the Salt River, close to modern day Mesa. Other groups, specifically the Maricopa, began moving to the area of land right between the Salt and Gila River junction, which would later become Maricopa Colony.¹⁰ In addition to external forces like the water supply, internal tensions such as infighting between villages also caused people to relocate.¹¹ The problems with water availability and the large number of people living off of the reservation led the U.S. government to create a second Pima-Maricopa reservation, Salt River Reservation (SRR), in 1879. The Gila River Reservation (GRR) was also expanded in 1879 and the 1880s to encompass settlements outside of its borders, including Maricopa Colony, located to the west of present-day Laveen.¹² The problems with water availability were not solved by the reservation extensions, and crop failures in areas of the GRR forced residents into

¹⁰ The Maricopa had been settled in two main villages, one near Sacaton (Halchidhoma Maricopa) and a larger settlement close to Maricopa Wells. The Halchidhoma Maricopa moved north around 1871, eventually settling at Lehi, an area later included in the Salt River Reservation. The larger group of Maricopa began moving to the area between the Salt and Gila rivers during the late 1870s; Wilson, XII-4, XIII-22, 3.

¹¹ Marvin R. Munsell, "Land and Labor at Salt River: Household Organizations in a Changing Economy" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oregon, 1967), 110; Wilson, XI-25, XII-28.

¹² Wilson recounts the movements of Maricopas based on reports by Indian Agents, XII-35, XIII-22-3; Executive order on June 14, 1879; Spier 142.

poverty and some to rely on rations distributed by the U.S. government.¹³

By the 1890s, the situation had gotten so bad that one Indian agent argued that “not a drop of water” was reaching the GRR.¹⁴

The change in economy from subsistence to market, the establishment of the reservations, influx of new settlers and the loss of resources all heavily impacted the lives of the Maricopa and Pima. These changes also were reflected in the types of materials used in daily living. Prior to the introduction of Western goods, pottery was essential to daily life. Utilitarian pottery was meant for activities like cooking as well as food and water storage. Increased contact with settlers and the receipt of goods distributed by the U.S. government rapidly impacted material culture. John Wilson, who has written an excellent documentary history of this time period, suggests that “[w]hen the Gileños [Pima and Maricopa] began to receive brass kettles later in this decade [the 1850s] as part of their annuity goods, much of the pottery making probably stopped.”¹⁵ With the availability of mass produced wares, traditional materials like low-fired ceramics and stone tools were replaced gradually with more durable wares. The manufacture and use of utilitarian pottery certainly did not die out right away. In his 1933 ethnography, Spier noted that the Maricopa

¹³ Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533-1960* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962), 150; Wilson, XIII-18.

¹⁴ Eric V. Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin:TX, University of Texas Press, 2007), 34; Spicer, 150; Wilson, XIII-18.

¹⁵ Wilson, VII-9.

were still using ceramic cooking pots, though he focused on the manufacture of decorative wares.¹⁶

Spier neatly sums up the style of utilitarian pottery: “Decoration was not applied to cooking pots and parching pans since these were soon blacked in use... Designs seem to have been applied relatively rarely in the old days.”¹⁷ It is not clear what time period Spier meant by “the old days” but during the 1852 U.S. Boundary Survey Commission, John Russell Bartlett noted a pottery type which is “red or dark brown... painted with black lines in geometrical figures.”¹⁸ This is the first identification of Maricopa-like pottery in the written record. The pottery could have been produced by either the Maricopa or Pima; Bartlett did not distinguish the origins of the pottery, and there was little difference in the early pieces of the two groups.

Black-on-red decoration is now synonymous with Maricopa pottery; however, numerous sources argue that the Maricopa acquired this decorative technique from the Pima and Papago.¹⁹ Regardless of which

¹⁶ Fernald, 25; Spier, 104.

¹⁷ Spier, 106.

¹⁸ John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua*, vol. 2 (New York: D Appleton and Co., 1854), 226.

¹⁹ Bartlett, 226-7; Department of the Interior. National Park Service Field Division of Education, *Material Culture of the Pima, Papago, and Western Apache with suggestions for museum displays*, by Ralph L. Beals, (Berkeley, 1934), 30; Fernald, 38; Fontana et al, 118; Malcom J. Rogers, “Yuman Pottery Making,” *San Diego Museum Papers* 2 (Feb. 1936), 34; Albert H. Schroeder, “An Archeological Survey of the Painted Rocks Reservoir Western Arizona” *The Kiva* 27, no. 1 (Oct., 1961): 20-1.

tribe is responsible for the origin of black-on-red decoration, clearly by the mid-nineteenth century the Maricopa, Pima and Papago were all making it, and without provenance it is nearly impossible to tell the wares apart. It is likely that the Maricopa had their own distinct ceramic tradition, including utilitarian wares, decorated effigies and buff colored ceramics. They blended these traits with the black-on-red style to create a unique pottery style that has evolved over the years and continues to do so today.²⁰

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Maricopa pottery expanded from a utilitarian pottery used exclusively by the people producing it to include a decorative ware that was manufactured for sale outside of the community. In the short contextualization of Maricopa pottery provided in *Papago Indian Pottery*, the authors credit the arrival of the railroads as the impetus for commercial Maricopa pottery.²¹ However, it is likely that the trade and sale of pottery began earlier. By the late 1860s, there were at least six separate traders on the GRR.²² These posts primarily facilitated the sale or exchange of grain, but it is reasonable to assume that goods other than grain were exchanged. Stage stops were often in tandem with trading posts, and could have been a location to sell crafts like pottery to travelers.

²⁰ Fontana, 118.

²¹ Fontana et al, 119.

²² Wilson, XII-18.

Just as the stage stops had before, the trains facilitated trade and interaction between the tribes and settlers. The Southern Pacific Railroad Company opened its station at the town of Maricopa on April 29, 1879. In the 1880s another railroad connected with Tempe and Mesa, and eventually Phoenix in 1887.²³ The railroad stations became the new hub for travelers, and fewer people used the stage stops on the GRR as more and more towns became connected to the rail lines. These railway stations brought tourists into the area, and though they were farther away from villages, became good locations for potters to sell their wares.²⁴ Pottery sales were also occurring on the streets of Phoenix outside of the railway stations. Demonstrating this, a newspaper column from 1888 notes, “[s]ome of them [Pima and Maricopa] bring stone relics and curios which they sell to collectors, and others dispose of ollas and pottery of their own handiwork.”²⁵

Selling goods in Phoenix and other towns brought extra income into the family. Since water shortages meant many could no longer support themselves exclusively on agriculture, other means to survive had to be found. In some areas, men turned to wood cutting; families began ranching; and, some women began to supplement their families’ income through the sale of crafts. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Pima

²³ David Myrick *Railroads of Arizona, Volume 1 the Southern Roads* (Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1975), 40.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 74; Wilson, XIII-1.

²⁵ *Phoenix Daily Herald*, 27 July 1888.

were focused on basketry and produced fewer ceramics, while the Maricopa had successfully added a sellable ware to their pottery production.²⁶

Reflecting the new market, Maricopa potters began to change from more traditional, useable forms, to those that appealed to non-Indian buyers. The variety of shapes increased, shifting from predominately bowls to ornate pitchers, vases, and tourist wares like ashtrays. Whimsical pieces like ornamental figurines and vessels embellished with human and animal appliqués also appeared (Figure 2.1). The way the vessels were decorated changed as well. One of the most visually stunning changes was the increased amount of polish on the surface of the vessel, which created a much higher gloss than previously produced. Another development was a polychrome style of decoration, combining red and buff slips on the same vessel. Black painted decorations were almost universal with designs ranging from more traditional swirls and geometric patterns to unique life and plant forms like saguaro cacti.²⁷ These style changes describe what is currently identified as the early period of Maricopa pottery. This phase is defined as occurring between 1885 and 1912, dates that are based on the collecting history of the largest

²⁶ Stoeppelmann, 19; For information on Pima basketry see Breazeale.

²⁷ Fernald, 47; Fontana et al, 119; Schroeder 1961, 20.

collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Maricopa Pottery, named the Connell Collection.²⁸



Figure 2.1 – Examples of early Maricopa pottery using human embellishment.

Maricopa potters adapted their wares to make them more marketable in a changing world. A variety of factors appear to have triggered the transition in pottery, including the replacement of utilitarian pots with more durable pieces, economic necessity, and response to a new market. The period between 1846 and 1900 was one of drastic transition for the Pima and Maricopa. The influx of new people, loss of land and transition to reservation life, as well as the shift of lifestyle from

²⁸ The main portion of the Connell Collection is divided between PGM and ASM; Fernald, 39.

one of subsistence to participating in a market economy all resulted in cultural upheaval.²⁹ Changes in the first part of the twentieth century were not as widespread, but rather were a continuation of trends from the previous century. The lack of water and the hardships it produced would remain one of the most glaring problems for the first half of the century.³⁰ The U.S. government tried to address these water shortages by the allotment of tribal land on both the SRR and GRR, generally consisting of two 10-acre tracts, one with access to irrigation water and the other without. In many cases, these land allotments, starting in 1912 for SRR and 1914 for GRR, reduced the acreage or changed the location of the land that families had farmed, without solving the water problem.³¹ As agriculture remained unreliable for many families, other means of income, like selling pottery, continued to be important to supplementing the family economy.

²⁹ See Spier for an ethnographic discussion of Maricopa culture.

³⁰ Meeks, 63.

³¹ Compared to other parts of the country, the division of tribal land started late in Arizona. Under the Dawes Act of 1884, reservation land could be divided into individually owned parcels, a way to force the assimilation of native peoples by eliminating communally held lands; Meeks, 67; Munsell, 111; Wilson, XV-2, 5. For a brief discussion of the long term impacts of allotment on Gila and Salt River see Edward B. Liebow, "A Sense of Place: Urban Indians and the History of Pan-Tribal Institutions in Phoenix, Arizona" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 1986), 41, 75.



Figure 2.2 - Polychrome vessel B-102. Courtesy of Pueblo Grande Museum. Photographer Allen Tury, 2004.

Very little information documenting the Maricopa or their pottery exists for the period between 1913 and 1936, the years that fall between the early period and the revival period of Maricopa pottery. During Fernald's research, only three pieces were identified in these "intervening years."³² Several pottery collections have now been identified that span these missing decades. These collections demonstrate that Maricopa pottery was changing during this poorly documented period and that the craft experienced more of a gradual evolution than a punctuated change. An example of these slow changes is seen in vessel B-102 (Figure 2.2), a piece from the Connell Collection curated at PGM, a collection which has

³² Fernald, 47-8.

an end date of 1912. While the looped handles and oblong shape are more characteristic of the eccentric forms in the early period, other elements are more similar to the style of the revival period. Fernald noted that revival pottery "...clearly shows a striking improvement by museum standards in the quality of pottery and application of design..."³³ Changes attributed to the revival period include the simplification of shapes, increased symmetry, higher polish, and the use of more filled elements in concentrated fields of design.

The vessel in Figure 2.2 demonstrates remarkably high polish and symmetry. More significantly, the layout of the piece, particularly the division between the red and buff slips is different from what is seen in early period pieces. Even greater, the style and execution of the decoration, particularly the use of filled pendant triangles in a line, are much more typical of wares dated to the revival period.³⁴ Designs attributed to the revival generally are bolder, using dark, filled elements like triangles, rather than primarily thin-lined designs seen on early period pieces (Figure 2.1). Before the late 1930s, vessels were unsigned, so there are few cases where the artist is definitively known.

Though the potter who created vessel B-102 is unidentified, it is similar in decoration to wares known to be produced by both Lena

³³ Ibid., 49.

³⁴ The term "pendant triangle" simply means triangles that are hanging from something like a line or a rim, with a tip pointed down, like a pendant. Fernald notes the restriction of design particularly to the shoulder and rim, and that they are often lines of triangles. Fernald, 51.

Meskeer and Mary Juan.³⁵ Lena Meskeer is mentioned in J. F. Breazeale's 1923 material culture study *The Pima and His Basket*. He states that "Lena Mesquerre [sic] is, probably, the best pottery maker of her tribe."³⁶ Breazeale goes on to briefly describe Meskeer's manufacturing process and includes a photograph of two pieces produced by Meskeer. The photograph of two bowls demonstrates that Meskeer was making polychrome pieces with filled pendant triangles, like those seen in Figure 2.2. If undated, the two pieces in Breazeale's book would be assigned to the revival period as the stylistic periods now stand; however, their appearance in Breazeale's book means that these pieces predate the revival period by at least fourteen years. In addition, Lena Meskeer was noted as being "elderly" during a pottery demonstration in the late 1930s.³⁷ Her age and the high quality of her work as seen in Breazeale's book in 1923 suggest that she had been creating pottery for a number of years.

Other pottery collections also demonstrate that Maricopa pottery exhibiting the characteristics typically attributed to the revival period were already taking place by the 1920s. The Condell Collection at Illinois State

³⁵ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

³⁶ A unattributed newspaper article from the 1930s states that "Lena Mesquerre" is actually a Pima who married into the Maricopa tribe, Hayes' 2006 book *The Desert Southwest* makes the same claim, citing an unidentified source; J.F. Breazeale, *The Pima and His Basket* (Tucson: Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society, 1923), 16; Hayes, 148.

³⁷ "Demonstration on Pottery Set," *Arizona Republic*, 30 March 1940.

Museum (ISM) features three pieces by Mary Juan and one by Lena Meskeer.³⁸ Mary Juan is probably the most prolific Maricopa potter and is known for her use of filled pendant triangles. Her first definitively dated work is a remarkably symmetrical, highly polished tall-neck jar at ASM that won a prize during the 1923 Arizona State Fair. The four pieces in the Condell Collection were acquired from a dealer in Arizona between 1916 and 1924 (Figure 2.3). Jonathan Reyman, the ISM affiliate who documented the Condell Collection, argues that because Mary Juan's pieces were so well-manufactured by this point in time that it is likely that: "she was producing pottery nine to thirteen years earlier."³⁹ Mary Juan would have been close to thirty years old when the pieces in the Condell Collection were produced. Many women learned pottery making at a young age, and although it cannot be proven, it is quite possible that Mary Juan may have been assisting in the production of pottery during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Another accession that demonstrates the high quality of workmanship from the pre-revival period is the Linderman Collection at ASM. Daniel and Amelia Linderman began teaching at the Maricopa Day School in September 1903 and taught there many years until they retired

³⁸ Note that the 1885 to 1912 collection at PGM and ASM are the Connell Collection while the ISM collection is the Condell Collection and dates from 1916 to 1924. The similarity in names is just a coincidence.

³⁹ Jonathan E. Reyman, "Mary Juan, Maricopa Potter" *The Living Museum* 62, no. 1 and 2 (2000): 20.

in June of 1929.⁴⁰ The school was located in Maricopa Colony, and the Lindermans taught the offspring of some of the Maricopa potters, including the children of Ida Redbird and Josephine Bread. The Lindermans collected a variety of items, including thirty-two pieces of Maricopa pottery. While none of the pieces are signed, communication from the Lindermans' daughter indicates that "[t]he majority of this Maricopa Pottery was made by Ida Redbird and Mary Juan."⁴¹

Maricopa pieces in the Condell and the majority of the Linderman collections exhibit evenly spaced line work, medium to extremely high polish and symmetry (Figure 2.3). Moreover, all of the pieces demonstrate a restricted design field and the use of filled geometric designs, particularly triangles. These characteristics have been credited as being due to the Maricopa revival period. However, based on the pieces described and illustrated here, all of which are dated before 1930, it is clear that a transition in Maricopa ceramics was already taking place. The exact reasons for the shift in styles remain unknown. It may have been purely a change in aesthetics, or perhaps the style of potters like Lena

⁴⁰ Day schools began appearing in the GRR during the 1870s and were usually operated by missionaries. In 1899 Presbyterian missionaries built a church at Maricopa Colony and around the same time built a school. While elementary aged children attended day schools, older children were often sent to boarding schools like the Pima Boarding School at Sacaton or the Phoenix Indian School. Wilson, XIII-32-35; For more information about schools see Robert Trennert, "John H. Stout and the Grant Peace Policy among the Pimas," *Southwest* 28, no. 1 (Spring, 1986); Robert Trennert, *The Phoenix Indian School: Forced Assimilation in the Southwest* (Norman, OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

⁴¹ Linderman Collection Archives File, Arizona State Museum, Tucson.

Meskeer and Mary Juan was so distinct that other potters began to adopt their techniques or designs. While there may have been some variation in the quality of pieces put out by different potters, it is clear that excellent pieces did exist and that not all Maricopa pottery was a “poor product” as it was later described.⁴² Design distribution restricted to a smaller portion of the vessel and the heavy use of filled elements, like the pendant triangle, were common traits before the 1930s.



a. Lena Mekseer polychrome bowl



b. Mary Juan polychrome bowl



c. Miniature polychrome bowl



d. Indented polychrome bowl

Figure 2.3 – Maricopa pottery from the intervening years; (a, b) Examples of ceramics 1916 – 1924, from the Thomas Condell Collection. Courtesy of the Illinois State Museum; (c, d) Bowls in the Linderman Collection dated 1903-1929. 76-104-141 and 76-104-146. Arizona State Museum.

⁴² Fernald, 2, 48.

During the 1930s, U.S. government involvement on the reservations increased; the result of ongoing irrigation projects and other activities meant to counter-act the nationwide depression. The government conducted “land subjugation” on the east end of the GRR, removing excess vegetation and leveling the land in an attempt to make irrigation more effective. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service Project for Technical Cooperation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (TC-BIA) sent agents to each community on the GRR during 1935 and 1936 to study local economies and the impact of these government land efforts. These agents produced detailed reports about the communities, some with an ethnographic flair.⁴³ The TC-BIA reporter Emma Reh, who studied Maricopa Colony noted: “Maricopa economy is largely agricultural. Less than 10 percent of the families fail to live to some extent on farming. But almost none live exclusively from it. For all classes, wood-cutting on the part of the men, and pottery-making by the women contribute largely to the income.”⁴⁴

Another group of government workers involved on the reservation were the Home Extension Agents. Elisabeth Hart, a U.S. Indian Service Home Extension Agent, worked out of Sacaton, Arizona, from November

⁴³ Wilson, XV-26.

⁴⁴ Emma Reh, “Report on Maricopa District of the Gila River Indian Reservation” U.S. Department of Agriculture. Soil Conservation Service and Technical Cooperation. Bureau of Indian Affairs. *Community Reports: Gila River Pima Reservation*. Lucy Wilcox Adams, ed. Albuquerque: October, 1936. US Soil Conservation Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

1934 until the spring of 1941. Over the course of her work, Hart visited 1155 homes and particularly focused on improving the domestic lives of women.⁴⁵ Initially, Hart kept a diary of the locations and people with whom she visited, sometimes noting their occupations. Traveling to Maricopa Colony on November 16th of 1935 or 1936, Hart visited thirty-four families, recording the names of twenty-one women who were known potters.⁴⁶ A letter between Hart and a store owner in California indicates that by July of 1935, Hart was interested in the pottery produced by Maricopa and basketry made by Pima women. Hart, recognizing that the wares women produced brought money to the family, decided that by making better pottery, the women could get more money for their work.⁴⁷

In 1937, Hart drafted guidelines for the “Arts and Crafts Program for the Pima Jurisdiction,” setting standards for pottery and basketry that emphasized symmetry, finish and design execution. Part of her inspiration for this was a similar program with Hopi potters at the Museum of Northern

⁴⁵ Fernald, 65; See also Hart’s Pima cookbook *Pima Cookery*; Summary of Project, 1941, Elisabeth Hart Papers, Pueblo Grande Museum, Phoenix; Odd Halseth, Phoenix, to Vic Householder, Phoenix, 26 January 1938, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

⁴⁶ Hart’s Diary consists of loose-leaf pages. The page from November 16th does not list a year but other pages in the diary are dated from both 1935 and 1936; Diary of Elisabeth Hart, Elisabeth Hart Papers, Pueblo Grande Museum, Phoenix.

⁴⁷ Fernald, 66; Mrs. Lewis Hawkins, Los Angeles, to Elisabeth Hart, Sacaton, 21 July 1935, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

Arizona.⁴⁸ Hart enlisted the help of Odd Halseth from PGM and Fred Wilson, an Indian goods trader based out of Phoenix. Working together, the three set up a series of group meetings with potters from Maricopa Colony. The first of these meetings was held at the school house in the Colony, and twenty-six potters attended. Potters were given copies of designs from pieces in the Connell Maricopa pottery collection and Hart's checklist of pottery standards.⁴⁹ Later, the potters were sent letters encouraging them to enter a competition at Fred Wilson's Trading Post in October of 1937. The pieces were judged on their use of the designs from the Connell Collection and adherence to the checklist of standards. Prizes of five and ten dollars were given to the top potters, more than what many potters could expect to earn in a week selling pottery.⁵⁰

The next documented meeting took place in June of 1938, with twenty-seven women attending. By this point, it had been suggested that the women could make more money selling as a co-operative, rather than individually or through traders. Working directly with Ida Redbird, Hart and

⁴⁸ Elisabeth Hart, "Arts and Crafts Program for the Pima Jurisdiction 1937-1938," Fred Wilson Collection, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix; Fernald, 66-7, 86.

⁴⁹ These pottery standards are included in Hart's "Arts and Crafts Program for the Pima Jurisdiction 1937-1938" and are also reprinted in Fernald's thesis. Part of the Connell Collection would be curated in 1939, part at PGM and the other part at ASM, but in 1937 the collection was still in private hands, though Odd Halseth was negotiating for its purchase.

⁵⁰ Reh, October 1936, 53; "Maricopa Pottery Project Meeting Sept. 8th 1937 School House Maricopa Reservation" Fred Wilson Collection, 1907-1967, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix; Elizabeth Hart, Sacaton, to All Cooperating Potters in the Maricopa District, 15 September 1937, Fred Wilson Collection, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

Halseth organized a meeting of the Maricopa Pottery Makers Association that was held in October of 1938 at PGM.⁵¹ Twenty people attended the first meeting, but by late December only eleven potters were attending meetings. The idea was to set up a Maricopa pottery stand at PGM and though Ida Redbird and Mary Juan did stay on the museum grounds for several weeks selling pottery, it is clear that the pottery cooperative was never really functional beyond a few isolated activities.⁵² Ida Redbird later told Fernald that distance and transportation to PGM were some of the major reasons the cooperative failed, she also noted: “The idea of a co-op was a good one, though. Maybe it would have worked if we’d had a place on the Reservation, but the pots still had to be taken to market, and tourists weren’t coming out to the Reservation anyway.”⁵³

While the pottery cooperative may not have worked, the activities of Hart, Halseth and Wilson were successful in producing publicity for the potters. Beginning in the winter of 1937 and continuing at least until March of 1940, the potters participated in a series of public exhibits that featured pottery demonstrations and sales were covered in local newspapers. The

⁵¹ From here on the Maricopa Pottery Makers Association will be referred to as the “pottery cooperative” as that is how it is known in the Maricopa potter and museum communities as well as in the sources by Fernald and Stoeppelmann.

⁵² Fernald, 76-7; Stoeppelmann, 46.

⁵³ Ida Redbird identified 17 potters active in the association when speaking with Fernald in 1971 however there were more women in attendance at the original meeting. Fernald, 75; Stoeppelmann, 42-3; “Minutes of the opening meeting of the Maricopa pottery makers association on Monday, October 24, 1938,” Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

first exhibit happened in December of 1937 at the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce offices, the second in January of 1939 at the Federal Arts Center, and the last, a multi-part exhibit in March of 1940 at both the Federal Arts Center and PGM. Potters who participated in the demonstrations include Ida Redbird and Pearl Miller in 1937 and Lula Howard and Lena Meskeer in 1940.⁵⁴ The activities of the 1939 exhibit are documented in a series of photographs curated at PGM, but the identity of the potter is unknown (Figure 2.4).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ "Pottery Show is Scheduled," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 26 December 1937; "Maricopa Pottery Exhibit Shown by Commerce Unit," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 30 December 1937; "Maricopa Pottery Exhibit Arranged," *Phoenix Gazette*, 12 December 1937; "Pottery Making Demonstrated at Exhibit Here," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 2 January 1938; "Difficult Process is Explained," *Phoenix Gazette*, 25 January 1939; "Art Center to Hold Big Pottery Exhibit," *Arizona Republic*, 28 March 1940; "Demonstration on Pottery Set," *Arizona Republic*, 30 March 1940; "Pottery Movie will be Shown," *Arizona Republic*, 30 March 1940; "Three-day Exhibit of Maricopa Pottery is Now Being Held," *Phoenix Gazette*, 30 March 1940.

⁵⁵ In addition to more formal exhibits and demonstrations, some of the potters were involved in activities strictly for Fred Wilson's Indian Trading Post on Central Avenue in Phoenix, which featured publicity days where Ida Redbird, Joanna Yarmatta, Mary Juan and at least one other potter participated. "Minutes of the Opening Meeting of the Maricopa Pottery Makers Association on Monday, October 24, 1938," Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix; Photographs RC 245(2.4)20, 46, 52, 57, 465 and 245(6) 83, 365, 409, Fred Wilson Collection, Heard Museum, Phoenix.



Figure 2.4 - An unidentified Maricopa potter conducting a firing demonstration at the Federal Arts Center in Phoenix, 26 January 1939. 1995.17.EM-7. Image Courtesy of Pueblo Grande Museum.

In addition to media coverage generated by the activities of potters, an appearance at a large Indian fair added to the publicity. Fred Wilson sent one of his staff to the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial in Gallup, New Mexico, in August 1938. A piece by Mary Juan won first prize in all Southwestern pottery beating out the work of more acclaimed Pueblo potters.⁵⁶ Letters from judges at the competition, and other museum professionals like Santa Fe's Laboratory of Anthropology's Kenneth Chapman and the Museum of Northern Arizona's Harold Colton gave credit to Hart for "the great improvement that had been made in the last

⁵⁶ Fernald, 71.

few years in the Maricopa pottery.”⁵⁷ Perhaps a more telling quote comes from the organizational meeting of the pottery cooperative in 1938. Potter Maggie Colt commented “that from her experience the average tourist did not appreciate a fine piece of pottery, preferring instead, something of mediocre or poor quality.”⁵⁸ As demonstrated by pottery collections before 1930 at ASM and ISM, potters like Mary Juan, Lena Meskeer and others were already producing well-made, award winning pottery. These collections do not demonstrate the low-quality wares to which documents from the late 1930s refer. Based on the quotes above, there must have been some variability in the execution level of Maricopa pottery. Perhaps these were produced by less-skilled potters or the low prices and the tourist market encouraged women to spend less time on quality and focus on quantity instead.

One of the key motivating factors that led potters to participate in activities of the late 1930s was the promise of higher prices for better wares. It is unclear if prices for Maricopa pottery actually increased for all women. In a 1935 letter, one dealer remarked that she was paying five cents for a small vessel and was able to sell it for twenty cents. After the

⁵⁷ Harold Colton was Director at the Museum of Northern Arizona, he and his wife Mary played a role in creating the pottery standards that Hart used as a model for the standards that she distributed to the Maricopa potters. Harold S. Colton, Flagstaff, to Elizabeth Hart, Chandler, AZ, 26 September 1938, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix; Fernald, 86.

⁵⁸ “Minutes of the opening meeting of the Maricopa pottery makers association on Monday, October 24, 1938,” Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

beginning of the meetings in 1938 Odd Halseth noted that some women only received thirty-five cents for well-made medium sized bowls.⁵⁹ An undated advertisement from Fred Wilson's Trading Post indicates that Maricopa pottery was selling in the store for prices ranging from twenty cents to a dollar and fifty cents, while those from Mary Juan ranged from twenty-five cents to two dollars and seventy-five cents.⁶⁰ This suggests that potters like Mary Juan and Ida Redbird, who received name recognition from the publicity of the 1930s, may have benefitted by their pieces bringing in slightly higher prices. Other potters probably did not experience the same effects.⁶¹

By any standards though, Maricopa pottery continued to sell for very little. Unethical dealers may have had something to do with low prices. Halseth noted that "he [John Bonnell who worked for Fred Wilson's Trading Post] has bragged to us about how he has practically 'stolen' some of the finest pots from the women who come in the store to sell."⁶² The nature of the tourist market also was a factor in low prices, a sentiment that Maggie Colt expressed during the potters' meeting, and

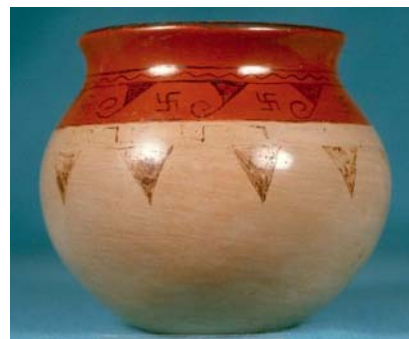
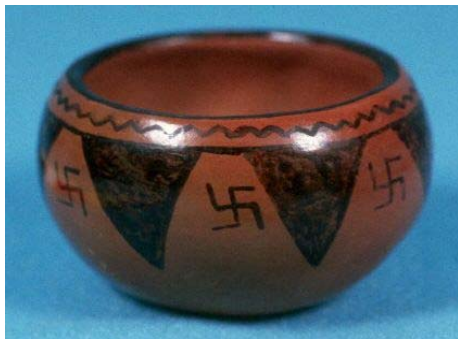
⁵⁹ Mrs. Lewis Hawkins, Los Angeles, to Elisabeth Hart, Sacaton, 21 July 1935, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix; Odd Halseth, Phoenix, to K. M. Chapman, Santa Fe, 22 September 1938, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

⁶⁰ Undated advertisement for Fred Wilson's Indian Trading Post, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

⁶¹ Odd Halseth, Phoenix, to K. M. Chapman, 13 October 1938, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

⁶² Ibid.

earlier, in a letter to Elisabeth Hart another dealer remarked “[tourists are] buying, yet they are only buying souvenirs that are cheap.”⁶³



a. Mary Juan red-on-black bowl

b. Mary Juan polychrome jar

Figure 2.5 – Revival period pieces date 1937 -1941. (a) 92.10.1; (b) PGM:70/2. Courtesy of Pueblo Grande

The period from 1937 to 1941, signified by Hart’s involvement with Maricopa potters, is currently termed the revival phase of Maricopa pottery. This nomenclature is the result of 1930s terminology. In the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the more famous Pueblos of Arizona and New Mexico experienced pottery revivals involving well-known artists like Nampeyo and Maria Martinez. These revivals resulted in the complete transformation of some forms of Pueblo pottery, to the point where the pre-and-post revival pieces are not recognizable as being produced by the same tribe.⁶⁴ The word revival became a catch-phrase in Southwestern art and created a lot of excitement in the public; anthropologists, art

⁶³ Mrs. Lewis Hawkins, Los Angeles, to Elisabeth Hart, Sacaton, 21 July 1935, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

⁶⁴ Fernald compared the Maricopa pottery revival to the Hopi, San Ildefonso and Zia. Fernald, 84-97.

collectors and others attempted to produce the same kinds of transformation and success in the work of other tribes.⁶⁵ In her Arts and Crafts Program guidelines, which contained the quality standards for pottery, Hart stated, “The chief purpose of this article is to make you consider and do your share toward a revival.”⁶⁶ Even before the potters adopted standards and made changes, this period was predestined to be called “a revival.” Changes that have been attributed to this phase include an improvement in quality and the resurgence in the use of old Maricopa as well as Hohokam designs (Figure 2.5).⁶⁷ The ceramics in the Condell and Linderman collections demonstrate that some of these transformations were already underway before Hart’s involvement (Figure 2.3).

There are some changes attributable to the activities in the 1930s. The most obvious is the addition of signatures to vessels. Prior to the standards distributed by Hart, signed Maricopa pottery was non-existent. While even today not all potters sign their work, the addition of signatures starting in 1937 is significant. Signatures were advocated to increase the value of the pieces, and prices for signed pieces by the best known potters may have increased slightly. From the standpoint of museums and

⁶⁵ David Penney and Lisa Roberts, “America’s Pueblo Artists Encounters on the Borderlands,” In *Native American Art in the Twentieth Century*. W. Jackson Rushing, ed., (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) 23-4.

⁶⁶ Elisabeth Hart, “Arts and Crafts Program for the Pima Jurisdiction 1937-1938,” Fred Wilson Collection, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

⁶⁷ Fernald, 49, 65.

collectors, the addition of signatures has made it possible to attribute pieces to specific artists, something that is difficult, if not impossible, for pieces lacking provenance.⁶⁸

The other major result of this period was due to the publicity generated for the potters. The increased visibility resulted in an expanded market, meaning that not only were tourists picking up isolated pieces, but more people began privately collecting Maricopa pottery. Demonstrations and newspaper articles brought potters like Ida Redbird and Mary Juan into direct contact with the public. Ida Redbird became the face of Maricopa pottery and continued to do demonstrations until her death. In a later conversation Ida Redbird reflected that the 1930s “were really busy years for us.”⁶⁹

The term “revival” suggests that prior to the late 1930s Maricopa pottery was in need of help. Evidence now shows that some of the stylistic changes attributed to the revival period already were occurring within the potter community prior to the involvement of external personnel. Rather, the period of the 1930s seems to have created more uniformity in the appearance of the pottery as a whole. If Maricopa pottery went into this period widely varied, it came out with a solid set of characteristics. Pots were more glossy, symmetrical, and decorated with even, filled geometric

⁶⁸ Undated advertisement for Fred Wilson’s Indian Trading Post, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix, MSS 45, 4/1.

⁶⁹ Stoepplemann, 41.

designs. Black-on-red became the dominant type; polychromes, while still produced, were not as frequent; and black-on-buff pieces became rarer still.⁷⁰ Larger pieces also began to be produced with greater frequency. These changes were encouraged by the promise of higher prices, competitions for cash-prizes, and also the success of well-publicized potters encouraging the adoption of their style by other potters.

The heightened public profile of Maricopa pottery slowed in 1941, partly due to the death of Elisabeth Hart in March of that year. World War II also impacted the production and distribution of pottery for a variety of reasons. Ida Redbird recalls: “When the war came I remember we had to stop decorating our pots with swastikas because the tourists refused to buy them.”⁷¹ Potters stopped using this traditional symbol, again reflecting the importance of the market in the physical appearance of pottery. The war also brought about the enlistment of many young men from the reservation and increased the availability of wage-work jobs on and off the reservation. Women increasingly turned their attention elsewhere.

Land use and economic development on the reservations also continued to change. While family agriculture was still a source of income, there was increasing economic diversification. Land-leasing for farming and ranching to non-Indians became an important source of income in the

⁷⁰ Fernald, 100.

⁷¹ Stoepplemann, 43.

1930s.⁷² In addition to the economic impact of the Great Depression, the 1930s was a time of transition for the reservations. The policy of the federal government began to shift towards tribal self-determination, reflected in the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which stopped land allotments and encouraged the tribes to transition to elected governments.⁷³ Gila River Reservation drafted a new constitution in 1936 and became Gila River Indian Community (GRIC), splitting the reservation into electoral districts.⁷⁴ Despite the shift in federal policy, the BIA continued to control large portions of reservation life, such as policing and infrastructure, involvement in which began to slowly decrease during the social reformation of the 1960s and continued into the 1990s.⁷⁵ Likewise, the federal government encouraged the urbanization and relocation of younger Indian people in the 1950s, some of whom took wage-work jobs on and off of the reservation. Land leasing in both the SRPMIC and GRIC also increased for corporate industry development and commercial ventures, like business parks, that provided income for the tribes and more wage-earning jobs.⁷⁶

⁷² Munsell, 111-2.

⁷³ Indian Commissioner John Collier is most noted for the changes in policy regarding supervision of Tribes. The Indian Reorganization Act is also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act.

⁷⁴ GRIC officially adopted the constitution in February of 1938; Salt River Reservation became SRPMIC in 1940. Liebow, 41; Wilson, XVI-11.

⁷⁵ Henry F. Dobyns, *The Pima-Maricopa*, Indians of North America (New York and Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989), 91; Liebow, 49; Spicer, 151.

⁷⁶ Laws like the Leasing Act of 1955 allowed for the long-term lease of tribal lands. Liebow, 56.

For traditional crafts like pottery, the increasing availability of wage work had a drastic impact. In 1971 Fernald noted: “The women usually produce pottery only when they are in the mood or if they need extra cash...A few younger women are learning the craft from their mothers; however, most of the women in their late teens and early twenties are learning to be beauty operators, typists, key punch operators, nurses’ aides, and the like, and are not interested in making pottery.”⁷⁷ The period between 1940 and 1970 is one in which potters were active, but the number of women producing pottery sharply declined. Except for the physical pieces of pottery produced, there is little documentation. Ida Redbird continued to lead a more public life than the other potters. In 1948, Redbird allowed Robert Sayles, the museum photographer for ASM, to document her digging clay and manufacturing pottery at home.⁷⁸ The photographs, now curated at ASM, appeared in an *Arizona Highways* article and are some of the only images that show clay being excavated. Newspaper articles also document that Ida Redbird continued to be involved in outreach demonstrations and workshops for museums and women’s organizations like the Girl Scouts. Beginning in 1950, Redbird

⁷⁷ Fernald, 82.

⁷⁸ Sayles Photograph Collection, Arizona State Museum, Tucson.

began doing demonstrations for the Heard Museum and later would teach children's summer workshops.⁷⁹

Awards given for pottery at the Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial, Arizona State Fair and Heard Museum also document that both Ida Redbird and Mary Juan produced high-quality wares from the late 1940s into the early 1970s. Mary Juan does not appear to have been very active in demonstrations; however, scattered documentation shows that her work was sold at Fred Wilson's Indian Trading Post between 1940 and 1957. In addition to selling through dealers, both women also sold directly to the public. Fernald notes that into the 1950s, some potters were still selling on sidewalks in downtown Phoenix and at railway stations. Entering into competitions at the Arizona State Fair was another way that potters could directly sell their wares to the public. In 1971 Mabel Sunn remarked that "People at the fair always buy my pots."⁸⁰ Additionally, the Heard Museum Indian Market, beginning in 1958, provided a point of contact between the public and American Indian artists.

By 1971 when Fernald began documenting potters, many of those active in the 1930s, such as Grace Percharo, Alice Colt, Lou Johnson, and

⁷⁹ "Ida Redbird Perpetuates Art of Indian Pottery Making," *Phoenix Gazette*, 19 November 1948; "Indian Craft Workshop at Museum Today," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 19 March 1950; "Ida Redbird and Scouts," *Phoenix Gazette*, 24 May 1952; "Ida Redbird Photograph," *Phoenix Gazette*, 28 May 1953; Stoeppelmann, 83.

⁸⁰ Stoeppelmann, 37.

Joanna Yaramata, had passed away.⁸¹ Fernald noted that there were about ten active potters, a reduction of almost two-thirds from the late 1930s. In 1971, Fernald had limited contact with Ida Redbird, who was still producing a small amount of pottery but died later that year. Fernald's major source of information was Mabel Sunn, who she observed in order to document the process of pottery production. Based on her observations with Sunn, Fernald provided an incredibly detailed and accurate description of the manufacturing process. Fernald noted that changes in the pottery were still occurring, with the trends moving toward simpler shapes and less-complex designs, but also the increased use of effigy and appliqué, particularly the lizard, snake and human forms produced by Mabel Sunn and her daughter Barbara Johnson.⁸² Mabel Sunn would pass away in 1980, and with her death the women who had been producing pottery since Elisabeth Hart's day were mostly gone, leaving only a small number of potters to take their place.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Maricopa experienced major political, economic and social change. This was reflected in the pottery they produced, resulting in the transition from utilitarian pieces used daily by tribal members to a decorative ware that was manufactured for sale. Potters adapted their wares to appeal to non-Indian buyers, resulting in a

⁸¹ "Alice Colt," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 4 October 1960; "Lou Johnson," *Arizona Republic*, (Phoenix), 30 November 1963; "Joanna Yaramata," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 21 May 1967.

⁸² Fernald, 79, 81. Informant 9, interview by author, 23 September 2010.

highly variable pottery that combined traditional and eccentric elements. The pottery continued to change during the first decades of the twentieth century, and the designs became more consolidated, bolder and better executed. Between 1937 and 1941, the period referred to as the Maricopa pottery revival, involvement from people outside of the potters' community resulted in increased public awareness and a consolidation of traits resulting in a more homogeneous appearance. This time period can now be better understood as part of a longer process of transformation in the pottery. Despite decreased visibility in the historical record, several of the well-known potters continued to produce a large number of pieces from the 1940s to the 1970s, but the number of potters was greatly reduced as young women turned to training for wage-labor jobs rather than learning the production of traditional crafts.

CHAPTER 3

THE ADELE CHEATHAM COLLECTION

Outside of a few newspaper articles and photographs, there is little information on Maricopa potters between the start of World War II and the beginning of Fernald's thesis research in 1971. Potters produced their wares mainly for the open market and previous documentation has noted that Maricopa women sold pottery in Phoenix to dealers or on the streets directly to tourists. There were other places that potters were able to sell their wares and people outside of the anonymous public that bought their pottery. Collectors became more aware of Maricopa pottery after the increased visibility of the 1930s. One woman who acquired Maricopa pottery was Adele Cheatham of Laveen, Arizona, who rather than buying pieces from dealers, purchased vessels directly from the potters. Her collection, dating from ca. 1960 to the early 1970s, helps to document work from this void in history and reveals a shift in the generations of potters. The collection also sheds light on the world in which the Maricopa women lived and how they interacted with the women of Laveen.

This chapter will be presented in the format of a collection catalog. Previous catalogs addressing Maricopa pottery have always included the style as a segment of a larger Southwestern art themed study; this collection provides the unique opportunity to focus on a collection of only Maricopa pieces. This catalog will follow a standard museum format for these types of studies, beginning with a brief historical sketch, biography

of Adele, discussion of collecting methods, and concluding with a section that focuses on the individual pieces of pottery and the artists who produced them. Laveen and Maricopa Colony are both communities in which multiple generations of people share common last names. For the sake of clarity, the more unique first names have been used to identify people in this chapter. The information on the community of Laveen, Adele's relationships with the potters and her collecting habits is mainly from two interviews with former residents of Laveen (Laveenians) personally acquainted with Adele. Other interviews were unable to address these themes. The perspective of the potter would certainly add another dimension to this story and change the way that it is viewed.

A small region located at the southwest corner of Phoenix, Laveen was one of the last portions of the metropolitan area to urbanize. In the late 1980s, the City of Phoenix began annexation of the Laveen area. Before commercial development, former residents fondly recall an isolated, agrarian landscape dominated by cotton fields and old wooden houses.¹ Due to its small size and location, many Phoenixians were unaware of Laveen's existence; likewise, the residents of Laveen were remarkably self-sufficient and did not care much for travelling to Phoenix.²

The Laveen Store, a general mercantile, supplied residents with all of their

¹ For more detailed information on the land use history and creation of identity in the community of Laveen see Alexander Bethke, "Creating the Pride of Laveen: A History to 1930" (M.A. thesis, Arizona State University, 2007), 8-9, 98; Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010.

² Informant 12, interview by author 16 October 2010.

basic needs. More than just serving Laveen, though, the store served as a point of interaction for the communities of Laveen and Maricopa Colony, as well as the Pima settlements of the Cooperative Community, Komatke and Gila Crossing.³ Since the 1980s, Laveen has lost most of its farmland, but communities in the Gila River Indian Reservation (GRIC) have maintained a rural landscape. However, for a time both shared an agrarian identity and residents in these small communities had routine interactions.

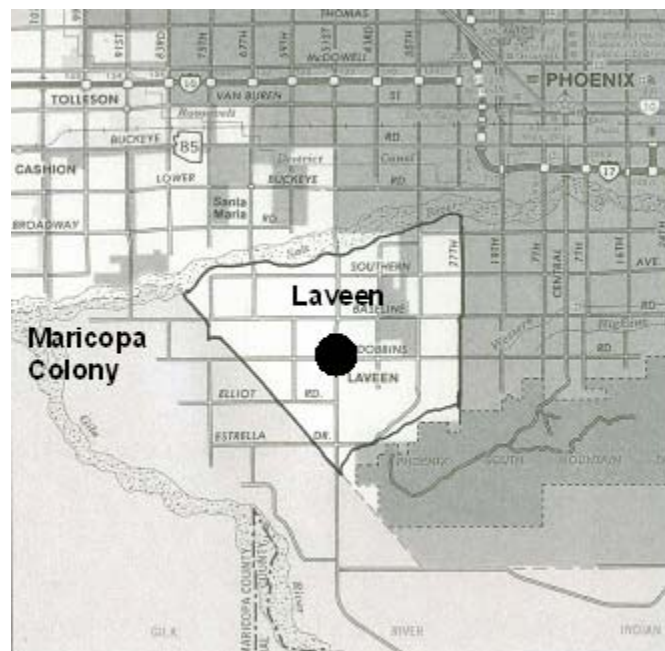


Figure 3.1 – Maricopa Colony and Laveen, black circle is location of the Laveen Store at 51st Avenue and Dobbins

The Maricopa people moved into the area of the Maricopa Colony during the early 1870s when newly arrived homesteaders caused water shortages by diverting the Gila River to their fields. By June of 1879

³ Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

enough people lived there that the Gila River Reservation (now the GRIC) expanded to include the Maricopa Colony. Families continued moving to the settlement in small groups, and by the turn of the century about 350 Maricopa lived in the GRIC, most in the Maricopa Colony community.⁴ Laveen also began to develop in the early 1870s, when white and Hispanic homesteading families established farms, eventually claiming land right up to the border of the GRIC. Outside of farming, Laveen and several locations in the GRIC served as stage stops for roads traveling from Wickenburg to Maricopa Wells and Prescott to Tucson.⁵ Though census records do not exist for Laveen until the 1920s, one historian estimates that perhaps 200 people lived in the area by the turn of the twentieth century.⁶ In fact, the community was so tiny that it remained unnamed until a post office was established there in 1913. The post office operated out of the “Country Store” run by Roger and Walter Laveen and was named for the proprietors.⁷

The 1910s brought major changes for the people living in the far southwest corner of the Valley. The opening of the Roosevelt Dam in 1911 positively impacted growth in Phoenix and surrounding communities; however, for isolated areas, like Laveen and Maricopa Colony, without

⁴ Wilson, XII-4, XIII-22, 3; Harwell, 76.

⁵ Bethke, 42.

⁶ Ibid., 65.

⁷ Ibid., 97.

access to the canal system of the Salt River Valley Water Users Association, the dam resulted in less available water.⁸ Though canals would be extended into Laveen later in the decade, well irrigation became more important to communities like Maricopa Colony as water from the Salt River became more restricted.

Infrastructure that better connected these rural communities to the population of Phoenix also began to develop during this period. The construction of the Central Avenue Bridge in 1911 provided access to Phoenix, which had previously been accessible through fording the Salt River at a place close to the Maricopa Colony, today around 87th Avenue.⁹ A single road was paved in 1922, which also provided better access to Phoenix. Despite these changes, the still lengthy trip to Phoenix continued to keep visits to the growing city infrequent.¹⁰ Growth increased during the 1920s as more people moved into Laveen. In addition, a cotton gin was established there, and electricity arrived at the end of the decade. Electricity, however, was not widely available, especially to more remote homes, and other modern conveniences like running water did not begin appearing until the 1940s.¹¹ By 1930, the community of Laveen had a

⁸ Ibid., 73.

⁹ Ibid., 69.

¹⁰ Dobbins was paved but only from 51st Avenue eastward. Betty Accomazzo, ed. *Laveen Centennial History: 1884-1984* (Laveen, AZ: Laveen Community Council, 1984), 22.

¹¹ Bethke, 121.

population of about 750, and the number of people living in the area would remain under 900 until the 1960s.¹²

During the 1930s, the communities on the west end of the GRIC had a similar sized population to that of Laveen, with a combined total of approximately 775 people living in the Maricopa Colony, the Cooperative Community and Gila Crossing.¹³ Maricopa Colony, where most Maricopa potters lived, began about five miles west of the Laveen Store and spread along and to the south of Baseline Road. In 1936, there were forty-seven families (about 250 people) living in the community, most of whom farmed cotton or wheat or ranched cattle, with fewer than ten percent not participating in some form of agriculture.¹⁴ From the mid-1920s, water in the Salt River was reduced further every year, and the poor quality of available water resulted in soil salinization, which negatively impacted the ability of the land to support crops. Likewise, good drinking water was less available, and though many people continued to get water from a well by the Maricopa school, others drove to Laveen or even Phoenix for potable water.¹⁵ Laveen store owner Ralph Spotts recalls "...There was a hydrant near the store on the south which provided water for everyone. There was

¹² Ibid., 115, 120-1.

¹³ Lucy Wilcox Adams, "Pima Economy," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and Technical Cooperation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Soil Conservation Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, Figure 2.

¹⁴ Reh, October 1936, 40.

¹⁵ Ibid., 55-6.

only one well on the Indian Reservation, and it was salty. So all night long there was a steady line of Indian wagons loaded with milk cans hauling water to their homes.”¹⁶ Located at the southwest corner of 51st Avenue and Dobbins, at least five miles from Maricopa Colony, trips to the store were on an as needed basis with one former Laveen resident noting “you didn’t just run up to the store [like today].”¹⁷

Most Maricopa families used horses and wagons for transportation. During the 1930s, about six families had a “good car” with only a third having any automobile and in many cases it “was such a wreck that you had to wonder...how it would start and go.”¹⁸ Now a short drive, the trip to Phoenix from Maricopa Colony was twelve to fifteen miles on a two-lane road, which took an hour or more even by a reliable car. For those who used a horse and wagon or walked, the trip was an all-day event. Despite this distance, many Maricopa women took weekend trips to Phoenix to sell pottery to tourists or dealers. As a child in the 1940s, one Laveen resident recalls Maricopa potters and Pima basketmakers sitting under the awning at Walgreens Drug on Central Avenue where “they would sell pots for literally pennies. Like a quarter or fifty cents.”¹⁹ Even at these low prices,

¹⁶ Ralph Spotts, “How I Remember Laveen,” in *Laveen Centennial History: 1884-1984*, ed. Betty Accomazzo (Laveen, AZ: Laveen Community Council, 1984), xxix.

¹⁷ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010; Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

¹⁸ Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010; Reh, October 1936, 55.

¹⁹ Reh, October 1936, 53.

the sale of pottery was important to the survival of many families. Soil Conservation Worker Emma Reh observed: "In three-fourths of the Maricopa families, pottery-making plays a notable economic part...A mediocre pottery-maker can get \$2 a week. The best-known Maricopa pottery-maker gets from \$7 to \$9 a week..."²⁰ Selling pottery was so vital, that stories exist of potters who "every weekend...would leave from home and walk towards Phoenix to sell pottery...and if she could she would catch a ride on a wagon..."²¹ With pottery playing such a significant role to the family, it is no wonder that women were interested in Home Extension Agent Elisabeth Hart's suggestion to start a pottery selling cooperative. However, the location that was picked, Pueblo Grande Museum, was a distance about eight miles further than downtown Phoenix. This roughly twenty mile trip proved too far, with Ida Redbird noting "there weren't any good roads into Phoenix then, and none of the women had cars...and they couldn't be away from home so long at a time."²²

In 1938, the same year that the attempt to start a potters' cooperative began, Ernest (Earnie) and Adele Cheatham returned to Laveen, where they would spend the rest of their lives.²³ Earnie married Adele Morrow in 1927, who earlier that year had graduated valedictorian

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

²² Stoeppelmann, 42-3.

²³ Spelling of Earnie and Jonni according to Informant 12.

from Glendale High School.²⁴ Soon after, the pair moved to Oklahoma when Earnie's employer the Arizona Grocery Company (later Safeway) transferred him for a managerial position. Upon returning to Arizona, the couple and their two boys settled in an unheated wooden house on the northwest corner of 51st Avenue and Elliot, close to the cotton farm and dairy run by other members of the Cheatham family.²⁵ Earnie joined his father and three brothers and undertook the management of the business. A farmer at heart, he drove Belgium draft horse teams in the fields, and later, when the family mechanized, he was "always running the tractor."²⁶ To work the cotton acreage, Earnie hired people from the area, the majority of whom were Maricopa, Pima or African American laborers.²⁷

Adele worked in the home, but she also was an active leader in the community of Laveen and participated in women's agrarian associations like the Laveen Cowbelles, Cotton Wives Association, and Holstein Freisan Association.²⁸ Adele at times also worked as the back-up mail carrier at the local post office, which operated out of the Laveen Store. Earnie's father Armon (A.D.) had purchased and rebuilt the store when the family moved to Laveen in 1919. The Cheathams ran the store until 1925

²⁴ "Adele Cheatham," *The Arizona Republic*, 22-Apr-2002.

²⁵ Accomazzo, 28; Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010.

²⁶ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010.

²⁷ Accomazzo, 28; Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010; Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

²⁸ "Adele Cheatham," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 22 April 2002.

when they leased it out, later selling it to Ralph Spotts in 1937.²⁹ Adele and Earnie soon became fast friends with Ralph and his wife Mary (Jonni), and the women were inseparable. By 1959, Adele and Earnie built a new home on 51st Avenue and Baseline. Their son Buddy and his family moved into the old wooden house down the road at 51st Avenue and Elliot. At that same time, Adele and her best friend Jonni started collecting Maricopa pottery.³⁰

Adele and Jonni both developed personal relationships with some of the better-known Maricopa potters. How these relationships began is unclear, but after living in Laveen for over twenty years and being active in the community, in addition to their involvement in the general store, both women probably knew the majority of people living in the area. Perhaps they began interacting with the potters at the Laveen Store where “everybody ran into each other.”³¹ Another likely role in which the women got to know the potters was through their jobs as backup mail carriers. Adele, and later Jonni, filled this position at the post office run out of the store, delivering the rural route in Laveen and the west end of the GRIC.³² This took them to the homes of the potters. In addition, Adele’s friendly

²⁹ Accomazzo, 20, 22; Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

³⁰ Accomazzo,; Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010; Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

³¹ Bethke, 98.

³² Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010; Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

and open personality probably had a lot to do with her friendships with the potters. As one person recalls, “there was no more outgoing person than Adele Cheatham.”³³

Adele and Jonni both purchased pottery directly from Maricopa potters with exchanges occurring both at the store and at the potters’ homes. One store employee recalls some of the Maricopa women bringing small, easily portable vessels to sell to store employees or customers, and, occasionally, the potters would trade and barter for groceries with Ralph. More often than not, potters preferred to sell their vessels for cash that they could then take with them or use in the store. Ralph usually would send the potters to see Jonni at the family home across the street, where she would purchase pieces.³⁴ Adele probably also acquired some of her collection at the store, perhaps while filling in at the post office.³⁵

Adele and Jonni also purchased some pieces directly at the potters’ homes in Maricopa Colony. Some of these interactions may have occurred while delivering mail or during friendly visits. Both women used to pay social visits to Ida Redbird and Mary Juan, who were in their seventies by this time. Childhood memories remain of heading out with Adele or Jonni, travelling along the dirt road, and visiting with the potters while they worked outside under a tree next to their traditional ocotillo and

³³ Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010.

mud houses.³⁶ Adele and Mary Juan shared a love of sewing, and the women would sit and talk for hours or sew pieces together. Jonni, who was a local artist, sometimes painted watercolors of the potters at work.³⁷

Adele's interest in American Indian art did not begin when she settled in Laveen. She actually began collecting while the family lived in Oklahoma, starting with two hide and twig stools.³⁸ A Heard Museum Auxiliary Guild member, she devoted an entire bedroom in their Laveen home to American Indian art, with specific collections of Maricopa pottery and Hopi kachinas. When Adele died in 2002, the collection was split among several parties. Some of the Maricopa pottery ended up in separate collections, but most of the pieces stayed together, making up the current, forty-one piece collection.³⁹

Outside of the Maricopa community, not a lot is known about the lives of most of the potters, but their pieces also can tell a story and it is possible to learn more about the women and their art by looking at the pottery they produced. This is part of the importance of Adele Cheatham's collection. Eight different potters are represented, the majority of women manufacturing between ca. 1960 and the early 1970s, the period when the collection came together. Most notably there are no pieces by Mabel

³⁶ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010; Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

³⁷ Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

³⁸ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010.

³⁹ Ibid.

Sunn, the potter that Fernald documented. It is possible that Adele once had some of her pieces that have since been separated from the main collection. The mix of potters in this collection shows a transition in generations. It includes those who were at the very end of their careers like Vesta Bread, Mary Juan, Alma Lawrence, Grace Monahan, and Ida Redbird, contrasted with those in the first half of their production phase like Barbara Johnson, Malinda Card and Beryl Stevens.

Vesta Bread (ca. 1912 – ca. 1976)

“...it was a family deal you know, Phyllis and Vesta and then later on...her daughter Avis and then the grandkids...and then Beryl comes in...so it was all...close knit.”⁴⁰

Vesta Bread (nee Yarmatta) is one of two potters active in the 1930s that still has students manufacturing today. Her three daughters Phyllis Cerna, Laretta Bread and Serena Johnson, along with Beryl Jane Stevens, whose work also is represented in Adele’s collection, learned from Vesta. Phyllis went on to become one of the most active potters of the next several decades and she personally instructed at least four new potters and taught community classes in the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community. Beryl has also been active in continuing the teaching line by instructing up and coming potters who are active today.

Vesta Bread’s work in the collection is represented by four black-on-red jars. Mary Fernald noted in her 1973 thesis that Vesta was one of

⁴⁰ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

only two potters who continued to manufacture tall-neck jars (Figure 3.2 a).⁴¹ Two of her large jars are represented in this collection, the tallest standing at over a foot and a half tall. The form of tall-necked jar is considered to be distinctly Maricopa, featuring a very long neck on a globular body. Tall-necks began appearing during the end of the nineteenth century, but experienced a surge of popularity during the 1930s. At that time they increased in height, and the tallest known piece stands around two feet. Since the 1980s, tall-necks have become shorter, and most produced today stay well under a foot tall. Potters have their own methods for manufacturing tall-neck jars. Some do so using only coils of clay and their hands while others use a stick positioned in the center of the vessel to provide a guide for the coils.⁴²

The other two jars by Vesta Bread stand out when compared to the rest of the collection. Both have relatively sharp shoulders and the design is confined to the area above the shoulder. One is a seed jar and the other has a very short neck, which one potter suggests could indicate that it was originally going to be a tall-neck that broke during manufacture (Figure 3.2 b).⁴³ The designs on these pieces are laid out so that they create a five or

⁴¹ Tall-neck jars are also referred to as long-neck jars and sometimes called vases. The other potter being Mable Sunn, it should be noted that Barbara Johnson was producing tall-necks at that time, Beryl Jane Stevens has produced tall-necks as well; Fernald, 79.

⁴² Informant 7, interview by author, 10 August 2010; Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

⁴³ Informant 3.

six pointed star shape, something that is very typical in the work of most potters from Vesta's teaching line.

The line work and paint application on several of these pots, and particularly on the seed jar, is much smoother and bolder than most other pieces attributed to Vesta. Multiple potters have indicated that the design work on at least three of these pieces is probably the hand of Phyllis Cerna. Based on interviews, it is now known that Vesta, Laretta, Serena, Phyllis, Avis, and Beryl, at times worked together. Within this family, one person would sometimes make the vessel and another would help by completing the design.⁴⁴ This type of cooperative production is not something that has been previously documented in the literature on Maricopa pottery.



a. Black-on-red tall-neck jars



b. Black-on-red jars

Figure 3.2 – Vessels by Vesta Bread

⁴⁴ Informant 2, interview by author, 16 June 2010; Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010; Informant 5, interview by author, 23 July 2010.

Beryl Jane Stevens (1934 – present)

“Beryl Jane ...she does beautiful work and god her pieces are just paper thin”⁴⁵

Of all the potters represented in the Cheatham collection, Beryl Jane Stevens is the only one still producing pieces today. Only a toddler during Elisabeth Hart’s day, her grandmother Alice Colt was one of the women who attended the potters meetings of the 1930s. A student of Vesta, Beryl worked cooperatively with the Bread family. Beryl has been active in spurts since the 1970s, and within the past decade, she has been instrumental in the continuation of Maricopa pottery. Her students include Matillas Howard and her great-nephew Kevin Stevens, grandson of Gertrude Stevens Ruelas, who was also a potter, and the daughter of Mabel Sunn. Most Maricopa potters are related to each other in some way, sometimes in multiple ways through both blood ties and marriages, making for complex family relationships and family trees.

Two of Beryl’s pieces are in the collection, both beautifully executed miniature jars (Figure 3.3). The first is a black-on-red decorated with a five pointed star line layout with barbed and hooked triangles, as well as open spirals. The second jar is highly polished and completely undecorated with a body about the size of a golf ball. The plain red piece is so well made that it stands on par with the two undecorated Mary Juan pieces also included in the collection.

⁴⁵ Informant 7, interview by author, 10 August 2010.

The design on the decorated piece is reflective of Beryl's teaching heritage, evidenced by the layout and hooked triangular elements. Pieces of her work in other collections also display a similarity to those produced by Vesta and her daughters, a characteristic attributable to her participation in the production of pieces cooperatively. Beryl has produced a wide-range of forms and color schemes, including polychromes, bowls, jars, and some tall-necks. It has been said that Beryl "...even sold a salt and pepper shaker to Mary Juan...cause she liked it."⁴⁶



Figure 3.3 – Miniature jars by Beryl Jane Stevens, both stand about 2.5 inches high

Barbara Johnson (ca. 1923 – 1997)

"I'd always be getting on the bus early morning...she'll be sitting out there in the carport...big ol' pots just sitting around her..."⁴⁷

Though Fernald never observed Barbara Johnson manufacturing a tall-neck jar, she was one of the last potters to produce large pieces on

⁴⁶ Informant 3, interview by author, 23 July 2010.

⁴⁷ Informant 7, interview by author, 10 August 2010.

par with those made in the early and middle part of the century. Taught by her mother, Mabel Sunn, Barbara was present while Fernald conducted ethnographic research for her thesis. In fact, by that point in her career, Mabel relied on her daughter to do the physically strenuous clay processing. Barbara's sister, Gertrude was also a potter, though her work is not as well known.

Barbara Johnson is represented in this collection by a single piece, appropriately, a tall-neck (Figure 3.4). The neck is uneven and lopsided with visible coil bulges and is decorated with bands of alternating rectilinear and squiggled lines, while the body is adorned with a ten-pointed layout of nested triangles. The asymmetry of this jar indicates that it may be one of her earlier attempts to create a vessel of this magnitude. By the time Adele was collecting, Barbara was already in her forties; her tall-necks became so good that she won multiple awards at the Heard Museum during the later 1970s.

Out of the three tall-necks represented in the Cheatham collection, this piece stands the tallest at about eighteen inches. Adele was particularly proud of her tall-necks and displayed them out of reach on the top of a living room cabinet. Originally there were more in the collection but at least one suffered misfortune. Years after the event occurred, Adele continued to relate the story of a cleaning woman who snapped the neck off a jar when she lifted it by the top.⁴⁸ The immense height and thinness

⁴⁸ Informant 7, interview by author, 10 August 2010.

of these vessels makes the neck a particularly weak point; jars of this scale are incredibly difficult to manufacture to completion, perhaps another reason that vessels of this size are rarely produced today.



Figure 3.4 – Tall neck jar by Barbara Johnson

Alma Lawrence (ca. 1899 – 1980)

“and of course the rumor there is her husband helped her so ok if he’s good at it then why not?”⁴⁹

Of all the potters active during the twentieth century, Alma Lawrence’s vessels are probably the easiest to identify. The designs on her pieces are unique and stand out from the work of other Maricopa potters. Rarely using the solid elements that tend to dominate most vessels, the designs are composed of tightly grouped, thin-lined units that connect and flow into each other creating a continuous design band.

⁴⁹ Informant 1, interview by author, 14 April 2010.

Alma was one of the women active in the attempt to create a pottery cooperative. At the September 8th 1937 potters meeting in the Maricopa school house, an annotation next to her name indicates that she was “represented by husband.” In fact, part of the reason that Alma’s pieces look so different may be that her husband, Walter Lawrence, is said to have participated in their production. It is unclear whether Walter was actually putting the designs on the vessels or if Alma was copying his drawings. Regardless, his acknowledged participation is unusual in this historically female dominated craft.

Fernald noted that “Alma Lawrence prefers making only bowls and some plates...” and all five of her pieces in Adele’s collection are bowls.⁵⁰ The most typical of Alma’s work is a large polychrome bowl (Figure 3.5 a), slipped cream under the rim and red on the lower body.⁵¹ The designs on each slip are separate and clearly divided by a thin black line; however the layout is done so that it creates the appearance of a single band of decoration.

The four other bowls by Alma in the Cheatham Collection are bi-chromes (Figure 3.5 b), the largest of these is a medium sized black-on-cream bowl with a quartered design layout consisting of triangles and diamonds. Three miniature bowls are also represented, two black-on-cream, and one black-on-red, use running spirals, nested triangles and

⁵⁰ Fernald, 80.

⁵¹ Polychromes are also referred to as two-tones.

pentagonal shapes to create a band just under the rim. The small black-on-creams show marked asymmetry and also some uncharacteristic fireclouds, discoloring some of the surface to gray.



a. Large polychrome bowl

b. Medium-small bi-chrome bowls

Figure 3.5 – Bowls by Alma Lawrence

Grace Monahan (1901 - 1973)

“Grace Monahan...she was a really good potter.”⁵²

Identified as “Mrs. Phillip Monahan” in Elisabeth Hart’s November 16th journal, from 1935 or 1936, Hart noted “pottery leaders” next to Grace Monahan and Mary Juan’s names.⁵³ Grace was producing enough pottery by 1932, that the birth certificate for her son Phillip, listed her occupation as “pottery maker”; in contrast most other potters were identified as “housewife” in vital statistics records. Though obviously an active potter, she was not one of the eleven women who ended up participating in the pottery cooperative. Perhaps part of the reason her involvement in the

⁵² Informant 1, interview by author, 14 April 2010.

⁵³ Elisabeth Hart Papers, Pueblo Grande Museum Archives, Phoenix.

effort waned is that like many of the potters, Grace was the mother of small children and had other responsibilities in addition to pottery making.

The work of Grace Monahan is represented here by four black-on-red pieces (Figure 3.6 a). Two of the pieces are of a similar shape produced by many Maricopa potters, with long, restricted necks and bodies embellished in bold running scrolls. Another small jar, a wedding vase, demonstrates a style particular to Grace. Wedding jars are typified by two spouts connected by a handle. On wedding jars produced by Grace, the handle juts up at a sharp angle, with a very tight space between the spouts. Many other Maricopa wedding vases have wider spread spouts and lower handles, making the space between easier to polish.⁵⁴

One of the most unique pieces in the entire Cheatham Collection is an eccentric vessel, which is undecorated save for the rim, lined in black paint (Figure 3.6 b). The shape is most similar to a lamp chimney, but appears to have been made from two separate vessels, the upper half a jar and the lower an inverted bowl with a quarter-folded rim. The underside of the vessel shows that it is hollow all the way through, and signed in two places with Grace's characteristic, fancy script initials.

Noted for being an excellent potter, several of these vessels lack symmetry in form, design and polishing, probably an indication of her advanced age when the pieces were produced. Fernald noted that

⁵⁴ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

Monahan favored the spiral design motif, and while she was still producing during the early phase of Fernald's research, before the thesis was finished, Grace had passed away.⁵⁵ Adele was present for the funeral in January of 1973 at the Seventh Day Adventist church in Maricopa Colony. In a memory album, Adele saved the funeral program along with others from the services for Ida Redbird and Mary Juan.⁵⁶



a. Black-on-red jars



b. Eccentric vessel

Figure 3.6 – Vessels by Grace Monahan

Ida Redbird (ca. 1892 – 1971)

“...she couldn't see very well...they're not the quality she once had but they're Ida Redbird pots”⁵⁷

Ida Redbird is the best documented of all Maricopa potters; however, she is only represented by one piece in the Cheatham

⁵⁵ Fernald, 79.

⁵⁶ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010.

⁵⁷ Informant 1, interview by author, 14 April 2010.

Collection. Ida first emerged in the public eye as the translator and an informant for Leslie Spier during his field work for *Yuman Tribes of the Gila River*. She is visible in the historical record from the 1930s through the 1950s from a variety of workshops and was noted for being “...outgoing, charismatic and comfortable with English and the Anglo world.”⁵⁸ Despite being the most widely known Maricopa potter, Ida did not leave a strong teaching legacy. While her daughter Malinda observed and assisted her during childhood, Ida’s daughter-in-law Anita Redbird is her only known student to become an active potter.

Later in her life, getting the necessary materials for pottery manufacture appears to have been a problem for Ida. Multiple people, including docents at the Heard Museum and PGM, recall driving her to gather clay. On one trip to Ida’s house, Adele noticed that Ida had not made pottery and Ida informed her “I don’t have any of my tools.” Adele offered to order whatever Ida needed from the Laveen Store, and she requested a tub in which to fire pottery. Adele drove home and ran into the house yelling “Earnie, Earnie, we gotta go get Ida a tin tub!” and the couple promptly went to the store, purchased a tub and drove back to Ida’s.⁵⁹ Based on their friendship, it is very likely that Adele originally purchased more of Ida’s work that has since been separated from the main collection.

⁵⁸ Hayes 2006, 148.

⁵⁹ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010.

The single piece by Ida Redbird is not a good representation of the majority of her work (Figure 3.7). A small polychrome bowl slipped cream on the exterior and red on the interior, the bowl is rough and asymmetrical, with the interior surface slip unevenly applied leaving a bare area under the rim. Ida's pottery from the 1930s to the 1960s was generally well-made; however, based on the execution of this bowl, and the collecting history of Adele, it seems likely that this piece was produced at the end of Ida's career. Several pieces in other collections dating from the same time period show similar characteristics. By the end of her life, her ability to produce pottery was negatively impacted by cataracts, arthritis and diabetes.



Figure 3.7 – Polychrome bowl by Ida Redbird

Malinda [Redbird] Card (ca. 1929 – 1996)

*"I was polishing my mother's and it cracked and [I] took off...I was kinda small...I was polishing for her she was going to sell it...I know she's going to get mad at me so...I went to my aunt's house I stayed over night..."*⁶⁰

Ida Redbird was killed by a falling tree as she slept outside during a summer storm.⁶¹ Her death in 1971 was the catalyst for her daughter, Malinda Card, to pursue her own pottery career. As a child, Malinda watched her mother make pottery and even helped her produce pieces, but did not refer to her mother as her teacher; rather, after Ida's death, Malinda went to her mother's cousin Mary Juan for instruction.⁶²

Malinda became active during the 1970s, and by the 1980s conducted several workshops for local museums. One was held in the spring of 1983 at PGM, documented by a series of photographs and notes. Malinda was helped by her husband Howard; particularly during the firing sequence which he conducted almost entirely on his own.⁶³ Students in the workshop were taught pottery construction using Legg's Pantyhose eggs as molds. Following the design process, Malinda

⁶⁰ Malinda Card, "Second Session of Workshop," 21 April 1983, transcript. Copy in 1980s Maricopa Pottery Documentation Accession. Pueblo Grande Museum, Phoenix.

⁶¹ "Master Potter of Maricopas crushed to Death Under Tree," *The Arizona Republic*, 11 August 1971.

⁶² Anice Bromley, "Ida Redbird and the Maricopa Potters," *Heard Museum Guild Ketch Papers* vol. 1 (April 1974).

⁶³ 1983 Pottery Workshop Photographs, Donald Hiser Administrative Papers, Pueblo Grande Museum, Phoenix.

informed the participants that the designs on their pieces could be set by heating the pots in their home ovens. The workshop demonstrated a modern take on traditional methods.⁶⁴

Only one piece in this collection is by Malinda, a medium sized short-necked black-on cream jar decorated with diagonal fringe and nested triangles with filled tips (Figure 3.8). The surface on this jar is heavily scuffed by polishing striations. Pieces in other museum and private collections suggest that Malinda heavily favored the design that she used on this vessel. It was a favorite of both her mother and Mary Juan during the 1930s. The roughness of this vessel suggests that it dates to the time when Malinda first started making pottery around 1971. Her later vessels, particularly those with red slip, show excellent polish and better design control.

The base on this jar is signed "M. Redbird" in blue ink, which is probably some sort of felt tipped marker. Other media are occasionally used to sign pieces, a process which depends entirely on the potter. The seed jar by Vesta Bread, described earlier, also appears to have its signature done in marker, which can easily be identified by its iridescent sheen.

⁶⁴ Informant 10, interview by author, 8 October 2010, Pueblo Grande Museum, Phoenix.



Figure 3.8 – Black-on-Cream Jar by Malinda Card

Mary Juan (ca. 1892 - 1977)

“...I don’t think anybody could put...the finish on like Mary Juan could.”⁶⁵

Mary Juan is considered by many to be the most skilled Maricopa potter of the twentieth century. Across the board her pieces are noted for their high, incredibly even polish and finely executed line work. The pottery of Mary Juan accounts for over half of the Cheatham collection, with a total of twenty-two pieces that demonstrate the breadth of her work during the last portion of her career. The forms range from jars, bowls and wedding vases to miniature vessels and eccentric forms. Mary was instructed by her mother Josepha, and worked together with her cousin Ida Redbird who was born about the same time as Mary. Though both were visible in the activities of the 1930s, Mary soon faded from the public

⁶⁵ Informant 1, interview by author, 14 April 2010.

eye. Ida Redbird later said of Mary, "...[s]he's really a better potter than I am, but I've always talked too much so I got all the publicity."⁶⁶

Multiple sources describe Mary as incredibly shy while Adele Cheatham was noted for being very outgoing. Despite their differing personalities, Adele and Mary appear to have shared a special bond, particularly when it came to sewing. Adele used to sit with Mary for hours as the two women discussed needlework and sewed together. Towards the end of her life, Mary asked Adele if there were any of her possessions that she would like to keep as a memento. Adele requested her old treadle operated sewing machine. Adele kept the machine exactly the way Mary left it. One person recalls that no one was allowed to touch the sewing machine, "It was her pride and joy."⁶⁷ Both Adele and Jonni attended Mary Juan's wake in 1977. Jonni, also a close friend of Mary, wrote a short account of Mary's life and described the wake, leaving one of the few personal accounts of a potter in publication.⁶⁸

Mary Juan is first documented and photographed in *Yuman Tribes of the Gila River* where Spier states "...information on the making of cradle bands was had from Mary Juan, a young and skillful weaver."⁶⁹ Like Mary Juan, many other potters manufactured multiple crafts, particularly

⁶⁶ Stoeppelmann, 46.

⁶⁷ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010.

⁶⁸ Jonne Spotts, "How I Remember Laveen," in *Laveen Centennial History: 1884-1984*, ed. Betty Accomazzo (Laveen, AZ: Laveen Community Council, 1984), xx-xxv.

⁶⁹ See pictures of Mary Juan with loom; Spier, 111, plate VIII and IX.

beadwork. These other products were used mainly within the Maricopa community, which is perhaps why pottery, sold to the public, has overshadowed work done in other media.

Four small to medium sized jars in this collection were produced by Mary Juan; two are polychromes slipped cream on the body and red on the neck, and a third is a small black-on-red (Figure 3.9). All three pieces have elongated necks and are ornamented with pendant triangles extending onto the bodies. The paint on the fourth jar, a black-on-red short neck is so badly faded that the designs are difficult to read (Figure 3.10 a). In fact, one of the most pressing conservation problems with Maricopa pottery is the instability of the organic paint. Exposure to light and over-handling appear to be the largest factors in deteriorating paint. Mary Juan's pieces are particularly susceptible to fading, perhaps even more so than the work of other potters. Possible reasons for this include differences in the preparation of her paint or possibly that the incredibly high polish makes it difficult for paint to adhere to the surface.

In the collection are two wedding vases of a similar size, both with widespread handles and spouts that flare outward (Figure 3.10 b). The first jar is intricately decorated on the body and spout with pendant triangles, spirals and meander lines. The second jar is a completely undecorated redware. Mary Juan has one other undecorated piece in this collection, a medium sized incurved bowl (Figure 3.10 c). Mary Juan is one of the few potters who made pieces that lacked decoration; only one

other completely undecorated piece is represented in this collection, the small jar by Beryl Jane Stevens. By the early 1970s, Fernald noted that Mary Juan was producing very few pieces that were decorated, most being plain; this suggests that her age played a factor in her ability to draft and paint designs. However, she began producing undecorated redwares much earlier in her career, the earliest known piece dates to 1945.⁷⁰

Three other medium sized, low profiled incurved bowls also appear in Adele's collection. Two are black-on-red featuring zig-zags and partially filled or tailed pendant triangles running just under the rim (Figure 3.10 d). The other low profile incurve is the only polychrome bowl by Mary Juan in this collection. It is designed simply with a stepped rectilinear line on the upper red slip, and an undecorated cream base (Figure 3.10 c).

Medium to small sized bowls that range from hemispherical to slightly incurved are represented by four pieces (Figure 3.10 e). The decoration on these pieces highlights one of Mary Juan's characteristic designs, pendant triangles, which appear on the majority of her work. Sometimes, the triangles are left unornamented, while at other times, as shown on each of these bowls, the triangles are embellished with tails. Tails are generally a simple scroll or a gently curved line with embellishment. Three of these bowls also have a secondary, scooped line with filled triangles running below the pendant triangles, creating the appearance of running spirals.

⁷⁰ Fred Wilson, "Maricopa Indian Pottery," 1 May 1945, Fred Wilson Collection. Arizona Collection. Arizona State University, Phoenix.

Five well-made miniature bowls, all of a similar size, demonstrate consistency of Mary Juan's craftsmanship (Figure 3.10 f). Each stands just over an inch and a half in height, with less than a half-ounce difference in their weights. The uniformity of size suggests that they were formed using the same base mold. Four of the bowls are black-on-red, each using the embellished pendant triangle motif, occurring at or just under the rim. The last miniature bowl is a simple black-on-cream, highly polished with the only decoration being a painted rim.

Two other miniature pieces in this collection stand out, both are red-on-black of unusual shape (Figure 3.11). One is an oval bowl with an uncharacteristically asymmetrical rim, decorated on the exterior with filled triangles connected by a thin stepped line. The second vessel, a recurved rim⁷¹ bowl, is decorated with partially filled pendant triangles with spiral tails, fringe and pinwheel circles make up the remainder of the design (Figure 3.11).

The final example of Mary Juan's work is the most memorable. It is the only effigy piece in the Cheatham Collection, a small, black-on-cream bird effigy vessel (Figure 3.11). The body is oval shaped and hollow, while the head is solid and the tail scooped. Decoration is minimal with only a line on the rim and a small eye on either side of the head. Every person who has seen the collection has remarked on the pot, and several potters have even begun making bird effigies after seeing this piece. Though a

⁷¹ Recurved rims have the appearance of an s-shape when viewed in profile.

few bowls by Mary Juan use appliquéd ornamentation in the form of frogs, to date, this is the only effigy vessel attributed to her hand.⁷²

Adele put together an excellent example of the wide range of Mary Juan's work, and that it was collected by someone that knew her personally makes this portion of the collection all the more notable. From the late 1930s to the 1950s, Mary Juan produced a wide range of sizes and shapes including very large, tall-necks and pitchers. That none of these pieces are on as large a scale of those she produced earlier in the century suggests that by later in her career she produced a greater number of small pieces, or that Adele simply had an affinity for smaller vessels.



Figure 3.9 – Small Jars by Mary Juan

⁷² Informant 5.



a. Jar with damaged paint



b. Wedding Jars



c. Redware and polychrome bowls



d. Black-on-red incurve bowls



e. Bowls with tailed triangles



f. Miniature bowls

Figure 3.10 – Vessels by Mary Juan



Figure 3.11 – Unique Vessels by Mary Juan

There is only one piece in the collection that lacks a signature, a small, black-on-red short-necked jar. The design is very typically Maricopa, a five-pointed star layout consisting of pendant nested triangles with filled interior triangles. One of the five triangles was left un-filled either on purpose or by mistake. Frequently with unsigned pieces, particularly those that use a very common design, it is impossible to identify the artist.



Figure 3.12 – Unsigned black-on-red jar

Compared to other collections, Adele's is mid-sized. Despite the presence of a few very large tall-necks and some medium sized pieces,

the majority of the collection tends toward small and miniature. This could indicate a preference of Adele's, increased rate of survival for small ceramics in a household setting, or it could reflect supply at the time she was purchasing. One store employee recalls that most of the pieces women brought in to sell were "about the size of your hand" or even smaller.⁷³ These smaller pieces would have been easier to transport to the store. Smaller pieces also mean meant that clay would last longer resulting in fewer trips and less clay processing. Miniatures and small vessels are also cheaper to buy and therefore easier to sell. Even during the 1960s the prices for Maricopa pottery remained low. While some of the very large pieces may have begun to bring in prices between ten and twenty dollars by the end of the decade, a store employee recalls that the potters in the store "...sold 'em [pots] for nothing, one dollar, two dollars, three dollars, they sold them for nothing sometimes just to pay a bill and that was the money they had."⁷⁴

The black-on-cream pieces are also important; there are two by Mary Juan and three by Alma Lawrence. When Fernald was doing documentation, she surveyed 250 vessels at Lee's Indian Crafts shop in Phoenix not one of which was black-on-cream. Later, in the book *Dirt for Making Things* she notes the existence of a single black-on-cream piece by Mabel Sunn, inspired by pictures of early period pieces in a museum

⁷³ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010.

⁷⁴ Informant 11, interview by author, 9 October 2010; Informant 12, interview by author 16 October 2010.

collection. That the Cheatham Collection of forty-one pots contains five black-on-creams shows that pots of this color combination, though not prominent, were made during this time period. Some sources indicate that the production of black-on-cream pieces is due to the difficulty obtaining red slip, it could also be the preference of the potters.

While each of the pieces are special in their own right, the eccentric tall vessel by Grace Monahan and the small bird effigy by Mary Juan are in a class of their own. The eccentric vessel shape produced by Grace Monahan has not been seen in any other collection, and no other full-effigies by Mary Juan have been identified to date. The redware pieces by Mary Juan and Beryl Jane Stevens also stand out. Though Mary Juan is noted for producing many of these pieces at the end of her career, the existence of other plain vessels in other collections as well as the piece by Beryl in this collection, show that these plain pieces were not produced only because of age, but that potters whose polishing excelled did not always need to decorate their pieces in order for them to be collectable.

Other pieces of pottery in this collection have revealed information as well. The seed jar by Vesta Bread with design work by Phyllis Cerna demonstrates that some vessels are manufactured by two or more people, resulting in a different appearance in pieces signed by the same person. This also demonstrates that some individuals have unique styles that can be used to identify their work, while others, as seen in the unsigned piece, are nearly impossible to differentiate. Uncharacteristic asymmetry in some

of the vessels also shows the impact of age upon the potters' abilities, but also their dedication to continue making vessels. These same issues also impacted the number of pieces they were able to produce. At the same time, work by Mary Juan and Ida Redbird became more recognized during the late 1960s and early 1970s, resulting in higher prices for their pieces, the benefit of which they probably did not receive. As Mary Juan demonstrates, these women were multi-faceted artists and individuals. While only their pottery speaks for them, the elder women who were active until the 1970s were the same potters who used to walk to Phoenix to support their families.

Adele's collection is unique in that it was created by a woman with personal ties to many of the potters. Her collection reveals that purchasing was occurring outside of the anonymity of the larger markets in Phoenix. In fact, geographically closer locations like Laveen played a more significant role in the daily lives of Maricopa potters than far-off metropolitan Phoenix. The interactions between people in Laveen and people from Maricopa Colony at common locations like the general store and through activities like mail delivery led to exchanges between women of these two communities. The manufacture and sale of Maricopa pottery was a common interest and created deeper bonds, some of which developed into close friendships. This adds a personal dimension to the economic aspects of pottery production, the product of which are collections like Adele's.

The Cheatham Collection creates a snapshot of the work of potters during the 1960s and early 1970s and more importantly demonstrates a shift in the generations of potters. Pieces in this collection represent some of the last produced by potters who defined Maricopa pottery in the mid-twentieth century; the collection also represents the works of new potters who would continue the tradition into the following century. This transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next is one of the most important factors in the continuation of Maricopa pottery and is a process that continues to evolve today.

CHAPTER 4

CHANGES IN POTTERY TODAY

The interviews for the background research on the Adele Cheatham Collection did not shed much light on Adele's collecting habits, but they did reveal the importance of teaching and family relationships in the manufacture of vessels. Today these relationships are changing and so is the appearance of Maricopa pottery. While many modern potters use commercial clay, pottery wheels and electric kilns, Maricopa potters have maintained traditional methods employed by earlier generations of Southwestern potters. The potters dig clay from the ground where it emerges in clumps as dense, dry soil rather than the wet, commercial clay with which most people are familiar. To process the dry clay, there is a labor intensive sequence involving pounding, sifting and kneading to turn the clay into a moldable state. In addition, tree products like mesquite sap are used to create a thin black paint used to decorate the pottery, and mesquite and cottonwood branches and bark are gathered to use during firing.

Potters shape clay, using the paddle-and-anvil process, forming the vessel primarily through percussion; additional coiling techniques are used for rims and necks. The raw vessel surface is smoothed using a small, medium-coarse textured stone. Next, dry vessels are coated with a slip, a liquid suspension of clay with the consistency of house paint, which the potters prepared, and then polished to a high shine. Firing is done inside

of a metal container surrounded by a controlled fire. Artists decorate fired pieces with black, organic paint that dries translucent. Re-exposing the paint to heat causes the paint to blacken and designs to appear. Fernald extensively documented this entire process, and what described above mentions only the basic steps.¹ What needs to be noted is that the production of vessels from obtaining and processing raw materials through vessel construction and completion is labor intensive, involves a lot of physical effort, and modern Maricopa potters still employ these methods today.

Potters learn about this complex process through a kind of apprenticeship, working together at certain points in their careers, particularly during the teaching phase. However, the process of multiple people being involved in pottery production is something that has not been discussed in the literature. Mary Fernald states,

In contrast to the Maricopa, who work alone, the Hopi hold 'pottery bees' where they get together to decorate pottery and visit...At San Ildefonso pottery making has become a family affair. It is a common sight to see a whole household with every member working at some phase of manufacture...Pottery making among the Maricopa...has never become a family business.²

¹ Mary Fernald's documentation is incredibly detailed and explains the entire process, which has not changed much over the past forty years, since Fernald did such an excellent job it does not need to be repeated here. For the process see Fernald, 12-25 and Stoepplemann, appendix 89-96.

² Fernald, 34.

While it may not be “a family business” or as communal as the Hopi “pottery bees,” there is much evidence that Maricopa potters, friends, and family members have been involved in helping each other. Maricopa potters frequently work at home alone, but they do not live in isolation; at times other people assist in the process. This tends to occur in two main forms: the cooperative manufacture of vessels and the procurement or processing of raw materials. These trends are highly variable depending upon the individuals, and influenced by complex social systems; however at the most basic level, they appear to revolve around the process of teaching pottery and family relationships.

Historically, pottery manufacture among the Maricopa has been restricted to women, who had the responsibility of producing pottery in any spare time they had while caring for the home and children.³ Because much of the pottery making occurred in the home, this became one of the primary places for young girls to learn about the craft. Many early potters began learning about pottery and its construction while observing their mothers and other female family members when growing up. Leslie Spier noted that “a five-year-old girl was seen following the mannerisms of her mother. She worked up a ball of mud, beat it flat on the bottom of an old pot with a paddle, and pinched up the sides to form a tiny vessel, which she set in the sun to dry.”⁴ Children helped at multiple stages in the

³ Fernald, 8; Spier, 104.

⁴ Spier, 104.

process, often assisting relatives in the process of gathering and preparing raw materials by doing simple tasks like picking rocks from clay.⁵ In addition, young girls sometimes aided with vessel manufacture. Malinda Card recalled polishing completed vessels for her mother as a young child.⁶ Other children helped with the formation of vessels and the older potter would complete the more complicated finishing process.

More than just learning about the creation of pottery in the home, some young children historically produced sellable wares on their own that benefitted their families. In 1935 a trader in California remarked that “Ida Redbirds [sic] small daughter at that time in 1927 used to make little pots for her mother.”⁷ Involving children in the process was a natural product of caretaking, but also beneficial to the family by allowing adult potters to better focus their time on more technical stages and produce more pieces, helping the family bring in more income.

Although some potters learned the craft as children and worked alongside adult family members, others did not pursue pottery until adulthood. For example, Malinda Card watched and helped her mother Ida Redbird in the process, but not until her mother died did she pursue

⁵ Angela Cara Pancrazio, “Potter's Work Shapes Life: Tradition Helps Gila River Woman get Off Welfare,” *Arizona Republic*, 19 November 2004.

⁶ Malinda Card, 21 April 1983.

⁷ Mrs. Lewis Hawkins, Los Angeles, to Elisabeth Hart, Sacaton, 21 July 1935, Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

her own pottery career.⁸ When Malinda decided to continue the family tradition, she learned from well-known Maricopa potter Mary Juan.⁹ This experience is similar to that of Mabel Sunn: “My mother died when I was little, but I asked my mother-in-law if she’d teach me, and she did. That’s how Maricopa do. If a woman doesn’t have a relative to show her how to make pottery, she just goes and watches someone work, and that woman shows her what to do.”¹⁰

These teacher-student interactions do not end once an individual begins producing pieces on their own. Some older potters continue to assist younger ones by helping them get established. Vendors and collectors often are more willing to buy the work of known artists; sometimes more established artists will help new potters. For instance, one potter recalls, “Nobody really knew of me...so I do the whole work, the polish, firing everything then I would send it over...and they would design it and it would be sold as theirs...and then from there the money would just get divvied up between us.”¹¹ This method of cooperative pottery production and sale is mutually beneficial by allowing the newer potter to continue gaining experience and the better-known individual to produce

⁸ Malinda Card. 21 April 1983.

⁹ Anice Bromley, “Ida Redbird and the Maricopa Potters,” *Heard Museum Guild Ketch Papers* vol. 1 (April 1974); Informant 10, interview by author, 8 October 2010.

¹⁰ Stoeppelmann, 28.

¹¹ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

more pieces because less time is spent in the manufacturing process, thereby increasing the profitability of both.

Potters and teachers continue to work together later in their careers as well. For instance, as evidenced in the Cheatham Collection, the daughters, granddaughters and students of Vesta Bread all worked together to produce ceramics.¹² One potter theorizes that “maybe she [Phyllis Cerna] was just helping Vesta out you know by doing that for her...because that was the problem a lot of the older ladies who were making pottery, their pottery got more plain as they got older because they couldn’t see.”¹³ Later in her career, Phyllis Cerna and her daughter Avis Pinon continued manufacturing together to produce pieces as well as teach classes.¹⁴ The production of these pieces can occur alone with the pots changing hands for decoration, they can also be produced in tandem with multiple potters working in a social setting. The experiences vary by the potter, circumstances and phases in the career, but are tied together by student-teacher or family relationships.

Some potters receive assistance obtaining and processing the raw materials needed for vessel production. During a visit with Mary Fernald, Mabel Sunn stated, “We’re not going to pound clay this morning because I have a sore shoulder and my daughter [Barbara Johnson] can’t come over

¹² “Maricopa Potter Continues Traditions Taught by Mother,” *Tri-Valley Dispatch*, Casa Grande, Arizona, 10 and 11 February 1988.

¹³ Informant 2, interview by author, 15 June 2010.

¹⁴ Informant 9, interview by author, 8 September 2010.

to help me.”¹⁵ These steps are the most physically demanding and difficult, particularly for older potters. Students and other potters are not the only ones who assist with raw materials; other family members and friends often help.

Men, though, excluded from the actual manufacture of pottery, played an indirect role in the process. Historically, the tasks that men or boys performed to help potters were often physically demanding, required transportation or crossed into areas of life where men were already involved. Digging and hauling clay is strenuous work and most potters are very particular about the clay they use. Men, other family members or friends would help female potters by taking them to the clay site and working under their instruction. For example, while observing potter Malinda Card, one person noted “Howard kept picking up chunks [of clay] and handing them to Malinda...”¹⁶ Wood is also something required for the production of pottery, used during the firing sequence.¹⁷ During the 1930s, Soil Conservation Worker Emma Reh noted about half of the Maricopa families sold wood gathered by men to supplement their income and “[a]bout half the families sell no wood, at all, however cutting it for home use.”¹⁸ Since mesquite wood was important to the family for household

¹⁵ Stoeppelmann, 20.

¹⁶ Malinda Card, 21 April 1983.

¹⁷ Fernald, 11.

¹⁸ Reh, 52.

use and income, it makes sense that some of the wood gathered by men also went to potters in their families.

The fact that the production of ceramics involved students, family members or friends demonstrates that pottery manufacture was important to the training process as well as being beneficial to the family. As documented by Reh in 1936, pottery played a “notable economic part” in supplementing the income of at least three-quarters of the families living in Maricopa Colony.¹⁹ For example, in a letter to retired school teacher Amelia Linderman, Maricopa potter Josephine Bread wrote “I have been busy with my clay dishes to take them over tomorrow. I might get little money to help my husband to get food with it.”²⁰ Selling vessels was important and some of the potters also negotiated with local merchants on a barter system, at times exchanging ceramics for groceries or other necessities when money was tight.²¹ Women and the pottery they produced played an important role in the economy of the family. While there were other people involved in the process, women were ultimately the ones in charge of pottery.

Historically, it is quite clear that pottery making among the Maricopa was a role restricted to women, though there may have been a few men

¹⁹ Reh, 53.

²⁰ Josephine Bread, Laveen AZ, to Mrs. Linderman, San Diego CA, 2 Aug 1929, Linderman Collection Accession File (76-104), Arizona State Museum, Tucson.

²¹ Informant 4, interview by author, 1 July 2010; Informant 12, interview by author, 16 October 2010.

who have functioned behind the scenes in pottery production as well. According to Mary Fernald, Alma Lawrence “copied designs drawn by her husband.”²² There is speculation that Walter was actually doing some of the design work, and that he may have been even more involved in the process. One potter remarks “...kinda like Alma Lawrence, her husband did the designing you know? And who’s not to say that he didn’t do the whole process, but back then, the woman’s name sold.”²³ Walter Lawrence is probably not the only man to have produced vessels. Harsh financial circumstances, such as those caused by water shortages and economic depressions, may have loosened traditional roles in other families as well. For example one potter recalls hearing “there was another guy that made pottery too...you know what...you did anything back then to make money...women were out picking cotton men were doing pottery, anything to take care of your family...you did what you had to to survive.”²⁴ The participation of men in pottery production was not the norm and appears to be specific to certain families. While it is accepted that some men were involved in the physical labor associated with raw material procurement, the participation of men in the actual production of the pottery was either discouraged or has not been openly acknowledged.

²² Fernald, 80.

²³ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

²⁴ Ibid.

In 1973, Mary Fernald wrote, “Unless there is a dramatic change in the economic benefits to be derived from the craft and unless younger women become interested and stimulated to learn the art, Maricopa women will no longer be making pottery in possibly another fifteen years.”²⁵ While her prediction did not come to pass, since the 1980s there has been a continued reduction in the number of female potters and a sudden appearance of male Maricopa potters. Currently there are more male than female potters actively producing pieces. This is a significant transition in what historically has been a craft restricted to women. However, just because more men are entering the field does not mean that the change is permanent or universally accepted. Feelings about men producing pottery continue to be mixed and depend greatly on the individual.²⁶

Reasons for this shift are varied, but the biggest factor appears to be that the pottery tradition was about to disappear. Since the 1930s, the number of Maricopa potters has steadily dwindled. Elisabeth Hart’s records identify close to thirty potters in the late 1930s. As these potters passed away, few female children took their places. There were increasing opportunities for jobs outside of the home. While young women may have been exposed to pottery in their youth, most were not actively making it themselves. This meant that their children did not grow up

²⁵ Fernald, 82.

²⁶ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 July 2010; Informant 6, interview by author, 26 July 2010.

around the process and had little or no knowledge of ceramic manufacture. Those that did grow up exposed to pottery were not interested in pursuing the craft themselves. When asked, during a 1983 workshop, if she was teaching pottery to her daughters Malinda Card replied "I have three [daughters]. They don't want to learn."²⁷ By the 1970s, Fernald noted only around ten women were making pottery, and by the 1980s and 1990s there were between five and seven female potters, all living within the GRIC.²⁸

As the number of potters declined, there was a realization that what traditionally had worked as a teaching process would result in the loss of the craft within the next generation. Potters had already been active for decades conducting demonstrations and workshops at museums like the Heard and PGM, teaching non-community members how to make pottery in the Maricopa style. These classes, taught at outside cultural institutions, provided additional income for potters. SRPMIC began to sponsor workshops that paid artists for their time, making it economically beneficial for potters to conduct classes in that specific community. In the GRIC, these classes were run primarily by privately founded non-governmental organizations. While there are more complex social forces at work, one of the commonalities between male potters is that they have all been

²⁷ Malinda Redbird, 21 April 1983.

²⁸ Ben Winton, "Tribal Culture Preserved Fledgling Program Offers Instruction on Traditional Skills," *Phoenix Gazette*, 31 July 1995; Anne Stephenson, "History In The Making Art Of Maricopa Pottery Lives On In Chronicle Of Craftswomen," *Arizona Republic*, 6 July 1995.

exposed to pottery in the classroom setting. This shift in teaching style appears to be a factor in opening up Maricopa pottery to men. In order for this to have happened, female potters first of all had to agree to teach groups of people and, secondly, had to be willing to teach men.

The idea of using a class format to transmit cultural and technical knowledge is not something new to Native American tribes or one that is exclusive to pottery. Communities like the SRPMIC have also been proactive in the use of classes to preserve language and other crafts as the number of native speakers and artisans have continued to decline. During the 1970s, Anna Moore Shaw, a Pima woman, started a basketry group in the SRPMIC: “We decided to organize women’s weaving classes under the tutelage of those great artists who are still left, so that this proud heritage will be preserved for the generations to come.” The shift to teaching Maricopa pottery in a class setting for the community certainly occurred by the 1990s and may have happened earlier. In 1993, the daughter and granddaughter of Vesta Bread were conducting workshops. Stoeppelmann noted “Phyllis and Avis teach a pottery class at the Hoohoogam Ki Museum in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and have about a dozen students (including a few men).”²⁹ Classes served to expose men to the craft and allowed them to express interest in further learning. One man who took a similar class recalls, “So one time the museum...was going to have a pottery making class...so I

²⁹ Stoeppelmann, 87.

decided I was going to sign up...I took her...class and after that I just started talking to her, going and hanging out with her.”³⁰ Men who have become potters are by nature artistic, like many of the earlier female potters also create other crafts or are engaged in forms of cultural expression like traditional singing.

After learning pottery in a class setting, most of the male potters have developed their art as individuals under the private tutelage of one or more female potters. The teacher-student relationship works similarly to the historically documented process based around demonstration and critique. For example, one male potter recalls of a female relative, “I just pick up clay and a ball and a paddle and I just started going at it...I really didn’t know what I was doing and [she] was just like watching what I was doing...she’s looking at me and she’s like ‘give it [the clay] to me’...and from there it just took off.”³¹ Like the relationships described earlier in this chapter, male students often assist in the more physical aspects of the process, such as clay processing and material gathering. They also produce pieces cooperatively with their teachers as well. Because these men were interested in learning and other women were not, rather than letting the tradition die, some female potters actively encouraged men to pursue careers in pottery. One man recalls “she used to ask me...do you

³⁰ Informant 2, interview by author, 15 June 2010.

³¹ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

think you could make pottery all the time?...You should try it you know there's nobody making pottery."³²

Within the last decade, some of the most active female potters have passed away. The few women who remain have slowed their production due to age or ill-health and are either unwilling or unable to continue teaching community classes. This has led to an important change. Over the past several years, male potters have begun teaching classes in the community and conducting outreach demonstrations. Maricopa pottery has gone from an entirely female associated craft to one where men, who learned from women, have become the most active producers of Maricopa pottery and are now responsible for transmitting knowledge by instructing their own students, some of whom are female.

There are other changes occurring in Maricopa pottery as well. The styles which have been described in the preceding chapters are still being produced, but in recent years, the diversity of vessel forms and decoration has increased dramatically. These approaches vary widely depending on the individual artist, with some staying more in line with traditional styles and others making more dramatic adaptations. Many of the male potters are the most innovative, creating new forms, using different color schemes, and expanding the repertoire of design elements. The majority of active potters are relatively young and new to the craft, making them

³² Informant 2, interview by author, 15 June 2010.

less restricted and more willing to adapt the style to suit their own talents and tastes.

For a long time, potters have been inspired by prehistoric potsherds and historic vessels. Today, images of these items are more accessible than ever before. The increased availability of publications like Emil Haury's *The Hohokam* (1976) and the growing number of Southwestern art books are sources that obviously play an influence. Artists also continue to draw inspiration from earlier Maricopa pieces like those in museum collections. Images available through online exhibitions like the Arizona Memory Project and commercial auction sites like Ebay have made previously unknown pieces viewable. Individual style, artistic creativity and the increased accessibility to a wider variety of inspiration are all influencing Maricopa pottery to move in a different direction.

The use of Hohokam and proto-historic Pima color palettes like red-on-buff, as well as prehistoric motifs are current trends in Maricopa pottery. These color combinations appeared on "Mohave style" human effigies like those that Mabel Sunn and Barbara Johnson were noted for producing in the 1970s. More recently, one female potter began producing small dog figurines that are "directly influenced by the dogs that were found at Pueblo Grande [in 1989]."³³ The same potter produced several Hohokam style "pot bellied" effigies, inspiring two male artists to cooperatively produce effigies incorporating stone and shell jewelry into

³³ Informant 9, interview by author, 23 September 2010.

the pieces.³⁴ The creation of effigy shapes and the use of appliqué is not something that dominates Maricopa pottery. Simple vessel forms are still the norm. A female artist and several male artists have started using the red-on-buff color palettes on traditionally shaped vessels. Some male artists are incorporating modern forms like the use of sharply inflected jar shoulders, with their own unique color palates like white paint on brown surfaces, a color combination never before seen in Maricopa pottery. By combining colors and layouts that are not reflected in historic Maricopa pottery, artists are redefining what the craft looks like.

Other potters intentionally maintain tradition by sticking closer to the work of their teachers and classic Maricopa shapes and designs.³⁵ For example, one male potter has started producing scalloped rim vessels, a trend that is reflected in Maricopa pottery from the early and mid-twentieth century, but has not been frequently used for some time. Over time, polychrome vessels have become increasingly rare, most likely because they are more labor intensive. The black-on-cream color palette, which has not been common since the early period, is now produced with greater frequency, in part because it requires fewer steps but also due to the changing tastes of the artists. Black-on-red, which has been the predominant color scheme over the past seventy-five years, is still produced, but is no longer as prevalent. Some store buyers and managers

³⁴ Informant 8, interview by author, 17 August 2010.

³⁵ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

find these pieces easier to sell because they are more traditional, but the newer styles are more distinct and preferred by some potters. Another factor which may influence these style changes is resource availability. The red clay required for red vessels is increasingly difficult to obtain, the result of depletion from use as well as urbanization, both of which impact the quantity of other natural resources including buff clay as well as the mesquite and cottonwood used in producing paint and firing.

Despite the variation in vessel shapes and decorative motifs, the size of pottery pieces is consistently small, the majority tend to be less than six-inches high or miniature in size. One curator points out that “people are buying smaller things because they’re less expensive, more affordable, more portable. So if you’re in Phoenix for a vacation and you want to buy a souvenir for somebody a little Maricopa piece is going to transport better than a tall-necked vessel.”³⁶ In addition to portability, part of the reason for this trend is that large pieces take much longer to manufacture and require greater amounts of raw materials to produce, so not only are they more expensive for the consumer but they are more costly in terms of labor and materials for the producer. Artists are recognizing that their time is valuable and selling pieces for higher prices, but rarely do they recover a fair price for the amount of time a vessel takes to produce. The smaller numbers of potters also means a reduced quantity of pottery being created, resulting in higher market prices.

³⁶ Informant 9, interview by author, 23 September 2010.

At the same time, the amount of pottery an individual produces varies greatly, making the definition of who is an “active” potter difficult. Only one person currently producing considers his work to be full-time, meaning that he works on some part of the process every day.³⁷ Most others produce on a part-time basis or only occasionally. Some people only make pieces when they need extra income, others when they feel like it, while still others produce on commission. During the past two years, people producing for the market include approximately six Maricopa potters, as well as two Pima individuals who are producing at least some pottery in the Maricopa style. Over the past decade, there are another five or six individuals who have produced pottery, but only sporadically or not for the open market. Of all of these people, only two or three are young women who learned the trade from a close family member, over half are men, and the remainder are older female potters whose production has slowed in the past several years.

Over time, the teaching of Maricopa pottery has shifted from one that was learned in a home setting to one that is introduced in a class format. What once was a female dominated craft that involved students, family members and friends in the process is changing to one where men have actively taken over production. Though fewer people are producing pottery, diversity in its appearance is increasing due to personal

³⁷ Informant 2, interview by author, 15 June 2010; Informant 3, interview by author 21 June 2010.

innovation and greater access to images. While inspiration is more available, increased mobility in the modern era and growth in technology means that there are more things competing for people's spare time. In 1995, Theroline Bread remarked, "Nobody wants to do it anymore. They'd rather watch television or do other things."³⁸ The reality is that people no longer have to produce pottery for utilization within the home or for sale to provide income for their family. Today, wage-earning jobs pay more for the time and energy that pottery requires. As pottery production no longer plays a role in daily life and because few people are exposed to it informally, individuals now have to actively choose to learn the process, and, with so many other activities available in metropolitan Phoenix, most are not pursuing traditional crafts. One potter wonders "[Y]ou think.... are you gonna be the last one to do it? You know, are you going to be the last one alive? Are you really going to carry it on?"³⁹

³⁸ Theroline Bread as quoted in Ben Winton, "Tribal Culture Preserved Fledgling Program Offers Instruction on Traditional Skills," *The Phoenix Gazette*, 31 July 1995.

³⁹ Informant 3, interview by author, 21 June 2010.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Forty years ago, Maricopa pottery was identified as a dying art. Mary Fernald defined the research of this pottery and her documentation of its manufacture and decorative patterns remain important. Her analysis created a timeline for its development and the discovery of the letters and ephemera from Hart, Halseth and Wilson identified some of the only historic documents relating to Maricopa pottery which helps to clarify why it became more visible in the 1930s.

By reexamining the topic, conducting new research and adding analysis of sources to which Fernald did not have access, some developments in Maricopa pottery are better understood. Following the transition of pottery from a household utilitarian ware to a purely decorative one for sale, Maricopa potters continued to adapt their styles. During the first part of the twentieth century, designs became consolidated, bolder and better executed and many of the vessels demonstrate high polish and symmetry. In the late 1930s, government and museum personnel who intended to start a pottery revival, distributed vessel quality checklists to potters and held a series of events involving Maricopa potters. These exhibits and demonstrations provided increased public awareness for the potters, and Maricopa pottery became less varied, more collectible and the pieces better documented.

After 1941, the visibility of Maricopa potters faded in the historical record and the number of active potters began to decline. Spanning some of these poorly documented years, the Cheatham Collection demonstrates that communities like Maricopa Colony and Laveen were much more connected with each other than they were with distant Phoenix. Women from these areas interacted in locations like the Laveen Store, and the manufacture and sale of Maricopa pottery became a common interest between people like Adele Cheatham, Ida Redbird and Mary Juan. The collection that Adele put together serves as a vehicle to discuss both the common and unique elements in Maricopa pottery. Likewise, the discussion of the works of the individual potters shows that they were unique artists that were dedicated to their craft and many of them were active in its continuation by instructing new potters.

This transmission of knowledge from teacher to student is one of the most important factors in ensuring the survival of Maricopa pottery. Historically, the process was learned by young girls at home or by adult women through a form of apprenticeship. Students, family members and friends were all important to the production of pottery and interacted through cooperative work, the sale of vessels or the procurement of raw materials. These teacher-student relationships are in the midst of change. Few potters remain and the instruction of new potters is increasingly set in a classroom. Likewise, there are fewer female potters and the past decades have seen the emergence of increasingly active male potters.

The new artists today are experimenting with forms and decorative styles that reflect both their heritage and the modern world as information becomes more accessible. However, the number of potters remains small and activity levels vary greatly. The changes in teaching style, the people who are producing the pottery and decorative techniques indicate that Maricopa pottery is an art in flux.

While this research has helped to expand the understanding of the factors that influenced the potters in Maricopa Colony, it is likely that more private collections were put together by Laveenians. The study of these collections would help to further expand and change the knowledge about the potters, their art and the relationship between the communities of Laveen and Maricopa Colony. There are many other areas that need further research and information remains sparse about the individual potters themselves.

There remains a void in the literature concerning the other Maricopa community of Lehi in the SRPMIC. Elisabeth Hart visited the SRPMIC in the winter and spring of 1936. Of the women listed in Hart's diary only Emma Lewis, Grace Cough, Susie Cough, Claudia Kavoka, Eleanor Kavoka, and a woman identified as "Grandmother Vest" are known to be potters. Hart considered including women from the SRPMIC in the pottery cooperative. In an undated letter to Odd Halseth, she wrote:

"Will you be thinking of the pottery situation in Lehi and Salt River? I feel that this district will need help at the same time

as our other group to prevent a lot of poor quality ware from flooding the market where the good ware is on sale. I am wondering if there are some steps which should be taken to secure the clay beds to the Maricopas for according to my understanding these are not on the reservation in the Lehi area.”⁴⁰

For whatever reason, be it distance or the smaller number of potters, the women from the SRPMIC did not participate in the publicity activities of the 1930s, therefore their experience during this time period is unknown. The production at Lehi appears to have begun to taper off during the 1960s and disappeared in the SRPMIC around 1980.⁴¹ Very little information is known about the potters from Lehi; few of their vessels exist in the museum community; and, only a handful of pieces have been identified in private collections.

It is important that additional research be done to understand developments in this community, what other factors influenced the potters and how their pottery differs from that produced in Maricopa Colony. In addition to learning more about the potters of Lehi, there also is the possibility of studying the relationship between the potters there and the local collectors. Sources indicate that there were private collectors in Mesa who acquired vessels directly from the Lehi potters. A study of the interactions between potters from Lehi and residents of Mesa would make

⁴⁰ Elisabeth Hart, to Odd Halseth, Wed A.M., Papers of Odd Halseth, 1893-1966, Arizona Collection, Arizona State University, Phoenix.

⁴¹ A few of the family relationships can be identified: Susie Cough was Grace Cough's mother-in-law, Grace Cough's sister, Elsie Vest was also a potter, and Claudia Kavoka was the mother of Eleanor [Kavoka] Lewis; Informant 2, interview by author, 16 June 2010.

a fascinating cross-comparison to the relationships of people from Laveen and Maricopa Colony, which are discussed here.

What remains most obviously absent from the literature is the perspective of the Maricopa people. History needs the addition of these voices in order to fully understand the ways in which the pottery has developed, how relationships with outside communities like Laveen were formed, and to better understand the potters themselves.

Maricopa pottery has historically been and continues to be an evolving art form. Over time, a variety of factors have impacted its development, however potters maintain control of what they produce. These individuals are ultimately responsible for the changes seen in their pottery, be it in response to their environment, the demands of the market or the creation of a piece for artistic expression.

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Informant 11. Interview by author. 9 October 2010. Pueblo Grande Museum, Phoenix.

Informant 12. Interview by author. 16 October 2010. Pueblo Grande Museum, Phoenix.

APPENDIX A
HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

To: Nancy Dallett
COOR

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 04/01/2010

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 04/01/2010

IRB Protocol #: 1003005014

Study Title: Interviews for the Adele Cheatham Collection of
Maricopa Pottery

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.