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Basketmaking Guides and the Appropriation of Indigenous Basketry

Ellen Pearlstein

Between the 1860s and 1920s, American Indian basketry production in the Native United States underwent changes that include both its audiences and methods of transferring knowledge. Fueled by tourism and the Arts and Crafts movement, in this period basketry transitioned away from locally produced items made for Indigenous use and became commodities influenced by national and international collectors.¹ Traditional basketry production—based on plant gathering and live instruction, including oral exchanges from experienced older weavers to younger relatives, or tutors to apprentices—became superseded by teaching practices whereby acclaimed weavers provided materials and instruction to classes of novices. This article focuses on the particular appropriation of American Indian basketry accomplished by both publication of how-to guides and the production of kits and materials that began around 1900, revealing the context in which such basketry kits and designs originated and were sold.²

As I will demonstrate, these “American Indian” basketry books and kits were disseminated for profit and include written instructions for producing both European and romanticized Indigenous-style baskets by using non-Indigenous materials and methods. Basketry instruction booklets and kits were marketed not only to home décor aficionados during the so-called “basket craze” of the 1920s, but to school children, ironically including those at American Indian boarding schools who were

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being taught by Anglo instructors. Aspects of both plant gathering and instruction by acclaimed weavers of American Indian basketry have been revitalized since the early 1960s. However, as will be demonstrated, substantially earlier—in the 1920s—how-to guides and model designs for basketry production were already in demand for instruction. In addition to analyzing the tensions between reliance on how-to books and non-Indigenous materials and instruction in basketry at boarding schools, I will discuss evidence that the books and materials served assimilationist goals of “deculturating the Indian.”

GEORGE WHARTON JAMES’S BASKETMAKING GUIDES

George Wharton James (1858–1923) was a leader in promulgating these books and kits. A Methodist minister and the son of an English basketmaker, he arrived penniless in the United States in 1881. James became a self-made chronicler about tourism in the American West, Franciscan missions, God and spirituality, and American Indians in both Arizona and California and their baskets and blankets,³ as well as a collector, dealer, author, and entrepreneur who promoted basketry styles and stitches erroneously named for Indigenous weaving methods. As an author, he self-published, republished, and heavily excerpted not only his own work, but also that of others, including Otis T. Mason, a Smithsonian Institution curator and also a prolific author about basketry. An example of James’s continuous reuse of content in publications is his merging of *Indian Basketry* (1901) with *How to Make Indian and Other Baskets* (1903) to produce an enlarged 1904 edition.⁴ Such continual reuse leads James’s biographers to refer to these publications as “happily created chaos” that defies any organization for “the ambitious scholar.”⁵

James’s zeal clearly outweighed his scholarship. His prolonged attention to basketry emerged with a first publication entitled *Practical Basketmaking* privately printed and issued around 1900, then published with updated editions in 1901 through 1917 by J. L. Hammett in Boston, a company dedicated to the sale of school supplies.⁶ In 1903 James began what he called the “Basket Fraternity,” styling himself as the “Originator and First Brother” or “*Primus Frater*,” through which he published eight issues of *The Basket; The Journal of the Basket Fraternity or Lovers of Indian Baskets and Other Good Things* (1903–1904).⁷ Another volume called *Indian Basketry* was first published by Henry Malkan Publishers in New York in 1901, and, after selling ten thousand copies, continued to be self-published by James in revised and enlarged editions through a fourth edition in 1909, as well as published by others. While an earlier edition of the title *How to Make Indian and Other Baskets* appears to be undated, multiple editions of this name appeared in 1903 and 1904. These were privately published by James and the Hyde Exploring Expedition—supporters of now discredited archaeology in the American Southwest—and by Henry Malkan Publishers, which later also published an edition in 1914.⁸ While subsequent texts devoted to basketry by James appeared as lectures and serial articles rather than books, basket images from his collection also figured in a 1913 book, *Poetry and Symbolism of Indian Basketry*, a reprint of his 1913 journal article of the same name.⁹

In a review of the 1970 posthumous reprinting of James's books on *Indian Basketry and How to Make Baskets* and *Indian Blankets and their Makers*, Clara Lee Tanner, anthropologist from the University of Arizona, remarks that James:

is not penetrating; most of his coverage, when not quoted, is superficial. His ethnology is confused, and too frequently he inserts extraneous material. . . . The reference list on basketry also is weak, with missing dates and other publication data, as well as all-encompassing citations such as "All the reports of the U.S. Bureau of Ethnology [*sic*] Washington D. C." All that can be said on this subject is that it is consistent with general inaccuracies, fanciful imaginings, and poetic nonsense that is Mr. James."¹⁰

While James remains an academically questionable figure, his zealous interest in assembling collections of field photographs of Native peoples, and especially weavers and their work, and the inclusion of these images and his notes in his books and records, serve to reveal a great deal about American Indian life and basketry between 1900 and 1923.

BASKETMAKING KITS AND DESIGNS PUBLISHED BETWEEN 1900 AND 1910

In the same years when James was publishing about Indian basketry, two works ostensibly unrelated to James were published about practical Indian basketmaking that added to the body of how-to literature. Located in Los Angeles, nearby James's home in Pasadena, the "Navajo School of Indian Basketry" produced *Indian Basket Weaving*, published in 1903 by Whedon and Spreng.¹¹ By 1903, the availability of appropriated Indian basketry design models for constructing baskets is well established. There is absolutely no link between this publication and the Navajo. Not many Navajos were producing basketry in 1900 and the tribal name was appropriated for this guide, as well as all types of other publications.¹² Irving Nelson, who has served as program supervisor with the Office of Navajo Nation Library for forty-seven years, knows of no connection between the Navajo Nation and the "Navajo School of Indian Basketry."¹³

It is tempting to connect James with the Los Angeles origins of the Navajo School publication. In an effort to locate the authorship of works by the Navajo School, I made considerable efforts to determine whether the Navajo School publication had any connection to James. Records indicate that in 1902, one Nita Wright filed a copyright application for the Navajo Indian School publication,¹⁴ and this same Nita Wright Carroll, like George Wharton James, also published about her travels around Arizona and New Mexico in 1904.¹⁵ In any case, James not only advertised The "Navaho" [*sic*] School publication in his journal *The Basket*, but also fulfilled orders for the book through his fraternity.¹⁶

In what perhaps constitutes an innovative contribution to "how-to" instruction, the Navajo School was responsible for including plates of instructional images as well as a "kit," the latter of which inspired James, as he later turns to producing and selling similar models or designs for weavers. Within *Indian Basket Weaving*, published

by The Navajo School and sold for \$1.00, was a side pocket with plates “of bound lessons, a colored plate of an old Yokut feathered basket, [and a list for purchase of] twenty-four special basket designs.”¹⁷ The “Genuine Indian Basket Designs” offered for sale from the Navajo School are represented by black-and-white drawings indicated by numbers, for example, “No. 34,” or by figure numbers, “Figure 208.” The references for these numbers are uncertain; the book does not include corresponding enumerated illustrations of actual Native baskets, nor do these numbers correspond to figure numbers in James’s books. This indicates that the Navajo School book uses unattributed, and most certainly appropriated, basketry images, while to his credit, James uses images of baskets of Indigenous weavers he met in his travels as well as those held in named private collections of business associates.

Nonetheless, both James and the Navajo School were making available paper patterns for Indigenous baskets referred to as designs for sale. Marketing for basket-making kits and designs bear the insidious message that do-it-yourself baskets are equivalent to Indigenous examples, but a better value. An eight-page promotional booklet by the Navajo School proclaims the beauty and authenticity of the kit baskets and markets ten lessons, inclusive of materials, at a price range of \$2 to \$25 each.¹⁸ For instance, The Autry Museum of the American West in Los Angeles holds the kit and instructions promoted as “Lesson Seven” for an “Apache basket.” Its marketing materials state: “‘Apache’ Basket of very fine design. Total circumference 48 inches, diameter of top 16 inches, height 8 inches. This basket when finished is worth from \$30 to \$40. We send a commenced [started] basket with all necessary materials and instructions for completing it prepaid for \$10,”¹⁹ showing how despite the fact that weavers might have benefited from the sale of Indigenous baskets, such baskets are marketed as more affordable than the original Indigenous baskets they imitate.

The instructions include three pages of generic instructions for applying techniques—identifiably non-Indigenous—as a means for working with the imported weaving materials provided. The additional twelve “Genuine Indian Basket Designs” were available for fifteen cents each, or two for twenty-five cents. Among these were baskets imitating those of Yokut, Tule River, Cache Creek, Pomo, Mono, San Jacinto, Pima, Washoe origin, and unidentified British Columbian and “Ready for the Sun Dance” designs.²⁰ The design for the supposedly “Pomo” bottleneck basket included in the Navajo School publication *Indian Basket Weaving* is a line drawing showing sixteen clearly delineated rows of coiling for the base, and the number of foundation coils, but not stitches, needed to complete the designs illustrated. Neither coiling rows nor stitches are indicated for the side walls, which are also illustrated with a line drawing.

This design, which bears no relation to Pomo weaving styles, is included here as figure 1. Figure 2 is a seven-inch tall, non-Indigenous bottle-neck basket made from imported raffia and rattan. The printed design bears no number or figure reference, but bears a 1903 copyright date for the Los Angeles publisher Whedon and Spreng.

The movement to sell kits or outfits, as well as two-dimensional models or designs, is also reflected in the Apache School of Indian Basket Weaving’s 1903 Chicago publication *How to Make Indian Baskets*.²¹ Unlike the guides of James and the Navajo School, no images of Native baskets are included in the Apache School guide. However,



FIGURE 1. Bottleneck basket design, Navajo School of Indian Basketry (1903). All images by Ellen Pearlstein.



FIGURE 2. Bottleneck basket 2-44864, Phoebe A. Hearst Museum.

like the Navajo School, the Apache School offers a kit: “On receipt of 25 cents we will send you a commenced [started] basket. *With this you will be able to proceed without any difficulty.* Would suggest that you take out a few of the stitches to see how it was made.”²² Notably, in providing a “commenced basket,” or the coiled start, for any of the coiled example kits provided, both the Navajo School and the Apache School kits relieve practitioners of one of the most difficult parts of coiled basketry construction.

While George Wharton James cannot be directly linked to either of these two anonymized “schools,” his archives are filled with correspondence about orders for both basketry books and designs, indicating that James was motivated at an early stage to provide two-dimensional models or designs for the imitation of Indian basketry.²³ In fact, in November, 1903, James received correspondence from an avid mid-Western teacher of basket weaving, who praises his book *Indian Basketry*, inquires about purchasing his book *How to Make Indian and Other Baskets*, and mentions her teaching is already being guided by the Navajo School (i.e., designs) and other resources.²⁴ In 1904, James received a request for the book he was then providing—which included designs—from a writer who already had the Navajo School designs and wished to avoid any duplicates.²⁵

In fact, the third and enlarged 1903 edition published by Malkan, combining *Indian Basketry* and *How to Make Indian and Other Baskets* into a single book, already

includes a list of twenty basketry designs or models that James is offering for sale.²⁶ A letter writer in February 1906 requests from James the “full size working designs of Indian baskets, as follows: #2 Alaska Treasure Basket with cover, #6, Poma [*sic*] Shi-Bu Basket, #10, Yokut Bottle Neck Basket, and #12, Mono Rattlesnake Design Basket,” each for 50 cents.²⁷ In 1909 James is providing designs such as #11, Ramona’s Star Basket, and #15, Palatingwa Oblong basket.²⁸

An end date for James’s provision of Indian basketry designs is possibly found in archived correspondence that references them in the past tense. A letter from school supply vendor J. L. Hammett’s representative in August 1919 requested the availability of “Designs which you *used to* issue with *Practical Basketry Making* which sold for \$1.25 per set” (emphasis added).²⁹ A letter dated June 1922 from the Dryad Co. in Leicester England registers customers’ complaints about receiving incomplete design sets of twenty. The total number of design sets is not known, but design numbers 3, 11, and 12 were missing at least thirty-one copies, and one shipment provided only five complete sets.³⁰ Still, near the end of his life, in January 1923 James received an order for designs #4 and #7 as advertised in *The Basket*, the journal of his “Basket Fraternity.”³¹

BASKETRY DESIGN DISTRIBUTION TO SCHOOL SUPPLIERS AND TO INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOLS

It is clear from James’s correspondence that he promoted his own works with both entrepreneurial and missionary zeal. Between 1920 and 1922, James’s correspondence indicated sales of two of his basketry books to important distributors of school supplies, including Milton Bradley and Co. in San Francisco, J. L. Hammett in Boston, and A. Flanagan Company in Chicago. An additional regular client in those years is the Dryad Company in England, also a vendor of raffia and cane and furnishings made from them.³² James’s publications were reaching American Indian boarding schools at the same time that Indian Schools Superintendent Estelle Reel was advocating for American Indian instructors to be teaching basketry made from locally grown materials including “willows, cat claws, cat-tails, rushes, yucca, agave . . . shredded bark and roots. . . and grasses.”³³ As Superintendent of Indian Schools, Reel published her recommended *Course of Study for The Indian Schools* in 1901, mentioning James’s “work on Indian Basketry.”³⁴ That same year James received a reply from a clerk writing on behalf of Reel, stating “Your favor of the 9th instant, enclosing some suggestions on the teaching of basket-making to Indians, is received, and I desire to thank you most sincerely for your kindness in the matter.” James is further thanked for his additional promise of print materials, which we may presume to be his books.³⁵

That James was disseminating instructions and designs for Indian baskets in schools across the United States and perhaps England is clearly an act of cultural appropriation that was unrecognized as such by James and his circle, steeped as they were in notions of white superiority. That he was distributing these materials to Indian schools has another sort of impact. Other evidence of distribution to Indian schools in James’s archives includes further correspondence between them. In December 1901,

James purchased an as-yet-incomplete basket from Nelson Carr of the Department of the Interior Indian School Service.³⁶ Carr is documented as beginning employment as a teacher at the Hualapai Day School in Kingman, Arizona in 1896, where he presumably worked when James contacted him in 1901.³⁷ The motives behind the purchase are unclear, but the exchange indicates relationships with Indian boarding schools at the time James began to publish on Indian basketry. In those schools, widespread assimilation tactics predominated. The role of the Indian boarding schools in eliminating Indigenous practices is well-documented.³⁸ By appropriating Indian basketry designs and supplying instructional books, James aided the erosion of traditional Native instructional methods for teaching basketry.

In a critical review of such tactics used for art instruction at the Indian boarding schools, Kevin Slivka documents drawings of still-lives and other art copied from European works produced at the Carlisle Indian School in the 1880s.³⁹ From the work of scholar Deborah Miranda (Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation of California), we also know that books were used for instruction in the Indian boarding schools, but the titles are not well documented.⁴⁰ Documentation suggests, however, that the basketry books of James and others were in use at the boarding schools.

BASKETS AS TOOLS FOR ASSIMILATION

Marinella Lentis has pointed out the assimilationist role of how-to books used to teach Anglo instructors how to teach art to students in Indian schools.⁴¹ Even before these how-to books and kits were available in 1900, basketry was part of the overall debate between traditional and assimilationist methods, as reform groups were recognizing the damaging impact of assimilation through art instruction. The Indian Industrialist League, a reformist group begun in the 1880s whose membership disputed the assimilationist practices of boarding schools, included member and activist Nellie Doubleday, who critiqued the lace industries as alien to Indian students “and also encouraged specifically Indian women’s art. In 1901 and 1903, Doubleday published four articles explaining her understanding of the benefits of basketry industries for both cultural and economic benefit as well as uplifting the Indian woman to the position she had had before white influence.”⁴²

The Indian Industrialist League was actively publishing about the importance of traditional tribal capabilities in the Indian boarding schools even before the likes of James and the Navajo and Apache schools were appropriating basketry. Erik Krenzen Trump’s research, reveals that the advocacy of the Indian Industrialist League sought to preserve traditions through teaching, while embedding racist slurs:

The League and other reformers advocated preserving the traditions of the specific tribes. This was to be done by hiring Native women to teach in schools. In 1901, Candace Wheeler, a leader in the arts and crafts movement, promoted this also. “It is most important that the Indian women, the aged squaws who know how to do the oldtime work, be the teachers among the young people of their own tribes.”⁴³

The writing of James too espouses these same views: to respect and pay for the work represented in Indigenous basketry, and to encourage and pay Native specialists to teach skills to others.⁴⁴ Given his awareness of the contemporary reform movement against the introduction of non-Native assimilationist instructors and techniques in the boarding schools, how can it be that James begins to write his how-to books emphasizing Indian basketry at this time? The zealous and entrepreneurial nature of James explains a lot about these inconsistencies.

Both James and his regular publisher J. L. Hammett sold non-Indigenous materials for basketry production. J. L. Hammett sold raffia and palm leaf strands and rattan or cane stems from their Massachusetts location as early as 1903.⁴⁵ The materials and tools identified both in a Navajo School kit held by the Autry Museum and in all of James's books are unrelated to cultural traditions of plant gathering closely associated with Indigenous basketry. "Reed" or rattan is typically used to refer to an imported grass stem, often from Malaysia; "raphia" or raffia is a leaf element from imported palm trees, typically from Madagascar; and a needle such as that used for European needlework, supplants the awl and trimmed, pointed weft element often used for Indigenous coiled basketry.

J. L. Hammett became a consistent advertiser in *The Basket; The Journal of the Basket Fraternity or Lovers of Indian Baskets and Other Good Things*. They further advertised themselves as "Agents for the Basket Fraternity" operated by James, and provided in their ads the message that "We send a Complete Basketmaking Outfit by mail, paid, for One Dollar, giving all materials and full instructions."⁴⁶ James's correspondence between 1903 and 1915 is replete with questions from hobbyists about where to find and how best to use these materials, especially raffia.⁴⁷ James's works describe methods for dying with non-aniline dyes, including using boiled logwood chips, typically logwood bark used to produce brown, and copperas (hydrated ferrous sulfate) to produce black. Steps for creating the basket start, adding dyed "raphia" stitches, and finishing the rim stitches are included in James's work. The coiled start, one of the most diagnostic parts of any Indigenous basket, is already created and included in the Navajo School basketry kit in the collection of the Autry Museum, as well as in kits provided by the Apache School. Could J. L. Hammett be the supplier of the anonymous kit held in the Autry Museum of the West in figure 3?

As we have seen, James's 1901 correspondence with the superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs proves that he was providing Indian schools with his writings. Moreover, his publications espousing raffia and rattan for Indian baskets persisted, despite a 1903 Department of Indian Affairs Report to the Commissioner of the Department of the Interior reasoning that non-traditional materials were inferior for several reasons (note the racist reference to "the Indian child" as "it").

The necessity for preserving these arts and simultaneously providing means of livelihood for the Indian is obvious. Many of the Indian schools are now including the teaching of the native industries as part of their regular course. We are also endeavoring to teach the children to use the best and most available materials in making baskets. For instance, in many of the public schools white children use



FIGURE 3. “Commenced” basket, rattan foundation rod and raffia stitching materials. Autry Museum 4.C.241.

raffia in making baskets, because it is easy to obtain, but the Indian child knows the proper materials and how to get them. It knows what its parents have used and the work they have accomplished. The use of raffia in basketry in Indian schools is discouraged, because it is merely a substitute for native material and can not give as good results. In teaching Indian children the native industries care is taken to teach them the industries of their own tribes. This is the controlling idea in all industrial school instruction, and has been found mutually beneficial to teacher and pupil.⁴⁸

The following year, the 1904 Department of Indian Affairs Report to the Commissioner of the Department of the Interior encourages basketry taught in the Indian schools to use an Indigenous material rather than raffia: “In addition to the above the work of making baskets of native willows was also continued. This work requires much more judgment, as well as much more strength in the hand, than the making of small baskets of rattan or raffia, as so generally done in school at the present day.”⁴⁹ Clearly, it was acknowledged that people in Indian schools had knowledge of plant materials and their gathering, processing, and working into twined, coiled, or plaited baskets, and that this specialized knowledge required more judgment and skill than needleworked raffia on rattan.

In addition, as K. Tsianina Lomawaima points out, Superintendent Reel exhibited the racism of her time, but with “a gendered twist”:

She concentrated, in her writings and curriculum development, on economic opportunities for Indian women by fostering rather than denigrating native arts and crafts. She felt tribes whose crafts were still flourishing especially crafts produced by women's labor-should be maintained as an important economic resource for Indian families and communities. So, native women were hired to teach arts as basketmaking and weaving in the boarding schools.⁵⁰

Yet, in spite of these contemporary movements toward supporting Indigenous basketry by Indigenous instructors, *Practical Basketmaking* by George Wharton James was again widely distributed nationwide in 1914 by the school supplies company J. L. Hammett. Practical instructions are again offered, along with an increased range of stitching styles when compared to the 1903 volume, along with revised dyeing directions for the same rattan and raffia materials.⁵¹ Following published instructions and designs, Anglo women and children are now making baskets more affordable than those made by Indian weavers.

IMPACT ON NATIVE CHILDREN FROM BASKETMAKING COMMUNITIES

Little has been published by children who attended boarding schools coming from communities with a long tradition of basketmaking. However, prominent scholars interviewed elders who attended boarding school and have documented traumatic, assimilationist, and yet subsisting lifestyles.⁵² Fortunately, important evidence remains about the impact of the imposition of pan-Indian and European methods of weaving propagated by James and the Navajo and Apache schools, including items preserved by cultural descendants and collectors, and even a few well-documented boarding-school baskets.

In one instance, the basketry taught in an Indian boarding school violated the tribal taboos and privileges associated with basket manufacture. The context for Hopi wicker and coiled basketry is described thoughtfully by Helga Teiwes. Certain Hopi women (and men) have birthright privileges to weave baskets that are restricted by gender and village location, and have privileges to use baskets in certain ceremonial dances.⁵³ A conversation with Rosalie Talahongva, curator of the Phoenix Indian School Visitor Center and staff member at Native American Connections,⁵⁴ reiterated that basket-making privileges depend upon village and gender. Talahongva provided these details from her maternal grandmother's account of basketmaking at the Phoenix Indian boarding school, and on basketry as a birthright among the Hopi:

My maternal grandmother was from First Mesa, the Hopi is a [matrilineal] tribe. My grandmother would not have made baskets. In traditional Hopi, it is frowned upon to make something not in your birthright. She was away about 10 years at the Phoenix Indian High School, a Federal Boarding School. During her time away from her Community she was not learning appropriate skills associated with her Village, clan and family. She was taught to weave at school. When she went home and showed her baskets, the family was mortified! 'What are you doing? This is not acceptable!' The baskets were torn apart. There are ramifications for this, no,

we do not do this! Nothing was said about if she did a good job, if she made a nice design or used pretty colors.⁵⁵

A second account provides direct evidence of a basket made by an Alaskan Indigenous student at a boarding school. Annie Coollook (or Coogidlac, Koodlallook or Koolalook), was of Iñupiat descent and attended the Carlisle Indian School, in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, from November 14, 1897, when she was seven, to April 17, 1907, when she was seventeen. In 1910, Annie went to work as a housekeeper in Riverside, California, before becoming a student at a Bible College in San Francisco in 1914. There Annie met Presbyterian minister Albert Hansin Eide and they married and moved to Diomed Island in the Aleutians. Annie then became a teaching assistant at Point Barrow working with her own community.⁵⁶ A lidded basket attributed to Annie Coollook is in the collection of the Heard Museum in Phoenix Arizona, 48997-1 a, b (fig. 4). The donors of the basket also donated a photograph of Annie and reported that she made the basket in 1904–1905 at age fourteen or fifteen, while on a Carlisle school outing in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania.

This basket, made from red and black dyed and undyed raffia on an undetectable single-rod foundation, does preserve a knobbed lid and the geometric patterns



FIGURE 4. Lidded basket attributed to Annie Coollook, Heard Museum in Phoenix Arizona, 48997-1 a, b.

often seen on examples of Yup'ik basketry traditions.⁵⁷ While weavers have been very resourceful in their acceptance of imported and modern materials into their baskets, those who are revitalizing basketry traditions in Alaska embrace the Northwest Native American Basketweavers Association's mission, which includes "maintenance of the social, cultural, spiritual, and environment surrounding basketweaving" and "protect[ion] and preserv[ation] and . . . access to traditional cultural resources and gathering sites."⁵⁸

A next example is in the collections of the Sherman Indian School Museum (fig. 5), also published as figure 6.12 in Marinella Lentis's dissertation "Art Education in American Indian Boarding Schools: Tool of Assimilation, Tool of Resistance."⁵⁹ Lentis persuasively argues that this basket was completed by Brigida Ward, a Mission Indian at Sherman in the early 1900s, the period when Sherman Indian School curator Lorene Sisquoc believes this basket to have been made. Made from dyed and undyed raffia, this coiled basket bears a shape not typically found in Mission-style basketry, either before or after the boarding-school era.⁶⁰ When we contrast this basket, with its flat bottom, with the inside and profile views of a Cahuilla basket bowl with geometric designs as James presents it in his book *Indian Basketry*, it becomes apparent how different these school baskets are from those culturally affiliated with the maker.⁶¹

Two additional examples of baskets made by Indigenous children enrolled in Indian boarding schools, now in the collections of the Riverside Museum, further



FIGURE 5. Attributed to Brigida Ward. Coiled raffia on rattan basket in the collections of the Sherman Indian Museum.

illustrate the impact of how-to books and instructional models. Violet Digesay, age eleven, made a rattan wickerwork bowl with a braid of raffia laced through it while attending the Theodore Roosevelt School at Fort Apache (fig. 6). One need only look at the detailed rattan wickerwork directions in James's 1903 work, referred to there as "web weave" and best illustrated there by the work of students at Teachers College in New York, to discover how Violet Digesay may have learned to weave.⁶² While attending the same school, Lynn Jaynaz, age eight, created an intensely colored basket from dyed raffia, coiled with wrapped and interlocking stitches, with two small handles (fig. 7). Characteristics such as these—the wide color palette, interlocking stitches, and uneven walls—have a great deal in common with baskets made by Anglo women from instructional books and kits.⁶³ Interestingly, neither of these baskets are in keeping with the *Course of Study for Indian Schools* (1901) developed by Superintendent Estelle Reel, in which she states, "the children must be led to see how important it is for them to learn the arts of making baskets as they were woven by their parents."⁶⁴

These examples provide evidence of weavers working in ways disconnected from the traditions associated with their respective peoples. At least three examples suggest that weaving was taught from a "how-to" book, or based on instructional models, rather than from personal transmission accompanied by intangible communications. In addition to the Hopi, so-called "Mission Indians" from southern California—that is, peoples who received Spanish names after missions were built on their territories—have a robust tradition of basketry using yucca, deergrass, juncus, and sumac that has been revitalized today through the efforts of weavers.⁶⁵ Basket makers from the Aleutian Islands maintained weaving of finely stitched twined and coiled baskets, including rounded baskets with knobbed lids, most typically including rye grass and cedar and spruce roots, with adaptations in the nineteenth century. Revitalization efforts undertaken by the Northwest Native Basketweavers Association do not include use of raffia or rattan, as none of these communities adapted raffia and rattan basketry.

CONCLUSIONS

The long-term focus maintained by authors such as George Wharton James on writing and disseminating how-to books about American Indian basketry, which, as I have shown, included two-dimensional designs of imaginatively named baskets and instructions for their completion, should be seen as misappropriation for personal gain. It is clear that James, and perhaps some of his contemporaries, were disseminating their publications among schools, including Indian boarding schools. At a minimum, it was unenlightened that James promoted such publications even after knowing that Indian boarding school officials and reformists had seen fit to realign basket making practices with Indigenous methods.

Further, the marketing practices revealed in James's archives mimic those of the "Navajo School," in which the thrifty purchase of the instructions allow anyone to weave their own Indian basket that "when finished is worth from \$30 to \$40."⁶⁶ And finish them they did.^{67,68} The 1914 edition of *Practical Basketmaking* is heavily

FIGURE 6. Violet Digesay, rattan wickerwork bowl with a braid of raffia made at the Theodore Roosevelt School at Fort Apache (Riverside Museum A8-79).

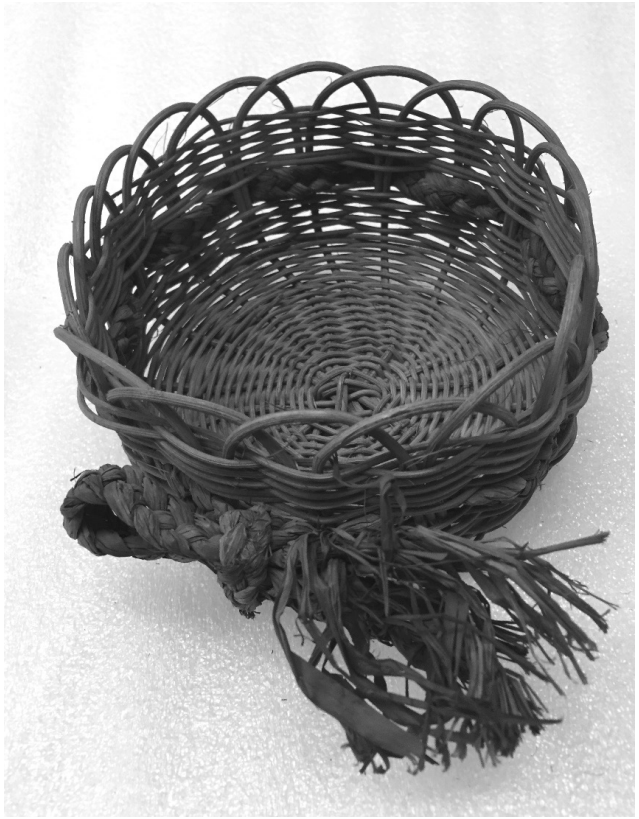
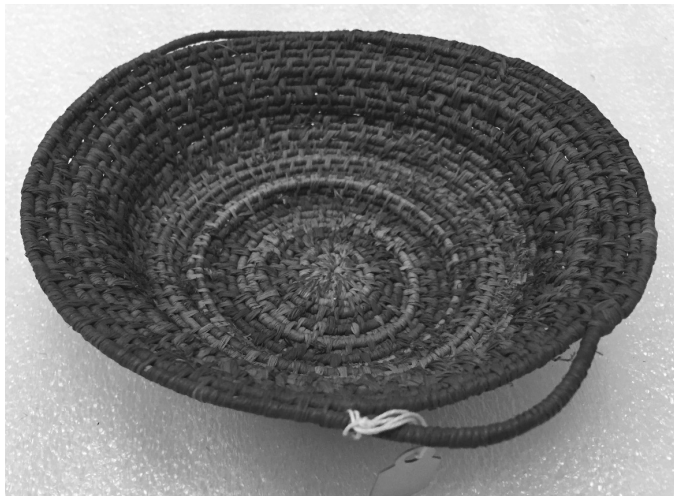


FIGURE 7. Lynn Jaynaz, coiled basket from multi-colored dyed raffia made while attending the Apache School (Riverside Museum A8-147)



illustrated with baskets, presumably but not specifically noted as having been produced by non-Native men and women from designs or kits, including baskets by Fred S. Boughton of Pittsford, New York (illustrated in fig. 37 of the book), Mrs. E. A. Hayes, Brookline, Massachusetts (fig. 38), and Miss Nelly Sutton, Detroit (fig. 41).⁶⁹

James's volume *Indian Basketry* was first published in 1901 and sold 10,000 copies.⁷⁰ James's archives indicate that of two 5,000-volume print runs of *Indian Basketry* and *How to Make Indian and Other Baskets* in 1903, more than 4,800 copies of *Indian Basketry* and 3,000 of *How to Make* sold by January 1911.⁷¹ While subsequent texts devoted to basketry by James appeared as lectures and serial articles rather than books,⁷² images of baskets in his collection also figured in a 1913 book reprint of his article "Poetry and Symbolism of Indian Basketry." After his death in 1923, dissemination of James's work continues to this day. J. L. Hammett continued to republish *Practical Basketmaking* through 1951. *How to Make Indian and Other Baskets* also was republished posthumously in 1970 by Rio Grande Press in New Mexico. In 1970, Dover Publications produced a reprint of *Indian Basketry* and it has continued to be printed and distributed.⁷³

Baskets produced from kits and designs share a series of visual traits that distinguish them from American Indian baskets, such as the use of imported raffia and rattan, and certain stitching methods. They often include a brighter color palette than is typically found on Indian baskets. A detailed guide to the characteristics of these baskets to readily allow for their identification by collection stewards will be addressed in a future article. Such identification is urgently needed, for as these baskets have increased in age and accumulated complex collection histories, they have entered both tribal and non-tribal museum collections, as well as the marketplace, with erroneous identification: the ultimate appropriation.

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NOTES

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31. *Ibid.*
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