

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

TO THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR

ENDED JUNE 30

1916



Smith-Lever Act and the county agents are cooperating with the farmers of this service in behalf of the Indians along systematic and effective lines. The officials of the Federal and State agricultural departments connected with this work have, without exception, expressed a willingness to advance it among the Indians. Their sympathetic and helpful attitude will be a potent influence among the Indians. Boys' and girls' clubs were organized on 23 reservations. The Grain Sorghum Club at the Phoenix school was awarded the first prize in the State of Arizona.

Agricultural demonstration work was very successful at Cheyenne River, Flathead, Hayward, Kickapoo, La Pointe, Omaha, San Xavier, Sisseton, Tomah, and Turtle Mountain.

NATIVE INDUSTRIES.

Baskets, pottery, and bead work are made by Indians and encouraged by the Indian Office, but the Navajo blanket industry is the most important and remunerative. This industry has not been as extensive as in previous years, owing to the Indians having received higher prices for their wool, which they have preferred to sell as clipped rather than weave into fabrics.

The system of tagging blankets at the San Juan and Moqui Indian reservations has been extended to all Navajo reservations with the ultimate aim of requiring all traders who purchase blankets to distinguish them by permanently attached tags. This guarantees the genuineness of the article and gives it unique and exceptional value. These metal tags are fastened to the blanket by means of a wire and lead seal. They are placed on all blankets for which the Indians receive a price of 75 cents or more per pound. If the system works satisfactorily it will be extended to baskets, pottery, and other Indian-made articles. New markets for the sale of the products of native Indian industry are being exploited, and it is believed that if the arrangements now under consideration can be perfected the Indians will hereafter have a more certain and better market with comparatively satisfactory prices.

The directors of the Commercial Museum and the University Museum, both of Philadelphia, have indicated their willingness to cooperate with us by giving valuable floor space and assisting in setting up exhibits in conspicuous places properly marked to direct the public to the Indian source of supply.

Prominent and reliable merchants from the populous centers, dealing in such wares extensively, have indicated their interest in a dependable and standardized supply of native Indian industries, and if successfully developed will be a source of distribution greatly to the advantage of the Indians.

LACE MAKING.

The Sybil Carter Lace Association of New York City maintains lace schools on several reservations, where it furnishes its own teachers, all the material, the funds needed to pay the Indians, and disposes of the finished product. Last September, through a cooperative agreement with this association, a meeting was held at Laguna, where the teachers of day schools and field matrons in that section were given instructions in lace making which would enable them to cooperate with the representative of the association in extending this industry to the pueblos under the Albuquerque superintendency.

This association also intended to start a lace school at Eastern Cherokee, N. C., but was unable to obtain a teacher, and was compelled for the present to give up the project.

Lace work among the Mission reservations in California was heretofore conducted in cooperation with Mrs. Cordelia S. Sterling, of Redlands, Cal. Prior to her death this spring ill health caused her to give up this labor of love, and her death had a depressing effect upon the industry of which she had so long been the mainstay. Last year two teachers were employed by the Indian Bureau to teach this art among the Mission Indians in California. Altogether the Indians have shown an interest in and adaptability to lace making, indicating that it will be successful and profitable as an industry for the home employment of Indian women and children. Some Indians have shown skill, both in the making of the lace and patterns. Many have indicated industry. It has occurred to me that the interest of purchasers can be increased by the development of native Indian patterns, and it is our purpose to undertake the working out of such a plan.

INDIAN FAIRS.

The holding of agricultural fairs on the different reservations and of placing Indian exhibits at county and State fairs has been continued with excellent results. Fifty-four fairs were held in 1915, as compared with 35 the previous year, of which 32, or nearly 60 per cent, were entirely supported by voluntary contributions from Indians, gate receipts, etc. On most reservations where Indian fairs are held there is a permanently organized fair association, with Indian officers, charged with entire responsibility for the management of the fair, under the supervision of the superintendent. This makes the Indians feel that it is their enterprise, for which they are responsible.

About 100 certificates of merit, under the official seal of the Indian Office and the personal signature of the commissioner, were sent to Indian first-prize winners at Indian and white fairs in recognition of their accomplishments.

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