THESIS
ON
Basketry and Weaving in The Home
Submitted to the Faculty
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by

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APPROVED:
"It is not what you do, but how you do it, that counts."

In connection with the handicrafts which are cultivated because of their artistic or commercial value, and also because there is at the present time a reaction toward hand work that tends to provide a market for the products of the craft-worker, the mind turns naturally to the only real handicraft this country knows, that of the Indian. Indian products are becoming more or less fashionable, yet there are very few people who realize their beauty and value from the artistic point of view. In them are the expression of the life customs, and character of the race.

The Indian work is our only handicraft because it was the only one brought about by the spontaneous growth of necessity, and is an absolutely natural expression of the individuality of the maker.

During the past few years as people have begun to realize the importance of teaching children practical things, the industry of basket weaving has been renewed as an important factor in education.
Basketry is a form of handicraft more generally practiced by the Indians. From the Pueblos of New Mexico to the Pacific Coast and extending thence to Alaska, we find a multitude of different type, each one characteristic of its makers. The best baskets are made by the Pimas and the Apaches. These baskets show the same natural symbolism and the same instinctive feeling for color, form and design. These baskets are woven from willow, which is gathered at a certain season of the year by the Indian squaws, peeled and stored. When taken out for use it is placed in water for a certain time to be made sufficiently pliable. As the process of making a basket is exceedingly slow, a weaver will sometimes spend several months on one basket. The best ones are made waterproof.

The first Indian weavers were the Hopi, who had been weaving for generations when the Spaniards first entered their villages in the year 1540, and found them weaving fabrics from their home-grown and hand-spun cotton. Sheep had not yet been introduced into the country. This art was one greatly envied by the neighboring tribes, especially the Navajos, who were always the hereditary enemies of the Hopi. After much suffering on both sides a treaty of peace was signed on condition
that the Hopi teach the conquering Navajos the art of weaving. Among the Hopi the men are the weavers, but with the Navajos the women do the work taking months or even a year for the completion of a single blanket. An appealing human touch is given by the fact that no two Navajo blankets are woven alike, and never is one found to be symmetrical down to the last detail of its pattern. The reason for this is the superstition of a Navajo squaw against making a perfect pattern, which to her mind would imply the perfect completion of her work and consequently the ending of her life.

Basketry is one of the most interesting forms of handicraft, but very few amateur basket makers get the true feeling of handicraft into it. They try to imitate Indian designs or weavers so the majority of the baskets are inferior to the Indian baskets and not of any commercial value. There is a certain market for the basketmaker's wares, provided he makes articles that are useful as well as beautiful.

Materials can be obtained at any reliable seed store or basket factory. They consist of reed, numbered from one to six. Number one is the smallest and number six is the largest. Split and flat reed is more pliable than the round and more easily managed. Flat and braided rush makes very strong baskets, and combines readily with reed. Raffia is a long palm
grass imported from Madagascar. It is almost the color and texture of corn husks, except that it is more pliable when wet. It is easily handled and lends itself to a great variety of weaves. Almost any material such as wood, ribbon, sweet grass, corn husks, and wheat straw may be used in basket making.

**REED**

Cyprus reed, arundo donax, grows from fifteen or more feet in height. It is found in eastern Asia, southern Europe, western Africa, and in Mexico and Texas. The common reeds of this country and of England are called the Phragmites. It is a perennial grass growing from six to twelve feet in height. In northern Europe the reed is used for thatching and in the construction of rude huts.

**Prices of reed.**

- Size 1 ————per pound, $.90
- Size 2 ————per pound, .70
- Size 3 ————per pound, .55
- Size 4 ————per pound, .50
- Size 5 ————per pound, .40
- Size 6 ————per pound, .35

The spokes are the upright pieces in the basket and should be from one to two sizes larger than the weaver. The weavers are the fillers which are wound in and out between the spokes. For a reed bas-
ket it requires nine or ten times as much material as for spokes.

When one weaver is used it is known as the under and over weaving. (Figure 1) When two weavers are used as in Figure 2, it is known as the double weaving. When two weavers are used as in Figure 3 and are twisted once between the spokes it is known as pairing. When three weavers are used as in Figure 4 it is known as the triple twist, and is made by going over two and under one spoke. In preparing the reed for work, soak it in water until it becomes pliable.

A good basket is the result of growth. It passes through its evolutions very much as an organic growth might, and may take different directions toward usefulness and beauty, according to the idea uppermost in the mind of the maker as regards its form, design or color scheme. It is best for beginners to make simple shapes and simple designs; then as they become used to handling the materials, the variations possible seem easier to accomplish.

It is better at first to copy what is known to be good, and as the Indians are the basket makers, their simpler designs will be a great help, and there is hardly any beautiful shape that they have not used.

Any work of art will in some way express
the maker, so that when certain ideas of design give more pleasure it is best to work along such lines, as we do best what we most enjoy doing.

DESCRIPTION of STITCHES.

The Figure Eight Stitch.—

The raffia is passed over the lower reed, between, and then around the upper reed, between again and around the lower, and so on, making a spiral design that binds the two reeds together.

Wind and Bind, or the Long and Short Stitch.—

The raffia goes over two, and then over one, then down and over two again. This is the stitch that is used most in making baskets.

Nip-Stitch.—

Raffia is to be used as a foundation, as each stitch nips into the row below—over and over, the same as the over-and-over stitch in sewing. If reed was used it would be too hard to stitch into it, and there would not be enough substance between to hold the two rows together. Many other stitches can be made by varying these in different ways. A profile of the shape of the basket to be made is of great assistance to the worker.

RAFFIA.

Raffia (Ruffa) is a cultivated palm of Madagascar, nearly allied to the jupati-palm. It has
gigantic leaves which furnish a fibrous cuticle, used in Madagascar for mats, and in other countries for tie bands in horticultural work. This strong flexible fiber has no equal as an all around material for baskets.

One of the difficulties to be encountered in making a landscape basket of raffia is to find a subject which is at the same time suitable in shape, simple in design and interesting in color, a design, which, when spread out, must be at least a yard long and eight or more inches high; and which must be interesting whichever way the basket is turned. Having decided in a general way what the design is to be, the next step is to make a drawing of it, and to color it. The bottom of the basket may be of a neutral shade which will harmonize with the foreground of the landscape. Much shading should not be attempted.

Description of landscape basket.

The bottom may be made from any dark color which will work well with the foreground, that being the most difficult part of the entire work. One could work for several days without apparently accomplishing much towards the picture; it is only when some definite object like a tree, or a section of a house, is partly finished, that this point is reached, the basket grows more interesting, though it may take two or more hours to weave around once. The desire to see the picture completed, counteracts the feeling of weary fingers
caused by the increasing size of the basket; and another difficulty is that one cannot get the best effect without seeing the work from a little distance.

The design being completed, the sky blue, which must not be too even, obtained, it is a comparatively small matter to finish the basket.

Raffia basket with cover materials.

- One pound of natural raffia.
- One ounce black raffia.
- One ounce green raffia.
- One hundred and fifty feet of quarter-inch hemp rope.

To make the bottom of the basket, use a tapestry needle with natural raffia by winding toward you until one inch of rope has been covered. Fold the rope so that the beginning and the end of the weaving meet. Fasten firmly and continue working by using the figure eight stitch until the bottom is sufficiently large.

For the side of the basket weave one round of natural raffia in the same manner as before, but hold it directly over the last roll. The other rolls should be held in the position desired for the shape of the basket.

In making a design take a strip of paper the exact length of the largest circumference of the basket and divide it into six equal parts. Each point
is, the center of a figure.

The cover of the basket is made by weaving just as the bottom was started, and weave ten rolls. Divide the circumference into six equal parts and at each point of division begin the cover design. Weave six rows to complete the cover design. Weave a sufficient number of rolls to cover the top of the basket and then weave two rolls to hold the cover in place.

Raffia Tray.

Materials.

Two ounces green raffia.
Two ounces of purple raffia.
A few strands of yellow
Four pieces of reed, No. 6.

To make the bottom of the basket shave the reed down, without diminishing its diameter, until it is then at the end. Then soak the reed in water until it is pliable. Thread a tapestry needle with yellow raffia, wind the reed for about an inch, turn the end and sew. When the center is about three-fourths of an inch in diameter begin with the purple and green.

In splicing the raffia lay a piece along on the reed and work over it with the raffia being used. Instead of splicing where different colors are used the raffia may be carried along with the reed.

Splice the reed; shave down the reed as for
beginning, and the new piece of reed also. Place them together and work over.

SWEET GRASS.

Sweet Vernal Grass is a slender grass that grows in Europe, and is almost eighteen inches tall. It has a pleasing odor due to coumarin. Sweet Grass has been introduced into America and can be found in the meadows and fields. The Indians of the St. Lawrence vicinity weave their baskets from it.

To make a Sweet Grass basket take splint and cut it the distance across the bottom plus twice the length of height plus six inches. Use the splint the same as spokes in the reed basket.

To prepare the sweet grass for work soak it in warm water from thirty minutes to one hour. When it will not break weave it around the splints using the Under and Over weave. To finish it up around the top turn the spokes that are on the inside out, and those on the outside in. Cut off about one-half inch and using two pieces of splint bind around the top.

RATTAN.

Rattan of commerce comes from the calamus genius. They are twelve to sixteen feet in length doubled once and made into a bundle of one hundred each. The commonest use is for making chair bottoms and the split rattan for making baskets.
Description of the caning of stools.

Select the cane, soak it in water until it is pliable and then tack one end to the lower round of the stool. Place the cane up over the top round and across the top of the stool, then down the end around the round and over the round again. Twist the cane once so the smooth side will be on top and go back and forth until the stool is done. To join the cane, wet each end of the cane and join on the lower round by bending the end of each piece around a small rind.

To complete, begin on the opposite side and weave the pattern in.

TAPESTRY and RUG WEAVING.

Modern science has contributed a large share to this work. Until ten years ago the only colors which could be considered permanent were vegetable dyes, and most of these are so crude and harsh as to be difficult of artistic management. But the German chemists have been at work and have succeeded in preparing aniline colors, so that they are now as reliable and permanent as the vegetable dyes formerly in use. The shades produced by these German dyes are wonderfully soft and beautiful and lend themselves to charming combinations. The best tapestry weavers of the Middle Ages used very few colors.

Later on, as the weavers sought to imitate the effects of painting, the tints were endlessly
multiplied until it is said nowadays in the Gobelin factory fourteen thousand different tints are used.

In low warp weaving the cartoon is placed under the warp and the workman has merely to part the threads to see the pattern. The weaver works from the back of the fabric he is weaving. The art of tapestry working came to Europe from the East.

The splendid craft of tapestry weaving is so wide in its scope that it can be practiced by home-workers who have clever fingers and artistic tastes. It is almost an unknown craft in America, though in late years it has been introduced by the arts and crafts workers of England.

Tapestry calls for beautiful color, richness and plenty of interesting detail, it is essentially decorative work, and must be treated as such. The work may be applied to all kinds of uses, such as coverings for furniture, mats, curtains, book covers and bags, making it useful in the home.