



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center*

## **Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation - Grace Nicholson: Inventories and Clippings, 1928-1968**

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PASADENA STAR-NEWS, SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 1931  
Interesting Personalities Among Pasadena Women

"That's a Pima Indian basket."

"Oh, is it?" said Grace Nicholson to a Los Angeles curio dealer soon after coming to Southern California in 1902. But, to herself, "Looks to me like Tulare work."

"I'll take it." And it was a Pima as she soon learned authoritatively and that basket started.  
Miss Nicholson's collection of handicrafts of the Indians of the American Southwest and Northwest.

Now Grace Nicholson's name is known to museums, collectors and merchants throughout the world not only with reference to American Indian arts and crafts but those of the Orient, and, more recently, of Norway, Sweden and France, represented by glass, potteries and enamels.

#### First Gallery Opened

Her galleries on North Los Robles avenue, a structure that combines many of the principal elements of Chinese architecture, represent the realization of some of her dreams when she started her first shop and the first art gallery in Pasadena, she says. In that gallery, Frank Sauerwen first exhibited his paintings of American Indians. And, she adds, "I believe that I was the first person to place benches for the public to use while waiting for Colorado street cars at Los Robles avenue." Her original little shop was about where the present building stands, but would be lost in any one of the eight galleries therein.

Born in Philadelphia, Grace Nicholson took a business course at high school for she foresaw that she must become self-supporting as her father and mother both passed away in her girlhood. "My first job was at \$3 per week as a stenographer in a law collection firm. I stayed five months, then got an \$8 a week job. After a few years I went to Atlantic City where I was manager for a large amusement casino where shuffleboard and deck type games were very popular."

#### Comprehensive Collections

Possibilities of a business specializing in the Indian crafts was seen by Miss Nicholson soon after coming here and acquiring the nucleus of a good collection. "My first customer was C. Hart Meriam of Washington, D.C., a recognized authority on Indian arts and crafts, and he bought ten of the best specimens I had," she recalls.

Reading and acquiring through personal observation information relative to the many things which she collects and sells, Miss Nicholson is always adding to her store of knowledge. "Because Japan's art is based on that of China, I studied Chinese art, history, customs when I began to add Oriental art objects to the collections I was making," she explains. Now Korea, as well as Japan and China are well represented and there are also Java, Siam and Mexico.



Two years ago Miss Nicholson made an extensive tour of Korea, Japan, and China, and visited the principal art centers and museums as well as being entertained by prominent personages in these countries. Just recently she returned from a motor trip into the Northwest.

[image - photograph, -Photo by Maryland Studio]  
[[caption]] GRACE NICHOLSON [[/caption]]

Alaskan specimens are so well selected in her collection that the exhibit she made at the Seattle Exposition won for her a prize award.

#### Museum Is Urged

"How I wish we had a fine museum and art gallery here in Pasadena," says Miss Nicholson. "I have talked 'museum' ever since I came here." However, that lack is offset in some measure by her "treasure house of oriental art" to which the public is given access at all times.

Organizations and clubs to which Miss Nicholson belongs include the American Anthropological Association Zonta Club, of which she is a member of the international relations committee, several local civic organizations, Pasadena Drama League, Pasadena Art Institute, of which she is vice-president, and the Women's Athletic Club of Los Angeles.

Acquiring a knowledge of arts and ages past seems to give Miss Nicholson a keen interest in the period and city in which she is living. However, on second thought, it is doubtless her zest for life now that gives such savor to further acquaintance with the life and customs of peoples afar off, either geographically or chronologically.

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