

# **THE NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS**

**UNDERHILL**

**SHERMAN PAMPHLETS • NO. 1**

# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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# **THE NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS OF CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA**

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**Edited by Willard W. Beatty, Director of Education**

1941

# WHAT THIS PAMPHLET TELLS ABOUT THE NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS

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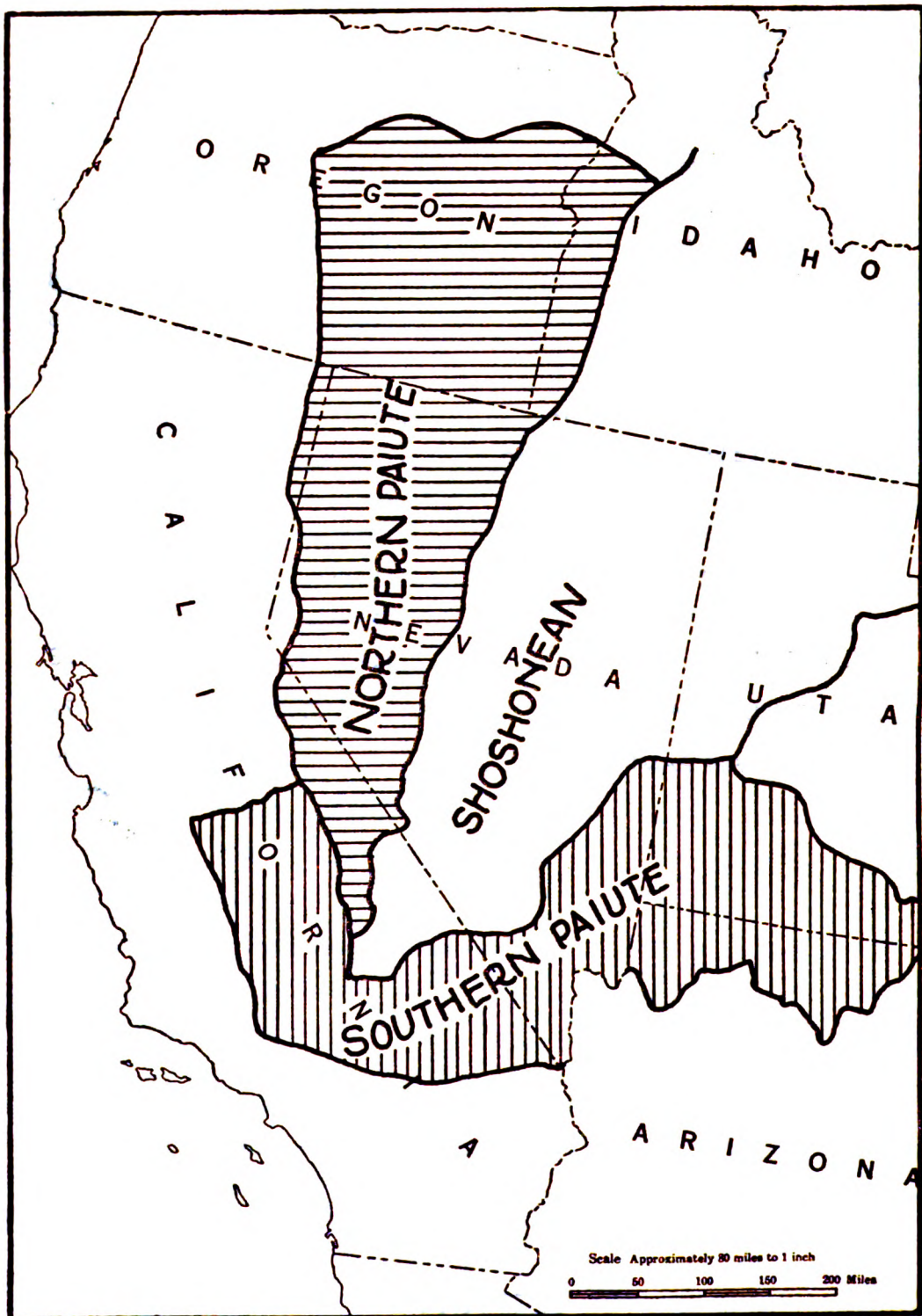


Plate 1. Map showing distribution of the Paiute.

# THE NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS

## WHO AND WHERE

WHERE DO THE PAIUTE LIVE? In the western part of the United States, between the Sierras and the Rockies, is a stretch of dry, barren country which was one of the hardest possible areas for Indians to live in. It is called the Great Basin because the mountains wall it in, almost like the rim of a bowl, and no rivers can run out of it to the sea. Such streams as there are sink away in the sand or form lakes which shrink and grow salty in the dry air. But there are not many streams, for the mountains keep away the rain. You can travel through the Basin for miles seeing nothing but sand and rock and sage brush. If you drive through Death Valley, one of its hottest and lowest parts, you will see only sand and rock.

Once the Basin really had water in it. That was some thousands of years ago when the glaciers of the Ice Age were melting and streams ran down the mountainsides to form great lakes, thirty or more miles long. Great Salt Lake is all that is left of one of the largest, and year by year it is growing smaller, leaving a rim of dry white salt which covers the desert for miles. But there are smaller lakes of the same sort, for the Great Basin is cut by low mountain ranges into dozens of little basins, each with a lake at its bottom. Some of the lakes are fresh and still full of fish, because they have some outlet. Some are salty and shrinking, some are swamps, and some just flat places in the ground. Around them stretches the sage brush where no animal seems to live but the rabbit. In the greener places grow some seed plants or roots which can be eaten. In the hills there are pine trees with nuts in their cones. This was what the people of the Basin had to live on. No forests to give wood; few large animals to give skins, either for clothes or for tents; few fish; few birds.

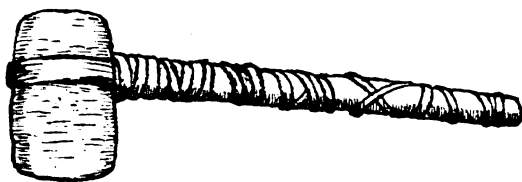
Compare this life with that of Indians in the eastern forests, who had fur and skins to wear, logs for houses, bark for canoes and game, birds and fish in almost every square mile of their country. Or think of the Indians of the prairies who had thousands of buffalo to give them skins for tents, for robes, for moccasins and bags, and all the meat they could eat. In contrast with these whom we might call "rich" Indians, the people of the Basin were poor. They had about as little to start with as any group in either of the Americas. Yet they learned to use everything. The study of their life gives an amazing picture of what can be done with seeds, bark, roots, even insects and water scum. The implements they made out of the desert bushes were the most efficient possible for their purposes. In fact, they are an outstanding example of the way to make the best of the environment.

**WHO ARE THE PAIUTE?** (How did they happen to choose such a country? That story is lost in the past, like the movements of so many Indian peoples. Students have divided the American Indians into various groups, according to language, and when the connections between the languages have been worked out, more may be known about the history of the people who speak them. At present it is known that the people in the Basin and around its edges all speak one general language. It is called Uto-Aztecan and it is spoken by scores of tribes along the highlands of western America, from the Ute in Colorado to the Aztec in Mexico. The fighting Comanche speak it, the peaceful Hopi, the Mission Indians of California, the farming Pima of Arizona. Of course these people do not all understand one another and it takes a student to see just how their languages are alike. Even the Basin people do not all understand one another. They seem to speak three different languages though these are all branches of the general language, Uto-Aztecan.

We need not go into these languages too deeply, though the map on page 6 shows where the lines between them are drawn. They have sometimes been called Northern Paiute, Southern Paiute and Shoshoni. These are chance names, given by White people and we cannot even be sure of their meaning. The Indians themselves often use some word like Num, which means People. There is no Paiute or Shoshoni tribe. The people go about in little groups which are nicknamed according to their way of

life. Salmon Eaters, Pine Nut Eaters or White Knives. The habits of each differ slightly, because each has a different way of getting a living. It would take a long time to describe them all, so we will pick two groups that are better known than the rest. These, as it happens, are both Northern Paiute and both live at the edge of the Basin in California. Their country is not so poor as the deserts of Nevada and Utah, but their way of life will still give us a good idea of the clever ways used by Basin people to get food.

Look at the western edge of the map, which is in California. In the south, you will see the Owens Valley Paiute, living around a small body of water called Owens Lake. Their name for themselves is Num, meaning "the people." In the north, are the Surprise Valley Paiute, whose home is in California, stretching into Oregon. They call themselves Groundhog Eaters. The following pages describe these two groups as they were when the White people first entered their country. Today, however, if you visited the Carson Agency of the Indian Service, which includes both Owens and Surprise valleys you would see a very different picture. You would find the Indians living in wooden houses, wearing blue jeans and cowboy hats, driving wagons or even trucks. You would find some old people who could still describe the ancient ways, but the young ones would look very much like young White people. At the end of our narrative we shall note the changes which have taken place and give some picture of the Paiute today.



**Plate 2. Hafted stone ax.**

# THE NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS

## HOW AND WHAT

HOW DID THEY GET A LIVING? (Of course the first question was food, just as it was with all Indians. If they could find enough food in a place, then they could settle down and get something or other that would do for clothes and a shelter. Just as the white man looks for a job, so that he can support his family, the Indian looked to the resources of the country for enough to support his family. The resources of the Basin must have been hard to see at first and we wonder how the Indians ever found them. There were, of course, rabbits on the desert, the fish in the lakes and sometimes ducks and mud hens. But these were not nearly enough to keep a family alive for the year. All the growing things must be watched and picked, one after another, as they ripen.

In the spring, there were green plants in the marshy places. In summer there were wild seeds, tiny little things which most people would not dream of trying to grind into flour. Later, there were berries and, if a good wet place could be found, there might be roots. In the fall came the big crop which really kept the Basin alive: pine nuts. These tiny nuts, no bigger than grains of wheat, grow under the leaves of the cones on several different kinds of pine trees. Some can be found in one part of the Southwest, some in another. But in the Basin the tree above all others for pine nuts is the scrubby little piñon. It grows on all the hillsides and, in some years bears dozens of pounds of nuts, which are both nourishing and delicious. Still, would you care to live on them for an entire winter? Many Basin people did just this, and since they needed huge stacks of the nuts they simply moved where the trees were, picked them clean and stored the harvest, then camped nearby until it was eaten up.

WHAT DID THEY LIVE IN? (Naturally, people whose food was scattered all over the country, could not have a permanent home in any one place. Instead of bringing food to their house, they brought the house to the food. Sometimes they would be in a valley, sometimes in the mountains, sometimes by a lake, sometimes out in the desert. In each place they put up some boughs for a framework and covered them with whatever they could get: reeds, branches, mats, even a deerskin if they had such a thing. The place where they stayed the longest was the winter house, cuddled in the warm valley. But no valley was very warm in winter because the Basin is really high land, though its wall of mountains makes it seem low.

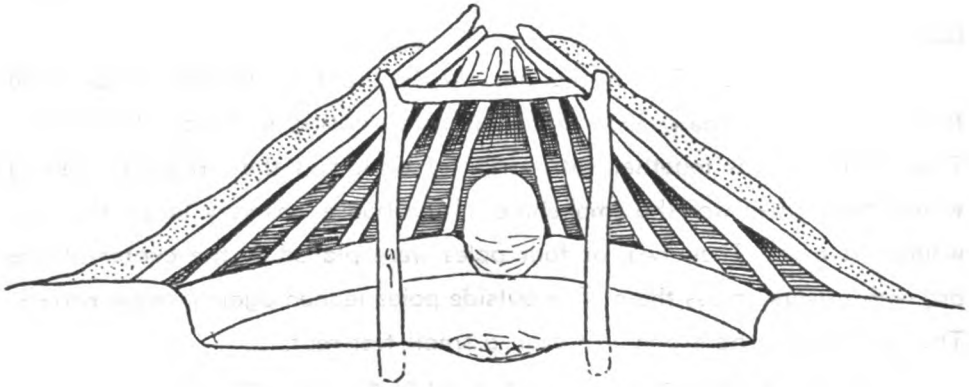
The Paiute winter house was often built over a pit about two feet deep. (Of course the Indians did not measure in feet, nor even care very much about accurate measurements. Those are for people who buy materials from a factory, all cut to size.) The pit was roughly circular and anywhere from ten to twenty-five feet across, depending on the size of the family. Its bottom furnished a good smooth floor, without the sticks and stones to be found on the surface of the desert and avoided the drafts that blew along the ground. Its sides furnished two feet of wall already built.

Around the edge of the pit, the Paiute men planted poles, with their butt ends in the ground and their tops slanting in toward the center. They tied the tops together with strips of bark and the irregular opening where they joined was the smokehole. If the house was very large, the tops would not meet. Then two, or four poles were placed in the center of the pit, with rafters across them. The outside poles leaned against these rafters. The result might be a gable or even a small flat roof.

All the fastening was done with strips of sage bark. The poles were tied together at the top, or tied to the rafters. Then some lighter poles, probably of willow which bends easily, were tied around them outside. Next the "shingling" went on. We speak of shingling because overlapping bunches of grass were attached much as shingles are used on modern houses. It is an ancient idea, used by people in many parts of the earth, before boards were thought of. The Paiute took saltbush or reeds or anything they could find and tied it together in bunches, with all the ends pointing the same way.

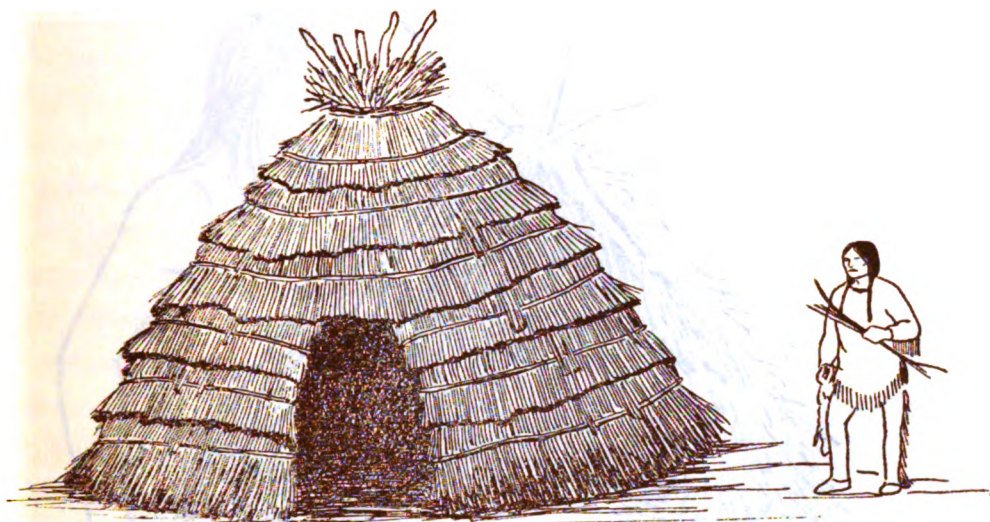


**Plate 3. Winter home. The sweat house was on the same plan but larger. The log framework was covered with boughs or woven mats, which in turn were covered with earth to keep out drafts.**



**Plate 4. Cross section of the Paiute summer house or, on a smaller scale, of the sweat house.**





**Plate 5. House covered with cattail mats.**

Then they tied the bundles to the framework of the house, beginning at the bottom. They let the ends of the leaves or grass all point downward, so as to shed the rain and they tied on row after row, each one overlapping the one beneath it, just as shingles do. They left a narrow opening for a door, but had no windows. When they wanted to close the door, they tied several bundles of grass together and stacked them against it. The hole at the top where the poles were tied together was never covered, for that had to let the air in and the smoke out. Beneath it, on the earthen floor, was a little hollow for the fireplace.

This was the simplest form of winter house but naturally people changed it according to what they had. Where cattails grew, they could make these into mats and have a wall covering almost as good as skins or canvas or tar paper. You may see such mats on old Paiute houses today and perhaps you might prefer to call them fringes. The women who made them laid the cattails in a row with the thick ends up. Then they made holes through the ends with a sharp piece of bone and ran a piece of bark string through them. Sometimes they fastened the lower ends too, as you may see in the picture on this page. The mats were laid on like shingles too, and the long straight cattails were fine for shedding water. If they wanted the house warmer and more airtight, they could throw earth over the outside. This was always done with a special big building made in Owens Valley, and used as a place for

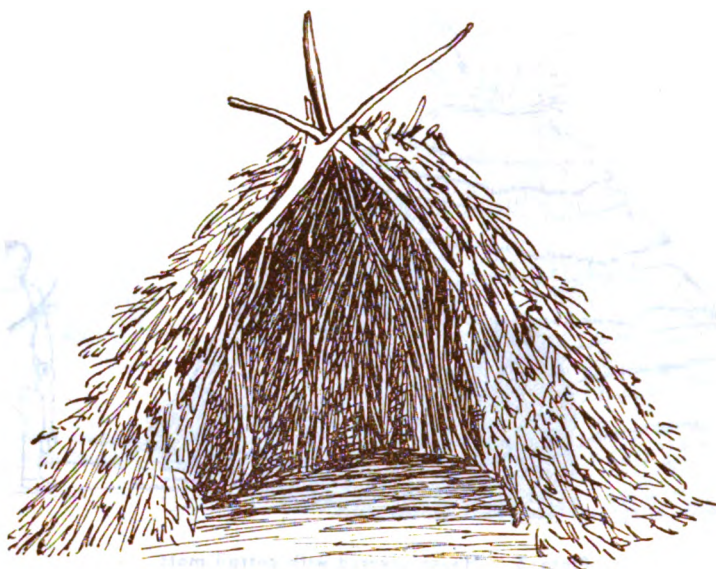


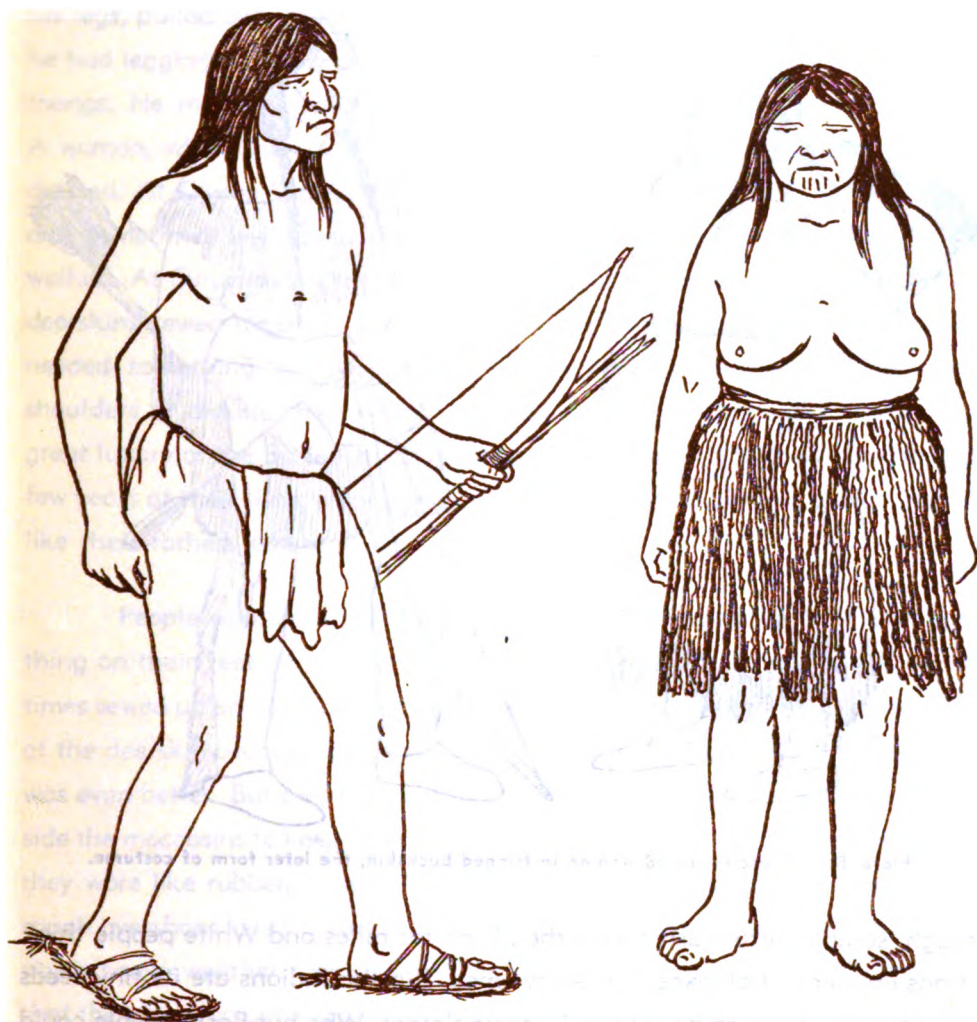
Plate 6. Summer shack.

men to meet. The Men's House is an institution often to be found in North America from the snug, underground Kiva of the Pueblo Indians to the big stone "singing house" of the Greenland Eskimo. Often it is, as with the Owens Valley Paiute, not only a club house, but a place to take a bath. The bath was provided not by soap and water but by the men's own perspiration. They built a big fire in the center and closed the doorway, letting the room get as hot as they could bear. When they had sweated well, they ran out and plunged into cold water. No better system could be devised for keeping clean under difficult conditions. The only pity is that the women did not take sweatbaths too.

Women sometimes had another kind of house, just as they did in many parts of America and in the Old World too. This was a roughly made shack, away from the main house where they went once a month when they were thought to be dangerous to men. Surprise Valley women did this and so did many in the Basin, though sometimes, as in Owens Valley, they were not so particular.

The sweat house and the winter house were the most important dwellings the Paiute had and were used year after year. When people were travelling and camping, however, they did not put up such a solid dwelling. They used a framework of boughs, cone shaped, dome shaped, or gabled.





**Plate 7. Man in buckskin breechcloth and sagebrush bark sandals; the woman in sagebrush skirt, her chin tattooed. The oldest form of costume.**

Sometimes they merely tied a few branches together. There was no end to the makeshift forms which might be used, according to the materials at hand. The picture on page 14 shows one common form.

**WHAT DID THEY WEAR?** (If building materials were hard to get in the Basin, clothing materials were even scarcer. What are people to do in a country where there are very few deer, no buffalo and not even the small fur animals like fox, and muskrat? Men often solved the problem by going without any clothes at all; but women, as in all Indian tribes, wore at least a skirt. They made it of *sage brush*. This



**Plate 8. Paiute man and woman in fringed buckskin, the later form of costume.**

tough, scrubby little bush covers the plains for miles and White people think it has no merit at all except its spicy smell. But the Indians ate its tiny seeds and stripped its rough bark to make their clothes. Who but Basin people could have thought of it! The bark is so broken that it does not even come off in strips but the women dampened it and pounded it with stones until it formed strings. These they made into a wide fring that reached from the waist to the knee; that was their skirt. Sometimes they had not time to do all this and old people tell how they might then take the green scum formed over a place where a pond used to be. It was as light as paper and tore just as easily but it would do when a woman was busy.

When they could get deer, that was another matter and in the two valleys we are speaking of, Owens and Surprise, they often could. However, they did not develop the art of tailoring very far, so the clothes they made were very simple. A man might wear a simple strip of deerskin between

his legs, pulled over a belt front and back. At Surprise, where it was colder, he had leggings which were just tubes of deerskin, attached to his belt with thongs. He might also have a shirt made kimono-fashion without sleeves. A woman, when she could have a deerskin skirt, thought herself very well dressed. At Owens Valley, she made it in one piece, in wrap around style, and sometimes she sewed deer hoofs around the bottom to rattle as she walked. At Surprise Valley, she sometimes had a whole dress, made of two deerskins sewed together, with a hole for her head. In cold weather, people needed something warmer and they tied whole animal skins over their shoulders or around their waists. Also they had the rabbitskin blanket, the great luxury of the Basin, which we shall describe later. Children, for the first few years of their lives, wore nothing at all and when they were older, dressed like their fathers and mothers.

People who travelled as constantly as the Paiute, had to wear something on their feet. If they could get deerskin, they made moccasins, sometimes sewed up on one side, and sometimes in other styles. They used the neck of the deerskin because it was tough and if they could get raccoon skin, that was even better. But also they used the faithful sage bark. They stuffed it inside the moccasins to keep their feet warm. They wove it into big sandals which they wore like rubbers to keep their moccasins dry. Later, they made great rough overshoes laced up the front with bark string and worn over the moccasins in snowy weather. One who had not seen these things could hardly imagine that the tough, scrappy sage bark could have so many uses.

For people who wore so little clothing they paid a great deal of attention to their hair. Indeed, the long black hair of men and women was almost a garment in itself. Both sexes wore it in two braids, tied together and flung back behind the head. Women, who carried the loads for the family needed a hat of sorts to protect their foreheads from the carrying strap. They made themselves a bowlshaped cap which was like a basket and could actually be used as such. Men needed no hat unless it was cold, then they made a cap of skins, of the kind that early American pioneers learned from the Indians.

Decoration was the most important part of the costume. Women

tattooed their chins for beauty, generally with up and down marks. They rubbed red paint along the part of their hair and for special occasions, men and women both rubbed red and yellow clay on their faces in all sorts of designs. Both sexes wore necklaces and earrings. They knew nothing about metal work and, though Nevada is full of gold and silver, they never used them. But they were very ingenious in finding things that would do: the hollow bones of swan wings, deer toes and rabbit toes, black deer hoofs and even ocean shells, brought all the way from the Pacific. A woman, dressed for a holiday, with her necklaces and ear rings and her skirt edged with rattling deerhoofs, was a rhythmic orchestra as she walked along.

WHAT DID THEY EAT? ¶ The Paiute knew their country. They knew which seed patches would ripen with the crescent moon of July (only they did not call it July); which with the half moon; which with the full moon. They knew that when seeds are ripe, they must be picked within eight or ten days or they will blow away and be lost. They knew when every root patch must be dug before the tops withered away; when the rabbits were fattest; when the fish spawned; and when the crickets came. Sometimes these various events happened miles away from each other and a family had to keep on the run, with everybody working. Under such conditions, there was no question of man being the food provider, while woman sat at home. Both were providers, but there was a rough division of labor. Men did the strenuous work of hunting and women did the day-by-day backbreaking work of picking the wild growing things. In that way, they could camp near their work and have the babies with them.

THE VEGETABLES: ¶ A Paiute woman's picking began in the early spring, when the first green leaves showed in the valley. Then she crawled out of the winter house where the family had been living on the last of their dried vegetables and put on the paraphernalia she would wear all summer: her cap and basket. The basket was a huge affair of willow, shaped like an inverted cone and capable of holding five or six bushels. She wore it on her back out of the way, sustained by a rope which passed from its two sides over her forehead or her chest. A tumpline, campers call it. Of course she could not have the rough rope pulling across her forehead with nothing under it. So she made herself a little cap in the one technique she had: basketry. The cap





**Plate 9. Paiute woman gathering wild seeds.**

was shaped like a bowl and fitted snugly to her head. With this and her skirt, moccasins and basket, she was equipped. All she needed besides, was a stick to dig the roots or a fan to beat out the seeds. The baby was almost as much a part of her costume as the rest. She placed him, in his cradle board, on top of the basket, hung him on a tree while she was working and finally carried him home on top of the load.

She began with the succulent shoots of onions and other spring greens. Those who criticize the Indian diet of mush, forget how many of these wild substitutes for lettuce they found. And they ate them, too. Then the family moved to the grasslands. There was much more grass in the Basin some fifty years ago than there is now and in all the moist places grew plants whose bulbous roots made a substitute for carrots, turnips and potatoes. One of these was the camas, whose lovely blue flower is of one the beauties of northwestern meadows. Another was the wild onion. But to the Paiute woman, these meant not a dash of color in the landscape but a month's job of digging and baking.

Those who are used to baking their potatoes in the kitchen oven, may wonder how the Basin woman baked without any stove. She made her own oven, with the help of some other women and it was nothing more than a pit

in the ground. On its floor, the women built a fire and laid stones in the flames to heat. The fire burned out and left the stones hot as the floor of an iron oven. On them was laid grass, then the roots, then more grass and more roots. Every woman placed her roots separately, walling them in with a wad of grass. Earth on top sealed up the hole and kept it warm all night. It was an efficient, large scale, fireless cooker.

Now she moved on to the fruits. These, in the Paiute system were not a mere dessert—they were the whole meal. The family lived on them while they lasted and every day the picker "put up" some for winter use. The putting up was mostly drying in the sun but the chokecherries, she pounded, stones and all, into a paste. Then she molded the mass into little cakes. During winter, she could grind the cakes into flour and mix it with the family gruel.

She made refreshing drinks, too. None of them were intoxicating, for very few Indians north of Mexico knew anything about fermentation. She had tea from chokecherry stems or wild rose stems or mint or the famous Mormon tea. Really it should be called Paiute tea, for it was the Indians who taught their Mormon visitors to boil these leafless green stalks and make a beverage. She even had sweets although the gum she picked from a certain kind of reed was not very sugary. And she had chewing gum! Gum, in fact, is an old American institution, taught to the Whites by the first residents. Indians made it out of all sorts of plants but the Paiute used a certain rubbery root or else pine pitch. The pitch is brittle after a winter's freeze but, in the warmth of the mouth, it becomes elastic like modern gum.

In late summer there was a special delicacy, hardly a vegetable but gathered like one. This was the crickets. They came out in swarms and, in the cool mornings they could be found bunched in the grass and picked up by handfuls. When a woman went out to gather them she built a fire and while she was getting her crickets she let it die down. Then she dumped the live insects on the coals by handfuls. Some women left them only a few minutes and some let them roast for hours. The family ate them immediately and any that were left over could be dried and kept. Ants and insect larve were gathered in the same way. The larvae were cooked like the crickets but ants were dried and ground into flour like seeds.

That brought the year around to seed gathering time, the most important season of all. The daily meal on which the family lived was gruel; gruel



was made from flour and flour from wild seeds. This must have been the earliest form of flour, before the human race learned that seeds could be planted and cultivated. The Paiute had not learned this but those in Owens Valley, at least, had found out that seeds could be helped to grow. They turned the streams into patches where they found seeds specially thick: a sort of irrigation without planting or hoeing.

Their seeds came from all the withered flower heads which farmers throw out of their gardens as weeds; sunflower, pigweed, clover, cress, even marigold and primrose. To get enough of these into her basket, the woman had to have other tools than her bare hands. So she made herself an openwork beater of basketry shaped like a small tennis racket. With this, she beat the plant heads, showering out the seeds by hundreds into the faithful carrying basket, held in her other hand. Even so, it took a day's work to get the basket even partly full.

When she got home, she had some bushels of seeds of all kinds mixed with leaves and stems. She sifted out the extras with a very neat utensil, an openwork basket in the shape of a sieve. Now she had to get the husks off the seeds. She laid them on her grindstone and rolled them lightly with another



Plate 10. Woman winnowing seeds under the arbor outside her home.



Plate 11. Gathering pine nuts.

stone or perhaps she pounded them a little in a mortar. That loosened the husks. To get rid of them, she put the mass on a tray—basketry again—and jerked it quickly so that the light husks flew out and the heavier seeds remained. All this to get them ready to grind! And they could not be ground even yet because they were too soft. She put them in another of her all-service baskets with some hot coals, shook the basket rapidly so the coals would not burn it and thus heated the seeds crisp. Now she could kneel down at her grinding slab and spend a few hours grinding them into flour. It was steady work but it was outdoor work, without haste or strain. Old women remember with pleasure those roving days, and their present problem, now that their men want more to eat than the old time seed gruel, is to work out a life that is as healthful.

With autumn, the woman's food gathering job was practically over. She had dried and baked her surplus as she went along but she still had to see that it was handily stored for winter. She did her storing in cellars, not of brick or concrete but perfectly efficient. They were nothing more than pits dug in the ground at any point where she had been gathering. She lined the pits carefully with grass, then laid in the sun-dried vegetables and covered the hole with earth. That kept her store dry and safe from marauding animals. When the family were ready to go into winter quarters, they made trips to the different caches and brought home the store.

Before winter came, however, the whole family went out for the great crop of the year and the great crop of the Basin, pine nuts. The scrubby little piñon tree which bears them, happens not to grow in Surprise Valley, but it is found near Owens Valley, and over many of the hills in Nevada and Utah. It is a tricky tree. One year it bears nuts, then for two or three years it bears none at all. Sometimes there is a big harvest in one place and nothing else for twenty miles around. Wherever the harvest was, there the people gathered, no matter how far they had to walk. If their homes were too far away, they did not go back to them but stayed where they were until they had eaten all the nuts.

Owens Valley was rather unusual, for there the people had their own groves and did not allow any trespass. They had a head man who decided when they were to go nut gathering, and they started off armed with baskets and mats for carrying the nuts. Men and women both worked. Men pulled the cones down off the trees with wooden hooks, tied to long poles such as you see



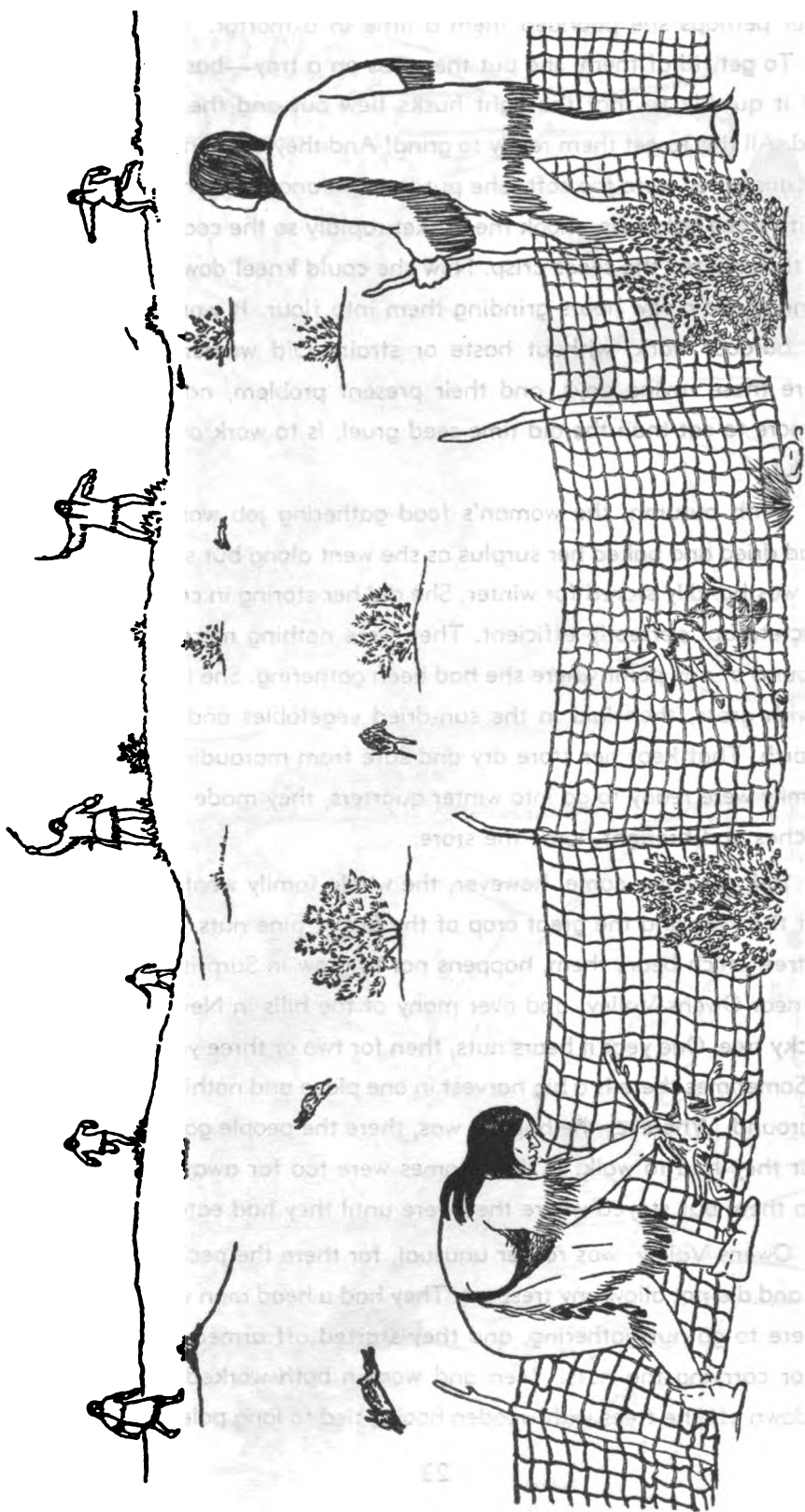


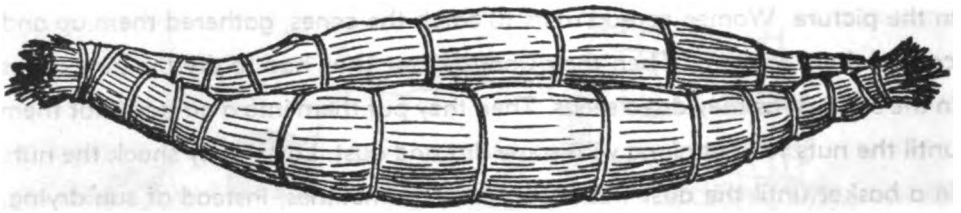
Plate 12. Poluto rabbit hunt.

in the picture. Women spread mats to catch the cones, gathered them up and carried them to camp. Then their work began. They had to dry the pine cones in the sun just as they dried seeds. Then they put them into a pit and beat them until the nuts fell out along with some dirt and dust. Lastly they shook the nuts in a basket until the dust was blown away. Sometimes, instead of sun drying, they roasted the cones all night, covered with boughs and earth. But they did not prepare all the cones at once. They stored them in a pit lined with skins and took out just enough for one meal at a time. Sometimes the Owens Valley people got enough pine nuts so they could camp in the hills all winter. They lived on nuts and the game that the men brought in.

THE MEAT SUPPLY: (With winter, the woman's season of food providing was over and she could sit down to handicraft. But the man was coming to his most strenuous period: no food would be brought into the house in winter except the game he killed. Moderns think of the primitive hunter as roaming alone over the hills with his bow and arrow. But a man who needed meat had more efficient means of getting it than this. The bow and arrow was mostly for impromptu occasions. In his regular planned work, he knew the haunts and seasons of all the animals and he arranged nooses and traps which would work for him all the time. These brought him in rabbits and birds. For large animals like deer, the Surprise Valley hunter dug a pit and roofed it over with boughs, so that the deer would fall in and be at his mercy. Little creatures like rats and ground squirrels he chased into their holes and then twisted a stick in their skins to pull them out.

In the same way he sometimes pulled out the big lizards, called chuck-wallas and even snakes, if the food supply was low. However, he never killed any creature unless he needed food. "I have never shot anything in my life but what is good to eat," said one old Paiute. "In my way of thinking and in my father's way of thinking, no man ought to kill anything unless it is good to eat."

Much more could be done, however, when all the men worked together. This they often did for that great meat supply of a treeless country, the rabbit. Far more efficient than a single noose, they found a long net or several nets strung in a line across a patch of land where rabbits came to feed. Several men held the net while the others drove the rabbits in from all directions. Their heads, with the long ears, caught in the net and the men clubbed them or the

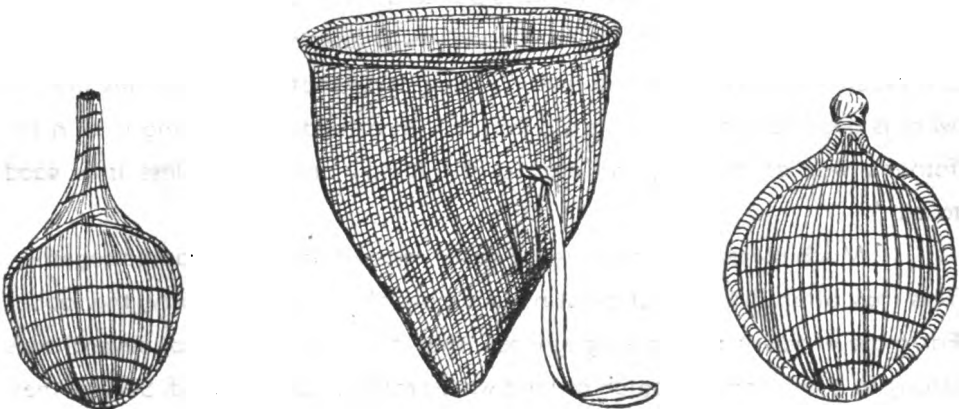


**Plate 13. Raft of reeds for hunting ducks.**

women pulled them out and twisted their necks. For geese and mudhens, a good plan was for a man or two to get on a raft in the lake and scare the birds to shore. There the others with some women to help, hit them on the head with sticks as soon as they arrived.

But the big game, so important that they held a ceremony for it, was deer and antelope. These could be hunted at any time of the year and they were, by stalking, by pitfalls, by driving them over the edge of a cliff, by chasing them into a corral and slaughtering them. In Surprise Valley this last kind of slaughter took magical preparation. It was performed for antelope in the winter when they ran in large herds.

A man who had supernatural power, directed the people. They built a huge corral with wide wings, into which the antelope were to be driven. They sent out scouts to look ahead for a herd and, when they had reported one, they performed magic to bring it to the corral unfrightened. The magic was to make a bundle the size of an antelope, tied with sagebark string. The magician took a stick wrapped around with hair and made music by rubbing it on this string, while magic songs were sung. Next day all the men went out to circle the herd



**Plate 14. Left to right, twined seed beater, twined burden basket, and twined seed beater or fish scoop.**

and never failed to drive them into the corral. There, as they stood still, they were shot with bow and arrow.

For fishing, they had other inventive methods. They used a rod and line but the line being thick and the hook a clumsy one of bone, they did not work too well. It was much better to drive fish into nets as they drove the rabbits or to throw into the water, a weed (*Smilacina sessifolia* or slim solomon), which stupefied the fish without spoiling their flesh for eating. They dragged openwork baskets through the water to scoop the fish up, or they stabbed them with three pointed spears or shot them with arrows. At times, they turned aside a stream to irrigate their wild plants and left the fish stranded.

There were no animals kept about the house for food but there were a few pets. Some people had very small dogs which looked like coyotes. They helped in hunting groundhogs and now and then, deer and if the meat supply got low enough, they might be eaten. Men who needed feathers for their crowns caught hawks and eagles when they were young and kept them in little brush houses.



Plate 15. Left to right, coiled basket dish, coiled boiling basket, and coiled dish.

**HOW DID THEY COOK?** (A few of the Paiute made some very rough pots but most had none at all. Then how did they cook? The answer may seem strange to people used to cooking in metal pots over a stove but to the Paiute and to many other Indians, it was simple. They cooked in baskets. These could not, of course, be placed directly over a fire but there are ways to get food hot in a basket without doing that.

A Paiute woman who wanted to boil porridge, would take a close coiled basket and fill it with cold water. As the basket strands grew wet, they swelled, as all twigs do. Soon every crack filled up and the basket was almost as water tight as a pot. Meantime, the woman had been heating her cooking stones. These smooth round stones, of a kind that did not crack easily, were a regular part of her kitchen equipment. She placed them in the campfire, let

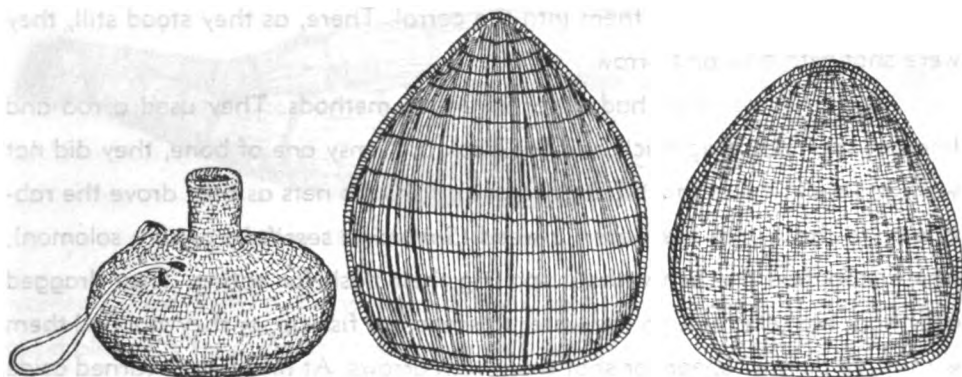


Plate 16. Left to right, twined water bottle lined with pine pitch to make it water tight, twined groter, and twined winnowing tray.

them get hot and then removed them with a pair of long wooden tongs. They were probably covered with ashes so she dipped them quickly into water to wash them. Then she put them in her boiling basket and stirred them around with the tongs so that they would not burn it. This needed care but it was part of the science of Paiute cooking: a good cook never let her basket burn. When the stones got cool, she had hot ones ready to take their place and soon the porridge boiled. This art of stone boiling must be a very old one, dating from the time when few of the human race had pots. Many Indians use it, whether their container is a basket, a wooden box or an animal hide.

Basket roasting was another scheme on the same order. We have mentioned in connection with flour grinding, how the woman heated her seeds by shaking them in a basket with hot coals. This was another case of bringing the heat to the basket instead of the basket to the heat. She used it for all the small things that needed a quick roasting. Meat was too large and needed more fire than she could put in the basket so she laid it in the ashes or stuck it on a stick by the fire. Fish she could cook merely on the heated ground.

For long roasting, such as she had to give the tough roots, there was the pit oven. This had all sorts of variations, from hot stones in the pit to fire on top. They gave different amounts of heat and so furnished a way of regulating the oven according to what was being baked.

Her utensils for preparing the food were mostly baskets. People who are used to metal and china can hardly realize that graters, sifters, bottles, spoons and dishes can be made perfectly well out of willow shoots, but the Paiute woman, who had no other material, managed this very skillfully. She



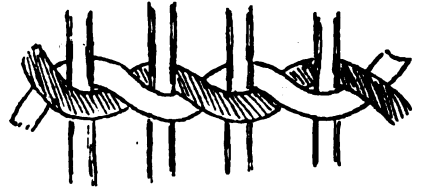
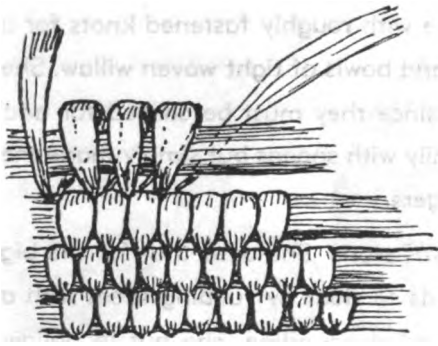
had a loose-woven tray for a sieve and one with roughly fastened knots for a grater. She made ladles and waterbottles and bowls of tight woven willow. She coated her water bottles with fresh pitch, since they must be carried far and must not leak. She did not provide her family with spoons but simply made the mush so stiff that they could use their fingers.

The only other material she had was stone. She used that for the big rough block on which she ground her seeds to flour by rubbing them with a smooth, smaller stone. The things that needed pounding, she put in hollow stone or a tree trunk, hollowed out by fire. Then she pounded them with a long stone as a pestle. She did very little cutting but when it was necessary, she had a thin piece of stone with the edge chipped sharp, as a knife.

**WHAT DID THEY MAKE?** (Naturally the chief craft of the Paiute was basketry. So it is with many American Indians and with other peoples all over the world. Basketry needs no tools but the fingers, helped now and then by a bit of stick or bone. Basketry materials can be found in all sorts of places, wet and dry, hot and cold. A woman out gathering plants could always find some sort of grass, twigs or reeds out of which she could weave a container. Perhaps that is why women seem always to be the basket makers. They are the plant gatherers and they are the ones who need containers in their housekeeping and cooking. They must have made baskets from very early times for we find scraps of basketry in old caves, long before we find pots or cloth. In fact, basketry may be the oldest of the human arts.

It is quite a complicated art. People who have not studied baskets often have the idea that they are all made in the same general way but that is not the case. Try putting some basketry strands together and you will soon see that there are two main ways of doing it. One is a little like sewing, one is a little like weaving. Some basketmaking peoples use one method for everything, whether it is convenient or not. Some use the other and some use both. The Paiute, who were basketry specialists, used both.

Try first the method which is like sewing. Try is the word, for no one can possibly understand a description of basketry unless he gets a few twigs or scraps of raffia and feels the motions with his own fingers. We should really say her fingers for, as mentioned above, basket making is a woman's art. First



**Plate 17. Left, Coiling in process. Right, Twining in process.**

you want the foundation which will be twisted around in spiral shape to form the basket. This may be a bunch of soft grass, as it is in some desert countries, or a flexible twig, or two, or three, or even more. The size and strength of this foundation will make all the difference in the size and strength of your basket. If you took twigs, they would have to be split and kept wet and would give you a great deal of trouble. Take a bunch of grass or raffia and wind it around in a spiral as you work. You will hold the spiral together with a light strand of raffia or grass. Pull this over one round of the spiral and poke it under or through the one below. Here you will need a sharp stick or bone to make a hole big enough for the raffia to pass through. You might almost be sewing except that your needle is not attached to your thread. This method is called coiling. You can always recognize a coiled basket because of the spiral lines, going round and round, parallel with the basket rim. The coils may be covered by the upright stitches which, perhaps are in different colors and make a pattern. Nevertheless the ridged look is always there.

You can see it easily in the coarse coiled baskets which the Paiute made. These were generally of willow; smooth, peeled shoots for the foundation strands and other shoots, split fine for the sewing. The Paiute woman used a splinter of deerbone for her sewing or, where cactus grew, she could get a large thorn which was the next thing to a needle. However, she did not do much coiling. She found the method useful for food bowls and, once in a while for large cooking baskets. She decorated these by doing part of her sewing with black fern roots or the red roots of a water plant. Sometimes she made *paint* out of pounded rock or willow root and painted designs on a white basket. This was a very unusual form of decoration. It should be easy, but few Indians used it.

The basketry method which the Paiute used oftenest, was the one akin to weaving. In this, the foundation strands, instead of going around, in the same direction as the basket rim, stand at right angles to it, like the ribs of an open umbrella. Take a few straight flexible sticks (for in twining, your foundation must be rather stiff; you cannot use raffia, as in coiling) and tie them together in the form of a sunburst. Then take two strands of softer material, like grass or raffia. Place one of these over a foundation stick, one under it and weave them in and out crossing each other every move.

This is called twining. Twined baskets never have the ridged look of coiled ones—they look much more like a basket weave in heavy cloth. In fact, if twining is done with very light materials, it can be almost as flexible as cloth and can be used for bags. We shall see how cleverly the Paiute used it. Twining was the Paiute woman's chief method of making her utensils, clothes and furniture.

Her carrying basket was in cone shape, sometimes three feet high, close woven for seeds and small things, openwork for large ones. Her boiling basket was a bowl, her trays and seed beater were fan shaped like the segment of an umbrella. The parching tray and winnower, of course, were close woven to hold the seeds but the seed beater was openwork and so were the sieve and grater. One of her cleverest pieces of work was the water bottle. It was globe shaped, like a carafe, with a very small mouth stoppered with grass. It had to be absolutely watertight for sometimes it carried all the water for the whole family on a day's journey. So the woman took some sticky gum from the pine or juniper tree and dropped some pebbles in it. When they were coated, she dropped them in the bottle and shook them around. To coat the outside, she

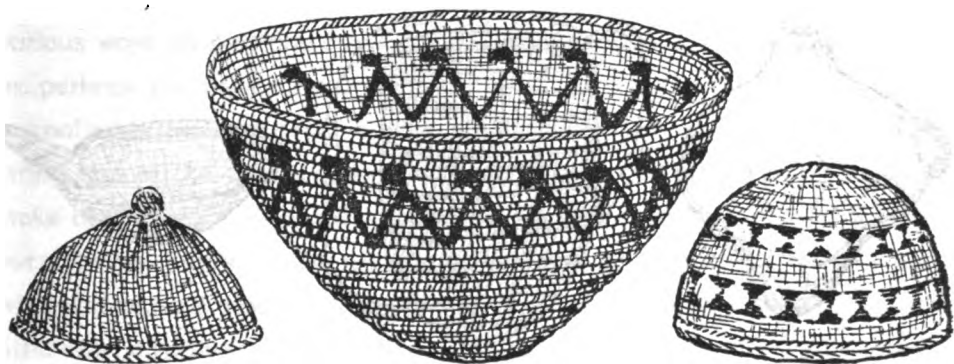


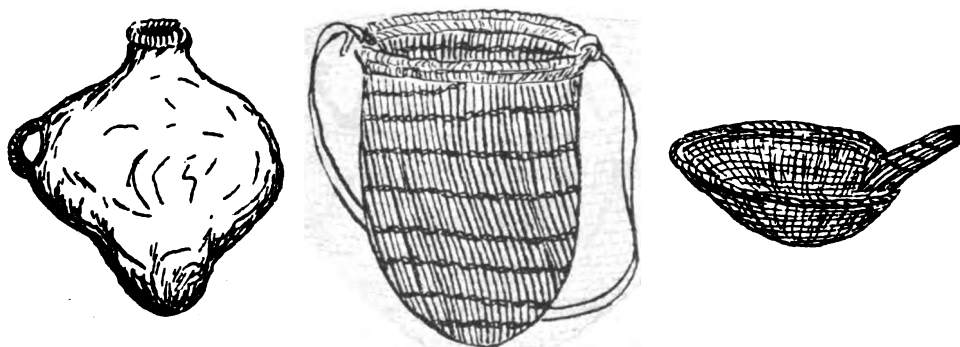
Plate 18. Left to right, basket cap, coiled basket dish, and basket cap.

smeared on the gum with a stick. Her basket scoop for dipping out gruel she coated in the same way. She even twined clothing. That was the method for the basketry cap, which kept the rope of the carrying basket off her forehead. Indian women of several western tribes wear a cap of this sort, which is nothing more than a basketry bowl, turned upside down. Probably they got the idea from a bowl in the first place, though some of them made changes as time went on. The Paiute cap was just a simple bowl, with decorations *painted* on. No one knows why the women started to paint their decorations, instead of weaving them in, like the tribes around them. The painted cap, however, is a Basin specialty. Another form of woven clothing was the skirt. In the olden days, this was merely a fringe made of strips of sage bark, doubled over a belt and held in place by two or three rows of twining.

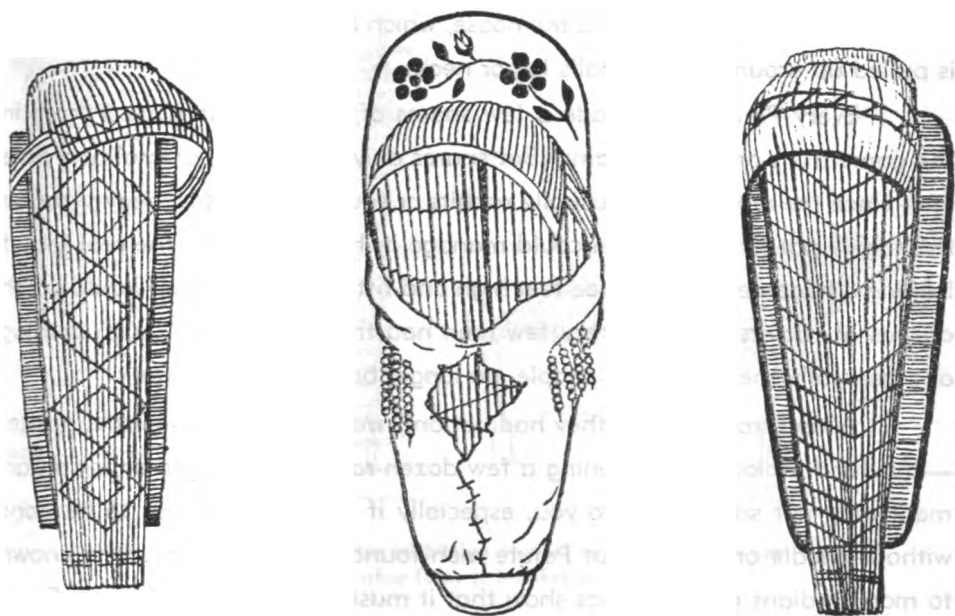
The Paiute woman also twined the baby's cradle. This was in the usual Indian form, a board-like contrivance on which the baby could be strapped. The baby's grandmother made it by laying down a row of willow shoots just the length of the baby. Underneath them, she laid a backing of other shoots going in the other direction. Then she twined the two layers together with string in different patterns, a zigzag for girls, parallel lines for boys. Over the baby's head was a little semicircular awning of twined willow.

We have mentioned string. Anyone who has camped or moved knows how essential this is for carrying loads and fastening bundles, and particularly where there are no nails, hooks or buttons. The Paiute used it to tie the mats or thatch on their houses, to attach the woman's carrying basket, to tie up loads for carrying and in making all their wickerwork.

Making string, with most Indians, seems to be the man's business and



**Plate 19.** Left to right, water bottle covered with pine pitch, twined carrying basket, for roots and large objects, and twined ladle.



**Plate 20. Cradle boards. Left to right, for a girl (zig-zag decorations on hood), buckskin covered board as made in the north, and board for a boy (parallel stripes on hood).**

from that it often follows that he does spinning and weaving and other tasks which are now thought of as the work of women. That was the case with Paiute men. They got their string fibre from any tough plant that grew near them. Sometimes it was sagebrush bark, sometimes nettle or another plant. It was chewed or moistened somehow, then pounded, then pulled into shreds. Then the man twisted it into two-ply string by rolling two strands of it up and down on his thigh. If he wanted rope, he took several of his twisted strings and braided them.

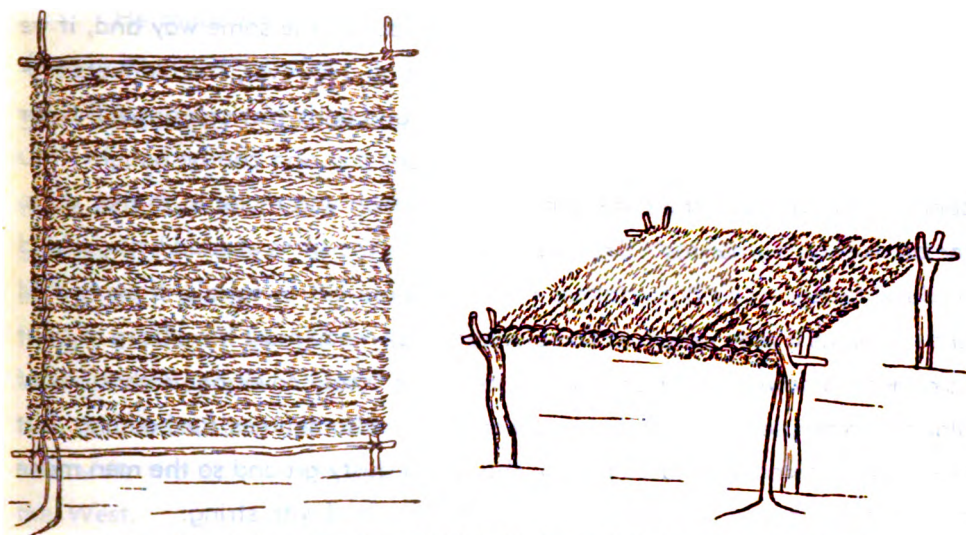
The first thing to do with the string was to tie together willow rods in various ways for bird and rabbit traps. You could make one of these yourself or, perhaps you have already done so, when you wanted to catch some small animal with the least possible work. The simplest way is to make a noose of string and attach it to a stake or a bush which can be bent over. Bend the stake until the loop lies on the ground, where the animal will step into it without noticing. Now you have to keep the stake bent. Tie another string to it and wind this around a peg in the ground with a little stick at the end. Place this little stick also in the ground, where the animal will be likely to kick it as he walks into the noose. As soon as this happens, the string unwinds, the flexible

stake flies back to position and the noose, which has been lying on the ground, is pulled up around the animal's leg or neck.

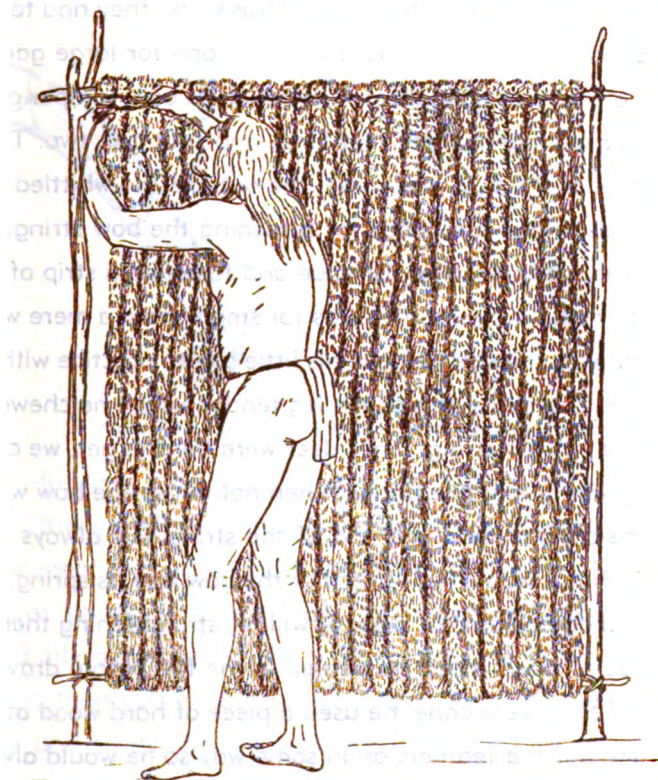
Every Paiute man made a few snares of this sort and placed them in the game trails around his camp. But snares only caught one animal at a time and, since the animals were usually rabbits or squirrels, this gave very little for the family pot. So if the man could manage it, he sat down to the real job of looping a huge net, about three feet high and fifty feet long which would catch dozens of rabbits at once. Very few men had the time to make such a thing and generally these were old people, no longer busy with active work.

After a rabbit drive, they had not only meat for the pot—or the basket—but fur for clothing. Fastening a few dozen rabbit skins together for a garment may not sound easy to you, especially if the fastening has to be done without needle or thread. But Paiute men found a practical way. It is known to many Indians and old relics show that it must have been used in the Basin for almost a thousand years. The idea is to make the little skins into a rope and weave them. There are various ways of doing this and the different groups of Paiute did it differently. All skinned their rabbits so that the skin came off in one piece. This they cut spirally into a single strip. Then two strips could be laid together or one strip could be doubled but, in any case, the hide was twisted into furry rope, with no skin showing. This was used for the foundation of a blanket and strips of bark or fibre were woven through it.

There were all sorts of weaving frames. The main point of a weaving frame or loom is that there shall be two firm bars, with the foundation of the cloth, which is usually called the warp, stretching from one to the other. The bars may be upright, with the warp wrapped from side to side; they may be held, somehow, in a horizontal position, with the warp going up and down or they may lie on the ground, with the warp across them. The Paiute used all these ways. In the picture, you see an old man of Owens Valley, weaving on an upright loom, with rabbitskin rope as the warp. His loom bars are about six feet apart and he has wrapped the rope around them from side to side, beginning his wrapping from the bottom. Now he is running the string through them, lengthwise. We might speak of this process as weaving, but actually he is not separating the warp and running threads through it in the same way that the Navaho and Hopi do. When you read about that process in another book of this series you will see that it is quite a complicated one. The Paiute, however,



**Plate 21.** Left, a loom for rabbitskin blanket with horizontal warp. Right, another form of blanket loom.



**Plate 22.** Twining a rabbitskin blanket with vertical warp.

is really doing the same thing that women do in basketry. He has two threads and he is twisting one over and one under in the way we have called *twining*.

Blankets and baskets, with the Paiute, were made in the same way and, if we were accurate, we should not call it weaving at all. However, the blankets produced by twining were delightfully soft, warm and light. Yet can prove this for yourself, for they are being made to the present day and can be bought. You cannot, however, buy the other kind of robe which was made in former days: the blanket of feather rope. This was made from the skins of mud hens, a kind of duck found in the Basin lakes. The skins were cut in spirals, then twisted and woven as if they were fur. The blankets they made must have been as light as a modern down comforter, without its silk or cotton covering. Both kinds of blanket were used as robes in cold weather and sometimes for bedding. But they were too valuable to be laid on the rough dusty ground so the men made a sort of mattress out of hanks of sage bark, twined with string.

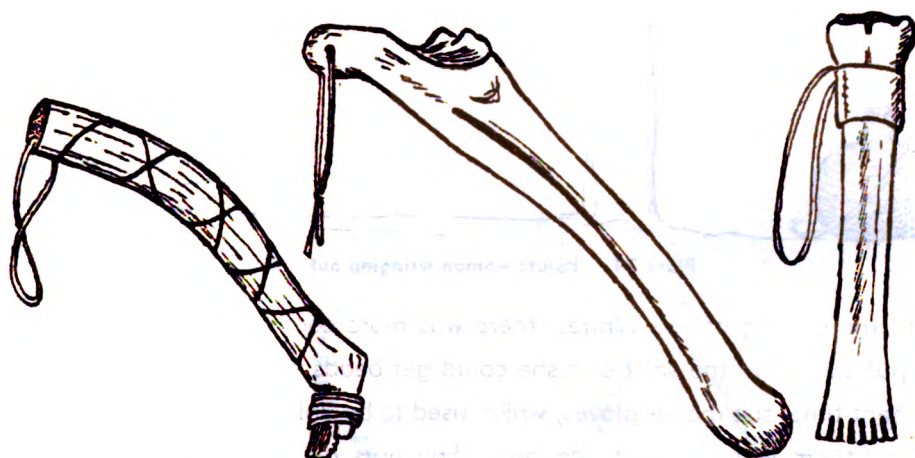
Generally it was old men who did the weaving, for the young ones had their hands full with hunting and fishing. For this work, they had to make their own weapons. Every man had at least two bows, one for large game, one for small. He chose a piece of good hard wood, such as oak, juniper or mountain mahogany, cut a piece about three feet long, and split it in two. The flat side would be the inside of the bow, the curve, the outside. He whittled it so that it tapered at the ends and made knobs for attaching the bow string. If it was a bow for large game, he took some fish glue and fastened a strip of deer sinew along the back to make it strong. If it was for small game a mere wooden bow would do and that was the sort he gave his little son to practice with. He made his bow string from two strips of a deer's leg tendon which he chewed soft and then twisted, as he twisted string. Since deer were hard to get, we can imagine that a bow string was a valuable thing. When not in use the bow was kept out of the way of the children and one end of the string was always unfastened from the bow, so that it would not stretch or the bow lose its spring.

The man made arrows, of cane or willow, straightening them carefully in a grooved piece of stone which he heated in the fire before drawing the arrows through it. If they were cane, he used a piece of hard wood at the end to hold the point. He put the feathers on in some way so he would always recognize the arrow, for the man who killed game had the right to dispose of it. For fish, he did not use feathers: the arrows were more like darts. For large game or for men, he sometimes poisoned the tip by letting a rattlesnake bite it or by dipping it into rotted meat.



He made himself a quiver out of a whole animal skin, sewed up and dried in its original shape.

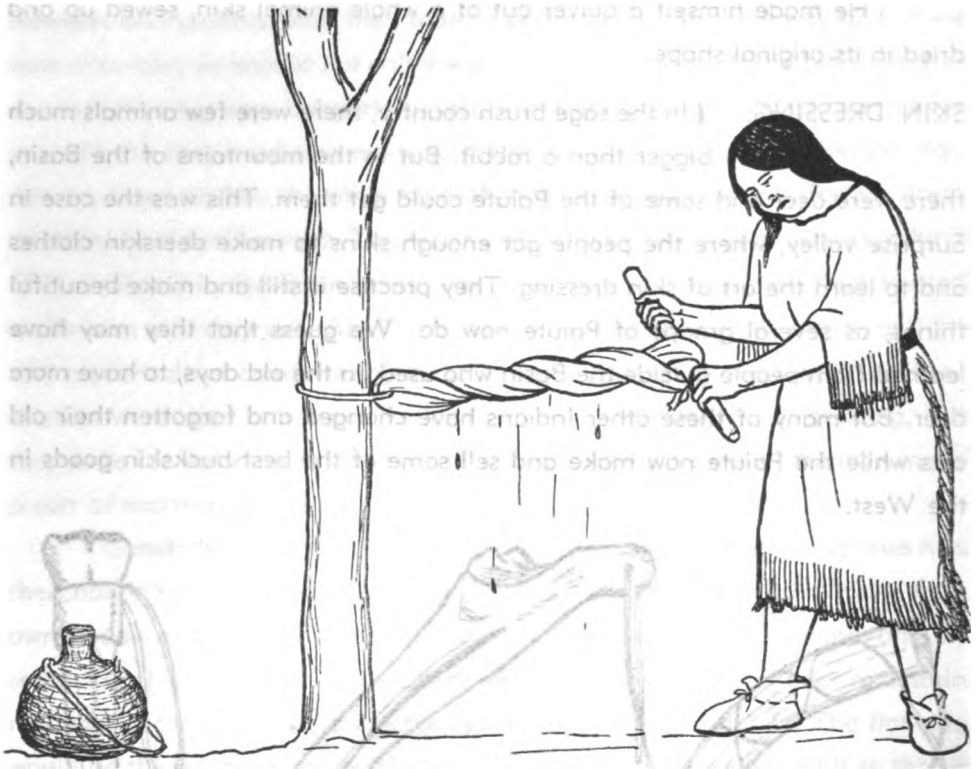
**SKIN DRESSING:** (In the sage brush country, there were few animals much bigger than a rabbit. But in the mountains of the Basin, there were deer and some of the Paiute could get them. This was the case in Surprise valley, where the people got enough skins to make deerskin clothes and to learn the art of skin dressing. They practise it still and make beautiful things, as several groups of Paiute now do. We guess that they may have learned from people outside the Basin who used, in the old days, to have more deer. But many of these other Indians have changed and forgotten their old arts while the Paiute now make and sell some of the best buckskin goods in the West.



**Plate 23. Tools for cleaning and scraping skins.**

Skin dressing, with them, is a job for women. This was the case with many Indian tribes where the men were often away hunting, so that the work of caring for meat and skins had to be left to the women. The Paiute woman was away just as much as the man but nevertheless she became the skin dresser. She had an enormous task: scraping the hide with a bone tool, washing it, wringing it, then softening it by rubbing in the oily brains of some animal, then pulling and stretching the soft skin into shape. Finally, she smoked it over a fire to a deep yellow.

Then she made garments for herself and her husband. At first they were a simple skirt for her and sleeveless shirt and leggings for her husband and the decoration was dyed porcupine quills or a fringe of deerhoofs. Then



**Plate 24. Paiute woman wringing out a hide.**

with the coming of the Whites, there was more communication. She learned to put sleeves in the shirt and she could get beads for the decoration. At the present time, she makes gloves, which used to be unknown to Indians and decorates them with elaborate designs. She puts all the work she can on the baby's cradleboard, covering the rough slats with buckskin and embroidering it with colorful beads.

No one knows when Paiute women began to weave bead belts but they make them now on a kind of loom of four or five taut strings stretched from the ends of a bent wooden bow.

**POTTERY:** ([Pottery was another of the extras which few Paiute enjoyed.

The art is not much practised by wandering peoples since pots are heavy and breakable but the Owens Valley people, to the south of the Basin, nearer the great pottery making peoples of the Pueblos, had a few women who knew how. They found clay which would do without any mixing with sand, ground it up and wet it. They started the pot by patting a little pancake with their hands, then rolled the clay into long sausages which they laid on in a

spiral. Some Indians used implements for patting and shaping the pot, but the Paiute woman dipped her fingers in a syrup made of boiled mallow juice and smoothed with them. Then she dried the pot in the sun, painted it with syrup again and baked it.

She used only one fuel, the desert sage brush. She heaped this around the pots without the elaborate arrangements the Pueblo women make to prevent smoke staining, and then kept the fire going for half an hour or so, until the rough, gray vessels were hard enough for use.

The pots were simple wide-mouthed jars for cooking. A woman who had none could do quite well with a basket but the thing her family needed much more was a pipe. The Paiute smoked clay pipes but not with a bowl like those of the whites. The pipe was simply a tube made by baking clay around a stick, then pulling out the stick. If a man's wife could not make him one of these—and, since few women made pottery she seldom could—he got it by trade.

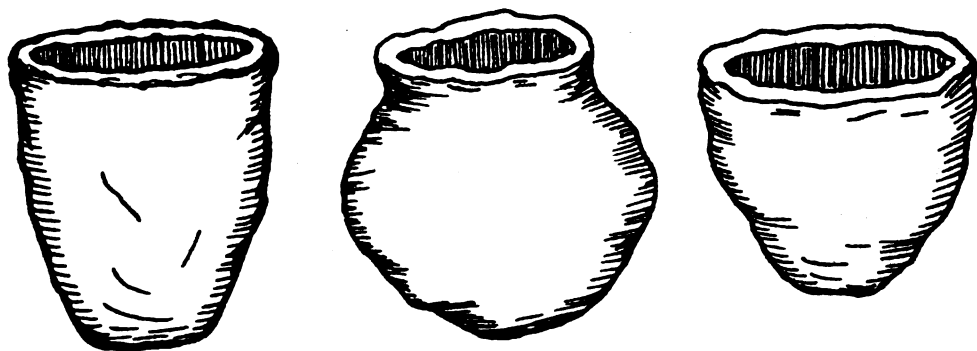


Plate 25. Owens valley pottery.

# THE NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS

## LIFE IN THE BAND

DID THEY HAVE ANY GOVERNMENT? ¶ There was no Paiute nation.

Paiute is a chance name given by the Whites to a number of Indians who live in the same part of the country and speak the same language. No one knows how this came about and the Indians themselves, as we have mentioned, do not understand the name and never use it. The people who are called Paiute have no government in common: they simply recognize each other as friends. They are divided into bands and the only name they have is the band name. This usually refers to the kind of food they eat most and, therefore, to the place where they live and where that food can be found. Thus, there are Seed Eaters, Berry Eaters, Fish Eaters, Cattail Eaters. We have been describing only two bands, but there are various others and probably all have some slight difference in their arrangements. We can give only a general picture into which new details may be fitted.

Each band had a country which was their general roaming ground. They knew just where its limits were and, if they went outside them, they were either visiting in the country of other Paiute who were their friends, or they were on the land of Indians of another language who might kill them as trespassers. The land which they considered their own, they did not use all the time. Some of it was hunting land where they only went occasionally, some was good only in warm weather, some only in cold.

They had a regular plan of wandering. There were generally two or three sheltered places in their country which were good for winter homes and at each of these, a number of families built permanent houses so that during cold weather, there was a little village there. In spring, the village broke up and every family went off looking for game and growing things. But

often, certain families would go to the same place year after year and keep little shelters there. In that way, they could have company at their hunting and food gathering. The fall was the big meeting time. Then the hard summer's work of getting in the food was over; the weather was not too cold for camping and there were herds of antelope that must be hunted by a number of men together.

All the band of one hundred or more people then met together for a week or two. They charmed the antelope and drove them together to be killed as has been described, and perhaps they also had a rabbit hunt. Then they feasted on the meat and spent some time in dancing and playing games. This was the only time when they got together.

For such a busy, separated life, they did not need very much government. The band had a head man who acted more like a father and general adviser than a chief. He told his people where to hunt and chose the time for the big meeting. When visitors came, he entertained and fed them and if something went wrong, he talked to the offenders and tried to straighten it out. But he had no power to punish or to command. People did as he asked because they respected him and if he could not persuade them, there was nothing to be done. When this man died, his son or younger brother generally took his place. The people decided which of the men in his family was best suited for the work and if there was no such man, they chose someone else.

This left a great deal to be settled by the people themselves. Anyone who caught a neighbor stealing, would argue with him and get him to return the goods or something equal to them. The headman, if he was nearby, would use his influence. Otherwise the two settled it for themselves. But the thief often gave back the goods because he could not afford to have his neighbors hate him: he and his wife needed their help too often. When there was murder, the family of the murdered man did their own punishing. They waited a convenient time and then killed the murderer or one of his relatives.

**HOW DID THEY FIGHT?** ¶ It can be seen that there was no large scale warfare. If people happened to trespass on the territory of some hostile Indians, they might be killed and then their relatives would go out and try to get their killers. Or if hostile Indians come on the territory of the band, some of its members would get together and



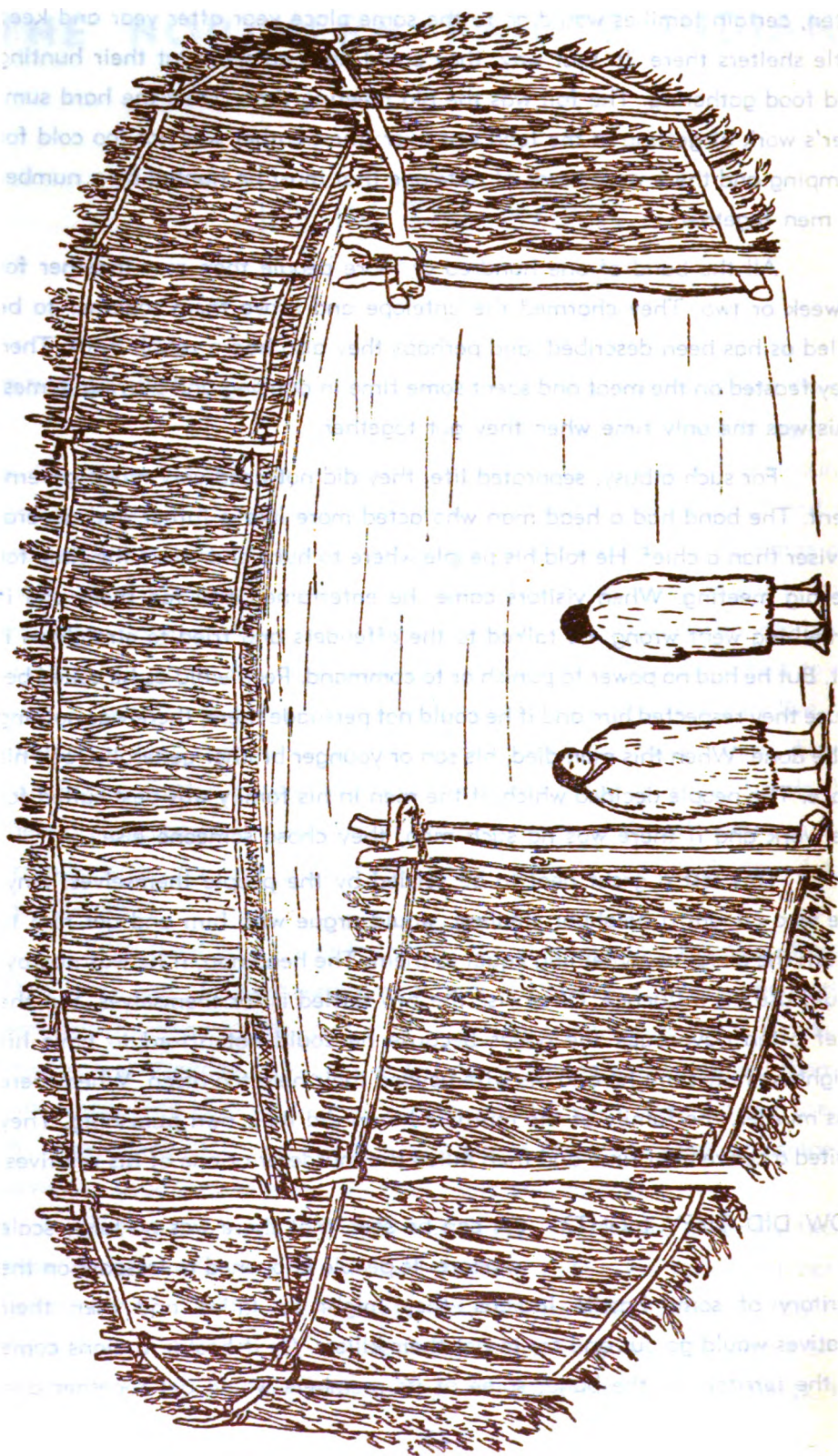


Plate 26. Paiute dance corral.



try to drive them off. This happened when the Whites first began to move into Paiute country and there was perhaps more fighting then than there had been for a long time. It was very informal. Any brave man acted as leader and his followers threw up low rock walls as forts. They fought with bow and arrow and shield, usually naked, though in some parts of the country they put together rods in a stiff, wide belt to protect the body as a sort of armor. They rarely took scalps or captives: they had no use for them.

**HOW DID THEY PLAY?** (Probably their greatest opportunity for community life was in games. They could not play these constantly as the people can when they are gathered in large camps or villages. Most of the time the families were moving about in small groups which could not muster enough men for a couple of ball teams or a guessing match. But in the autumn, when a number of families gathered for the antelope hunt or the pine nut gathering, they held a five or six day jollification and played games all day long. At Owens Valley, they built a big corral or fenced enclosure, some three or four hundred feet across. It had no roof but the walls were ten feet high and thatched like the walls of a house. This was the nearest the Paiute came to a public building.

Inside, the old men made speeches and played guessing games. All of these involved betting and caused great excitement. In fact, they do still, for the autumn get-together is held to this day in some parts of the Basin. Most popular was the hand game which is a favorite of Indians almost everywhere in the country. It is played with sticks or bones, small enough to be hidden in the hand—some of one color and some of another. One side hides the sticks and one side guesses in which hands they are. The Paiute played with four sticks, two plain white and two white with black



**Plate 27. Woman with tattooed face.**

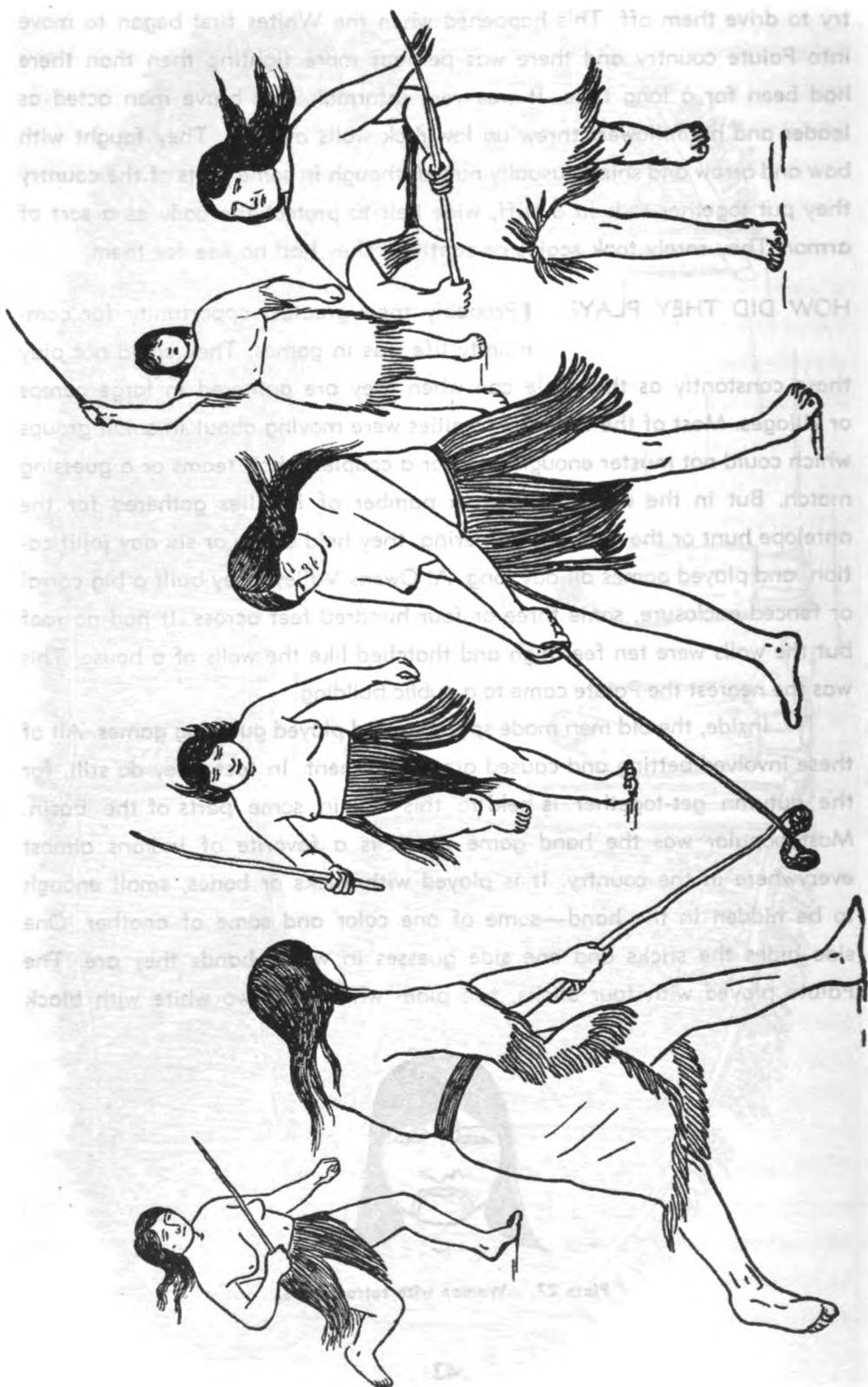


Plate 28. Women playing shinny.



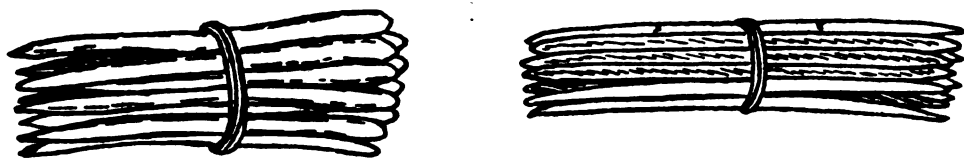


Plate 29. Left, counters for scoring in games. Right, stick dice.

bands. One side took the sticks and two of its men hid them, while one on the other side was appointed to guess. The sides sat crosslegged, facing each other and while the guesser was thinking, the men on the opposite side chanted taunting songs to confuse him. At present, they accompany themselves by drumming on a plank.

There were other gambling schemes. One was to hide sticks of different length under a basket and guess their position. Another was to use the sticks as dice. Eight of them were painted in different ways and thrown out of the hand on the ground. Men played this and women had a special dice game with four sticks. Or, there was another with eight sticks which they threw out of a basket. Even beaver teeth were marked and used as dice.

Outside the enclosure, the young men played football, though not the football of the Whites, for they used a small ball, the size of a man's fist, stuffed solidly with hair. Five to eight men played on a side and each side had a goal made of arched willow rods. The game was for each side to kick the ball through its own goal. It was a rough game, where the men dodged, fought and wrestled. There were no rules except that they must not touch the ball with their hands.

The great kickball race, which is a specialty of Southwest Indians, was also a favorite of the Paiute. There were two balls, one to a side and each side had any number of men, from five to twenty. They ran straight ahead, kicking the balls in front of them. Any man who was nearest the ball, kicked it and, while he was getting his balance another ran up and kicked it further. The main thing was to keep it going and to get around the course of a mile and back, ahead of the other side. Besides these games, men threw long poles at a rolling hoop or shot arrows at a mark. Women had a shinny game played with sticks and a sort of double ball of two knots of buckskin tied together by buckskin braid. Sometimes they juggled pebbles in the air or played jacks with pebbles and a stone for a ball.

**DANCES:** ¶After a day of games, the evening entertainment was dancing.

People gathered in the corral, with a leader to sing the dance songs. Sometimes a line of men went through the camp beforehand, to collect the crowd. They stamped along behind a leader, bows and arrows held ready for battle and shouting: "Shoot him! Shoot him!" They stopped in front of any likely dancer who was then supposed to fall into place at the end of the line. If he did not, they attacked him in fun. But of course every one joined. There were a hundred or more people in line, when they marched into the corral, ready for the real dancing. The step for this was very simple and some people might not call it dancing at all for men and women simply took hands and moved sidewise in a circle. But they did not start immediately. This was a woman's dance and no man entered it until some woman had tapped him on the shoulder and invited him. Then he would keep his place by her side all the evening. This was the chance of all the year, for flirtation and lovemaking.

**HOW DID THEY MAKE MUSIC?** ¶Some old men who sat in the center of the circle singing, furnished the music for this dance. The Paiute also had musical instruments, though none that would play a tune. What they wanted principally was something

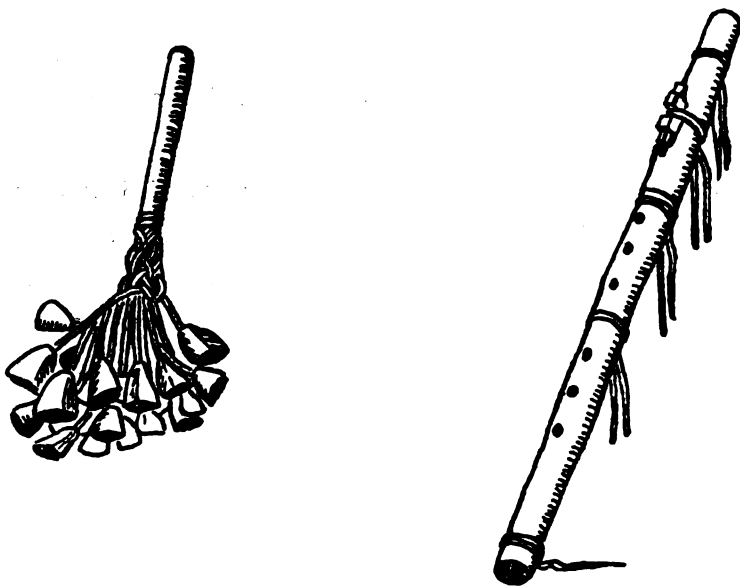


Plate 30. Left, deer hoof rattle. Right, flute.

to keep time for the dances. This is the case with most Indian music. With the Whites, the point of a song is the tune, while the time is very simple and often does not change from one end of the song to the other. With the Indians, it is the melody which is simple, while the rhythm is changed and varied in a most interesting way.

For keeping the rhythm, the Paiute made rattles and clappers out of everything available. They split a reed at one end so that it would clap when shaken. They tied deer hoofs around their knees so they would rattle in the dance. They made a rattle out of a deer's ear with pebbles inside. Or they got rhythm by plucking a bow string with the fingers, like a banjo with only one note. The medicine man made a rattle out of a number of the hard, brittle deerhoofs tied together or he cut a little flute out of elderberry. The flute was the only instrument which could play a few notes and the young men made them also with which to serenade girls.

**DID THEY EVER TRAVEL?** (Most of these things were made with materials they had at hand. There were some things, however, which were not common in their Basin and which they wanted very much. For these, they had to travel. One of their first needs was new kinds of food. They liked berries: elderberry, manzanita and sowberry and they liked acorns. They got these from their next door neighbors at the west, the Mono. Then they went a little further north to the Achomawi for bows and basketry caps better made than their own and to the Klamath to the north of them for clamshell beads. What they traded in return was seeds, rabbitskin blankets, buckskin, pine nuts and stone for arrows.

For travelling in the snow, the men worked out a kind of snowshoe which was circular, with sticks laid across it instead of netting and they smeared charcoal under their eyes to prevent snow blindness. A man carried his baggage in a skin slung on his back or, if it was very heavy, by a rope over his head. His water was in the gum covered water jar, slung from his belt.

Women did not go on long trips in winter so they had no snowshoes. But in summer when the whole family was moving, the woman carried her household utensils in the burden basket, with the baby on top. No one traveled by water but sometimes the men needed a raft for shooting ducks.

Then they tied together two enormous bundles of reeds, turned up and pointed at the ends like a gondola. Until this raft got soaked, they could keep afloat on it.

**WHAT DID THEY KNOW?** (Most of their knowledge concerned practical things such as where to find plants and game, how to make implements. But they had names for many of the stars and arranged them in constellations different from those of the Whites, such as Dancing Girls and Men Racing Home. They watched the position of the stars and could tell time at night by them.

They had names for the four directions and for some of the months in the year. They did not think of a month as having any special number of days but simply as the time from one new moon to the next. They named the winter moons, for these were the hard times when everyone was counting the days until spring. The summer moons, they did not name. Perhaps everyone was too busy then to keep count. They did not keep any count of years but remembered them by some important thing that had happened like a drought or a storm. Most people, the old ones say, did not count beyond ten though they have words for twice ten and three times ten, up to two hundred

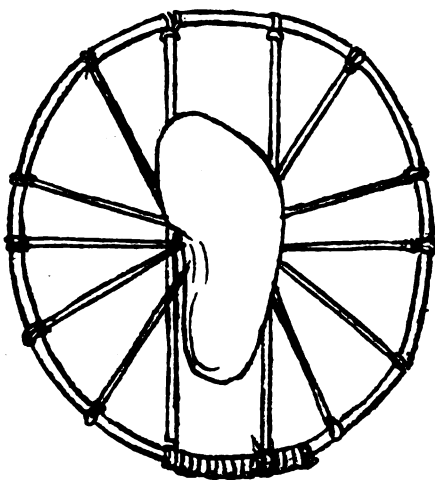


Plate 31. Snowshoe.

# THE NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS

## LIFE IN THE FAMILY

**BIRTH:** (The Paiute felt that childbirth and the other functions of women so different from those of men, were filled with a magic power and often when a woman was about to give birth, they did not let any men come near her. They felt that she was, at this time, so full of woman's special power that if she touched a man, she would make him like a woman. That is, he could not hunt or fight: he would lose his strength. Surprise Valley people built a special house for such a woman to the north of the main house—north being the region of sickness and evil.

There she was very kindly treated. There were generally several women to help her and they gave her the medical treatment which had been worked out for sick people in this cold country where there were so few blankets. They called it a hot bed. They made it by digging a shallow pit in the ground and warming it as they warmed their earth ovens—by building a fire in the bottom and letting it burn out. Then they covered the coals and ashes with clean sand or with juniper boughs and laid the woman on this soft, warm bed.

Owens Valley people did not send the woman to a separate house, but they made her the hot bed. Sometimes they gave her a steam bath. She did not go to the sweathouse, for that was men's property. Instead, her helpers took a large basket which was made watertight by a coating of pitch on the outside. They filled it with water, then heated rocks in the fire and placed them in it, just as they did for boiling gruel. Steam rose from the water and the woman sat over it.

After the baby had come, the mother and father both had to keep several rules. The idea was that they had come close to a powerful magic and, if they did not do something to tame it, the baby would die. So they fasted

in the way that most Southwest Indians did, by not eating meat and grease, though they might have their usual seed gruel. Also, they did not touch their hair with their hands. That was another ancient rule connected with the belief that the hair was a symbol of the whole person. People in the magic state following birth must not touch it for fear it would fall out, so they always used a stick.

These rules they kept for the first five days and sometimes for a month. During all that time, the man did no hunting for even if he had not touched his wife, he had come too near to the magic power of woman to have any success in male pursuits. But he tried to gain some benefit from the magic. While he was under its influence, he practised running for the first five days: to the east in the morning, to the west in the evening. He felt that if he ran at such a time he would always do it well and so have hunting luck.

EDUCATION: (The baby was given a diaper of fine sage brush bark and wrapped in a rabbitskin blanket. Its grandmother made it a basketry cradle and then several more as it outgrew the old ones. It lived on its mother's milk until long after it walked for there was no other good infant food available.

Some time after it had begun to walk, it would get a name. Generally, this came from the mother's parents, the grandfather naming a boy, the grandmother a girl. Perhaps the name was the grandparent's own and perhaps it was a nickname, describing how the child walked or talked. But in any case, it was a magic property. The Paiute were like many Indians, who felt that a name was a part of the person himself and must not be used too freely. When they talked to anyone, they said: "My child, my brother, or father of So-and-So." Some of them would use a person's name behind his back but they thought it impolite to do so to his face. They changed names, also. When a child's father or mother died, the child's own name was not used for a while, even in talking about him. Later, he was given a new name, which had never been used in connection with his dead parent. Or perhaps, when the death was no longer fresh in people's minds, his old name might be given back to him.

The child's education was the very practical manual training that

came from sharing the work of the grown people. Girls went to get seeds with their mothers, boys followed their fathers out hunting. The older people gave them small tasks to do which were really useful and kept increasing the tasks as they grew older.

It was the grandfather who gave them their lessons about right and wrong. He talked to the whole family when they were gathered in the winter house in the cold evenings and early mornings. He urged the boys to be out early and practice running and the girls to grind flour and gather seeds. He told them not to steal and not to quarrel, and above all things, never to be lazy. A Paiute who was lazy was a drag on the whole family. One worker lost might mean to them just the difference between sufficiency and starvation.

Sometimes by the age of eight or nine, a child would begin to have dreams that decided his future. The Paiute believed there were magic powers in the mountains, the animals, the gray fog of winter and the blue haze of summer. It was from these that man got help in his hard, dangerous life. He did not pray to them. He went about his work as well as he could. Some time when he was asleep, perhaps in a special lucky place, one of these magic beings would come to him in a dream and show him how to do the things that the being itself could do. The hawk would show him how to run fast, the lizard how to hide in the rocks, the gray fog and the blue haze would come at his call and hide him from his enemies.

It was not every man who had these powers. Some Indians make a great point of them but the Paiute were too busy to think much about mysteries. They felt that the men who were going to be great and clever would dream, especially those who were to be medicine men. The others went about their duties contentedly, without expecting any special powers, much as the majority of people in modern times keep at work without expecting to become rich.

COMING OF AGE (When the boy was about fourteen, he was thought to be almost ready to take on a man's duties. At this time, he felt much as a woman did when having a baby: he was under magic influence and he must be careful that it brought good luck and not bad. So he often ate no meat. He got up early and ran as far as he could, some-

times up hill to get greater strength for the future. Sometimes his grandfather sang him special songs. Then he took a cold bath, another powerful way to keep from magic harm, and perhaps he asked the powers to help him.

By this time, he was expected to be able to hunt alone but the first game he killed he must never eat himself. To do so would bring him bad luck, the people said, but the idea behind it was perhaps to teach him that his duty as a food getter was to think of others, not himself. Sometimes his grandfather performed a magic over the meat to give him better luck. Then he was allowed to smoke and was considered a full grown hunter.

The magic surrounding girls when they changed from girlhood to womanhood was thought to be even more powerful than that for boys. It was no wonder that to early people, childbearing seemed the most mysterious thing in their world. They did not think of it as natural to the woman. They thought, rather, that some strange power descended on her now and then and that this power must be dangerous, both to her and to those around her. The first descent of this power, when she was fourteen or so was a particularly important time. No one knew what harm might come of it and so they made the girl stay away from other people, particularly men. In fact, she was just as dangerous as a pregnant woman and was treated in much the same way. She must eat only certain foods, generally no meat, grease or salt. She must not touch her head for the head was the most important part of her body and very full of magic. If she wanted to scratch it, she must use a stick. She must take a cold bath now and then to purify herself.

It sounds as if the girl was being punished but this was really not the case. Everything that she did was planned for the safety of herself and others. Some of the things were intended to make her a good and healthy woman in the future. The Paiute thought, as many Indians did, that anything which the girl did at this time would become a habit for the rest of her life. So they told her to run, so that she could go far and fast in her food gathering. They had her carry loads of wood and water because that was an important part of woman's work.

We can find these same ideas through a a great part of the southwest and California though each group of Indians has a slightly different way of carrying them out. Our two groups of Paiute were different, also. Surprise Valley people sent their girls away to a separate house, just as they sent



women in childbirth. They made them stay a month, working hard and taking a cold bath every five days, to wash off the evil. Girls tried to keep their bodies healthy for the future, by twisting rings of sagebark to wear around arms and legs and waist. This was thought to keep off rheumatism. When the month was over, a girl gave away her old clothes, or threw them away. She appeared in a new dress, bathed, with painted face and she was ready to marry.

Owens Valley people did not have a separate house. Their way of caring for the girls was to keep them at home, but away from people. They gave them a "hot bed" and a steam bath to make them strong but they had them run and work and diet just like the girls at the north.

The magic which had come to a girl lasted during all the time she was able to bear children and, once a month, she had to be careful. If she was a northern girl, she went to the separate house. If she was a southern girl, she stayed at home. In any case, she kept away from men and their belongings, she used her scratching stick and she did not eat meat, grease or salt.

MARRIAGE: (The picking of wives and husbands for the young people was generally done by their parents. In Paiute life, a young couple did not set up for themselves. It would not have been economical to have two people hunting and picking seeds all alone, so they joined forces with the old people, generally the wife's family. Therefore, it was very important to the elders that the new mate should be the right person. Sometimes they spoke to another family while the children were babies or even before they were born. "You are hardworking people and we should like to have one of your children in our family." These future connections must not be relatives of any sort for all marriage between relatives was forbidden. If there was already a son-in-law, married to one of the older sisters, the family did not seek any further. They let him have the younger sister too.

This custom of marrying two sisters to the same man is a very ancient one and follows easily from the fact that the two sets of parents want as many bonds between them as possible. If the girl's parents like the boy's family, they would rather give them two daughters than one. No old maids were possible in that sort of life for a woman had to have somebody to hunt

for her. So most good hunters had several wives, usually sisters but sometimes not. Once in a while, two brothers married one wife between them.

When a girl was fifteen and a boy seventeen or so, it was time for the marriage to take place. The parents gave each other a few gifts: In Owens Valley the boy's people gave most. Then, one night, the boy came to the house of the girl's family and stayed there. That was the marriage.

The boy stayed with his new in-laws for a year or until he had a family of his own large enough to warrant a separate establishment. While he was with his wife's people, he hunted for them and tried to make as good a showing as possible.

HOW TO GET ON WITH RELATIVES IN LAW: (In a few parts of Paiute country, Owens Valley, for instance, a man thought it wrong to speak to his mother-in-law or even to her sisters. He acted as though the older women were not present and, if he needed to tell them something, he sent a message through his wife. Sometimes a woman had to do the same thing with her father-in-law, although this rule was not so strict. The idea was that the young people were showing respect to their "in-laws" and certainly it was a good way to prevent family quarrels. Many Indian tribes throughout the country practiced the custom, though not by any means all of them. Sometimes, as in Owens Valley, it was carried so far that a young man showed respect to his wife's brothers by never talking with them about improper subjects. As a compensation, he could joke and make very free with her sisters. After all, they might be his wives some day.

The Paiute allowed divorces as most Indians did. Either a wife or a husband could leave when living together became impossible and the children remained with the one who stayed behind.

DEATH: (When a member of the family died, the Paiute went into real mourning. They cut their long hair: sometimes men and women both, sometimes only women, and all gathered to weep. They believed that the dead, both good and bad, went to a pleasant place but that, nevertheless, they preferred to be alive and were always trying to come back and to take the living away with them. Therefore, while they wept they often spoke to the dead:

"We loved you, but your place is no longer here. Go now." They were afraid to touch the body, since death seemed to them to have some of the same magic as birth did. They wrapped it in a skin and hired people to carry it away and bury it. Digging was difficult in the hard earth, with no implement but a pointed stick, so the funeral party generally found a cranny in the rocks, laid the body in and covered it with stones. Relatives burned all the dead man's property, for they felt that was the best way of sending it to him in the other world. If he had horses or dogs, they killed them, or at least killed the best ones. They wanted the dead man to be comfortable but they did not want his ghost to come back looking for his property. So they even burned the house or at least they moved it away where the ghost would not find it. They never spoke the name of the dead person, lest he might think they were calling him. We have mentioned that older people were sometimes called father or mother of So-and-So, in order that their own names need not be used. If such an older person died, then So-and-So, the name of the child, had to be dropped also. Using it might seem a roundabout way of calling the ghost.

Widows and widowers had to forget their grief and marry again. Sometimes they did this in a very short time, because the family needed workers. A man who had lost his wife would expect to have one of her sisters to take her place and a woman would be taken care of by one of her dead husband's brothers.

These death customs were more or less the same throughout the Basin but there were slight differences, even in the two valleys we have been describing. In Owens Valley the mourners danced around a fire and hired special singers to accompany them. They even held a second mourning ceremony, later on, as some of the California Indians do, and burned more property to show that they remembered the dead. For all the months between, they did not bathe or eat meat and fat. Finally their relatives paid people to bathe them and take away the death magic.

# THE NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS

## LIFE AND THE GODS

VISIONS: (The Paiute god was all nature: mountains, animals, wind, fog: everything the people saw around them. They knew that these things had strange abilities that they had not. The animals could run faster than they and get food better: the mountains could stand firm in storms without shelter: the fog could appear and disappear. So they thought of these things as powers.

Two powers their tales tell, had created the earth. These were the animals who seemed to them the cleverest: Wolf and Coyote. They were men at that time, yet they had animal powers and took animal form when they wished. Wolf was the good power who was always trying to benefit mankind. Coyote was the bad, mischievous one, who was always trying to upset Wolf's plans. But they were not mighty beings like God and the Devil. When the earth was made, they took their places among the other animals.

All men hoped for favor from these creatures and other things which represented the unknown force about them. A man, if he was going to be successful, had a dream when he was very young in which some power appeared and promised always to help him. After that, he could call on it whenever he was in need. Some of the tales tell about the power working real magic such as helping the man to disappear or turn into a bear. But at other times, it merely told him: you will succeed or you will get well. It was a way for him to bolster up his courage and it worked.

The Paiute did not feel that any power was all bad nor all good: not even Wolf and Coyote. A power was simply an added force which helped a man to succeed in his actions. If he were a good man, they would be good actions; if he were bad, they would be evil. That was the case with medicine men: the good ones used their power to cure—the bad ones, to kill though

it might be the same power. So some medicine men were regarded as witches and might be killed by the angry people.

MEDICINE MEN: (A medicine man, or sometimes a woman, got his powers just like the other dreamers though he usually began earlier and dreamed more. Sometimes he tested out his dreams. If he dreamed of a bear he would go to find a real bear and see if it seemed his friend or if it chased him. If it chased him, he did not trust the dream and tried again. Sometimes a man who dreamed did not want to be a medicine man. Then he told his dreams instead of keeping them secret. In one place, Owens Valley, he went through a ceremony of burning the feathers and other things that a medicine man generally used. He was afraid the power he had refused might do him harm.

But if he wanted the power, he kept his dreams to himself at first. When he was thirty or forty he was old enough for the people to listen to him for they regarded young men as children. Then, sometimes, he gave a public performance and sang the songs his power had taught him. People knew from this he was a doctor and called for his help.

If his power was for curing, it was generally only for one ailment: snake bites, burns or some serious illness. The people knew his specialty and called him only for that. He built a fire, sometimes two, and then walked or danced up and down, singing his songs. This was to call his power. Then he might move his hands over the patient, blow tobacco smoke from his clay pipe, wave eagle feathers, or pretend to suck the evil out of the body.

There were certain doctors who could call back the soul. This happened when the patient was unconscious and his soul was thought to have gone for a time to the land of the dead. The doctor lay down beside him and sent his own soul after that of the patient. If his power was strong enough, he could bring it home.

The doctor was paid quite highly with a buckskin or a basket and his meals. If he did not work a cure, he often gave back some of the pay. If he failed to cure several times in succession, he was in real danger for the people might decide he was using his power for evil instead of for good and that they ought to kill him.

A few medicine men had powers that helped them not to cure but

to charm the antelope, to prophesy the weather or even to turn into bears. Antelope charming was especially important. We have mentioned the ceremony in which the medicine man made an imitation antelope from a bundle of skins and then performed a sort of music by rubbing a stick across the string that tied it. Sometimes on the night when he did this, he had a dream which told him from what direction the antelope would come. The man who performed this ceremony was the most important man in the band since antelope was the most important food supply. The weather medicine men are only a legend now: there have been none for some time. But there are stories about the bear medicine men; how they could walk up to bears without being hurt or turn themselves into bears and pursue their enemies.

CEREMONIES: ¶The Paiute life was so scattered and busy that people could not come together often for ceremonies. The only real ceremony was the singing and dancing which brought the antelope to them. But after the rabbit hunt, they sometimes gathered in the sweat house and sang songs to the accompaniment of a special deer's ear rattle.

It was a hard working life, where each person had to rely mostly on himself for getting food and keeping out of trouble. Even for getting in touch with the powers outside himself, there was no religious organization to help him. His dreams came to him alone and, if he obtained power, he used it as he thought best. It is the kind of life to make strong, self-reliant individuals and such is the heritage the Paiute bring to modern life.

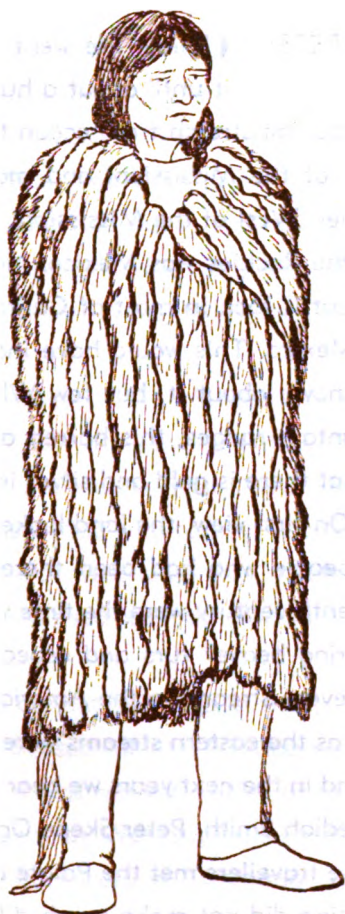
TOBACCO: ¶The Paiute used tobacco like all Indians. Theirs was a wild plant but they gave it a sort of care which was more than they gave to anything else. They sometimes burned over the ground where it usually came up and they turned water in if it was getting too dry. If the leaves were too small, they pruned the plants to make them grow better.

Late in summer, they gathered the leaves, dried them, ground them, moistened them and made them into balls. It was mostly older men who smoked tobacco and they used it sparingly, mostly to pass around on social occasions when each took a few puffs from the same pipe. Medicine men used it as a sort of incense in curing.

The datura, or Jimsonweed, grew near Paiute country and old men in Owens Valley cut up and boiled the root. They would give it to someone who

wanted to see visions and then watch him so that he came to no harm. Jimson weed was said to help the drinker find lost objects and sometimes people took it for that but they felt it dangerous and did not use it much.

Besides these two, there were many herbs used as medicine, not by the medicine man but by any ordinary person who had learned their uses. Tea was made from the leaves of several plants and the roots of others were cut up and boiled, either for healing drinks or for poultices.



**Plate 32. Man wearing rabbitskin blanket.**

# THE NORTHERN PAIUTE INDIANS

## HISTORY

ESCAPE EARLY EXPLORERS: ([Paiute life went on as we have described it until about a hundred years ago. At that time, the United States did not stretch from ocean to ocean, as it does now. The states were all east of the Mississippi and many people thought they would never extend further. West of the Mississippi was wild land, stretching to the Rockies. Beyond the Rockies was Mexico. No one knew just how far north Mexico extended but it took in most of California and Nevada, along with Arizona and New Mexico. This would have included the Basin country if any thing had been known about it, but few Whites did know anything. Hidden between its mountain ranges, this barren area had escaped the explorers. We know now that there is gold and silver in its mountains but these had not yet been found. On first view, the land looked unfit for human settlement. The only White people who had been there were the trappers. The early years of the nineteenth century were the time when the fashionable people of Europe were wearing beaver furs and especially beaver hats. Beaver trappers were exploring every stream on the American continent and moving further and further west as the eastern streams were exhausted. By 1825 they had come to the Basin and in the next years we hear tales of adventurous trips by famous men like Jedediah Smith, Peter Skene Ogden, Milton Sublette and Captain Bonneville. These travellers met the Paiute and had friendly relations with them but their passing did not make much difference. It was not until 1840 that change began.

By this time people from the eastern states were beginning to travel across the country to California. It never occurred to them to stop and settle on the way. They hurried through the wild prairies and mountains to the western coast and some passed through the Basin. Old Paiute accounts tell how the



covered wagons would stop beside some stream, how the Indians would come to look and the immigrants would give them bags of flour. They had no idea what the white powder was, so they threw it away but they kept the bags to make clothing. To people who had made skirts out of sage bark and water scum, a flour bag was real wealth.

UNITED STATES ACQUIRES AREA: (Suddenly the great, vague country of California ceased to belong to Mexico. In 1848 a treaty was signed turning it over to the United States. In 1849, gold was discovered there. Then the immigrant wagons came thick and fast. Some of the travellers saw that the Basin country had a few good streams and green meadows. They decided to settle there. Ranches sprang up wherever there were good streams and Owens Valley was one of the first places where this occurred. Surprise Valley, with less water, was not so desirable but the people there began to learn White ways, as all the other Paiute did. They felt friendly toward the newcomers and often they worked on the ranches and were paid for their work with knives, guns, White men's clothes and new kinds of food.

Then silver was discovered in Nevada. Virginia City, where the big strike was made in 1857 is in the western part of the state north of Owens Lake where one of our Paiute groups lived. Miners came swarming there and soon the western Basin was dotted with camps. The country was growing so full that the old, wandering life of the Paiute was interfered with. Cattle began to eat the seed plants that were used for food. Ranchers cut down the piñon trees for fuel.

The United States cannot be proud of this period in its history though, as a government, it had no responsibility. Nevada had been turned over to the Union with California but it was not yet a state or even a territory. It was separated from the government at Washington by miles of wilderness and the nearest authorities of any sort were in California. The miners and ranchers, rough men who had endured hardships, felt themselves in a No Man's Land where they could do as they pleased. Sometimes they pleased to do things which caused injury to the Indians. The Indians fought. They were a peaceful people, not organized for war. They had not even a head chief who could get several bands together. Still, when they fought the Whites at Pyramid Lake, in western Nevada in 1860, they were successful. Even though they had only bows

and arrows, while the Whites had guns, they drove off a party of 400, so the accounts say, and killed several. They fought near Owens Lake too, getting together and building a fort, though they had never done such a thing before. However, the Whites had more men and they could always get help from the soldiers in California. In the end the Paiutes saw there was no use fighting them.

Now the United States government realized that the new western country must be organized. In 1859, a railroad went through to the coast. Nevada was made a territory in 1861. In 1864 it became a state. These years were the great time of change for the Paiute. Some of them moved their camping places to keep out of the way of the White men. Some settled down near them to work on the ranches. Some fought. In 1874, the government set up the first reservations for the Paiute at Pyramid Lake and Walker Lake in Western Nevada. Others for Shoshoni and mixed groups of Paiute and other neighboring tribes were established about the same time. The Paiute were not used to settling down and many did not wish to do so. Instead, they built camps near the White ranches and worked there in spring and summer, instead of gathering roots and seeds. In fall and winter, they gathered pine nuts and went hunting, just as they used to do. White men who visited them at this time were surprised that they had not cared to change their houses or their food. They were still living in the sort of house described earlier and eating rabbits and pine nuts. They took from the White men only a few things and, for the rest, they went on with their old life.

THE GHOST DANCE: (By 1888 an interesting development took place among them, which became famous throughout Indian country. Everyone who has read any Indian history has heard of the Ghost Dance, yet few remember that it started among the Northern Paiute. In fact, it began some forty miles northwest of Walker Lake, which you will see on the map in the northeast part of Nevada. There lived a young man known as Wowoka, which means "the cutter." He supported himself, as other Paiute did, by working on a White ranch, while he camped with his family in a brush-covered Indian house near by. In 1888 there was an eclipse of the sun, at a time when Wowoka was ill with fever. He "went out of his head" as the Whites would put it or, as the Indian say, he "died for time." In that state, he had a

dream or a vision about the life of the Indians in this changing time. This is how he told about it:

"When the sun died, I went up to Heaven and saw God and all the people who died a long time ago. God told me to come back and tell my people they must be good and love one another and not fight or steal or lie."

That was how a peaceful man thought of solving his peoples' difficulties. He wanted them to be at peace with everyone, even the Whites. In his vision, God gave him a special dance, to make his people happy. It was the regular round dance, which we have described where men and women step sidewise in a circle, hand in hand.

Wowoka said they must dance it for five nights in succession, singing the songs he had dreamed. They were sung to the usual slow music of the Basin and their words were poetic, though brief.

The wind stirs the willows,  
The wind stirs the grasses.  
The whirlwind, the whirlwind  
The snowy earth comes gliding,  
The snowy earth comes gliding.  
The rocks are ringing  
They are ringing in the mountains.

Wowoka taught that if people went through this dance at intervals, decorating themselves with a sacred paint he had and if they lived rightly for the rest of the time, everyone on earth would be happy. The Indians would live as they used to do, the White people would disappear, all dead Indians would return and there would be no more death nor disease. He did not tell his people to fight. He preached only that they should be good and hold the dance, which was really a religious ceremony. His doctrine spread, for there were many Indian tribes who wanted the old days to return. Some of these were fighters, like the Arapaho and the Sioux. The Sioux, particularly, took up the dance with excitement and added more to it than Wowoka had preached. In the end, their dancing brought about a battle with the Whites and the Ghost Dance became known all over the country as a warlike ceremony. It was never that in the Basin. There it continued for a few years and finally it was dropped, though

there are old people who can still sing the songs. The Paiute turned to more practical ways of getting on under the new conditions.

**NEW INDIAN SCHOOLS:** ([They began to send their children to school.

There was not much schooling for any one in Nevada in those days, but the state had established little "ranch" schools near the big sheep ranches where both Indian and White children could learn their three R's. In 1892 the government set up an Indian school at Carson City, where Paiute children could go if they were really anxious for an education. Some of them, too, went south to the big Indian Service boarding schools at Phoenix, Arizona, or Riverside, California. Some went even to Carlisle in Pennsylvania. It was when these travellers came home that the real changes in Paiute life began. The young people knew about using wooden houses, chairs, tables and canned goods and the old people who had been sitting on the floor in their brush huts, began to change.

How were they to get the new comforts? They were hard workers and these pages have shown that they got everything possible out of their barren country, considering the tools they had. But the tools were not iron so they could not dig the gold and silver from the hills. Nor could they easily make irrigation canals so that crops could be grown during the dry summer. They had no sheep and cows so they could not use the desert plain for pasture. The White people had all these things and the country was now producing metals, alfalfa and sheep, rather than pine nuts, seeds and rabbits.

Most Paiute people had not the capital to become miners and ranchers. They worked for the Whites, especially as sheep shearers and they were known to be industrious and honest. But they were homeless. Many of the ranch hands were camping on ranch land. Most others were living on land which was still unclaimed and which was known as public domain. A few were living around Fort Bidwell in California (these were some of our surprise Valley Paiute) and Fort McDermitt in Nevada, working for the military and receiving rations. None were doing any farming for themselves except those on the small government reservations, for here the United States had set up irrigation projects.

On page 73 is a list of these reservations and the dates when they were established. The government did not make the distinction which we have made between Paiute and Shoshoni. In fact, the people themselves did not make it,

for the distinction was only one of language. The two groups, when they lived in the same part of the country, had much the same customs. Therefore, on many reservations, the Paiute and Shoshoni were mixed, and sometimes there were Washo from just across the Sierras. The mixture is indicated on our list. There were also reservations belonging to Shoshoni alone which are not mentioned.

By 1934 there were five pieces of land set aside for the Paiute. The people living on them looked outwardly very much like White people. Most of them spoke English. They lived in wooden houses, though very simple ones. They wore White man's clothes, except on special occasions. They worked at White men's jobs though they still went out for pine nuts when the crop was good. Many went to church but they also held round dances at least once a year. They were poor. They had given up their old life and learned the White ways but they could not go much farther without more land and more money.

**INDIAN REORGANIZATION ACT:** ([It was at this time (June 1934) that the Indian Reorganization Act was passed. This law, meant to give Indians more chance to govern themselves, was almost a charter of rights for many an Indian tribe, the Paiute among them. Its provisions are fully described in one of the pamphlets of this division but we will summarize here the three important things it accomplished.

The first was to help the Indians keep their land. It seems strange that Indians themselves had been selling land but they were forced by necessity. The government, up to now, had been dividing Indian reservations up into farms. These were given to individual Indians who, after some long formalities, could do with them as they liked. Any land left over after the farms were marked off, was thrown open to Whites. This was the allotment system. It was planned so that the Indian might have full responsibility for his land, like a White man, and it was thought to be the best way to interest him in learning White ways. It did not work in that way, however. Many Indians knew nothing about farming and they had no equipment, but they needed money. They sold their land, not realizing how hard it would be to get more, and then they had no way to make a living.

The Reorganization Act ruled that there should be no more allotments. Nothing could be done, of course, about the tribes where these had already been made but, where they had not, the land was to belong henceforth to the

whole tribe. The tribe could allow its members to use the land, in the old Indian way, but it could not sell the land to them or to anyone else. Neither could the government sell or give it away. Indian land was to be kept for Indians.

The new rule about old land was not so important to the Paiute, who had not had very much. But a provision of the Act which meant much to them was that Congress might appropriate money to buy new land for Indian tribes which needed it. The Paiute were certainly among these. Since 1934, over 7,000 acres have been bought for them, some for farming, some for grazing and some small tracts where they can at least have permanent homes.

The second important provision of the Act was for Indian self government. If a tribe was to own land, it must be legally able to manage it and, under American law, no group of people can do that without being incorporated. Villages, clubs, businesses, all incorporate under the White man's system and any Indian tribe that wished was given the right to do the same. It must write a constitution, have it approved by the government, and elect officers. The officers would be somewhat different from the chiefs of old times, when no records were kept and no money handled, but the real fact of tribal discussion of affairs and tribal responsibility would be the same. The charter might provide, if the Indians wished, that the tribe should keep order on the reservation. The United States government must attend to the major crimes in order that justice might be the same everywhere, but the smaller offences might be handled by Indian officials, in the old tribal way.

The Paiute took up this provision enthusiastically and five of their reservations incorporated. Their discussions go on in the old Indian manner, with long deliberation and with argument before action instead of after. They have profited, as they needed to by the third provision of the Act, which allowed Indians to borrow money from the government.

Indians came into the White man's world without capital. Their old system was one of exchange and gifts. They had no money and almost no way to make it. When a farmer wanted to improve his land or a young man wished to get a professional education, they were helpless. No one would lend an Indian money, because he had no security to give. The Reorganization Act set aside a fund of several million dollars to be loaned to Indian corporations. The corporation could use the money itself or re-lend to individuals or groups who needed it. These borrowers would repay the corporation and the corporation

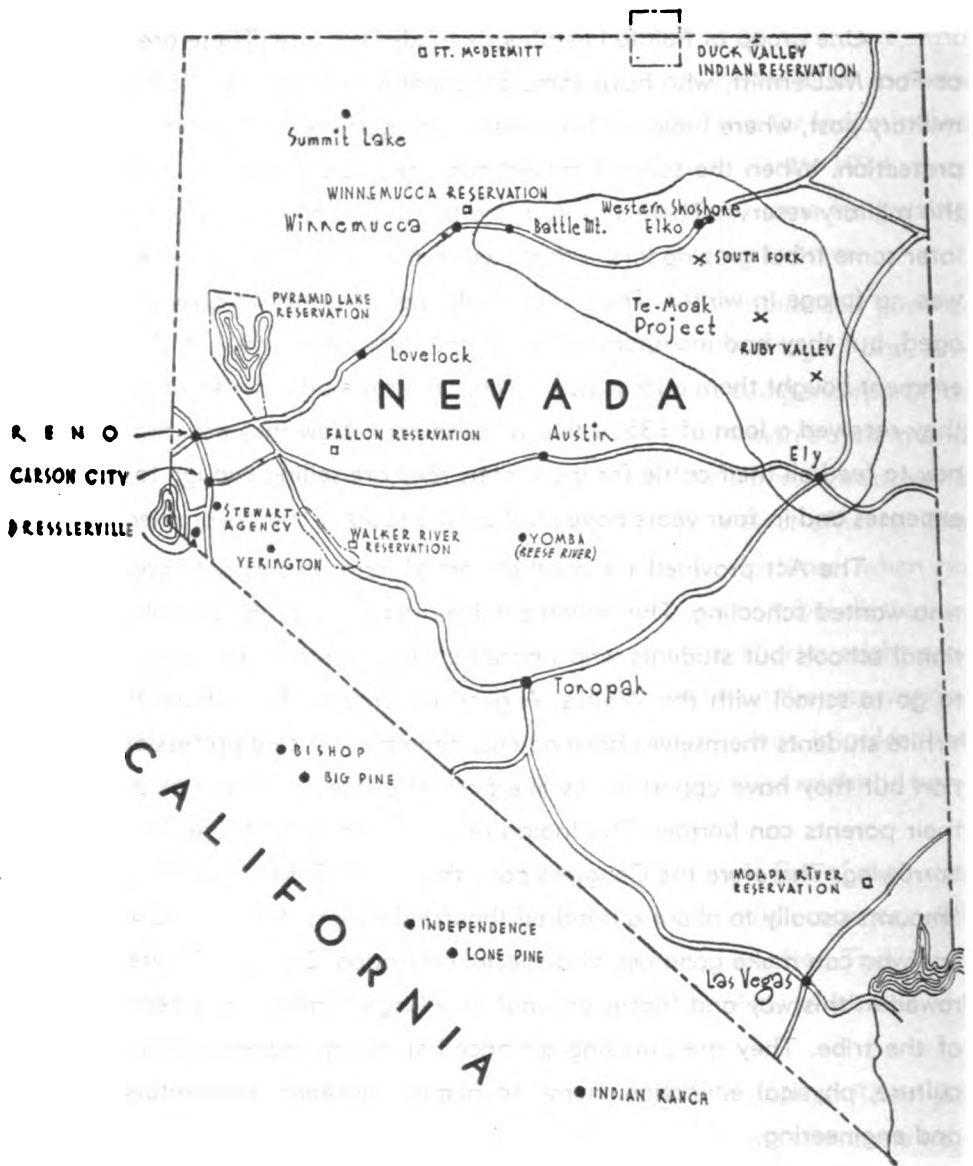


would return the money to the government. As fast as they paid back, the money could be loaned again. It was a revolving fund, at the constant service of those who could make good use of it.

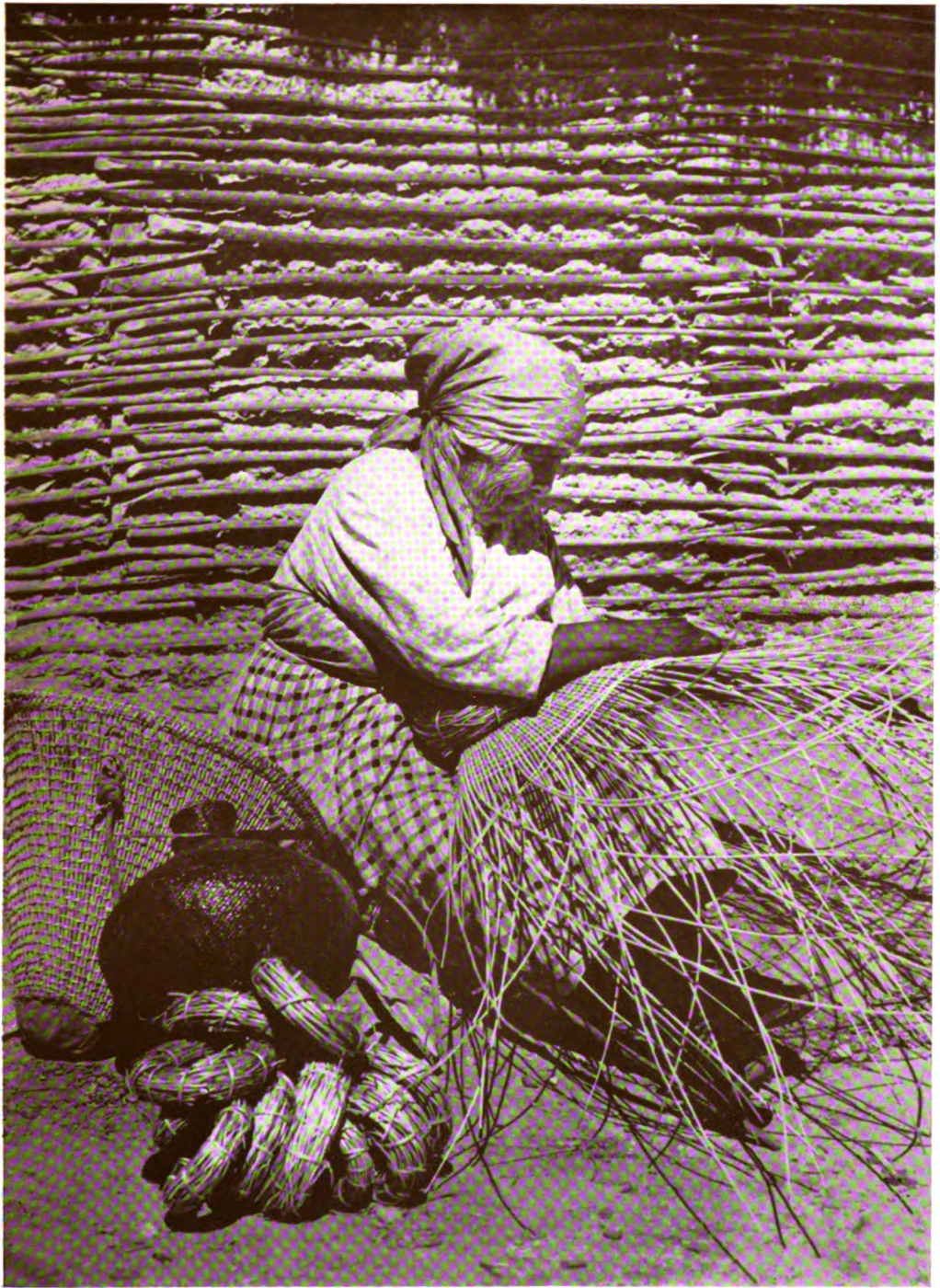
One group of Paiute has already made such use. These are the people at Fort McDermitt, who have some Shoshoni with them. The fort was an old military post, where Indians of various groups gathered in former days to have protection. When the soldiers moved out, the Indians received allotments on the military reserve. There was no more than space to live on, at first, though later some tribal grazing land was added. But raising cattle was hard, for there was no forage in winter. The Indian cattlemen might have given up, discouraged, but they had incorporated under the Reorganization Act. First the government bought them a large hay ranch, under the provisions of the Act. Then they received a loan of \$3500 to buy machinery. Now they are raising enough hay to feed all their cattle for the winter; they are selling enough to pay ranch expenses and in four years have paid back \$1000 to the government.

The Act provided for another sort of loan, this time to young people who wanted schooling. The Indian Service already had high schools and vocational schools but students who wanted college or other special training, had to go to school with the Whites. A good experience if you have the money! White students themselves have no easy time to finance a professional education but they have opportunities like part-time jobs, scholarships and they or their parents can borrow. The Indian has less chance at these, especially the borrowing. Therefore the Congress gave the Indian Office a yearly sum, which amounts usually to about a hundred thousand dollars, for loans to young Indians who can make good use of a special education. Eighteen Paiute have borrowed in this way and that is an unusually large number, considering the size of the tribe. They are pursuing advanced study in carpentry, dairying, agriculture, physical education, home economics, business, elementary teaching and engineering.

The situation to which these young people will come home is not that which met the first students who found their families camping here and there, with no future beyond that of ranch hands, for Nevada is now dotted with tracts of land, large and small, which belong to the government but have been set aside for the use of Indians. Some of these are reservations, which allow space for farming, some are what is called colonies, which at least provide



**Plate 37. Indian reservations in Nevada today for the Washoe, Shoshone and Paiute Indians.**



**Plate 33. A Paiute Indian woman of Moapa Reservation who still earns part of her living making the baskets traditional with her tribe. In the picture are the conical burden basket, the pitch-covered water bottle, and the winnower on which she is working. These baskets are of willow, with coarse weave, and no design.**





**Plate 34. Indian cattle men of Pyramid Lake Reservation. Much of the Indian land of Nevada is chiefly suitable for range livestock. Indian cattle cooperatives are being formed for the economic exploitation of this resource.**

land for homes. Living on them are 1150 Paiute, 940 Shoshoni and 540 Washo, (a tribe of different language which has seeped in from across the Sierras).

**CARSON INDIAN AGENCY:** (In charge of all this land and the interests of its people, is the Carson Indian agency, in western Nevada. Its jurisdiction covers almost the entire state, with the addition of Mono and Inyo counties in California, which are old Paiute country.

The government is attending to the education of these people in five reservation day schools, the boarding school near Carson City and other boarding schools outside the state. Seven hundred of them go to White public schools. The jurisdiction employs doctors and field nurses and has two hospitals beside the school hospital near Carson City. It is also employing agriculturists and grazing experts to instruct the Indian farmers and it is organizing 4-H clubs among the farmers' children. Most of all, it is buying more land whenever the money is available, buying cattle for the Indians and buying water rights.

What has happened to the groups who have had so large a place in this narrative, the Owens and Surprise Valley Paiute? The Owens Valley people live in Inyo county California and are under the Carson jurisdiction. There are 800 of them now and they have several reservations, two of which, Fort Independence and Bishop, are listed below. The other tracts are too small and

A large number of small areas have been purchased recently, where small bands are being re-settled. However most of the more important reservations or colonies are included in this table.

Reservation or *Colony	Date Established	Acreage	Kind of land	Allotted or not	Population	Organized
Pyramid Lake	1874	475,162	Grazing & irrigated	Never allotted	558	O
Walker River	1874		Irrigated	Allotted	461	O
Fallon Res.	1936	323,848	Grazing			
McDermitt	1902	6,640	3028 Irrigated	Allotted	292	
	1912	31,867	Homesites	Public domain allotments	280	O
	1936		Grazing land			
Summit Lake	1913	8,025	Meadow land			
			Homesites	Not allotted	46	V
			Summer grazing			
*Carson City	1892	160	Homesites	Not allotted	63	
Lovelock	1910	18	Homesites	Not allotted	121	V
*Reno-Sparks	1917	28	Homesites	Not allotted	191	O
*Winnemucca	1917	340	Homesites	Not allotted	38	O
*Yerington Res. and Colony	1917	1,076	Homesites	Not allotted	155	O
Bishop	1912, 1913	988	Homesites, grazing	Not allotted		
	1915, 1939					
Independence	1915, 1916	360				
Big Pine	1939	279	Grazing	Allotted 1910	930	
Indian Ranch	1939	560	Grazing	Tribal		V
Lone Pine	1939	237	Grazing	Tribal		
*Dresslerville	1917	40	Grazing	Tribal	162	O
Duck Valley	1877	289,827	Grazing	Tribal	554	O
Te-Mook (Battle Mt., Ely, Elko)		10,559	Grazing	Tribal	280	O
Yomba (Reese River)	1938	3,721	No data yet	Tribal	96	O
Moapa River	1874	1,128	Grazing	508 Tribal	156	V
				620 Trust allot.		
*Las Vegas Colony		10	Campsite		35	V

Groups in the last column, if marked O, are organized under the Indian Reorganization Act, if marked V, have voted to accept the Act.

barren for farming and the Indians had been supporting themselves by wage work until a few years ago. Then the city of Los Angeles bought the water rights of Owens Lake and carried the water away in its aqueduct. The ranches where the Indians worked were dried up and abandoned. However, Los Angeles has promised the government to remedy this situation. The city proposed to take over all the Indian lands, except Fort Independence, which is still usable and to give the Indians instead, 1470 acres of the richest land in the valley.

Surprise Valley does not come under the Carson jurisdiction. Some of its Indians spill over into the small agency at Summit Lake, Nevada, but otherwise for technical reasons, they are cared for by the Sacramento agency in California. They have a small reservation at Fort Bidwell but otherwise this remote group is camping near the White settlements and making the change to the new life in its own way.

We have followed these two groups of Paiute, with a number of others in the background, from the days when they made their living from the country, with hard work and primitive tools, through the time of dispossession, fighting, dreaming, to the time when they are being helped to self support on a different level. What change does this mean in their own plan of living?

In the first place, they are beginning to work together in large groups. This is not entirely new, since the men worked together in hunting, even though each woman had to pick her seeds alone, for fear there would not be enough. They must learn which kind of farming is best for their part of the country. They have government experts to help them and these workers have declared that the Basin is cattle country. Even irrigation will not allow a rancher to raise many crops and he had better devote his land to alfalfa that will feed his animals through the bad season. It is also good turkey country. Many families are already raising turkeys for sale and their product is pronounced as good as any in the state.

There is a future for the Paiute cattle and poultryman. He can no longer wander because ranches have filled up the empty country. Then let him become a rancher. Cattle have eaten the old seed plants so that he can not use them for food. Then let him raise cattle. This he is beginning to do, with government help, and so will come a new phase of his outdoor living, tuned to modern conditions.

# SHORT LIST OF READINGS ON THE NORTHERN PAIUTE

## GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS

Kelly, Isabel T.

**Ethnography of the Surprise Valley Paiute.**

University of California Publications in Archaeology and  
Ethnology. Vol. 31, No. 3, 1932

Lowie, Robert H.

**The Northern Shoshone**—American Museum of Natural History,  
New York—Anthropological Papers, Vol. II, Part 2.

Notes on Shoshonean Ethnography—American Museum of Natural  
History, New York—Anthropological Paper, Vol. XX.

Brief scientific notes with good illustrations.

Steward, Julian

**Ethnography of the Owens Valley Paiute.**

U. of C. Publications, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1933

Both the above are scientific descriptions, with specially full details as to handicraft,  
games and the use of plants.

Curtis, E. S.

**The North American Indian.** Vols. 15 and 16. Norwood, Mass.

An interesting, rather popular description, with beautiful photographs.

## SPECIAL DESCRIPTIONS

Culin, Stewart

**Games of the North American Indians.**

Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Vol. 24, 1902-3

The pages on Paiute games give accurate directions, with cuts.

Park, Willard Z.

**Shamanism in Western North America.**

Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill. 1938

A scientific account of medicine man's practices with full descriptions and much  
comparative material.

Park, Willard Z, and others

**Tribal Distributions in the Great Basin.**

American Anthropologist, Vol. 40, No. 4, Pt. 1, 1938

A short article, with full geographic details, for those interested in the exact loca-  
tion of Paiute groups.



Steward, Julian

**Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Socio-Political Groups.**

Bulletin of the Bureau of American Ethnology, No. 120, 1938

A special study for those interested in primitive organization.

Moony, James

**Local History**

The Ghost Dance Religion, Report Bureau American Ethnology,  
No. 14, Pt. 2, 1896

Chalfant, Guy

**The Story of Inyo.**

1922, privately printed. (Sometimes available in libraries)

Hopkins, Sara Winnemucca

**Life Among the Paiutes, their Wrongs and Claims.**

1883, privately printed. (Sometimes available in libraries.)

## MYTHOLOGY

Steward, Julian

**Myths of the Owens Valley Paiute.**

California Publications, etc., Vol. 34, 1936

Kelly, Isabel T.

**Northern Paiute Tales.**

Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 51, No. 202, 1938

Spair, Edward

**Song Recitative in Paiute Mythology.**

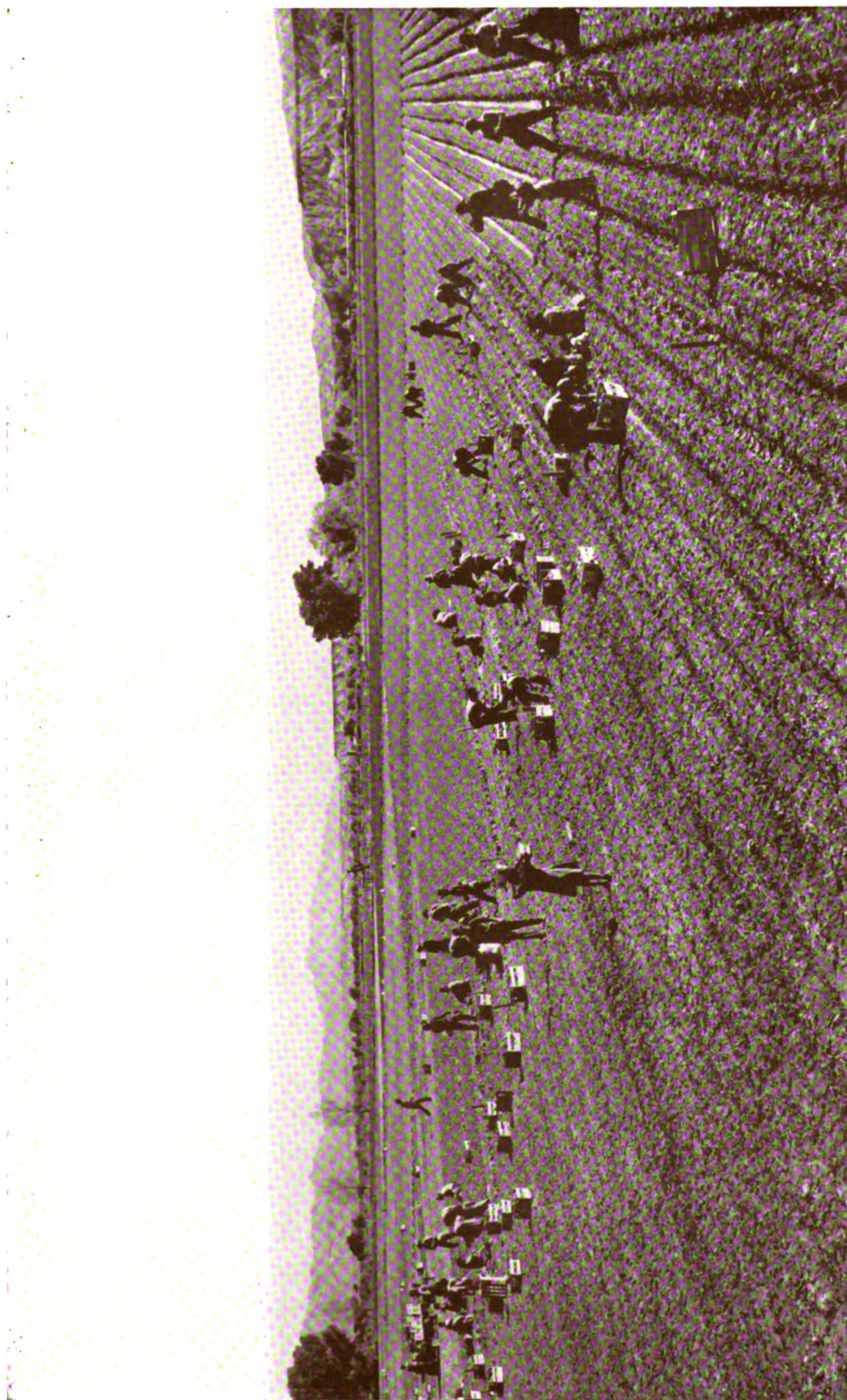
Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 23, Oct.-Dec. 1910.

## LANGUAGE

Spair, Edward

**Southern Paiute, a Shoshonean Language.**

American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Vol. 65, 1931.



**Plate 35. Many Indians make part of their livelihood working in the fields for White farmers. This scene in the radish fields near the Moapa Reservation is typical of the modern transient field work.**



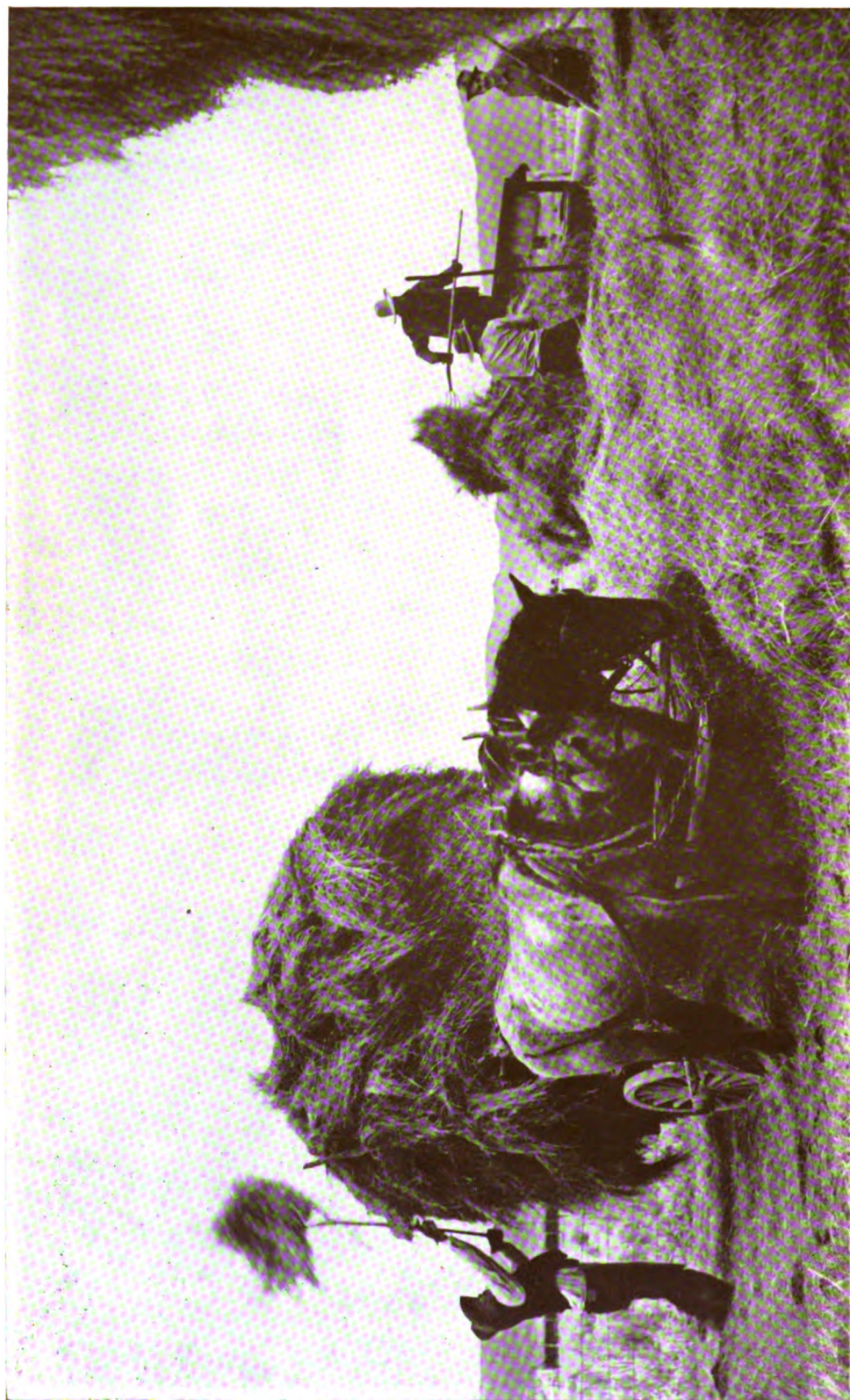


Plate 36. A successful cattle project is dependent upon the production of winter feed to keep the cattle alive when the ground is covered with snow. At Fort McDermitt, this group of Indians is engaged in a cooperative haying enterprise in anticipation of winter needs.

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## THE SHERMAN PAMPHLETS

This is the first of a series of pamphlets describing the life and customs of the Indians of the American southwest before they were greatly changed through contact with Whites. The need for these pamphlets was demonstrated in the course of a summer school in anthropology conducted by Dr. Ruth Underhill at Sherman Institute in 1935 at the invitation of Superintendent Donald H. Biery. Not only were the summer school classes well attended but in the months which followed Dr. Underhill received many requests for printed material about the tribes which had been the subject of her courses. As there was nothing in print to satisfy this evident need, Dr. Underhill prepared a series of short mimeographed summaries which were distributed by Sherman Institute. Several editions in mimeographed form were exhausted, demonstrating a continued need for the material in more permanent form.

Each of the original pamphlets has been completely rewritten and illustrated by photographs drawn from the collections of the larger museums interested in southwest artifacts, and by drawings when photographs could not be obtained. The drawings are by Velino Herrera, a Pueblo artist, trained at the Santa Fe Indian School. In undertaking to reconstruct with reasonable accuracy scenes from a pre-historic culture the artist encountered problems quite distinct from any he had previously met and his drawings should be judged as illustrations rather than fine art.

In preparing and revising her material Dr. Underhill has had the generous cooperation of scientists from the Bureau of American Ethnology, and the National Museum, Washington, D. C., the Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, the Art Museum, Los Angeles, the Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe, and the Museum of the American Indian (Heye Foundation), New York City.

These pamphlets are issued in this more permanent form to aid Indian Service employees in greater understanding of the tribal groups with which they work, for use as text material in the teaching of Indian history and culture in Indian Service junior and senior high schools and for general distribution to those interested in Indians. The printed edition of the Sherman pamphlets is being issued by Haskell Institute Printing Department.

Willard W. Beatty,  
Director of Education.

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U. S. Office of Indian Affairs

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