

“PROBABLY FROM SAANICH”

Don Welsh



A seated figure bowl of carved steatite, was first described by Harlan Smith, in his *Archaeology of the Gulf of Georgia and Puget Sound* [1907: p422, Figure 184b]. Smith may have never seen the actual specimen, which he stated was from a road-cut in a shell heap near North Saanich. He stated that this was from the Newbigging collection, and that Miss E. H. Woods made the line drawing illustrating it.

After a long publication vacation, the bowl surfaced again in Duff's 1956 *Prehistoric Stone Sculpture of the Fraser River and Gulf of Georgia*. He described it on page 34, repeating Smith but noted that its present location was unknown. He illustrated it on page 140, apparently reversing the image from left side view to right side view.

On page 25 of the same publication, Duff described a second bowl, identified as the Bossom Lytton Bowl, and illustrated in Plate 13A. He identified this bowl's provenience as "identified as Salish, probably from Lytton." This same artifact was also described by Marian Smith, in the same year, along with other artifacts from the Bossom collection of artifacts. Marian Smith called it, "probably from Lytton". The Sir Alfred Bossum collection now reposes in the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa. It should also be noted that another bowl is in the same collection from Patricia Bay in north Saanich.

In the *Images Stone B.C.* version, it was called: Seated Human Figure Bowl [Lytton] [Duff 1975: p78]. In the identification area at the back of the book, [p176], it was identified as National Museum of Man, artifact number VII –

G – 620. Here it was identified as "probably from Lytton".

John Hanna, [1996], was the next to publish these sculptures. In his thesis, [Hanna 1996: Fig. 43, p115], Hanna showed a photo of Bowl # 32, the North Saanich Bowl, citing Duff 1975: 78. In the bowl catalogue information, he cited Duff 1956: 34 [Hanna 1996: p247]. On page 116 [Figure 44], he showed a drawing of Bowl # 33, The Bossom Lytton Bowl citing Duff 1956: 140. In the catalogue information, he cited Duff 1956: 25 –26.

Hanna obviously mixed up his illustrations. Both appear to be scanned images taken from Duff's publications. No new information is added. He got the citations right but reversed the images.

Why all the mixups? Looking at all the illustrations, they all appear to be of identical bowls. The solution to this problem is simple - they are the same bowl! It was turned up in a road cut in Saanich and obtained by Newbigging, [an Indian art and artifact dealer of the day], and it was probably sold to Sir Alfred Bossum. Judge Bossum was stationed at Lytton for a period of time. In the course of passing from hand to hand, the original story was lost and a probable one added.

Smith wrote:

There is a shell-heap of considerable extent and height on the peninsula between North Saanich Bay and Canoe Pass. This heap extends across the base of the small point on the western side of this peninsula, and along the beach some distance northward. On the little point were a number of cairns which were explored by us in 1898. Following this beach northward, another shell-heap is found, extending along the shore on the northern side of the small arm of the sea which makes in here, and which ends toward the southwest. This heap is not far from the east-and-west road at this point. Most of Mr. J. Newbigging's collection was found in cutting this road. [Smith, H. I. 1907: p330].

The map in Smith and Fowke [1901] is not very precise, but it puts this site near the present day ferry slip at Schwartz Bay.

I could find no mention of Mr. J. Newbigging in Harlan Smith's letters from the Jessup Expedition housed in the American Museum archives. Excavations in Saanich mention O. C. Hastings and C. F. Newcombe who may have done the actual work. From the letters, Harlan Smith often appears to be a sort of editor, editing together the work of others into a final report. He may not have visited the site in 1898.

In 1904, Smith published *Cairns or Stone Sepulchers of British Columbia and Washington* in *Records of the Past* 3 [8]. On page 246, he noted that Professor Franz Boaz examined a number of cairns on the Saanich Peninsula. He noted also, assistance rendered at North Saanich by Mr. Albert A. Argyle. Later [p247], he mentions the Natural History Society of

Victoria: Messrs. Deans, Hastings, Newcombe, Boas, Von Steinem and Dorsey studying cairns at Cadboro Bay. Newbigging's name is not mentioned while the others are, so my assumption is that they got the information from Hastings, Newcombe or the society records rather than from working with him directly.

Since Smith was the first to describe this bowl, his information should take precedence. This sculptured bowl is probably from Saanich.

Bibliography

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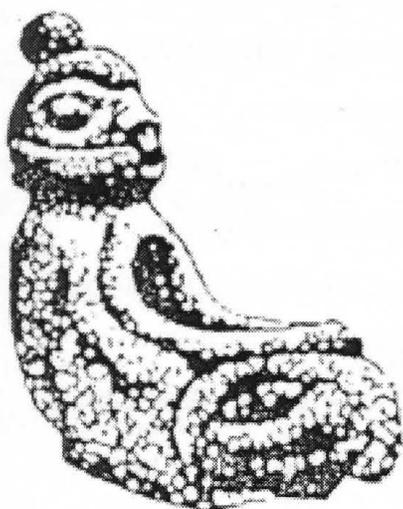
H.I.Smith 1907 Road Cut North Saanich



W.Duff 1956 "probably from Lytton"



W.Duff 1975 "probably from Lytton"



Hanna 1996 Bossum Lytton Bowl



Hanna 1996 North Saanich Bowl



M.Smith 1955 "probably from Lytton"