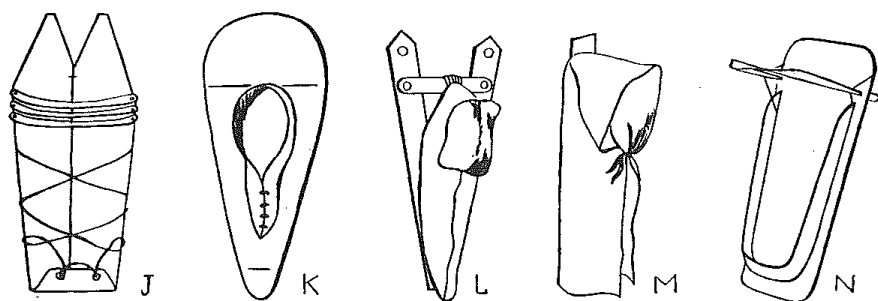
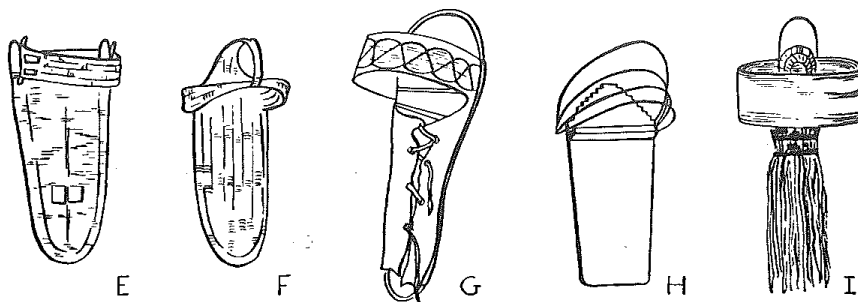
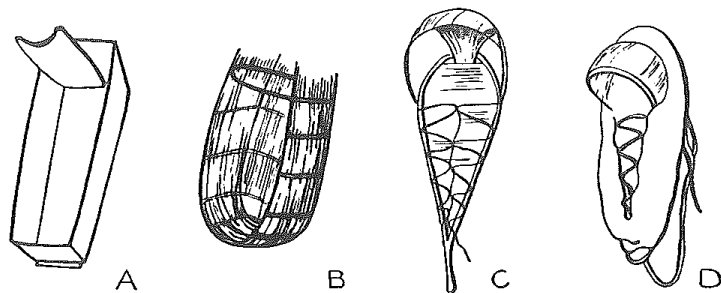


DENVER ART MUSEUM

1300 LOGAN STREET, DENVER, COLORADO

DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN ART

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MAIN TYPES OF INDIAN CRADLES

1. **INTRODUCTION.** This leaflet is concerned with the various major types of carriers used by Indians north of Mexico for the restraint and transportation of babies. The employment of such a device was universal except possibly in the Southeastern United States. The descriptions are of types used in the 19th century. Some of these exist today; and others were used long before. The text makes no attempt to describe all tribal types for space only permits a broad regional discussion. Nor are methods of holding the baby in the cradle discussed. All are variants of thong cross-ties, band wrappings and the like.

2. **CRADLE** appears to be the best name for these devices. Baby-board, baby-carrier, papoose-board are frequently used, among other terms, but "cradle" has the merit of shortness and is therefore preferred.

3. **INDIAN NAMES** for cradles are different in each of the scores of Indian languages. There is a widespread popular idea that one Indian word is in general usage. Every museum worker or specialist in Indian lore is familiar with the question about this mysterious word, mysterious because no trace of it ever appears. It is like the Hindu rope trick in that everyone has a friend who is said to know the word or to have seen the trick, though the questioner has no personal eye or ear witness knowledge himself.

Reference 6 is an extensive compilation of words for cradle from dozens of tribes. Let readers take their pick!

4. **ARRANGEMENT OF TEXT.** The cradle types are discussed by geographical areas, beginning in the Northwest, passing down the Pacific Coast and then moving to the Atlantic.

5. **NORTHWEST COAST.** (British Columbia Coast.) The cradle is made of rather thin light cedar boards in somewhat the shape of a coffin. The bottom and four sides are separate pieces. Forehead flattening was once the custom in this area, so these cradles have an additional piece slanting out from the bottom of the cradle at its upper end. This was bound on the infant's forehead (A). Wool from the mountain goat, and shredded cedar bark provided padding in the cradle.

6. **SALISH.** (South Interior of British Columbia.) A basket cradle is used by tribes in this region. It is made in a coiled technic, with broad flat coils usually trimmed on the outside with the decorative method called imbrication. (See Leaflet 58.) The cradle, again, is coffin shaped, but the sides curve out somewhat from head to shoulders and back toward the feet.

7. **CHINOOK.** (Lower Columbia River.) This extremely rare cradle type is made by hollowing out a block of cedar wood into a shape and size suitable to hold an infant; and at the same time carving the upper end into a D-shaped handle. This Chinook type has an attachment for flattening the head like that described in Section 5.

8. **WEST OF THE ROCKIES,** except as indicated in Sections 5, 7 and 10, the many cradle types are made of basketry in coarse wicker or twined technics. In northern California these are somewhat ovoid shallow baskets in which the baby sits with its feet hanging over the bottom edge (B). Elsewhere the basic pattern is a flat oblong with varying sorts of marquee-like eyeshades projecting forward near the top. The bodies of the cradles are made of reeds or withes running vertically, horizontally

or in both directions. Some have frames either oblong, ovoid (D), Y-shaped or in the form of a snowshoe (C). Page 316 of reference 3 and page 538 of reference 5 show the distribution of the various types. Space does not permit even brief discussion here. In Nevada and Utah the basket frame is often very simple, hardly more than a slim rod bent into a long narrow U held by a few cross pieces, with the whole framework covered with a soft deer skin wrapping.

The Arapaho of Wyoming, properly in another area, use a variant of this skin-covered U-shaped frame. It is handsomely decorated with a large disk of porcupine quill work on the fold above the baby's head; and to tie the child in place a ladder-like band of quilled rawhide is used. Red or orange, black and white are the colors used.

9. PLATEAU. (Idaho, Eastern Washington & Oregon.) See Section 13.

10. SOUTHWEST: BASKET TYPE. Variants of the basket cradle type discussed in Section 8 are used by the Southwestern tribes except for the Pueblo groups (exclusive of the Hopi) and the Navaho. The general pattern of the Southwestern basket cradle is a U-shaped frame filled in with coarse basketry, and with a broad flat basketry band curving out from the frame in front of the child's head (E). Some Apache groups cover the frame with skin. The Hopi basket cradle is related, but differs in that its back and curving band eye shade are linked by another band curving over the child's head from the back to the center of the eye shade. The whole cradle is one piece of wicker basketry, usually brightly colored (F). The Mohave cradle has only the long U for a frame. It is padded with long strips of willow bark and has a very large horizontal basketry eye shade rounding out in front of the baby's head. Neighboring tribes (Pima, Yuma, etc.) use variants of this (I).

11. SOUTHWEST: SLAT TYPE. Some Apache bands use a cradle which has a U-shaped frame of heavy rods crossed by wooden slats an inch or two wide. The broad band curving out above the child's head is also made of slats, though narrower than on the back. The cradle may be covered with deer skin, often colored yellow (G).

12. SOUTHWEST: BOARD TYPES. These are four in number; general Pueblo, Pueblo hanging board, Taos and Navaho. The Pueblo people (except Hopi) use a flat board with an eye shade something like a folding awning frame (H). The top of the board is frequently carved into terraces symbolizing clouds. The second Pueblo type is simply a padded board hung horizontally by ropes from the ceiling.

The old Taos cradle was a shallow box of quite heavy hand-hewn boards.

The Navaho cradle (J) has a back of two narrow boards with pointed ends, a foot board and a forward curving eye shade of bent thin wood splints. All parts are tied to each other by thongs threaded through holes in the wood.

13. ROCKIES AND WESTERN PLAINS. (K). From the Colorado Ute north to the Blackfoot, Crow, Flathead and some adjoining tribes, and into eastern Washington, the cradle is a flat board cut into a long ellipsoid much wider at top than bottom, and curved at both ends. The board is covered with skin or cloth, usually beaded. The covering is tight over the large top section and made into a shallow bag to hold the child on the narrow lower $\frac{2}{3}$ of the board. The Ute usually add an eye

shade of coarse basketry. The Crow replace the bag with a series of fairly wide straps laced together down the front.

A variant used by a few tribes on the lower Columbia River has a triangular or oblong projection rising as a handle from the top of the board. The cradle looks something like a stone arrowhead.

14. PLAINS, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN. Such tribes as Sioux, Cheyenne, Kiowa and Comanche use two cradle types. One has a deep, straight sided bag of skin, usually covered with beadwork, attached to a pair of narrow boards of which the pointed upper ends extend far beyond the top of the bag. The boards are held in place by cross pieces near the head and foot of the bag. The pointed upper ends are frequently trimmed with brass headed tacks (L).

The second type is, when flat, a triangular hood of beaded or quilled skin, sometimes cloth covered, to the base of which is sewn a large rectangle of skin or cloth. When the lower corners of the hood are pressed together it forms a head covering like a sun bonnet. The baby is laid on this and then the cloth bottom is folded around its body and legs (M).

15. PLAINS, SOUTHERN, RAWHIDE. The Comanche and perhaps other neighboring tribes use a rawhide night cradle. This is simply a rectangle of rawhide laced tightly around the baby. Such a cradle was often only a large cylinder of the type used to store and carry war bonnets and other ceremonial equipment.

16. NORTHEAST. (N). From the Great Lakes and Mississippi to the Atlantic and from the Mason & Dixon line to Canada the basic cradle was a flat board with an angled wood bow projecting forward from near the top, a small foot board and, usually, low sides of wood or bark on the lower $\frac{2}{3}$ of the board. Cloth or skin was attached to the sides of the board and laced over the infant.

17. SOUTHEAST. Information on southeastern cradles is extremely scant, and the great collections contain few if any specimens. Reference 4 deals with a few notations about cradles made by early explorers and these describe two types: a flat board of unspecified shape; and a contrivance of reeds, again not clearly described. The general impression is that children were carried to a great extent in folded blankets or skins. These tribes very early lost most of their native way of life because of strong white influence, so that at this late date any sort of a definite statement appears impossible.

Compiled by F. H. Douglas from examination of the great collections, and from the following references:

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1. Cradles of the American Aborigines—Otis T. Mason. Annual Report for 1887, 1889.

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2. Indian Cradles—William C. Farabee. The Museum Journal 11; 4, 1920.

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3. Havasupai Ethnography—Leslie Spier. Anthropological Papers 29; 3, 1928.

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4. The Indians of the Southeastern United States—John R. Swanton. Bulletin 137, 1946.

5. Handbook of the Indians of California—Alfred L. Kroeber. Bulletin 78, 1925.

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6. Indian Terms for the Cradle and the Cradleboard—Victor F. Lotrich. The Colorado Magazine 18; 3, 1941.