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

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a man was killed, the battle became general and in the end one group moved away to the south into what is now known as the Verde River Valley. This was the Yavapai Tribe. Those remaining at Hualpai Mountain were the Hualpai Tribe.

The only craft now being practice by the Hualpai is basket weaving. And in this they are less expert than most other Arizona tribes. Their preparation of their weaving material, as well as their technique and decorate designs, falls far short of the craftsmanship of the Pimas, the Apaches, and the Havasupai. Their baskets are made of one material, namely, the twigs of the sumac bush that grows abundantly on their reservation. Their method of starting their baskets is peculiar to the Hualpai tribe. A number of twigs twelve to eighteen inches in length are gathered and then the weaver crushes the base of the twig with her teeth for a distance of an inch or more. She bends the crushed portion and fastens these ends together with the twigs radiating like the spokes of a wheel from this hub. Split sections of other sumac twigs are used for the weaving material which is twined around one twig and crossed to the next, progressing in a circle around the hub. As the circle increases in size, other twigs are added; and when the basket has reached the desired diameter, the twigs are bent upward and the decorative patterns are developed. Hualpai baskets are almost exclusively small bowlshape, and the sides of the bowl are decorate with simple bands of embroidery-like patterns in bright colors. The dyes used are aniline dyes obtained at the trading post and lack much of the beauty and softness of the coloring found in the Hope baskets. The twigs are used while green and I have seen Hualpai weavers working on baskets where the leaves had not been removed from the tips of twigs used in the framework. When the basket dries, the weaving material shrinks and the basket appears to be loosely woven. What these baskets lack in craftsmanship and decorative design is somewhat compensated for in strength. At a trading post in Peach Springs, I have seen one of these baskets six or eight inches in diameter placed upside down on the floor and the trader stand with his full weight on it to demonstrate its strength. The basket was not affected in the least.

The last of the Arizona basket-weaving tribes to be mentioned here is the Chemehuevi who live on the Colorado River Reservation near Parker, Arizona. This is a small Shoshoni tribe that at sometime prior to the coming of the white man, settled along the Colorado River in territory occupied by the Mojaves and was permitted by the larger tribe to remain there. They farmed a small area on both sides of the river at one time. but when their reservation was established, it was set up on the California side because their land holdings extended back onto the great Mojave Desert to the west.

When the Parker Dam was built and the reservoir thus created inundated their farm lands along the river, they were then allowed to share in lands being developed on the Colorado River Reservation which lies in Arizona.

The Chemehuevi are among the finest craftsmen of our basket-weaving tribes. Their technique is the same as the Yavapai, Apache, and Havasupai. Their baskets are the coiled type over a three rod foundation or warp. The devil's claw and willow are the materials used, the willow being used for

the background and the decorative design worked with black devil's claw. Sometimes juncus is used instead of the willow. This is a rush that grows in marshes in the mountains near Banning, California. These twigs are green when cut but when dry, the bark turns to a variegated brown shade

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that is quite attractive when woven into a basket. The outer side or bark is always exposed in the weaving. Chemehuevi decorative designs cover a considerable scope, ranging from convential patterns to figures of snakes, bugs, and geometric designs. Some patterns, such as the "Tree of Life." are traditional with the tribe.

One of the most famous of the Chemehuevi weavers I have known is Mary Snider. Mary is about 98 years old and when I visited her three years ago I was interested in getting a picture of her at home, weaving a basket. We found Mary at her granddaughter's, about a quarter of a mile from her home. When I told Mary what I wanted, she very graciously consented to pose for me. When I found that the filed lying between us and her home was freshly plowed, I had some misgivings about Mary being able to walk across it. We started out and she was soon far ahead and was waiting for us when we arrived. I am told that Mary does not weave any more; that the eyes that enabled her to do such fine beautiful weaving have grown tired. I have several of her baskets that are among the finest in my collection, and those made twenty or more years ago are far superior to those of later years. She, like many of the old weavers of other tribes, cannot be replaced and her craft, like theirs, will soon be among the lost arts of our Indian people. Our Government realizes this and has set up the Indian Bureau an Arts and Crafts Department. This is not designed to teach weaving or other crafts to Indians, but to assist them in marketing their products, creating distribution centers, and in arranging the financing of tribal cooperative enterprises. In other words, it is an effort on the part of the Government to help the Indians to help themselves.

We do not want to make the Indian over into a white man, but rather, through education and training in the white man's ways, to fit him to compete with other citizens in the economic life of his community. We would not have him forget his old traditions, his arts, and his crafts. We want to help him become a good and useful citizen, but we respect his desire, his right, and his pride in being an Indian.

[[image - photograph of three designs]] [[caption]] Famous bug designs of Mary Snider - Chemehuevi. [[/caption]]

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