

Why Frankoma-?

THE FRANKOMA STORY

FRANKOMA POTTERY has rightfully earned its position as America's outstanding creators of "useful and beautiful" earthenware. The colors, textures and crafted designs are created at Frankoma, and are unique in American ceramics. Archeologists say that the Great Southwest was the cradle of the American Indian's culture. All tribes of the Southwest were potters, producing grain storage jars, water pots, serving bowls, pitchers, plates and such pieces as they needed to store, prepare and serve their food. Their decorations were slip painted earthen colors applied with a brush. Their motifs were taken from daily surroundings.

Our pottery of today differs very little from theirs regarding materials, inspiration and uses. They were limited as to firing methods and refinement of raw materials. We have added glazes and controlled temperatures and developed complex body compositions, but our common uses for pottery are the same.

Frankoma entered the field of ceramics in 1933, utilizing the heritage left it by its predecessors, the Southwest Indians. Our aim was to combine the traditional art of the Indians, the spirit of the American Pioneer and the creative tendencies of the youth of the Great Southwest, and mold them into good pottery forms.

John Frank, originator of "Frankoma," came to Oklahoma from Chicago in 1927. His teaching Art and Pottery at the University of Oklahoma and his work with the geological survey — unearthing the Oklahoma clay deposits — brought together valuable material for his future venture of "potting." The natural inspiration of the Indians and the opportunities in the new state that had never had a pottery was too much of a challenge to let pass. In 1933 he started a "studio" pottery in Norman, Oklahoma, — equipped with one small kiln, a butter churn for mixing clay, a fruit jar for grinding glazes and a few other crude tools and tables. It was necessary to continue teaching until enough ware was produced to prove that a product could be made of Oklahoma clays that was a contribution to Art and Ceramics and still salable — at a profit. Resigning his teaching in 1936 he and his wife, Grace Lee, working side by side, set out on a venture of creating beautiful pottery for every day living. They felt the need of using Oklahoma clays for Oklahoma's first pottery. First a clay from Ada was used, then in 1954 a red burning clay dug at Sapulpa became the basis for all Frankoma ware. In 1938 the "studio" grew into a small factory as it moved from Norman to Sapulpa, where it is now.

Frankoma demanded of itself to make as fine a pottery as could be made considering the limitations of its materials. This means constant research to take advantage of raw materials and processes as they are brought to light.

Pottery enjoys so many advantages over the more "refined" and delicate ceramic wares. Frankoma Pottery is manufactured by its unique once-fired process—clay body and colored glaze are fused and fired at the maturing point of the clay, and tempered as it slowly cools. It can be used "indoors—outdoors" because of its ruggedness and durability. It can really "take" the handling of every day use. It can be used in a dishwasher. It is also ovenproof and food can be served in

Grace Lee and The Late John Frank exemplify true American determination and the Free Enterprise System. They started with only a dream, and through hard work created one of America's most unique potteries recognized the world over. 1971 they were named, "National Small Businessman of the Year" and personally recognized by the President of the United States for their accomplishments. The business has continued since Mr. Frank's death, November 10, 1973, in the same tradition by their daughter Joniece Frank and a trained, dedicated staff.



Grace Lee and
The Late John Frank



the same dish in which it is baked or prepared. It also keeps foods and drinks hot much longer.

Color is such an indispensable part of today's decor, and Frankoma creates an exciting wide range of colors and textures. Eating from lovely textured and beautifully colored dishes is a fascinating experience. Our "Rutile Art Glazes" which have identified Frankoma's unique tableware around the world have successfully been produced only on our colored earthenware clay. By applying these unique glaze colors in various thicknesses according to pattern and design, the red body shows through the glaze giving it a beautiful mottled effect when fired. The first to introduce colored dinnerware on the market in the 1940's was one of the basic reasons John Frank was presented the award "1972 Marketing Man Of The Year".

No ceramic product seems so close to the artists as pottery—so much so that one can almost trace the potter's fingerprints as he originally formed the body, lips, handles, and designs of a piece. This is an important consideration with Frankoma, for we are artists first, and clay is only the medium of expression. "If art is good, it will live" was a statement made by John Frank, which has been proven many times over. One piece has been produced since the first studio pottery 44 years ago, others almost as long and still remains in demand. Yet Frankoma Pottery constantly creates new designs. Frankoma is versatile. Bake beans in a flower pot or arrange flowers in a gravy boat. What fun you can have by serving salad in a cornucopia. Your imagination creates its use.

Frankoma with its modern plant and latest equipment has been able to maintain its very popular price range in the face of higher materials, taxes and labor costs and the influx of foreign goods; yet it maintains the original concept that made it accepted as a standard of fine "Pottery" — every piece should be both useful and beautiful and be a contribution to both art and ceramics. "Frankoma" which includes its Frankoma Family of Employees and Accounts, and the family of John Frank will continue to do just that, so that every piece will add to your daily pleasure of casual living.