

DENVER ART MUSEUM

DENVER, COLORADO

Department of Indian Art

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OJIBWE, A CHIPPEWA WARRIOR

Leaflet No. 36 - November, 1931

THE OJIBWA OR CHIPPEWA INDIANS

2nd Printing, March, 1945

LOCATION. The Chippewa Indians are a semi-nomadic hunting tribe of Algonkin stock now living on 10 reservations in Minnesota, 4 in Michigan, 1 in Montana, 1 in North Dakota, 4 in Wisconsin and on several in Ontario, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories in Canada. In 1930 there were about 24,000 in the United States and in 1905 15,000 were listed for Canada. This is the third largest tribe in North America. The tribe is steadily increasing. In 1910 the United States division was about 35 per cent full blood.

NAME. The name "Chippewa" is a comparatively recent corruption of the native word "Ojibway, or Odjibwe," meaning "puckered." The name is supposed to have been given because of the puckered seam on their moccasins. Their old name for themselves was "Anicinabe," meaning "first man."

HISTORY. The tribe was first encountered by the whites about 1640. They then were living around the eastern end of Lake Superior and in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. About 1700, having come into the possession of firearms, they began a western movement, first pushing the Fox tribe to the south and later driving the Sioux westwards. Other bands went south toward Lake Erie and forced the departure of the Iroquois. In 1815 they began to make treaties with the United States. In the period 1850-80 the present reservations were set up, on which the tribesmen have lived in peace ever since. They never were at war with the whites, though they were courageous and successful fighters against other tribes. Despite the large size of the tribe it never became much involved in the development of the country, probably because of the rather remote area which it occupied.

HABITAT. The homes of the Chippewa are located in heavily timbered plains and low hills dotted with hundreds of lakes and traversed by many streams.

DWELLINGS. The Chippewa used four kinds of dwellings, the domed wigwam, the peaked wigwam, the bark house and the tipi. While there was no strict rule about the matter, the first two types were usually used in the winter and the last pair in the summer. The domed wigwam had a circle of poles bent over in a series of arches which were covered with reed mats or birchbark. The peaked lodge had a long series of A-shaped arches connected with a ridge pole. It also was covered with reed mats or birchbark. The bark house was a rectangular structure with a framework of poles making the walls and peaked roof, and an outer covering of sheets of bark. It closely resembled the Long House of the Iroquois, see leaflet 12. The tipi was a conical tent having a covering of birchbark, cloth or boughs resting on a framework of poles. In most details it resembled the tipi of the Plains tribes described in leaflet 19. All of these structures were the homes of single families. All had smoke holes over central fires, around which were placed the beds, clothing, weapons and other possessions of the family. Large round log dance houses were sometimes built. All of these types of houses are still used to some extent, though buildings of white design are coming into use.

CLOTHING. Before the coming of the whites all clothing was made of skin or of woven vegetable fibre. Hides were tanned and clothing made by the women. Sewing was done with animal sinew and thorn or bone awl. The women wore a long dress made from two deer skins over an underskirt of woven nettle fibre, leggings and moccasins. Men wore breechcloths, long, tight leggings and moccasins. Skin coats and shirts were made from white patterns. Additional warmth was given by rabbit skin blankets. Blankets and broadcloth were introduced long

ago and made into most articles of clothing. The head was covered with caps of burdock leaves, turbans of fur or cloth or peaked cloth hoods. Men wore moose hair roaches. Ear and nose rings, bracelets, necklaces and many kinds of beaded ornaments were worn. Present day clothing is mostly of white manufacture.

FOOD. Though the Chippewa were primarily hunters and fishers, they did depend to a considerable extent on vegetable goods, both wild and cultivated. The summer settlements were in localities favorable for gardening in which corn, squash, pumpkins and potatoes were raised. Wild rice was a very important food. Berries, fruit and acorns were extensively eaten. Maple sugar and syrup were of great importance as seasoning to replace salt, which was unknown in early times. Flour, salt and water were mixed and baked into "Legolet" bread. Moose, deer, bear and rabbit were the main meat producers, though all animals trapped for fur were eaten but the marten. Ducks, pigeons and other wild birds were eaten. Meat was either eaten after boiling or roasting or dried for winter use. Many kinds of fish were caught with nets, spears or hook and line and eaten fresh, or dried for storage. Water was very often boiled with the shoots of spruce, raspberry and other plants before drinking.

Most families ate one big meal in the morning and on and off through the day according to individual fancy. Meals were prepared by the women and eaten from birchbark and wooden dishes. Long ago clay vessels were used.

BASKETRY was weakly developed because of the ease with which birchbark could be worked. Basketry was made from willow branches, basswood bark and black ash splints in wicker and checker technics. Most of them had handles and covers. Small coiled baskets were made from sweet grass. Some color was used, but the designs were very simple.

BEADWORK began early, but only a few white beads were obtained so that little was done. In fairly recent times large quantities of beads in all colors have made an expansion of the art possible. The early designs were geometric or conventionalizations of natural forms. In more recent times highly colored, very realistic flower patterns have been developed. The beads are sewn on all sorts of skin and cloth articles with the "spot" stitch—see leaflet 2. The designs are worked out with the aid of birchbark patterns. Beads are also woven on simple frames. Large shoulder bags, garters, moccasins, headbands and belts are the objects most usually decorated with beads.

BIRCHBARK was made into canoes, dishes, storage boxes of various sizes, called makuks or mococks—see heading 10, leaflet 25—and sap buckets. Long rolls were sewed together for the covering of domed lodges and tipis. Transparencies are made by folding thin sheets and biting designs on them. When unfolded and held to the light symmetrical patterns are shown. Patterns used as guides in the making of beadwork are cut out. Maps and memory-aiding symbols are scratched on rolls of the bark. Pictography of this kind was very highly developed by the Chippewa.

TWINE, a very important article, is made mostly from the fibre under the bark of the basswood tree. Slippery-elm and nettle fibres are also used, as is deer sinew.

TEXTILES. Bullrushes (*Scirpus validus* Vahl) are woven into large floor mats, often showing simple geometrical designs in plain colors. In the northern part of the area cedar strips are used for this purpose. The mats which cover the wigwams are woven from cat-tail reeds (*Typha latifolia*).

Flat, square bags were and still are woven from the bark twines mentioned above. Tamarack roots were split and made into bags.

Flat yarn bags of various sizes are made from raveled blankets. They and the fibre bags are woven on a frame of two sticks, set upright in the ground. The warps hang from a strand stretched between the sticks, and the waft is twined diagonally through the warps, beginning at the top, which is the bottom of the finished piece. These bags have elaborate geometrical figures in several colors. Human and animal designs are also used.

Strips of cloth are woven into bands for making rag rugs. Bands were also made from bark and yarn. Long belts of yarn netting are very common. The northern bands weave blankets of rabbit skin.

Fishing nets are made from machine made twine. Formerly nettle fibre was used.

STONE ARTICLES. Knives, 2 sizes of axes and pipes were made from stone.

BONE ARTICLES. Awls, arrowheads, needles, knives, hoes, pipes, spurs and small ornaments were made of bone or antler.

WOOD was worked into bowls, spoons, drums, frames for snowshoes, sleds, etc., snow shovels, paddles, grave boxes and markers, sugar troughs, balls and bows and arrows. Wood was etched with a fine point in simple designs which were colored.

EMBROIDERY was done on birchbark and skin with colored grasses and porcupine quills. Applique was done on cloth with colored ribbons.

RELIGION. The spiritual life of the people was centered around the Midewiwin, or Grand Medicine lodge. Members pass through the 8 degrees of the order by initiation. The society meets, usually once a year, to perform its healing and initiatory rites in a special long mat lodge. There seems to be no conception of one god or great spirit, the members praying to one chief medicine spirit and a number of subordinate beings. There was a belief in individual guardian spirits. Healing and the teaching of ethical conduct are the principal aims of the society. Dreams were very important. The medicine men are very conservative and have much influence. They were great conjurers.

TRIBAL ORGANIZATION. Owing to the vast extent of territory occupied by the tribe there is no central organization, but a large number of bands, each under their own elected leaders, whose powers are not great. The tribe is divided into about 20 clans, each with a bird or animal totem representing their mythical ancestors. Descent is through the father.

MUSIC. The Chippewa are extremely musical. There are hundreds of songs to accompany every phase of activity and new ones are constantly being improvised. Drums of several kinds provide the accompaniment. Rattles are only used by the members of the Medicine lodge. Flutes were used while courting by the young men.

GAMES of chance were those involving the use of dice or the guessing of the location of some hidden article. Sticks were used for counters. More strenuous sports were lacrosse and the women's double-ball game, both involving much running on large fields. Games of dexterity were cup-and-ball and the awl game.

TRANSPORTATION. The vast number of lakes and streams in the Chippewa country made these Indians depend on water transport in birchbark canoes to a very great extent. They used the horse but very little, if at all. Winter travel on foot, often with snow shoes, was very extensive because of the long hunting trips.

CUSTOMS. A mock fight between two groups of relatives followed the birth of a child. The first year of life was spent on a cradle board. Naming procedures were very complicated. Children were very carefully brought up. Many toys were provided for their amusement. Marriage was out of the clan. Polygamy, once common, no longer exists. Young people made their own matches and then sought parental consent. A feast celebrated the engagement. The couple first lived with the bride's family. The dead were dressed in their best clothes, and after a form of service conducted by the members of the Grand Medicine lodge, was wrapped in birchbark or put in a box and buried with the feet to the west. Food and tools were put in or near the grave and markers were set up. Mourners wailed their grief, wore various signs of mourning for about a year, or kept a "spirit bundle," its nucleus a lock of the deceased's hair. The people are pleasant, with a good sense of humor. Both sexes cooperated to an unusual extent in the work of the camp. Handcraft was kept at a high level of excellence. Good workmen were honored.

Compiled from the following sources by F. H. Douglas:

Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington.

1. Chippewa Customs—Densmore. Bulletin 86.
2. Chippewa Music—Densmore. Bulletins 45 and 53.
3. Uses of Plants by the Chippewa—Densmore. 44th Annual Report.
4. The "Midewiwin" or Grand Medicine Society of the Ojibway—Hoffman. 7th Annual Report.
5. Article on "Chippewa"—Mooney. Handbook of American Indians, Bulletin 30, vol. 1, page 277.

Milwaukee Public Museum.

6. The Dream Dance of the Chippewa and Menominee of Northern Wisconsin—Barrett. Bulletin, vol. 1, article 4.

Photographs, 1, 2, 3, 4, 6; details of all activities, 1; musical details, 3; religious details, 4, 6.