

Parfleche

Parfleche were containers made out of rawhide, created in a variety of sizes to hold a wide range of objects. These containers are usually folded over and whipstitched around the edges with sinew or strings made of rawhide. The containers are decorated with natural paints in contrasting colors usually with geometric, floral, animal, and other nature designs. Parfleche containers were also designed to fit over a horse so that a storage case hung on either side of the horse. Women used parfleche cases to tote their belongings on their backs. Cases were used as containers for clothing, moccasins, dried foods, sacred objects, and any other items a person might want to store or protect.

Quillwork

Porcupine quills were used for decorative work on clothing until approximately 1850 when the trade and use of glass beads replaced quills as the decoration of choice. The sewing on of glass beads was an easy adaptation to make because the same designs could be made, more colors were available, and the quills no longer had to be acquired, washed, sorted, and dyed before work could

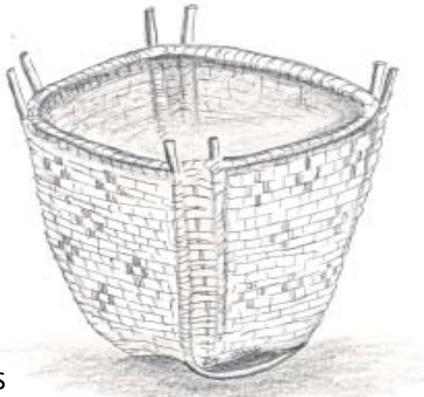
begin. While quillwork is beautiful, unique and usually very well done, there were limitations to the colors and designs which could be applied. With the introduction of glass beads of small consistent size, and great variety of color, these limitations were overcome.



Bison Bladder Pouch and Porcupine Quills

Most work was without a pre-drawn plan, leading to a feeling that the design belongs to each individual article. While there are many patterns which have definite meanings, the designs were frequently used simply because they were appealing to the woman doing the work. Some designs have been found that show definite European influence. Though most Plains Indian designs are geometric, the Hidatsa used some types of floral designs with no background.

Quillworking societies existed among the Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arikara. The right to do quillwork was purchased from society members with trade goods and other materials. The society members in turn taught quillwork techniques and skills to the new members. The traditional art of quillwork continues to be taught and passed down to new artists.



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Basket

were used not only for playing a dice game, but in certain ceremonies.

Basketry

The three tribes (Hidatsa, Mandan, and Arikara) made baskets called “burden baskets” that were used for carrying burdens such as garden produce, berries, firewood or dirt to place on the earth lodge. These baskets were made from the inner bark of elm, ash or box elder woven onto a framework of willow sticks. After the framework and weaving materials (weavers) were prepared, a light colored weaver was wrapped around and around the uprights of the frame.

The darker colored weavers were incorporated, weaving down one side across the bottom and back up the other side. This created a checkerboard effect. To make more complicated designs the darker weavers did not go over and under every light one but rather skipped in and out. The light weavers were the inner bark of the box elder which is nearly white. The dark weavers were made by soaking bundles of prepared bark in pools of clay which had water mixed in to bring it to the right consistency. The bark would pick up the color from the clay pool after several days. These darker weavers would be rinsed and then they were ready to be woven into a basket. Small flat baskets, seven or eight inches in diameter, were also made. These