

NEW HUICHO INDIAN EXHIBIT

BY ALEXANDER SPOEHR

ASSISTANT CURATOR OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Field Museum's collection illustrating Mexican ethnology has recently been augmented by an important gift of Huichol Indian material, presented by Mr. Henry J. Bruman, Professor of Geology, Pennsylvania State College. The more significant of these specimens have been installed in the Hall of Mexican Archaeology and Ethnology (Hall 8), Case 23, where they make a colorful addition to the exhibits.

The Huichol Indians live in the tall and rugged mountains of the northwestern part of the state of Jalisco. The wildness of their country greatly impressed the early Spanish Jesuit chronicler, Father Ortega, who said of the Huichol homeland: "It is so wild and frightful to behold that it, more than the quivers of its warlike defenders, took away the courage of the conquerors, because not only did its ridges and valleys appear inaccessible, but the extended sphere of towering mountains and peaks perplex even the eye." Yet despite the natural defenses enjoyed by the Huichols, they finally succumbed in 1722 to the Spanish conquerors. Franciscan missionaries followed, a number of churches were built, and the Huichols were nominally converted to Catholicism. However, missionary work was later abandoned, the churches fell in ruins, and the Huichols continued the practices of their native religion, which nevertheless assimilated numerous elements of Christianity.

QUITE PRIMITIVE EVEN TODAY

This Indian culture was also greatly affected by the introduction of metal tools and of domestic animals such as cattle, sheep, and horses. Yet even today, with modern Mexican civilization surrounding their mountain fastness, the Huichols remain a relatively primitive folk, living in isolated households, and growing crops of corn, beans, and squashes in small fields scattered over the mountain sides. There are today about four thousand Indians in the tribe.

Of greatest interest in the new exhibit are the ceremonial objects and the textiles. The former consist mainly of votive bowls and ceremonial arrows. The bowls are sections of gourds decorated with animal figures made of colored glass beads and beeswax, and used as offerings. The arrows represent a more common feature of Huichol ceremonial life. When an Indian prepares for a noteworthy event, he makes a decorated ceremonial arrow and asks for protection or a favor from the gods. The arrow is thought to act as a messenger to the deities.

Among the textiles are included belts, bags, head bands, men's dress neckerchiefs, and a woman's poncho cape. Embroidery is a favorite decorative technique and striking designs are carried out with care and

BENEFITS OF MUSEUM EXTENDED TO CRIPPLED CHILDREN

BY JOHN R. MILLAR

CURATOR, N. W. HARRIS PUBLIC SCHOOL EXTENSION

In recent months, ten hospital schools have been added to those receiving the portable museum cases prepared and circulated by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension of Field Museum. The hospital schools are branches of regular or special public schools. They represent a successful attempt to provide continuing instruction for children of school age who, through misfortune, must undergo long hospitalization for the treatment of various non-infectious maladies such as rheumatic heart, chorea, or crippling deformities of various kinds.

Instruction in hospital schools under best conditions is carried on under great difficulties. In many instances it requires individual bedside teaching. Under such circumstances, the Harris Extension cases, in spite of their claim to portability, seemed to lack utility as teaching aids or material for instruction. To adapt the use of the cases to hospital conditions, a tubular metal stand with large, free-rolling casters was designed, and a sample made by the Museum. It supports the usual loan of two school cases at bedside or wheel-chair height, and provides an almost effortless mobility for the cases,

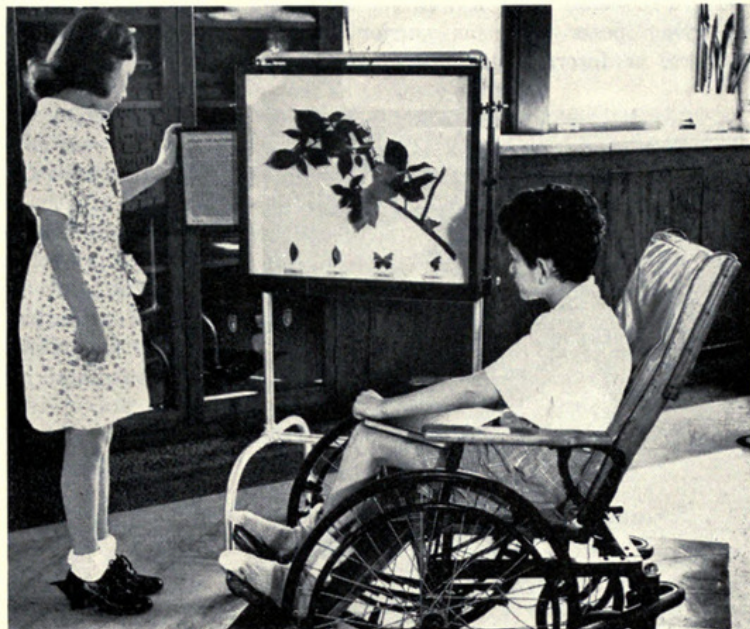
effectiveness. Two water color sketches, executed by Miss Margaret Ross, Volunteer in the Department of Anthropology, illustrate the Huichol method of wearing headbands and the manner in which women wear their dress capes. Two additional sketches by Miss Ross are mounted with a collection of modern Aztec specimens, which have been reinstalled in the same case.

Chicagoans, Please Note!

From a resident of Bluefield, West Virginia, who recently visited Chicago, the Director of the Museum has received the following letter:

"Just a note to tell you that the largest value received for twenty-five cents was the admission paid to see the Chicago Field Museum. The vacation spent in Chicago area by myself, wife, and son Jim was the happiest we ever experienced."

permitting them to be moved with ease from place to place in the hospital school. With the exception of one, where the kind of patient permits more formal classroom instruction, all the hospital schools receiving the Harris Extension cases have acquired this type of stand.



Courtesy of Board of Education Photo Laboratory

MUSEUM REACHES OUT TO HANDICAPPED YOUNGSTERS

Scene at Sarah Morris Children's Hospital (a division of Michael Reese Hospital) where traveling exhibition cases like that shown in center are now being sent on regular schedule by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension of Field Museum.

This contribution of the extension services of Field Museum to the education and welfare of handicapped children, who may be required to lead a cloistered existence the rest of their lives, will be regarded with satisfaction by the several thousand Chicagoans and others who support the Museum's activities.

5,000 BOLIVIAN BIRD SPECIMENS
RECEIVED AT MUSEUM

Field Museum recently received an interesting collection of some 5,000 birds from Bolivia. They were assembled by Señor Francisco Steinbach, of Cochabamba, who carries on the tradition of exploring the animal world of his country established many years ago by his father, José Steinbach. The collection is particularly rich in birds of the family of oven birds (not related to the North American oven bird). Also well represented are humming birds and fly catchers.

These specimens, which fill an important gap in the Museum's geographical coverage of South America, will be of great value in comparisons and studies on collections recently made by the Magellanic Expedition and other material recently received from Paraguay, Peru, and Ecuador. —R.B.



Spoehr, Alexander. 1941. "New Huichol Indian Exhibit." *Field Museum news* 12(9), 3-3.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25723>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/364937>

Holding Institution

Field Museum of Natural History Library

Sponsored by

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the Chicago Field Museum.
For information contact dcc@library.uiuc.edu.

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.