

NEZ PERCE CRADLEBOARDS



FROM THE HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION
AT NEZ PERCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



Northwest Interpretive Association
Nez Perce Branch
Spalding, Idaho
2005

HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

The pictures in this book are from the Historic Photo Collection at Nez Perce National Historical Park. The collection of over 5500 images has come from many sources over the years and continues to grow as people share their heirlooms with the Park Service. Some of the images are quite old and damaged, but are included for their artistic contribution. The identities of most of the children are cataloged as 'unknown'. Names are listed under the photographs, where they are known, but otherwise left blank.

Judy Wohler, Park Guide
Nez Perce National Historical Park
Spalding, Idaho

CRADLEBOARDS

(tike's) teek-ess

From the beginning of time, babies have been put in some type of device to hold them securely. In Nez Perce country, the evolution of these devices ultimately led to two forms that are still prevalent today. Photography became popular in the Northwest after the 1870's, giving us a record of what cradleboards looked like. The styles range from plain and functional to elaborate as you will see in the pages that follow.

Early observers to the western plateau region described the native cradleboards as in Otis Mason's report to the Smithsonian, published in 1887:

"The basis of the cradle is a rough board, generally hewn out, 3 feet high, 15 inches wide at the top and not more than an inch thick. It is shaped somewhat like a tailor's sleeveboard, but is more tapering. The board is covered with buckskin, drawn perfectly tight upon the back and across the broad part of the front as far down as the hood, or about one third of the length. Below that, the two edges of the buckskin form flaps, which meet nearly over the child. Along the edges of these flaps strings are looped, into which loops a lashing cord passes backward and forward to enclose the child tightly in its capsule. On the top of the back a fringe of buckskin strings is formed either by slitting the buckskin covering itself or by a separate strip sewed on at this point. A little above the center is sewed the head strap of buckskin; to enable the mother to transport her child or to suspend it when at rest. The hood of the cradle is based upon the flaps of buckskin, but these are entirely concealed by the covering of flannel or other substance. The most ornamented portion of the cradle is the part above the hood; a piece of flannel or buckskin is covered with beadwork, solid, or has figures wrought upon it in various patterns. To the hood are attached medicine bags, bits of shell, abalone perhaps, and the whole artistic genius of the mother is in play to adorn her offspring. After the child is lashed in the cradle a triangular flap of buckskin, also adorned with beadwork, is tied over the child to the buckskin flaps on either side."

"The child is laid on its back on the board, packed with soft moss, and laced firmly down with its arms to its sides, and only the head at liberty...The little prisoners are remarkably good; no squalling disturbances in an Indian camp."

A typical Nez Perce cradleboard is constructed out of one piece of brain-tanned buckskin stretched over a wooden board. This type of buckskin is not only soft and pliable like the mother's skin, but it is also porous, allowing heat to escape, thus keeping the baby comfortable. The child is able to move isometrically inside the flexible leather and feels secure and content.

The hood over the baby's head protects it from cold air drafts, preventing ear aches. The child's lower half is packed with soft cattail fibers for 'diapers' at lower elevations. In the mountains where cattails are not available, pine moss was used. A spade-shaped piece of leather or cloth often covered over the lower front portion of the child. Sometimes this was decorated, sometimes plain. Nearly half of the historic photos show some form of this covering.

The 'roll-bar' hoop around the head of the child is usually made out of the dried branch of a wild rose, formed into a half circle, covered with buckskin and beaded. Tiny bells and beads hang from the branch, toys for the baby to focus on. The hoop also serves as a frame on which to drape a cloth to shield the baby from light or insects. Since a child went everywhere with its mother the first year, the cradles had backstraps. It would allow the baby to be hung on a tree branch while the mother was working or suspended from the pommel of the horse saddle. As long as the child could see its mother, it would be content. If the strap would happen to break, the hoop served as a 'roll-bar', protecting the head and face of the child.

A small bag is tied to the side of the hood or on the base of the hoop containing the child's umbilical chord after it is dried. This bag was opened only by a medicine man/woman if the child was very ill.

The majority of beaded Nez Perce cradleboards have some type of wild rose design. The rose design and the rose branch hoop are significant because the Nez Percés believed that evil spirits would not come near a rosebush for fear of getting caught in the thorns, thus the symbol of the rose became a prayer that the baby would be protected from evil.

Spalding-Allen Cradleboard

This cradleboard is part of the original "*Spalding-Allen Collection*" on display at Nez Perce National Historical Park headquarters at Spalding, Idaho. It is one of 20 objects collected in Nez Perce country by Rev. Henry Spalding for shipment to his friend, Dudley Allen in Ohio in the late 1830's. It was originally cataloged as a "Nez Perce Cradleboard", but the shape, style and lacing are more typical of the Crow Indians. The decorations of dentalium shells and elk teeth are not usually seen on Nez Perce cradleboards. It is the author's opinion that the dress and the cradleboard were probably made by a Crow woman. Intermarriage and trade between the Nez Perce and Crows was not unusual since the Plateau people often traveled to Montana to hunt buffalo. The dress is made for a woman nearly 6 feet tall, a common height for the Crows, but unusual among Plateau people.



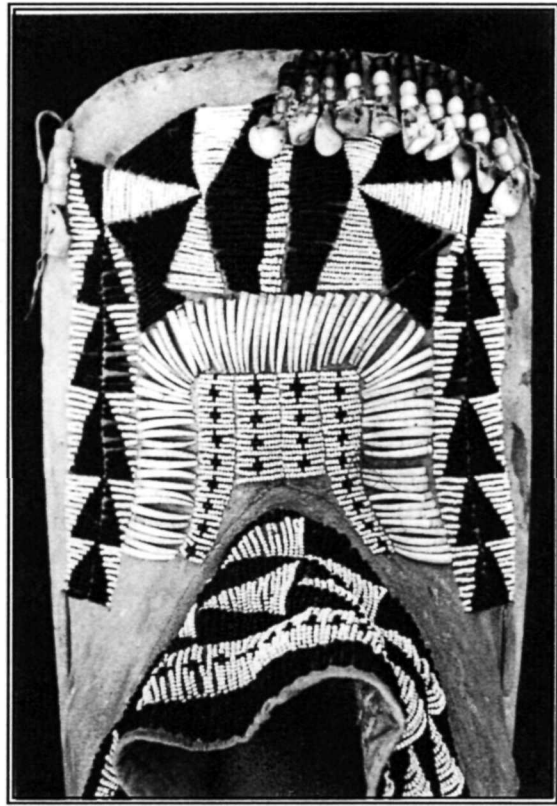
NEPE-HI-1811



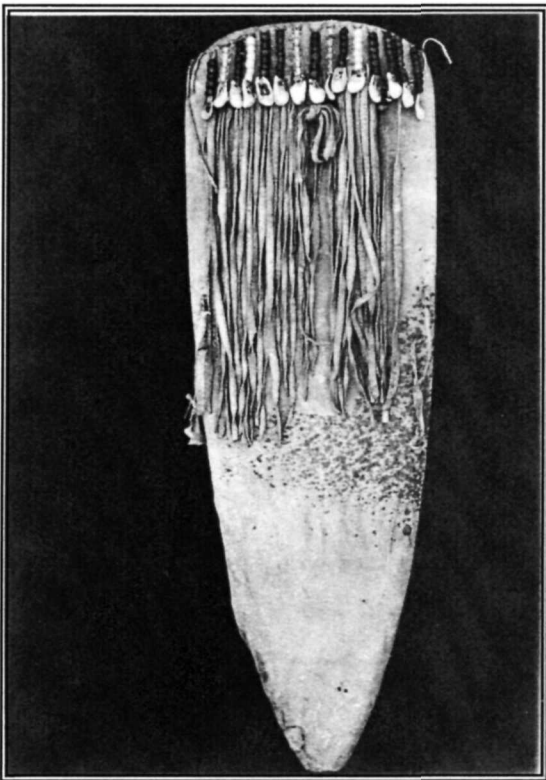
NEPE-HI-1813



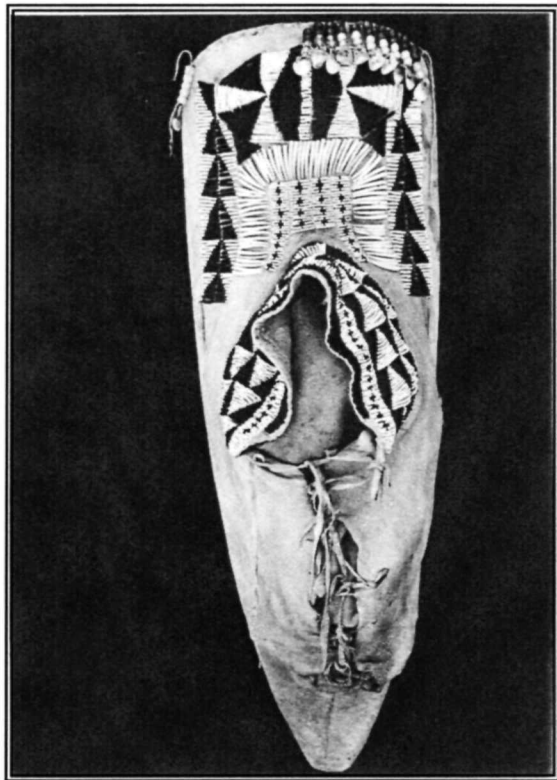
NEPE HI-1807



NEPE HI-1808



NEPE HI-1809



NEPE HI-1810

From the E. G. Gustavesen Collection
By Photographer Dr. Edward Latham, Nespelem, Washington 1890-1910.



NEPE HI-3233

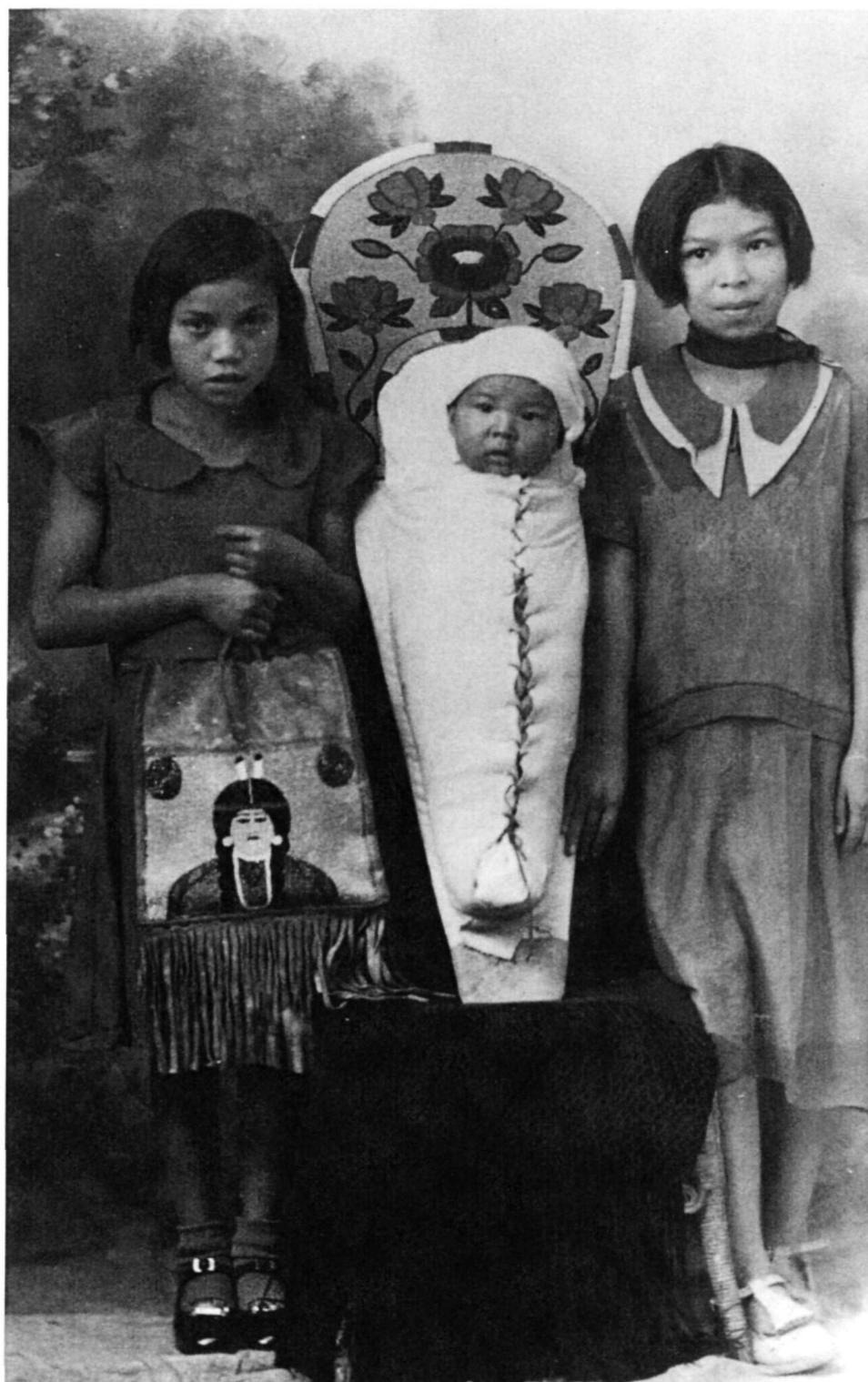
From Charles Kipp's collection



NEPE HI-0371

John (Jack) Pablo of Kooskia, Idaho (in the cradleboard),
Mabel Lowry, Lizzie Pablo and Alex Wilson

1920 Photograph



NEPE HI-0685

1890's



NEPE HI- 0708

Photographed by Walter Scott Bowman, Pendleton, Oregon 1915



NEPE HI-0748



NEPE HI-0717

Photographer: Walter Scott Bowman, Pendleton, Oregon 1915



NEPE HI-0728



NEPE HI-2477



NEPE HI-0686

From the Betty Rudfelt Collection
By Photographer J. W. Webster, Lewiston, Idaho c.1915



NEPE HI-1085

From the Betty Rudfelt Collection
by Photographer J.W. Webster, Lewiston, Idaho c.1915



NEPE HI-1083

The cradle on the left has an asymmetrical beadwork design,
the only one in the collection.

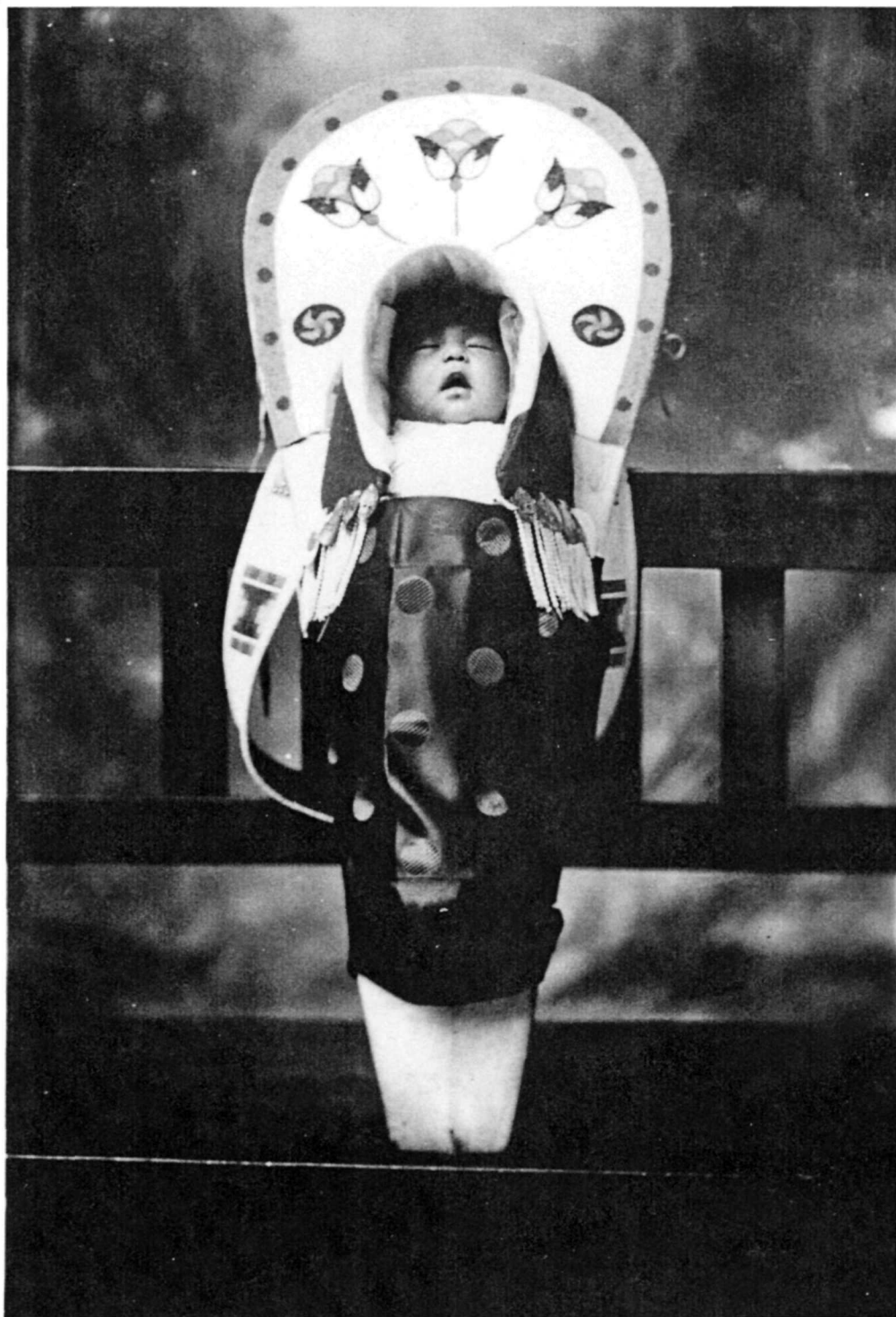
From the E. G. Gustavesen Collection
By Photographer, Dr. Edward Latham, Nespelem, Washington



NEPE HI-C7417

1900 photograph taken at Nespelem, Washington. Note the expression on the baby's face !

From the Betty Rudfelt Collection
By Photographer J.W. Webster, Lewiston, Idaho, c.1915



NEPE HI-1084

From the E. G. Gustavesen Collection
By Photographer, Dr. Edward H. Latham 1890-1910



NEPE HI-7418

Photo taken in Nespelem, Washington, around 1900

From the E. G. Gustavesen Collection
By Photographer, Dr. Edward H. Latham



1901 Photograph taken in Nespelem, Washington.
See the close-up of the Cradleboard on page 23.



NEPE HI-C7404

From the E. G. Gustavesen Collection
By Photographer Dr. Edward H. Latham, Nespelem, Washington

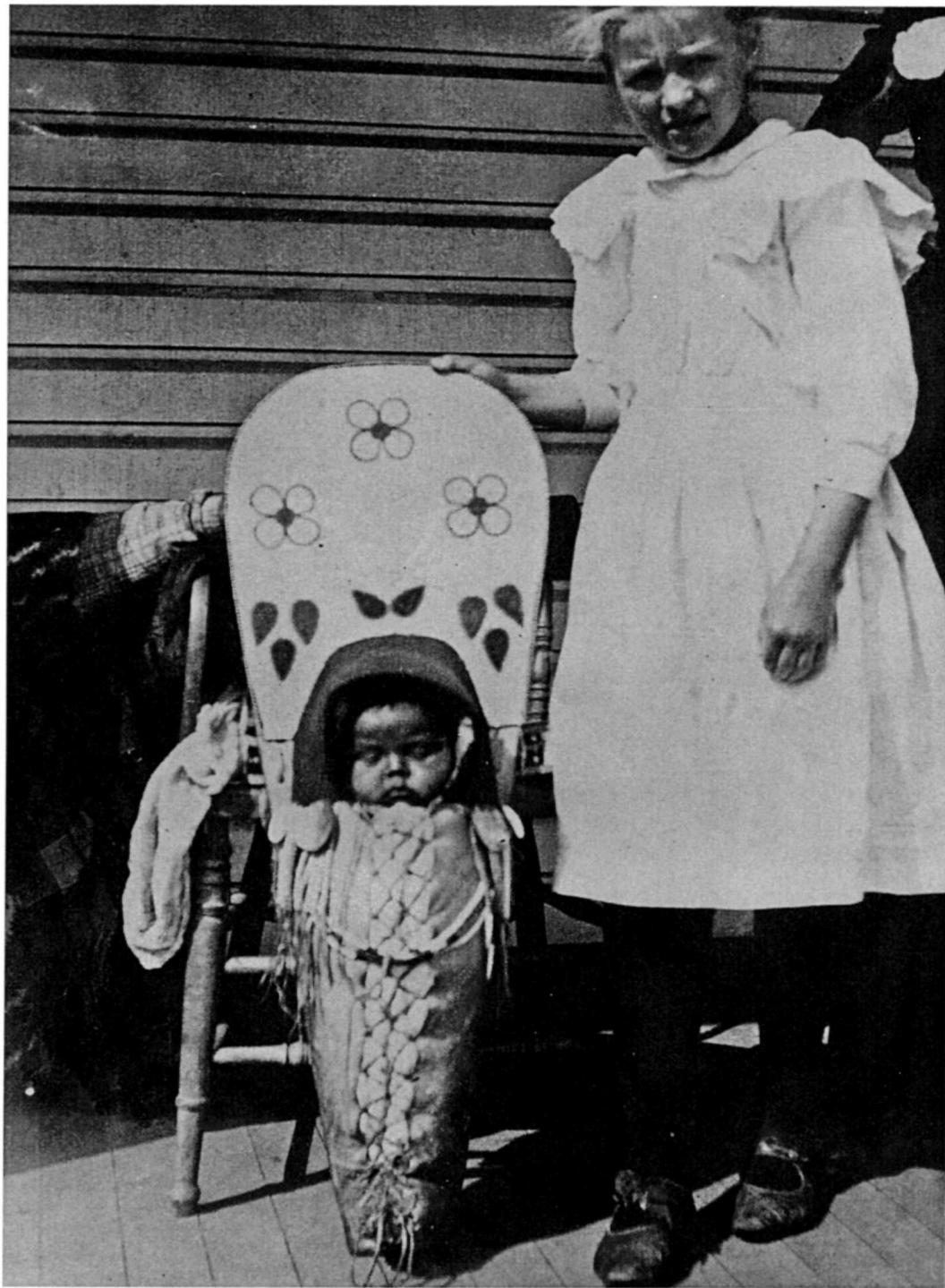


NEPE HI-7391

From the Francis Downs Heinen Estate, Lapwai, Idaho



NEPE HI-3085



NEPE HI-2472

Thora Stranahan, posing next to a Nez Perce cradleboard in this 1900 photo taken in Lapwai, Idaho.

From Elmer Paul's collection
By Photographer E. G. Cummings, Lewiston, Idaho.



NEPE HI-2980

From Cecelia Bearchum's collection



NEPE HI-6786

c.1910-1915

From Cecil Carter's collection



NEPE-HI-2147

Julia (Norman) Carter with premature infant.

From the Collection at Washington State University, Pullman, Washington.



NEPE HI—1592 and WS 77-0144

From the Collection of E. G. Gustavesen
Photographer: Dr. Edward H. Latham, c. 1890-1910, Nespelem, Washington



NEPE HI-2288

Art Cercle (son of Charlie Wilpocken) and 'unknown' boy .

From the Collection at Idaho State Historical Society.



NEPE HI-1767 and IH 63-221.125(B)

Photo taken of Ida James, Susie James and Sonava Motanic
by Jane Gay, c. 1889-1892, near Stites, Idaho.

J. W. Webster, Photographer, Lewiston, Idaho



NEPE HI-2467

Blackeagle Baby

From the collection at Montana Historical Society
Claire Hunt, Photographer



NEPE HI-1804 and MT955-981

From the E. G. Gustavesen Collection, Nespelem, Washington
Photographer: Dr. Edward H. Latham c. 1890-1910.



NEPE HI-2286

Sitting still long enough to get your picture taken could sometimes be a problem. Note the blurred arm and leg of the boy on the right.

From the collection at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D. C.



NEPE HI-1761 and SI12975-G-1

Louise Broncheau with her mother, Sophie Davis Broncheau, in this photo taken by Jane Gay in 1891 on the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho.

J. W. Webster, Photographer, Lewiston, Idaho



NEPE HI-2470

“Bessie”



NEPE HI-1162 and IH 63-221-264

“The First Missionary Society In Idaho”

Photo taken Jan. 8, 1891 by Jane Gay at Spalding.

Front Row: In Cradleboard: Baby Mark Allen; Jeanette Allen, Fannie Allen, David T. Arthur, unknown female infant, unknown boy.

Middle Row: Unknown female, Unknown female, Emma (Mrs. John) Allen [HeMowTahLote]; Fannie Hayes (Mrs. Alec), Mary Arthur (Mrs. Mark) holding an infant, Fanny (Bailey) Hayes (Mrs. Rev. James), Unknown female

Back Row: Unknown female, Unknown Female, Unknown Female, Unknown Female, Unknown Female, Unknown Female, Kate McBeth, Unknown Female

From the collection at Idaho State Historical Society.



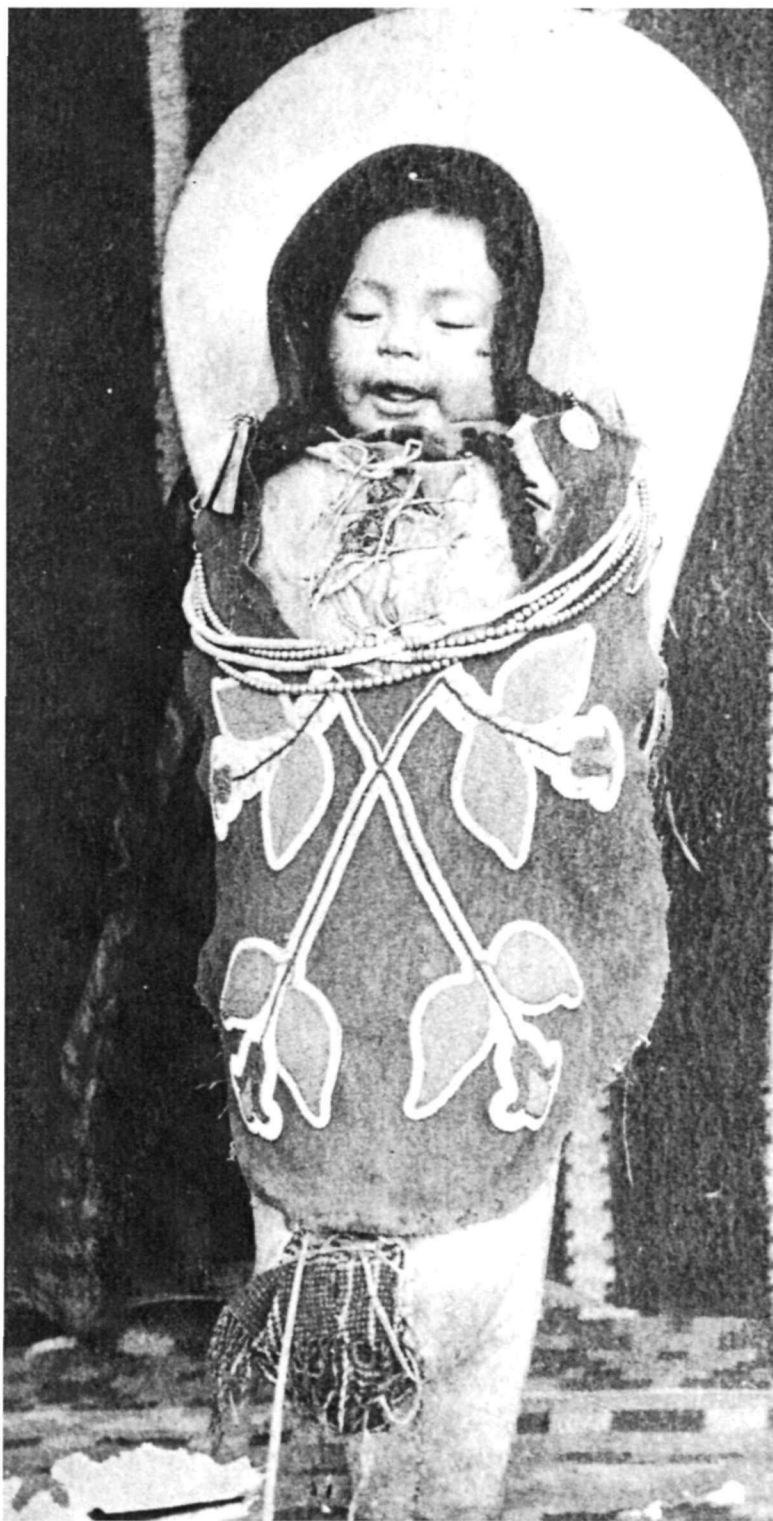
NEPE HI-1728 and IH 63-221-165 (D)

Photo taken outside Sue McBeth's home in Lapwai, Idaho, by Jane Gay in 1890. The McBeth sisters were missionaries to the Nez Perce at that time.



NEPE HI-2469

From Charles Kipp's collection By Photographer, A. F. Wohlenberg



NEPE HI-0285

Annie Pablo



NEPE—HI-2436

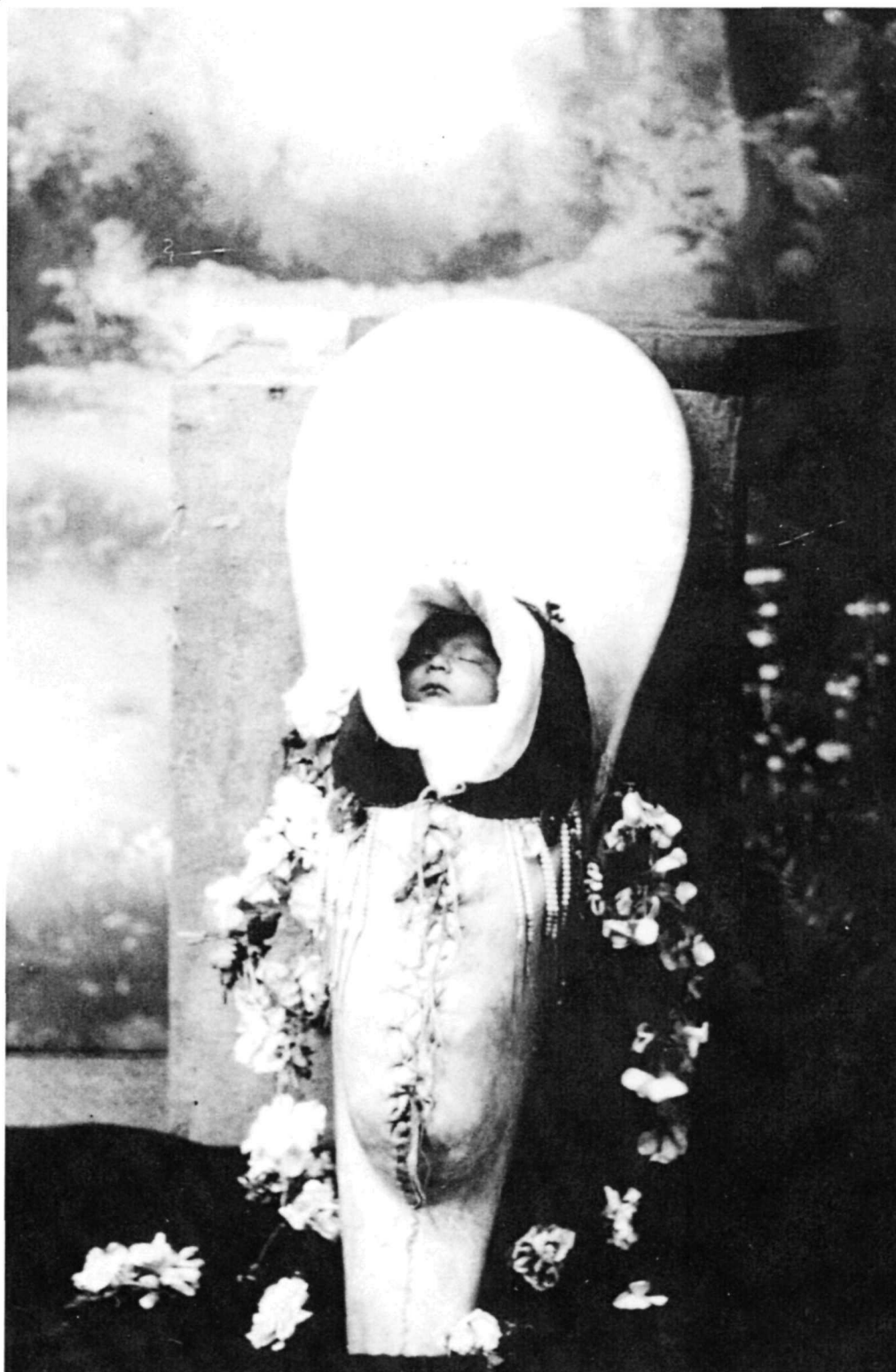
Notice the spade-shaped piece of cloth on the lower front of this cradleboard. It is common to have some form of covering over the front of Nez Perce cradleboards, sometimes beaded and sometimes plain. c.1890

From the Betty Rudfelt Collection
J. W. Webster, Photographer, Lewiston, Idaho c.1915.



NEPE HI-1094

From the Betty Rudfelt Collection
J. W. Webster, Photographer, Lewiston , Idaho, c. 1910



NEPE HI-1146

From Charles Kipp's collection
By Photographer A. F. Wohlenberg



NEPE HI-0288

Notice the hoop over the baby's head on the cradleboard, customarily made from the branch of a wild rose bush.

From Mark Allen's collection



NEPE HI-2292

Dolly Allen, Jeanette Jackson and Ms. Ellenwood at the Mark Allen, Sr. Ranch on Cottonwood Creek, near Myrtle, Idaho prior to 1935. All three children are unidentified.

From the Reuben Family's collection



NEPE HI-C9716

A Walter Scot Bowman Photograph, Pendleton, Oregon c. 1920.



NEPE HI-3188

From Mrs. Richard Klason's collection



NEPE HI-0591

The rose-branch hoop around the face of the child forms a frame to drape a shade / insect covering over the baby's head.

Photographer: Major Lee Moorhouse c. 1917
From Mrs. J. B. Montgomery's collection.



NEPE HI-C33565

“CAYUSE TWINS”

Emma Jones
A-Lom-Pum

Minthorn Family

Edna Jones
Tox-E-Lox

Walter Scott Bowman, Photographer, Pendleton, Oregon.



NEPE HI-1646

"Umatilla Children"

Taken at DuVall Photography, Moscow, Idaho
From Cecil Carter's collection.



NEPE HI-2046

Note the cradleboard contains the rare combination of floral and geometric designs.

From the E. G. Gustavesen Collection , Nespelem, Washington
Taken by photographer, Dr. Edward H. Latham, c. 1890-1910



NEPE HI-C7405

From the Joe Evans, Sr. collection
By Photographer: C.W. Hanson c.1900



NEPE-HI-3179

From Mrs. John N. Alley's collection
By photographer, Henry Fair, c. 1904-1908



NEPE HI-C33714

From the Lookingglass collection
By photographer, J. A. Hanson, Grangeville, Idaho



NEPE HI-0505

The use of geometric beadwork designs and 'lazy-stitch' is unusual in Nez Perce cradleboards as seen on this 1900 photograph.



NEPE HI-1602

Elsie McKay (Allen) held by Mrs. Adams.



NEPE HI-0569



NEPE-HI 0764

c. 1910

From Ronald Johnson's collection c. 1920.



NEPE HI-3166

Mylie Lawyer with Sioux cradle on the left, Rose Greene on the right with Plateau style dollboard.

From the National Park Service collection.



NEPE—HI-1518

This 1973 photograph of Marie Williams was taken outside of Watson's Store at Spalding, Idaho.

From the collection at Asotin County Historical Society
Photo taken at Lapwai, Idaho



NEPE—HI-C33762

Photo taken at Spalding, Idaho in October 1965
From Ira S. Dole's collection



NEPE HI-33797

A National Park Service photograph



NEPE HI-3105

Jessica Redheart in Seattle at the Northwest Folklife Festival.



NEPE-HI-0271

Viola Morris restored this cradleboard for the National Park Service in 1973 when she was employed there as a cultural demonstrator.

The beadwork was found in a trading post with a tag on it that simply said, "made by a Nez Perce woman". Viola took the old beadwork and sewed it on to a new cradleboard that is still in use in Ranger Programs today.

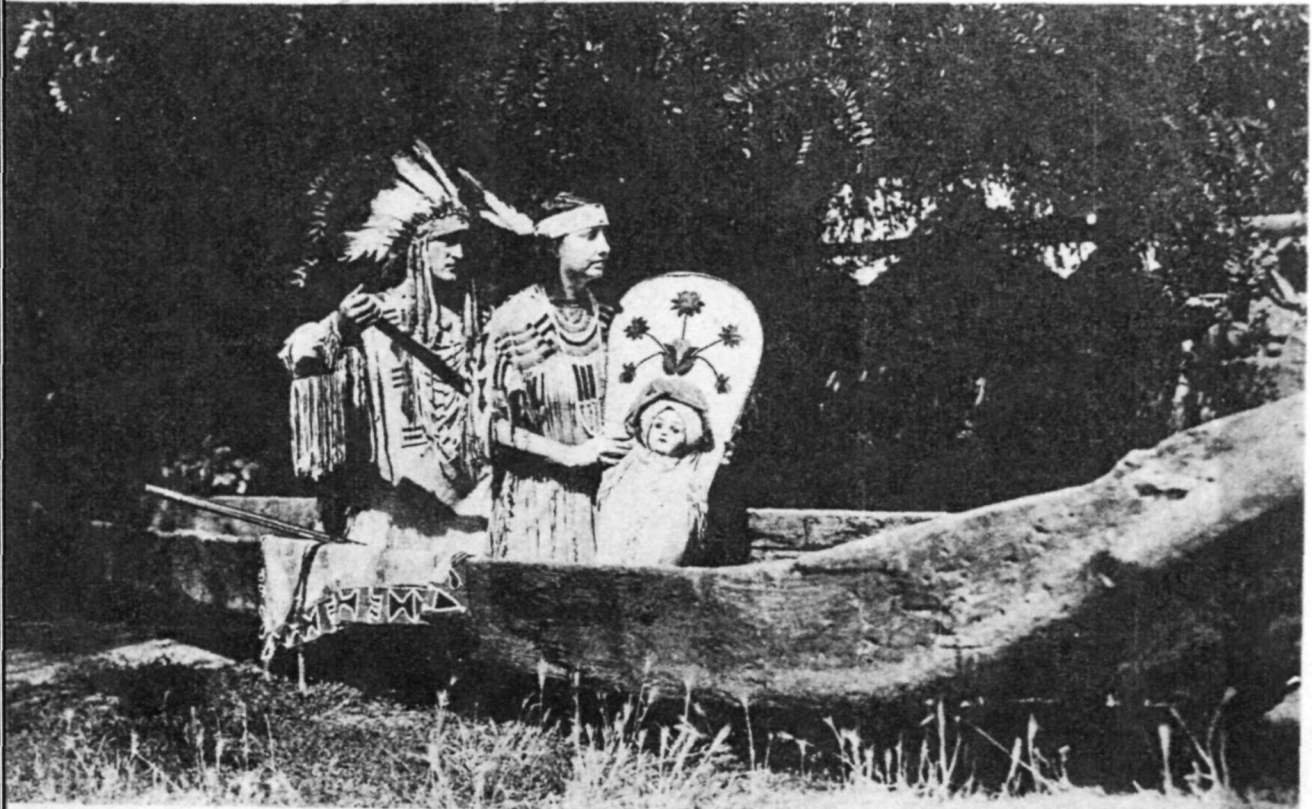


NEPE HI-2509

Elizabeth Wilson with some examples of her expert beadwork.
Photo taken at Spalding, Idaho.

The Seattle Sunday Times Rotogravure

SACAJAWEA MUSEUM

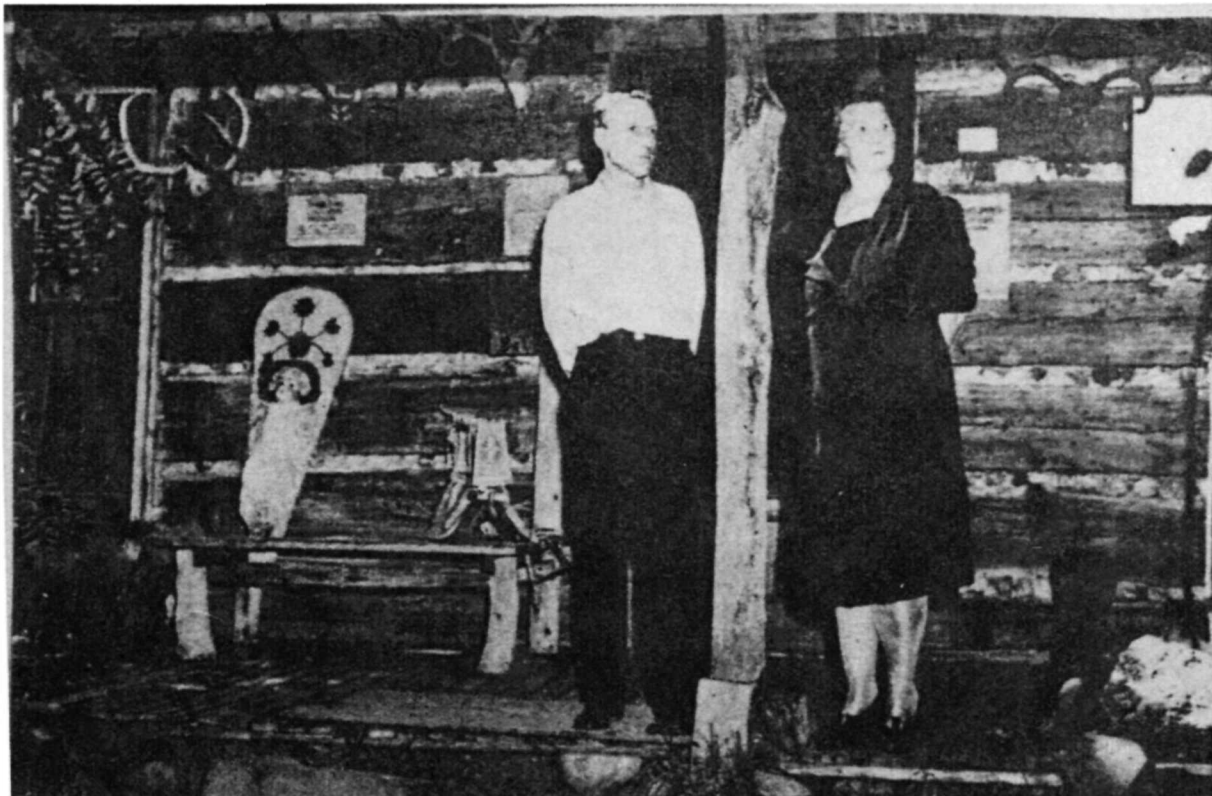


IN THIS DUGOUT CANOE, built for the Lewis and Clark expedition, Chief Red Bear and other warriors guided the explorers part way to the Pacific, then returned to Lapwai (now Spalding, Idaho), where the canoe was kept in the tribe for many years until it was turned over the museum. Miss Edna Baker of Seattle is shown in the historic craft, wearing Sacajawea's ceremonial dress and holding a decorated carrying board such as was used by Sacajawea on the trail. Arnold Waring of Seattle is wearing Chief Joseph's costume.

NEPE HI-0258

This photograph, taken by Patsie Sinkly, appeared in a Seattle newspaper in 1943. It was taken at the Evans Museum in Spalding, Idaho. Arnold Waring and Edna Baker are dressed in clothing from the Museum.

LEWISTON MORNING TRIBUNE 1956



IN THIS CRUDE CABIN some 600 articles of historic value are housed. Mr. and Mrs. Joe Evans, shown on porch, call it the Spalding Old Log Cabin Mission Indian Museum. Byron Defenbach, an Idaho historian, says: "Here was the very inception of the white man's settlement of the Inland Empire. Here was the first farming, the first apple tree, the first school, the first printing press."

NEPE HI-1365

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Evans, Sr. standing outside of their museum at Spalding, Idaho.

From Ralph William's collection



NEPE HI-2686

These two cradleboards hung on the wall in the old Evans Museum at Spalding, Idaho.



NEPE HI-2687

Woman dressed in one of the Evan's Museum's dresses, holding a cradle board from their collection, Spalding, Idaho.



NEPE HI-3394

From Gary K. Likkel's collection.

From the collection of Charles Kipp
By Photographer C. W. Hanson of Lewiston, Idaho.



NEPE—HI-0362

Photograph taken at the Astoria Centennial by Francis William Woodfield.



NEPE HI-0483

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