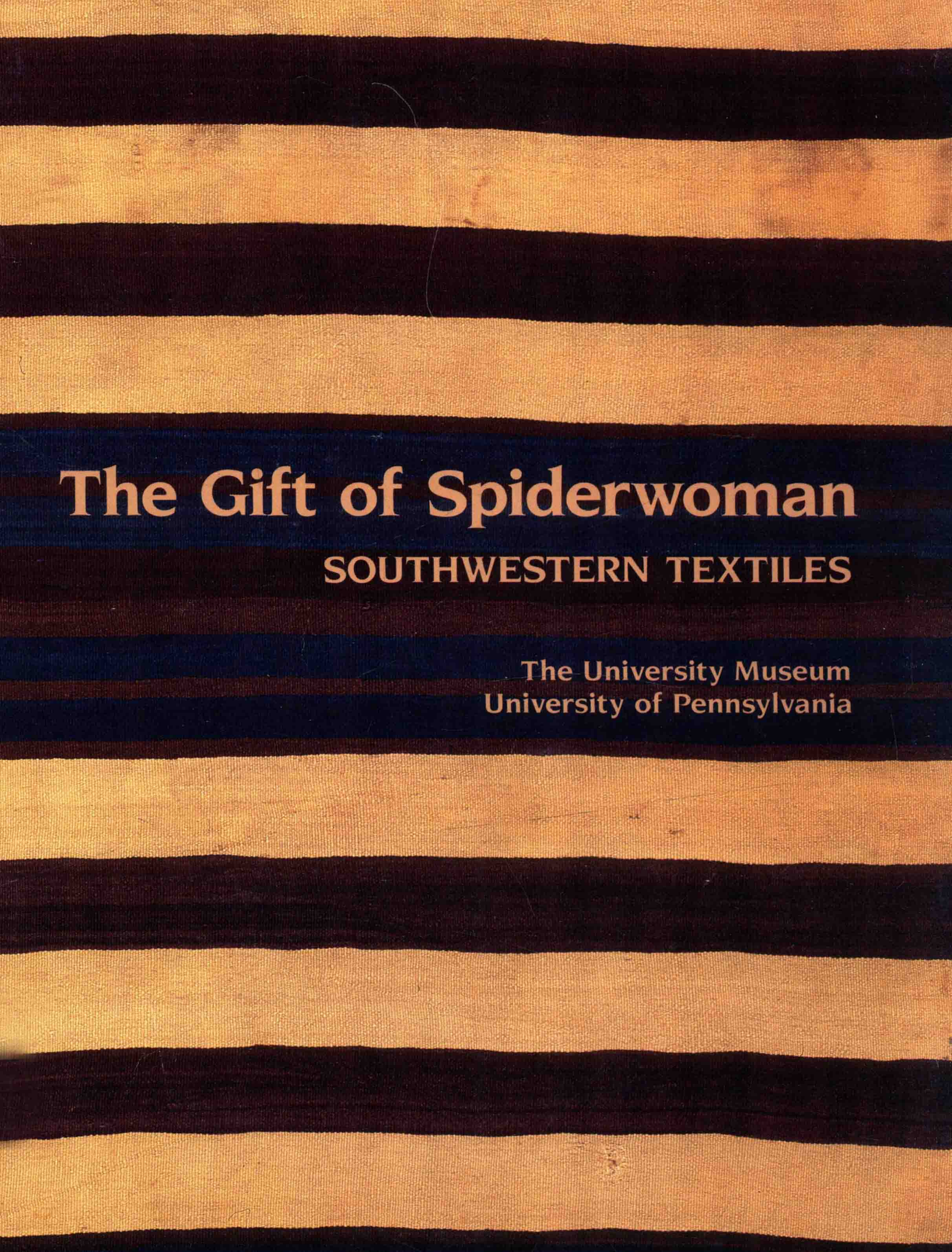

The Gift of Spiderwoman

SOUTHWESTERN TEXTILES

The University Museum
University of Pennsylvania

The Gift of Spiderwoman

SOUTHWESTERN TEXTILES
The Navajo Tradition

by
Joe Ben Wheat

with photographs by
Eric Mitchell

The University Museum
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia

Printed in the United States of America

A Navajo weaver seated at her upright loom.

Those who have participated in the publication of this handbook know how much of its final form is due to the extraordinary knowledge and energy of my friend and colleague, Joe Ben Wheat. His long-standing interest in Southwestern textile collections led him to add to his already heavy schedule the responsibility for writing the text for this book. He also selected the textiles to be photographed. Without his enthusiastic cooperation and unfailing courtesy, this project would not have been possible. We are all in his debt.

Robert H. Dyson, Jr.
Director
The University Museum

Cover: See page 27 plate 6.

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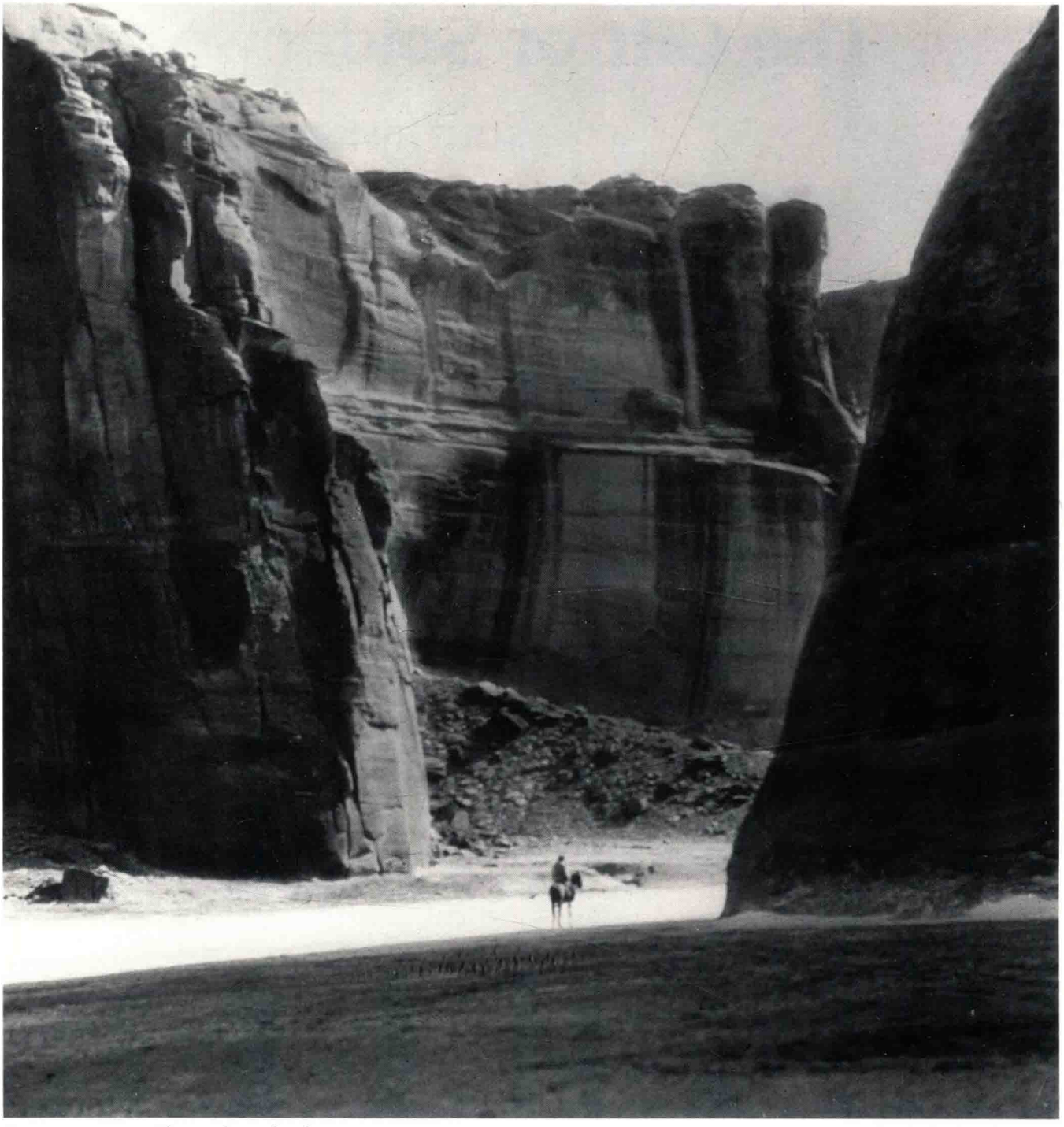


Navajo country, rider on horseback.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The preparation of this publication, along with the one-day symposium and exhibition "Southwestern Textiles: The Navajo Tradition," was made possible through the combined efforts of many people.

Without the encouragement and support of Robert H. Dyson, Jr., Director of The University Museum, and Gregory L. Possehl, Associate Director, the project would never have been initiated. William R. Coe, Curator of the American Section, provided access to the collection.

Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, Archivist, along with her knowledgeable staff members Caroline Dosker and Eleanor King, greatly facilitated research on the history of the collection. Mary Anne Kenworthy, Photographic Archivist, offered her assistance in selecting the ethnographic photographs that appear in this handbook.

Eric Mitchell was responsible for the textile photography, and Gei Zantzinger, a member of the Museum's Board of Overseers, served as photographic consultant.

Dr. David Wenger of The University of Colorado Health Science Center supplied the results of his dye analyses of red yarn samples taken from several textiles shown here.

A special thanks goes to Fred Boschan, founder and past president of the Textile Arts Society of Philadelphia. Along with other contributions, he willingly tackled the difficult task of identifying textiles in the collection.

The production of this handbook was coordinated by Barbara Murray of the Museum's Publications Division who shepherded it through each stage. Jennifer Quick edited the manuscripts, and Martha Phillips designed the publication. Gei Zantzinger's contribution enabled us to present all of the textiles in full color.

Elin Danien, Public Programs Coordinator, conceived of the symposium and carried it through to its successful completion. Capacity attendance was guaranteed through the advance publicity arranged by Phoebe Resnick and her able Public Information Office staff.

The Museum expresses its sincere gratitude to all those who offered their generous assistance.

Pamela Hearne
Keeper of the American
Collections

The Gift of Spiderwoman Legend

In days of old
White-Shell-Woman dwelled
  Perfect white she wore.
  With perfect grace she walked
  A perfect vessel she was Essential
    Womanliness.

One morning walking about
in the white of dawn
She came upon a stream of smoke
  wafting skyward
  from the ground.
With wonderment she approached the
  Earth-hole.
Innocently peered within.

There in dusky depths
There in musty dimness
  an Old-One worked
  tying a thread
  weaving a web.

This was the home of Spiderwoman.

Down
in her earth-lined chamber
as Spiderwoman wove
a shadow blocked her light above
an astonished face looked in.
  "Come down into my home,"
    Spiderwoman directed.
  "It is too small,"
    White-Shell-Woman objected.
  "It is big enough,"
    Dark-Black-Weaver insisted
  and so saying
  began to blow.

At the hole
she blew—
At the entrance overhead.
Again and again she blew,
Four times in all
It is said.

With each puff the portal opened
Widened, grew and swelled
Until a passageway stood large enough
And four ladders lined the walls.

  On the East was a ladder white
    with rungs of shell—
    the color of dawn.
  On the South was a ladder blue
    with rungs of turquoise—
    the color of sky at noon.
  On the West was a ladder red
    with rungs of abalone—
    the color of the setting sun.
  On the North was a ladder black.
    Its rungs were jet.
    —for such is the color of night.

Manuelito was one of several Navajo tribal leaders who signed a treaty in 1868 allowing the Navajo to return to their homeland after internment at Bosque Redondo.

Descending
into the damp dimness
the woman looked around her.
Woven forms
surrounded her.
Beautiful to behold!

"Yes, I made them all.
That's what I do.
And WHAT do YOU do?"
Inquired the Dark-Black-Weaver.

White-Shell-Woman considered
the question with care:

She thought about the way she had lived
for so long.
She thought about the corn she had ground
for so long.
She thought about the empty void she had felt
for so long.

"It's not good doing nothing,"
White-Shell-Woman concluded
sitting down wistfully.
"It's not good doing nothing,"
Spiderwoman repeated
and retreated to her web.

For her studio portrait taken in the 1870s, Juanita Pal ti-to, wife of Navajo tribal leader Manuelito, is wearing a traditional two-piece dress.

White-Shell-Woman watched
the quiet twining
fingers working
designs unfolding
She sensed here—Vital Being
She sensed here—Basic Meaning.

Something
for the hand to do
for the eye to see
for the mind to hold.

"Maybe,"
she ventured
"If I watch you weave
see you do it
twine the thread.
"Maybe
If I watch you now
join the color
shape the whole.
"Perhaps with Time . . .
"Perhaps with Patience . . .
I, too, could learn Your Way."

There came no answer
No response
The hands continued weaving.
Yet rhythm and sound were enough
to impart a hopeful feeling.
This Way is not for everyone, yet
you show Courage by coming.
This Way is not an easy one, and yet
there's patience in your Being.
This Way is not for all
yet I sense
Insight and Knowing.

In this way
Acceptance came
to stay
to watch
to learn.
From Master-Weaver herself it came
From Seer-Beyond-The-Time.

Four days White-Shell-Woman stayed and
watched
with patience and
understanding.

And in this time that she stayed
And in this way that she watched
She was given the Knowledge of Weaving.

INTRODUCTION

by
Pamela Hearne

In preparing this publication, the intention was that it serve not only as an accompaniment to the symposium "Southwestern Textiles: The Navajo Tradition" held at The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, but that it define the scope of the Museum's holdings of Southwestern textiles, which remain relatively unknown to the public. Information regarding the size, range, and historical background of the collection should prove to be useful to scholars, weavers, and collectors.

This collection comprises textiles woven by Navajo Indians, Pueblo Indians from both New Mexico and northeastern Arizona, and Spanish colonists who settled in the Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico. Also included are Saltillo sarapes produced in the general region of the town of Saltillo in northern Mexico. Any study of the Navajo weaving tradition must include textiles woven by the cohabitants of the greater Southwest. Navajo weaving did not develop in a vacuum. Always receptive to foreign design systems and styles of clothing, Navajo weavers incorporated elements of other weaving traditions into their own.

Since the early 1900s, the collection of approximately two hundred Southwestern textiles has grown through a process of gradual accumulation. A large number were acquired on Museum-sponsored expeditions at the turn of the century or were included in large collections of Indian artifacts, amassed by private collectors, which became part of the Museum's vast holdings. Other textiles have been acquired through an exchange with the Denver Art Museum in the 1950s and as part of a collection of American Indian material made by Amos H. Gottschall between 1871–1905 that was given to the Museum on permanent loan by the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

Many of the textiles are not well documented. Often a donor can provide only vague recollections of a great uncle who traveled in the Southwest in the early 1900s. For those textiles collected on Museum expeditions or by early collectors, however, some documentation is provided. Information is often limited to date of collection and provenience, although some collectors kept records noting how a textile was acquired and from whom.

Documentation of these textiles greatly increases their value for research purposes. For those studying the stylistic development of Navajo weaving within historical contexts, well-documented textiles serve as indicators, enabling researchers to determine when changes occurred. Working within a framework of a limited number of well-documented pieces, it is possible to trace the evolution of style over time.

The University Museum is fortunate to have a considerable number of Classic Period and late Classic Period textiles, dating from the early 1800s to ca.

1875. During this time, Navajo women were weaving articles of clothing for their family members and blankets for trade with other Indian tribes. Included in the collection are a number of Navajo women's two-piece dresses, Chief blankets representing all three phases of development, and women's and children's shoulder blankets. Possibly the finest pieces in the collection are a Classic Period sarape, the Navajo version of a Spanish sarape, and a poncho sarape.

One of the most important textiles in the collection is a First Phase Chief blanket which was collected by George Byron Gordon, Director of The University Museum between 1910–1917. Well known for his discriminating taste, Gordon acquired some of the Museum's finest examples of Navajo weaving while traveling through the Southwest in 1908.

One late Classic Period child's blanket is part of the large collection made by Charles H. Stephens in the late 1800s. Stephens, a commercial artist, began to collect Indian artifacts in 1876 when he purchased objects from Seminole Indians in Florida. The bulk of Stephens' collection was acquired through exchanges with other collectors and purchases from dealers. Through his accurate records, Stephens noted the provenience and history of each object. This enables us to know that he acquired several pieces that had belonged to explorers Lewis and Clark, and collector George Catlin. The previous owner of the child's blanket was Lt. George M. Wheeler, a topographical engineer who in 1871 was placed in charge of a surveying project in the western United States.[1]

Although the Museum's collection of Pueblo Indian textiles is not extensive, there are over twenty well-documented Hopi Indian pieces collected by Stewart Culin on the John Wanamaker Expeditions of 1900–1903. One of the Museum's founders, Culin became its Director in 1896. He traveled throughout the West on three consecutive summer expeditions with George A. Dorsey of the Field Museum of Natural History (then called the Field Columbian Museum), each man collecting for his respective institution.

Among the articles of Hopi traditional clothing in the collection are shoulder blankets, mantas/dresses, kilts, belts and sashes. One white cotton wedding manta, complete with reed container used to hold part of the bride's costume, was acquired by Culin from the Reverend H. R. Voth. A Mennonite immigrant from Russia, Voth had established a mission among the Hopi Indians in 1893. He studied Hopi religion and language while performing his missionary duties for nine years at Oraibi, at that time the largest Hopi community.[2] The ethnographic collections which Voth put together for a number of museums, including The University Museum, are well known for their accurate documentation.

Several articles of traditional Zuni clothing were given to the Museum in 1901 by Franklin Hamilton Cushing, the first person to do fieldwork with Indians

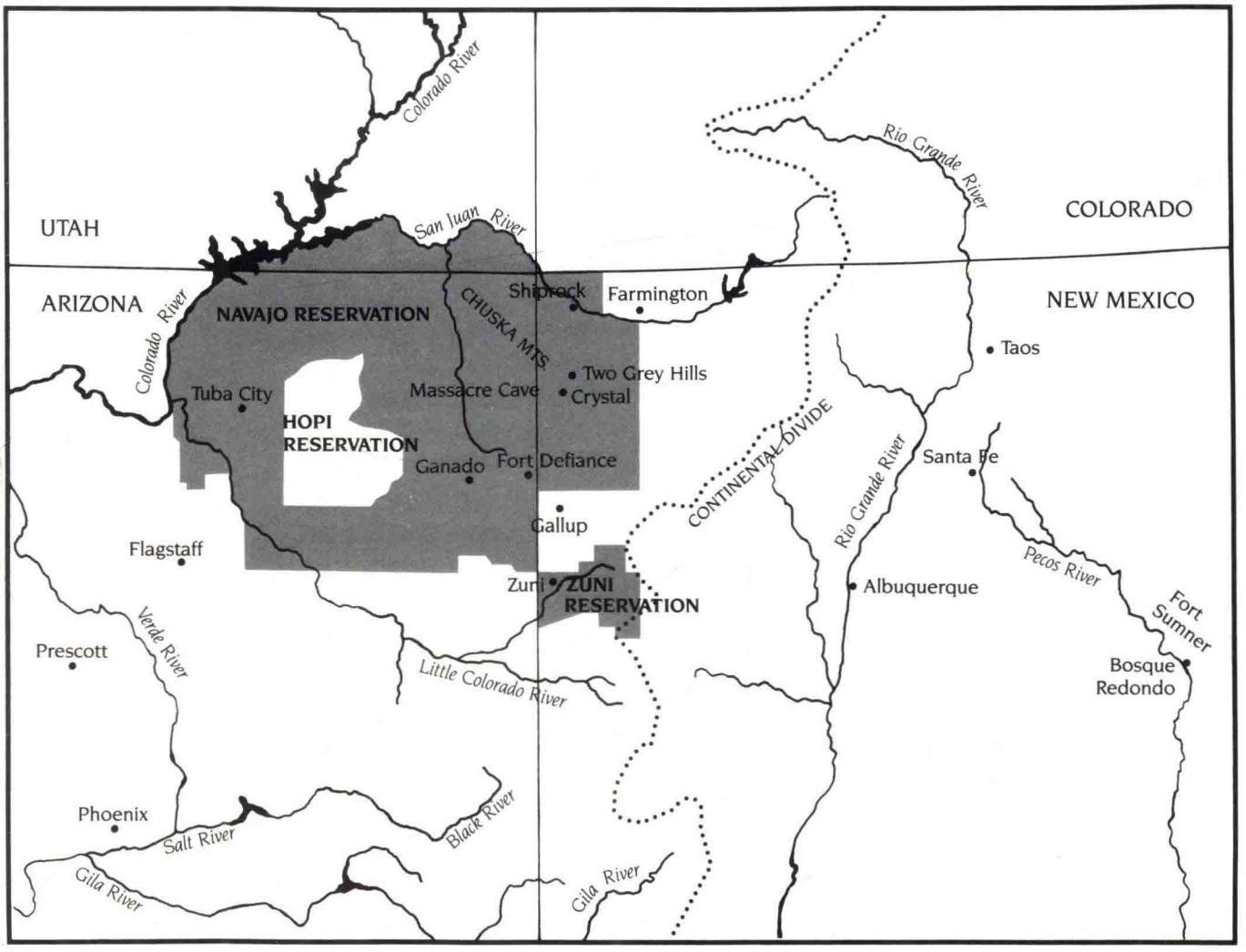
of the Southwest. Hired by the newly formed Bureau of Ethnology of The Smithsonian Institution, Cushing was a member of its maiden expedition which went to the Southwest in 1879. He left the expedition at Zuni pueblo, electing to live with the Zuni Indians for nearly five years.[3] Cushing's association with The University Museum began in 1895 when, plagued with ill health, he consulted Dr. William Pepper, a highly respected Philadelphia physician. Pepper, who was also the President of The University Museum's Board of Managers, arranged for Cushing to lead several expeditions, jointly sponsored by the Smithsonian and The University Museum, to the southwest coast of Florida.

Rio Grande blankets, woven on European style treadle looms by Spaniards who settled along the upper Rio Grande River, were not considered collectors' items and, therefore, were usually not well conserved, Surprisingly, a number of Rio Grandes in the collection are in excellent condition. Examples of both the striped and the banded varieties, as well as the type derived from the Saltillo sarape of northern Mexico number among the pieces. One Rio Grande blanket was collected by U. S. Hollister, who lived in Denver and traveled extensively throughout the Southwest in the late 1900s in order to acquire material for his collection.[4]

The Saltillo sarape, a finely-woven textile that had been worn in Mexico for several centuries, became extremely popular shortly after Mexican independence from Spain in 1821. Many Saltillos found in museum collections were acquired by United States military men engaged in the Mexican War of 1846–1848. One of the Museum's Saltillos was collected by a General Herring in 1845, while several others were purchased by George Byron Gordon in 1908.

Events that shaped the history of the Navajo people also affected their weaving. In 1863, the Navajo were interned at Bosque Redondo, New Mexico, by the United States government in an attempt to halt their continuous raiding in the Rio Grande Valley, When the Navajo returned to their homeland in 1868, although they continued to weave blankets and wear traditional clothing, the availability of commercial yard goods and blankets gradually changed their style of clothing.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, dramatic changes in Navajo textiles resulted, primarily from increased contact with the Anglo world. The introduction of new commercial yarns and dyes, along with exposure to alien design systems at Bosque Redondo, led to increased experimentation in their weaving. A gradual shift from weaving blankets to rugs developed when new markets for Navajo weaving were established. In this Transitional Period (1875–1890) different styles of blankets, blanket/rugs, rugs, and equipment for horses proliferated.



Map of the general Southwestern region indicating locations relating to The University Museum's textile collection.

Among the Museum's numerous transitional pieces are several eye-dazzlers, so-called for their busy patterns and bright aniline-dyed yarns, and a number of Germantown rugs woven with cotton twine warps and commercial yarns. All varieties of horse equipment are found in the collection, including single and double saddle blankets, throws, and cinches.

Early regional styles of Navajo rugs are represented in the collection, including Ganado, a style established in the region around Hubbell's Trading Post in Ganado, Arizona, and Two Gray Hills, named for the trading post south of Shiprock, New Mexico. There are also several Crystal rugs, a style inspired by J. B. Moore, a trader at Crystal, New Mexico. There is only one example of an early storm pattern rug woven in the western region of the Navajo Reservation, and one Yei rug, a style that originated in northwestern New Mexico.

The strength of The University Museum collection lies in the fact that it is a good cross-section of Southwestern textiles. Although not all early regional styles of Navajo rugs are represented and there are no examples of contemporary Navajo weaving, the collection is still remarkably comprehensive. The Museum anticipates adding other textiles which will round out the collection.

NOTES

1. Malone, Dumas, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 20 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 47.
2. Wright, Barton, *Hopi Material Culture* (Flagstaff: Northland Press and the Heard Museum, 1979), 2.
3. Cushing, Frank Hamilton, *Zuni: Selected Writings of Frank Hamilton Cushing* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 5.
4. Hollister, Uriah S., *The Navajo and His Blanket* (1903; reprint, Glorieta, NM: The Rio Grande Press, Inc., 1972), preface.

All ethnographic photographs in the catalogue are from The University Museum's Photographic Archives.

Photos	*Neg. Nos.*
Manuelito	99134
Juanita	99131
Hopi weaver (man)	1718
Navajo weaver (woman)	1512
Navajos in shelter	1513
Navajo country	1619

THE GIFT OF SPIDERWOMAN

by
Joe Ben Wheat

When Coronado and his band of Spanish explorers entered what is now Arizona and New Mexico in 1540, instead of the gold and jewels they were seeking, they found numerous villages of Indians who lived in multi-roomed stone and mud houses often several stories high. The people of these villages, which are called *pueblos* in Spanish, farmed large tracts of land, raising maize, pumpkins, beans, and other plants including cotton, which they wove into clothing for themselves and which they traded to the "wild" Indians for dried meat, buffalo hides, and other things.[1]

Cotton was introduced from Mexico to the Indians of southern Arizona and New Mexico about the time of Christ, and by about A.D. 800 it had spread north to the ancestors of the modern Pueblo Indians, as well. Shortly afterward, the back-strap loom was introduced, on which the Pueblos wove narrow strips of cloth and belts. By A.D. 1100, the Pueblos had developed a wide, vertical, heddle-operated loom, and were weaving shirts, kilts, and breech cloths for the men, and for the women, a manta or dress which was wrapped around the body under one arm and fastened over the opposite shoulder, and belted around the waist. Both men and women wore the manta as a shawl around the shoulders in cold weather.[2] These mantas were wider than long, the length being measured along the warps, and were decorated by painting, embroidery, or by woven stripes in different colors (Plate 1). Mantas were frequently given to the Spanish explorers and later became a standard item of tribute to the Spanish settlers.[3]

In 1598, the Spanish, under Don Juan de Oñate, founded the first European settlement along the Rio Grande in New Mexico. They brought with them nearly 3,000 sheep.[4] These were to provide meat, and wool for weaving on home-made versions of the European treadle loom. These sheep were the common Spanish sheep, the *churro*, rather than the fine-fleeced merino,[5] and ranged in color from a creamy white through dark tans to almost black. The Spanish also brought indigo blue dye and perhaps other commercial dyes. By the 1630s, they were weaving a variety of coarse woolen cloths and blankets that were longer than wide.[6] The cloths were plain or woven with checks and plaids, while the blankets frequently had alternating stripes of blue and brown, together with white. Sometimes they were in other colors, dyes having been taken over from the Pueblos (Plate 2).

Spanish priests were assigned to the various Pueblo villages, and with the priests went sheep. By about 1625, the Pueblos were weaving with wool[7] as well as with cotton, and in time, cotton came to be used almost exclusively for ceremonial garments, while wool was used for weaving blankets and for everyday clothing. Blue- and black-striped long blankets with white or other colors were woven (Plate 3), modeled after those of the Spanish, and the pattern

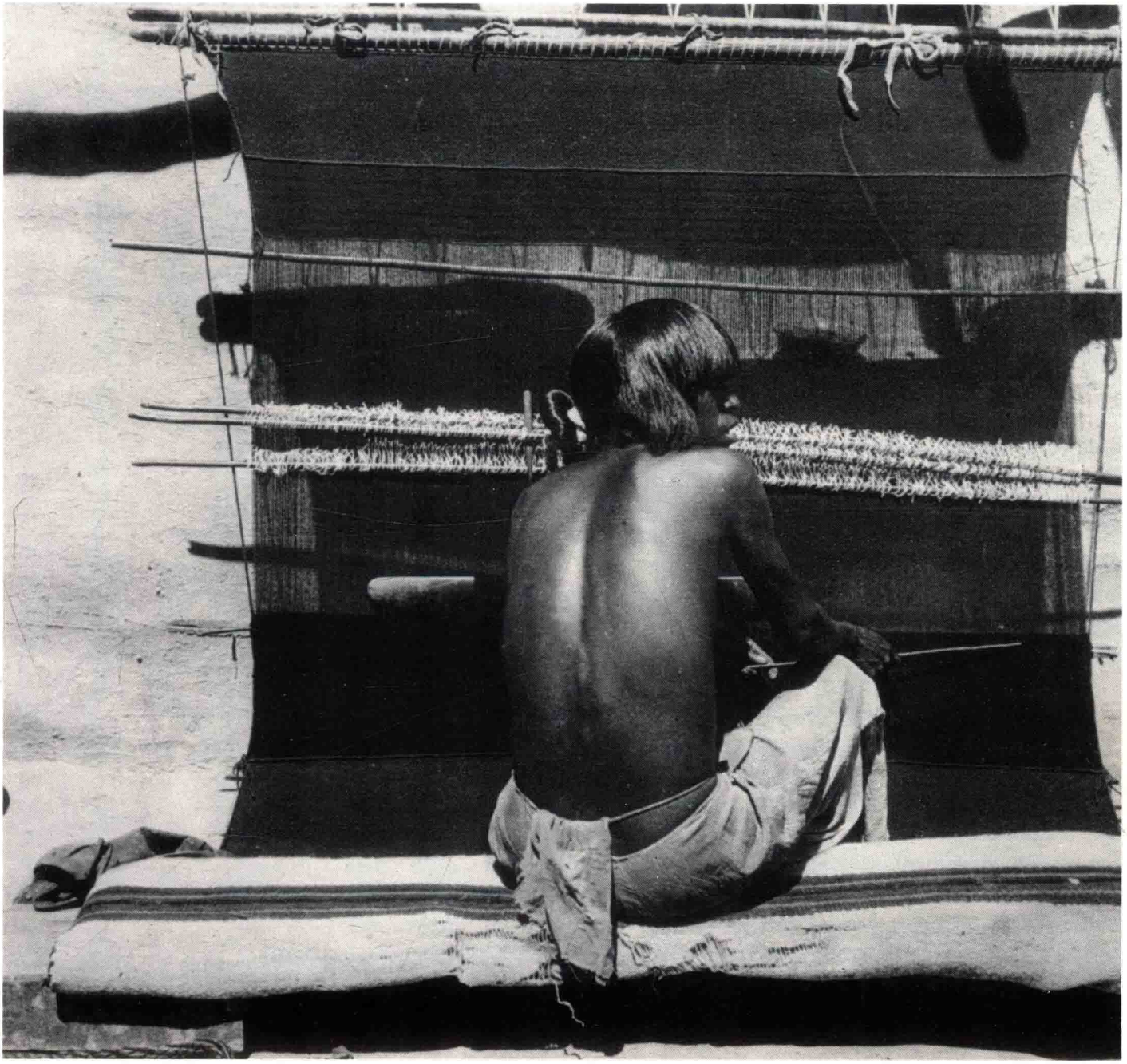
came to be known as Moqui (after the Spanish name for the Hopi Indians). The wide manta, made from wool and decorated as before, became the most common article of dress among the Pueblos (Plate 4).

Most of the "wild" Indians who lived around and between the settled Pueblos were warlike Apache tribes who belonged to the widespread Athapascan family.[8] They were mostly hunters, gatherers, and raiders who were seminomadic. They had come to the Southwest long after the Pueblos but before the Spanish arrived. One such Apache tribe, living in the mountainous area northwest of the Spanish capital of Santa Fé, did practice agriculture. These were the Apaches de Navaju (Apaches of the big fields), later known simply as Navajo. When they enter the historical record in 1626, they were not known as weavers of cloth but probably were already weavers of the fine baskets for which they later became famous.

According to Navajo legend, it was Spiderwoman who taught them to weave. It is not known exactly when the Navajo became weavers, but by 1640, they had stolen flocks of sheep from along the Rio Grande in retaliation for the warfare of the Spanish against them.[9] At this same time, there were numerous Pueblo Indians who, having fled from Spanish persecution, found refuge with the Navajo. Thus, it was probably during the middle of the 17th century that the Navajo learned to weave—from Spiderwoman in the guise of Pueblo refugees. The Navajo took over not only the Pueblo vertical loom but all of the other weaving tools and techniques as well. It is not surprising, then, that the Navajo also took over the most common loom products of the Pueblos—the belt, the shirt, and the manta dress-shawl and cloth.

When in 1680 the Pueblos revolted and drove the Spanish out of New Mexico, the Navajo sided with the Pueblos. The Spanish reconquered New Mexico between 1692 and 1696, and many Pueblos again fled to the Navajo's homeland and lived with them.[10] In 1706 the Spanish first mention weaving by the Navajo, noting that they dress like the Christian Indians—the Pueblo—in the wide black manta dress with blue edges, and that they weave a surplus of cloth and clothing (and baskets) which they trade to the Pueblos and to the Spanish alike for other things that they need.[11]

By the mid 18th century, Navajo weaving had changed in many ways. The old Pueblo manta one-piece dress was giving way to a two-piece dress with identical front and back blankets, perhaps copies of their ancient two-piece skin dress. At the ends, decorated panels of red replaced the blue,[12] the red weft threads being raveled from a solid red commercial cloth called bayeta—Spanish for baize. This was because the Navajo had no good red dye. Bayeta was commonly given to the Navajo by the Spanish when they were at peace or was traded from the Pueblos. The Navajo retained the manta as a shawl or small shoulder blanket. They also began to weave their blankets a segment at a time instead of straight across from side to side, leaving diagonal "lazy" lines



A Hopi man weaving on his upright loom.