

# A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History

Ira Jacknis



Diné artist, blanket, before 1895. Wool, tapestry weave. Courtesy the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York, Purchased by Clarence Pullen, 1895, 50 / 7350.

In the fall of 1909, the anthropology curators at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York, deciding that they had focused too much on the

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Northwest Coast, Arctic, and Plains, began a new regional initiative: the Archer M. Huntington Southwest Expedition.<sup>1</sup> Losing no time, they began rapidly to build up a collection of Navajo textiles, both from sponsored field expeditions and through the acquisition of existing collections.<sup>2</sup> Over a period of eight months during the following year, they acquired three large private collections – those of Emil W. Lenders in February, Margaret Olivia Sage in May, and Uriah S. Hollister in October – in addition to a small but important field collection, which was made by curator Pliny E. Goddard in April.

Great, excited claims were made in letters exchanged between collectors, curators, and administrators. While each collection had its own appeal, it was the one from Hollister that they felt had fulfilled their initial ambition to establish a Southwest collection, at least as textiles were concerned. As Clark Wissler, departmental chair, argued to the museum's director, Henry Fairfield Osborn:

I wish to say respecting this collection of blankets that if we can secure it we shall have practically all this Museum or any other would ever need. This collection contains practically all the usual types while the collections recently received through gifts from [J. Pierpont] Morgan [who purchased the Lenders collection for the museum] and [Margaret Olivia Slocum] Sage give us excellent examples of the most expensive and unique types. When it is noted that eighteen months ago this

Museum possessed scarcely a single Navajo blanket of any value, we shall now have, if we get the Hollister collection, one of the very best both as to size and quality.<sup>3</sup>

Wissler was not exaggerating. The museum acquired its first Navajo textile in 1895 and between then and 1902 accumulated only 15 further examples. The 3 collections acquired in 1910 totaled 113 Navajo textiles: 27 from Lenders; 20 from Sage; and 66 from Hollister, with another 10 collected independently by Goddard.<sup>4</sup>

These textiles were included in a special exhibition on the Southwest in 1912 before becoming part of the display in the new Southwest Indian Hall, which had opened two years earlier. As Goddard noted, “The [Hollister] collection not only contains excellent specimens but it is of such a character that it will fulfill nearly all of our purposes for both study and exhibition.”<sup>5</sup> Following this initial campaign of acquisition, the museum continued to acquire Navajo textiles throughout the next century, largely shifting from purchases to gifts, mostly from private donors. The collection now numbers almost three hundred items.

This essay focuses on the biographies of Navajo textiles after they left Native hands. For this collection we do not know much about the processes of acquisition whereby the objects came into the possession of the collectors who donated or sold them to the museum. The present discussion starts with AMNH’s institutional imperatives and continues with its relationships with the various collectors,

considering their own personal stories and interactions with the museum. It thus puts these weavings in context with the formation of the museum's Native American collections and with the history of collecting Navajo textiles more generally.

### **Ethnohistorical Contexts**

The turn of the twentieth century was a critical period for the creation and consumption of Navajo textiles. After displacement and forced settlement on their reservation in 1868, Diné (Navajo) weavers largely shifted their production from functional items of clothing for their own use to commercialized fabric panels that could be used by non-Native consumers as home décor. Most Navajo textiles were in any case flat weavings, not fitted garments, and could therefore be adapted into rugs or wall hangings. Although private collectors snapped up these textiles, it took a while before they were thought suitable for most museum collections. Other Navajo craft items such as jewelry and baskets were also popular, albeit to a lesser extent.<sup>6</sup>

In many ways, the Southwest was and still is a unique region for collecting Native American art. The completion of the transcontinental railroad through Dinétah (Navajo country) around 1880 was clearly defining for the region in the late nineteenth century, since the railroad facilitated travel to the Southwest between the East Coast and the West Coast, encouraging visitors to stop off on their way to more distant locales. As well, the Southwest was marketed as an attraction to

Easterners seeking to improve their health. Finally, the railroad spurred the development of a vast system of trading posts, with traders and dealers acting as middle-men to market Indian arts and crafts. None, or very few, of these factors applied to the Northwest Coast or the Plains.

### **Institutional Contexts**

The earliest substantial museum collection of Navajo textiles was assembled at the Smithsonian Institution, which had been working formally in the Southwest since 1879, with the founding of the Bureau of American Ethnology. The Smithsonian had inherited some of the earlier collections gathered by the several federal government geological surveys of the 1860s and 1870s. By the 1880s, the bureau had begun to sponsor the research of Washington Matthews, a US Army physician stationed in the region, who became the founder of Navajo studies.<sup>7</sup> A decade later, James A. Mooney collected for the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. Despite its precedence in the period before 1900, however, the Smithsonian had a relatively small collection of Navajo textiles.

AMNH began collecting Navajo textiles as part of a larger world of anthropology and art museums in the United States. By the turn of the century there were six major anthropology museums: three as part of urban natural history museums (AMNH in New York, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, and the Field Museum in Chicago) and three at major universities (Harvard, University of

Pennsylvania, and the University of California at Berkeley).<sup>8</sup> Harvard's Peabody Museum, founded in 1866, is the oldest museum of anthropology in North America. Appropriately, it has one of the oldest Navajo blankets to have been collected and one of the earliest to enter a museum collection: the so-called "Bartlett blanket," woven before 1850, collected in 1851, and accessioned in 1878.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to anthropology and natural history museums, many leading North American art museums – modeling themselves on the South Kensington Museum, London (known from 1899 as the Victoria and Albert Museum), with its focus on decorative arts and design – acquired Navajo textiles. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, acquired its first Navajo blanket in 1887, as did the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1897 and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1910. Later important Navajo textile collections were formed at the Southwest Museum of the American Indian in Los Angeles, founded in 1907 and from 2003 incorporated into the Autry Museum of the American West; the Denver Art Museum, founded in 1893, where Native American collecting effectively began in 1925 with the establishment of a separate Native Arts department, followed by the tenure of Frederic H. Douglas as its influential curator from 1929 to 1956; and the Heard Museum in Phoenix, founded in 1929.<sup>10</sup>

## **American Museum of Natural History Contexts**

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AMNH has collected anthropological material since its founding in 1869, formally establishing a separate department in 1873. Yet it was not until Harvard's Frederic W. Putnam was called to New York in 1894 to direct a dedicated curatorial program that the department began to operate on a recognizably professional basis.<sup>11</sup>

Putnam hired the German-American anthropologist Franz Boas to oversee first its ethnology division and then the entire department from 1895 to 1905. Clark Wissler, a former Boas student, succeeded him as anthropology chair from 1905 until 1942. Harry Tschopik, Wissler's successor as North American curator (between 1947 and 1956), had done his own original Navajo ethnography while a graduate student at Harvard in the 1930s, but he had focused on Navajo basketry and pottery rather than textiles.

The museum's earliest regional strength in Native North America was the Northwest Coast, beginning even before the arrival of Franz Boas, who substantially expanded upon this focus during the North Pacific Expedition (1897–1905), funded by museum president Morris K. Jesup. Clark Wissler next turned to the Plains, his own area of research. Wissler's expedition (1905–12) was funded by the president's wife, Maria van Antwerp DeWitt Jesup. Finally, in 1910, Wissler decided that it was time to focus on the Southwest. With massive and continuing funding from patron Archer M. Huntington between 1909 and 1921, the museum worked to document the region's prehistory and contemporary cultures. Whereas the more geographically ambitious Jesup Expedition returned with at least 11,000 items, the Huntington

Expedition acquired approximately 4,000 catalogued objects from the living tribes, plus another 9,000 from archaeological excavations.<sup>12</sup> Although it is hard to draw meaningful conclusions, it is interesting that of the two Athapaskan groups that Goddard focused on for the Huntington Expedition, the Apache collection (1,749) is about twice the size of the Navajo (878).<sup>13</sup> Following the close of the expedition, the museum's administration turned from its focus on the Americas during the 1930s, as it sought to emphasize the Old World in the institution's collecting and exhibition.<sup>14</sup>

### **Regional Textiles and the Challenge of Attribution**

It is not a simple matter to determine exactly which textiles in the collection of AMNH are Navajo. Since so few of the museum's Navajo textiles were well documented as having been produced and collected on the Navajo reservation, tribal attributions were determined mostly by stylistic comparison and were often later reattributed.<sup>15</sup> On the one hand, many items originally thought to be Navajo have since been re-catalogued as Zuni and Hopi, with particular confusion over Mexican and Rio Grande Hispanic textiles.<sup>16</sup> The museum seems to have been somewhat conflicted about consciously collecting Hispanic work, which was acquired by Herbert Spinden and Hermon Bumpus in 1910.<sup>17</sup> One departmental assistant rejected an offered textile because it was not aboriginal, claiming that it "apparently does not represent primitive work."<sup>18</sup>



The reconsiderations could also go the opposite way, with reattributions from Pueblo or Hispanic to Navajo.<sup>19</sup> Underlying these regional dislocations was the common intertribal trade between the Diné and other Indigenous groups. For instance, several of AMNH's Navajo blankets were collected among the Sioux (in the Cronau and Deloria collections).<sup>20</sup>

Beyond tribal attribution, there is also the issue of object types, or what should be classified as a “textile object,” to use the museum’s term. At the time of writing, this somewhat restrictive definition referred to finished textiles but not related looms and raw materials, such as wool, yarn, and dye samples. Two important collections omitted through this distinction were made by George H. Pepper for the B. T. B. and F. E. Hyde Exploring Expedition (about sixty items) and by Goddard in April 1910 (about a dozen associated weaving items, including a loom with an unfinished blanket).<sup>21</sup> There is an additional category of “costume,” but almost all of the Navajo garments – with the exception of some hide clothing – are made of interwoven fibers and are clearly textiles in contemporary usage.



Mrs. Louis Watchman (Diné), unfinished Navajo blanket on a loom, Fort Defiance area, Arizona, 1910. Courtesy the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York, Collected by Pliny E. Goddard, cat. no. 50 / 9239–9246.

Photo: Jesse Merandy.

## **Accessions and Collection Sizes**

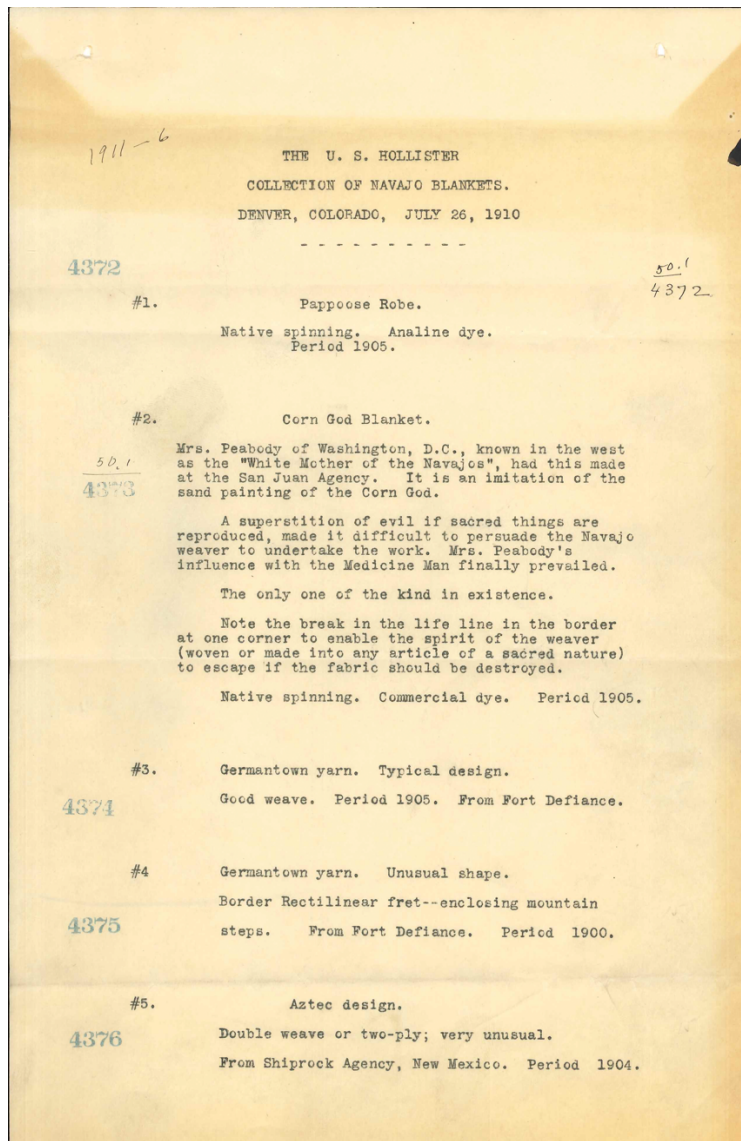
The entire Navajo textile collection at AMNH, acquired between 1895 and 2012, numbers 287 items, including 241 large, flat blankets and rugs; 46 smaller items, such as belts and hair bands or leggings; 6 unprovenanced Navajo textiles; and 25 collected on their looms (see the American Museum of Natural History: Navajo Textile Accessions Table). This essay follows the definition of “textile” employed in the catalogue of the museum; that is, a finished fabric, including garments but not textile-related materials and tools, such as wool, dyes, and looms. Over the years, the total of 302 items originally accessioned as Navajo textiles has been reduced to

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287, through exchange or loss, along with a few additions from re-cataloguing of items originally classified as non-Navajo.

This collection can be grouped into 62 separate accessions: that is, discrete sets coming from a particular collector at a particular time.<sup>22</sup> In almost all cases, each individual collector was responsible for only a single accession or group of objects (the notable exception being the brothers Benjamin T. B. and Frederick E. Hyde).

Most of the accessions have been quite small; many of the donors contributed just one or two items at a time. In fact, there have been only 7 accessions of Navajo textiles that number 10 or more items: those of Uriah S. Hollister (66), Emil W. Lenders (27), Thomas S. Walker (23), Margaret Olivia Sage (20), Pliny E. Goddard (10), Amelia Elizabeth White (10), and House of the Shalako (10). The Hollister collection was by far the museum's largest single accession of Navajo textiles, representing almost a quarter of the total inventory.



"The U. S. Hollister Collection of Navajo Blankets, Denver, Colorado, July 26, 1910."

Typed with handwritten notes, ten pages. Courtesy the Division of Anthropology,  
American Museum of Natural History, New York, 1911-6..

Not all of these Navajo accessions consisted solely of Navajo textiles. In  
some cases a particular collector contributed a larger Native American collection  
that had relatively few Navajo textiles. One of these was donated by a New York

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merchant, Erastus Tefft, who gave 3 Navajo textiles as part of a collection of around 1,200 items that is especially strong in Eastern Woodlands material. Another large collection was made by army officer Junius W. MacMurray during his travels in the West; although consisting of about 500 pieces, there were only 7 Navajo textiles. Two other large collections featuring items from the Plains were assembled by artists: Emil Lenders, who gave 1,236 pieces (with 27 Navajo textiles), and Alexander Phimister Proctor, who gave 125 pieces (with 4 Navajo textiles).

### **Temporal Trends**

While AMNH acquired Navajo textiles from 1895 to 2012, a review of accession dates reveals that most of these items arrived within a year or so around 1910 (see Table). Prior to that date, acquisitions had been made through purchase and gift from Clarence Pullen, Carl Eickemeyer, the brothers Benjamin T. B. Hyde and Frederick E. Hyde, Jr., and George H. Pepper. Then in 1910 and 1911 came the major field expeditions of Goddard, Wissler, and Spinden – all part of the Archer M. Huntington Expedition – along with acquisitions from private collectors: Margaret Olivia Sage, purchased from Adam Clark Vroman and the Fred Harvey Company in 1910; Emil Lenders, purchased by museum trustee J. Pierpont Morgan in 1910; Erastus T. Tefft, purchased by trustee Felix M. Warburg in 1910; and Uriah S. Hollister; purchased with funds from former museum president Morris K. Jesup in 1911.



Adam Clark Vroman, *Elle beside her loom, holding a weaving comb*, 1901. Solio photographic print. Braun Research Library Collection, Autry Museum, Los Angeles, P.40545.

Out of the total of 62 accessions, 8 were made during 1910 and 1911. They represent a dramatic proportion of the total collection, numbering slightly more than 140 items, or approximately half of the entire collection. The acquisitions made

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during these years include most of the largest Navajo collections (Lenders/Morgan, Vroman/Sage, Goddard, and Hollister) and rather small ones, such as those donated by Clark Wissler (7 items), Hermon Bumpus (4), Herbert Spinden (3), and Erastus Tefft (3).



Diné artist, blanket, before 1910. Wool, tapestry weave. Courtesy the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York, Donated by Mrs. Russell Sage, 1910, 50 / 9962.

The sequence of accessions listed in the Table reveals that the acquisition of the large Lenders collection affected subsequent actions. Goddard was explicitly

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told in 1910 that he needed only to acquire enough textiles for the museum's life group dioramas, as AMNH by then had a substantial Navajo textile collection, yet it became even larger as negotiations for the Sage and Hollister collections developed later in the same year.<sup>23</sup> Following this flurry of acquisition came much fewer and much smaller collections, which tended to be less well-documented.

The timing of these acquisitions around 1910 can be explained by the beginning of the museum's major expeditions in the Southwest. With funding from Archer M. Huntington in 1909 came the hire of two new curators, both of whom worked in the Southwest, among other regions: Goddard, an Athapaskan scholar from the University of California at Berkeley, where he had already worked with the Navajo manuscripts of ethnographer, linguist, and US Army surgeon Washington Matthews; and Spinden, from Harvard's Peabody Museum, having just earned his doctorate.

There were parallel developments at other museums. At the Metropolitan Museum of Art, across Central Park, there was a similar, if smaller, initiative led by President Robert de Forest to collect Navajo textiles. Interestingly enough, both museums were involved in Margaret Olivia Sage's purchase of the Vroman collection, which was split between the two institutions, and which was the subject of some conflict between the two respective presidents (Henry Fairfield Osborn and Robert de Forest).<sup>24</sup>



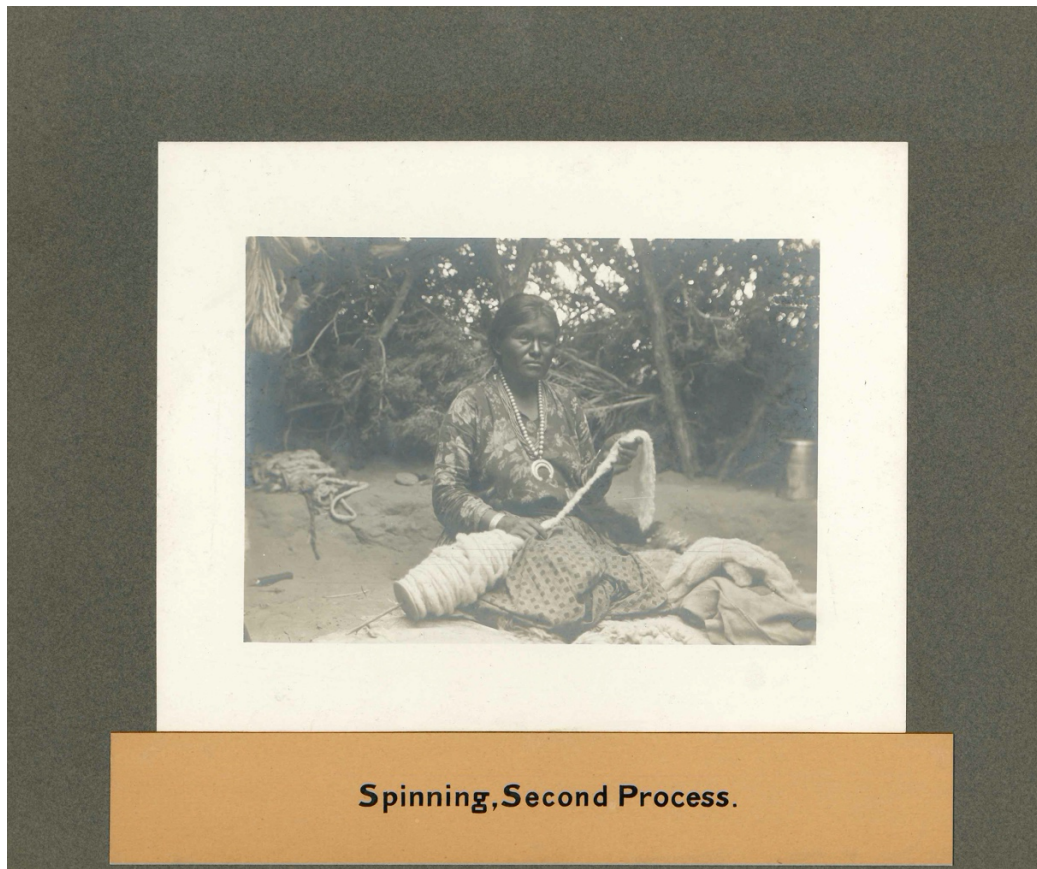
## **Modes of Acquisition: Expedition, Purchase, Gift, and Exchange**

The AMNH catalogue notes the precise mode by which the museum has acquired collections, through expedition, purchase, donation (gift), or exchange. While there were a few expedition acquisitions and notable purchases, the majority of the Navajo textile collection was acquired through gifts.

Two museum expeditions gathered Navajo textiles: the Hyde Exploring Expedition, 1896–1901 (financed by Benjamin and Frederick Hyde, with George Pepper as field director, museum anthropologist Ales Hrdlicka, and artist Rudolf Cronau), and the Archer M. Huntington Southwest Expedition, 1909–21 (with Goddard, Spinden, Wissler, AMNH Director Hermon C. Bumpus, and Alfred Kroeber, who headed both the department and museum of anthropology at UC Berkeley).<sup>25</sup> They were the only two collections of Navajo textiles made for explicitly anthropological reasons, and both included Navajo textiles along with larger ethnographic and archaeological collections. Although AMNH expeditions continued in later years, both in the Southwest and other regions, they did not yield any Navajo textiles.

Two of these field collections were “systematic”: George Pepper’s for the Hyde Expedition (accessioned in 1898) and Pliny Goddard’s for the Huntington (accessioned in 1910). Stemming from the impulses of natural science, a systematic collection is “unified by a central theme which gives it internal cohesiveness,” such as all the cultures in a region, or all the kinds of food utensils in a given culture.<sup>26</sup>

Each type of object and variation among them is related to the others in making up a cultural whole. Moreover, for a collection to be systematic it needs to be accompanied by written documentation and photographs.



George H. Pepper (photographer), *Spinning Second Process* (wife of Masselina demonstrating how to spin wool, Chaco Canyon area, New Mexico), 1896–97. Courtesy the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History; George H. Pepper, PH1\_6\_16 Photos: “Spinning, Second Process.”

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George H. Pepper collection, including two wool cards (of American manufacture), a distaff, and a bundle of reeds over a raw sheepskin blanket arranged by Pepper, *Tools of the Weaver's Trade*, ca. 1899. Glass lantern slide. Courtesy the Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, US.01.099.0276.

Both field collections featured evidence of the materials and processes of Navajo weaving and not just the finished project, which is common in most museums (indeed, both collections were notable for their *lack* of completed textiles).<sup>27</sup> While excavating in Chaco Canyon for the Hyde Expedition in 1897, Pepper became interested in the weaving done by local Diné laborers. With support from his mentor, Frederic Putnam, Pepper made two related collections – one for each of Putnam’s museums, the Peabody at Harvard and the AMNH – illustrating the materials and

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processes of Navajo weaving.<sup>28</sup> About a decade later, Goddard gathered a similar collection of yarns, dyes, tools, and an unfinished blanket on a loom, accompanied by a suite of photographs.<sup>29</sup>



Pliny E. Goddard (photographer), *Mrs. Louis Watchman (Navajo) weaving a blanket on a loom collected by Goddard, Fort Defiance area, Arizona, 1910.* Courtesy the American Museum of Natural History Library, New York, neg. no. 14473.

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Two of the museum's modes of acquisition – the expedition and the purchase – required an expenditure of funds by the museum itself. The museum has maximum control over the selection of specific items when it sponsors an expedition since it calls for assembling diverse objects together into a more or less systematic collection, which can then be the subject of further study and analysis. Despite this tendency, the Huntington expedition was generally not nearly as systematic as it could have been.

A purchase also represents a serious engagement with a collection, although not one that the museum had originally made. The museum de-emphasized field collections of Navajo textiles because by 1910 it had already obtained so many from private collectors, notably Hollister and Lenders. Another factor in ceasing to mount expeditions was that Navajo textiles had long been commercialized; that is, made for external sale to meet non-Native market demands as well as for Indigenous use. Evidently the museum felt – mistakenly as it turned out – that documenting these traditions in the field would no longer bring them much ethnographic information on “traditional” Navajo culture.<sup>30</sup>

Curator Clark Wissler clearly outlined the museum's initial approach to collecting Navajo textiles in a revealing letter to the museum's director in 1909. Writing from Los Angeles after visiting Albuquerque and Santa Fe, Wissler explained what he saw as the relationship between field collecting and the purchase of private collections. He recommended delaying the acquisition of a private collection, “until a

study of the industry has been made in the field.” He had interviewed both dealers and weavers, whom he had encountered providing demonstrations of their art at the Fred Harvey hotel in Albuquerque and at “two hogans at the Indian Village” in Los Angeles. “Now, the Museum’s interest in the technique side will be met by a good series of materials and tools and one or two finished blankets. On the design side the collection must be made after serious study in the field.” On the other hand, he realized a need to obtain fine textiles that were already part of the commercial market: “We want some of those rare expensive blankets for the sake of completeness (There may be some in the Lender’s lot). As I indicated [?] they are to be found in the hands of collectors scattered about, principally in the south west and the best time to buy will be while we are at work down here.” Still, he was worried that targeted purchases from collectors “use up money so quickly that unless there was a special grant I should hesitate so long as much needed [?] something else.”<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, in the end the department did acquire fewer items through field study than by purchasing from private collections.

The AMNH collection includes two major museum purchases, defined by their size and quality: the Uriah S. Hollister collection stands out in both respects, specifically for Navajo textiles. Curator Clark Wissler felt that the \$2,250 paid to Hollister, from the Jesup Fund, was completely justified.<sup>32</sup> It was followed by a much more expensive collection: a larger Native American collection, mostly from the Plains but including 27 Navajo textiles, purchased from Emil W. Lenders for the

museum by board member J. Pierpont Morgan for \$15,000. When Lenders offered the collection, originally asking for \$25,000, there was naturally a great deal of heated discussion concerning the price (curator Alanson Skinner thought it especially exorbitant).<sup>33</sup> Other purchases that were important but relatively small – at least in terms of Navajo textiles – were from Clarence Pullen (6 in 1895) and Erastus Tefft (which had only 3 Navajo textiles in a larger collection purchased for \$3,500). In recent years, purchases have essentially ceased. Other than the House of the Shalako acquisitions in 2002 and 2008, the last museum purchase of a Navajo textile came in 1952 as part of Gifford M. Proctor’s larger Native American collection.

In later years, the museum often pleaded poverty when asked by a donor to purchase a collection: “We agree with you that if this is a rare specimen its place is in a Museum. However, you will understand that in any bidding for an artifact the Museum cannot begin to match the prices paid by private dealers. The Museum gets most of its specimens as outright gifts; and the donors usually find that their tax saving makes this arrangement a satisfactory one.”<sup>34</sup>

The museum is at its least powerful and decisive when it is accepting gifts; many of these donations are quite small and relatively insignificant. On the other hand, some gift donations can be quite important; the most important here were the Sage and Morgan gifts, which were similar in that they were formed by others and then donated by museum patrons specifically at the request of the curators.<sup>35</sup>

One critical characteristic of a systematic collection, making it useful to anthropological scholarship, is documentation: information about the collecting situation, the place and date of the object's construction, the name and/or role of the maker, and any general information on the uses and meanings of the object within the Native culture. Generally in the AMNH collection there is hardly any such ethnographic information; most of the attribution of these textiles comes from stylistic comparison to better documented pieces.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, although it was only partly gathered from Dinétah, most of the Hollister collection is amply documented; in fact, it is one of the best documented Navajo collections in the museum. There is also the issue of collector/family/trader "folklore." Often these glosses on an object's history are handed down along with the textile, but frequently they prove to be in error. As an example, there are common claims for early collecting dates that are contradicted by the presence of later-period aniline dyes.<sup>37</sup>

## **Major Collectors**

Before turning to a comparative analysis of the collectors, it might be useful here to briefly summarize the biographies of the dozen or so major collectors.

**Carl Eickemeyer** (1868–1927) was the museum's second contributor of Navajo textiles. A mechanical and electrical engineer who traveled extensively throughout the West, he similarly wrote several accounts of his travels and collecting.<sup>38</sup>



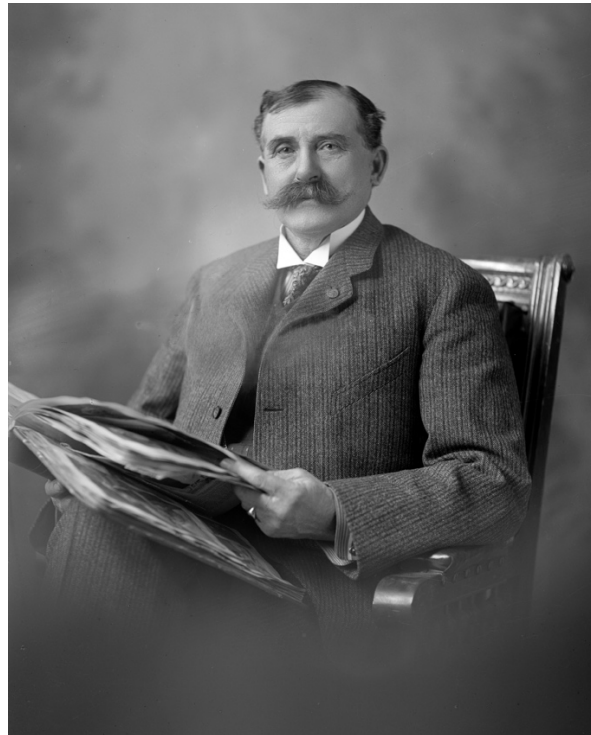
**Mary Lucena Loud Gay** (1846–1943) was the grandmother of the donor, Dr. Isabel Bittinger (1909–2006). Born in Ohio, Gay had spent much of her earlier years in Michigan. According to the research of textile scholar Joe Ben Wheat, she traveled to the Southwest during 1861–63, seeking relief for her tuberculosis. After her return East, relatives continued to send her textiles during the 1870s.<sup>39</sup> She died in her daughter’s home in Massachusetts, and the collection descended through the family before being split between AMNH and the Museum of Anthropology at the University of Colorado.<sup>40</sup>



Pliny E. Goddard. Courtesy the American Museum of Natural History Library, New York.

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**Pliny E. Goddard** (1869–1928) trained in linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. He worked there from 1901 through 1909 before becoming a curator at AMNH, where he served until his death. His specialty was the language and culture of Athapaskan speakers, particularly the Apache. Goddard made one principal Navajo collecting trip for the museum, in April of 1910, and returned to the reservation between 1923 and 1924 to gather more material for the Navajo diorama.



Rose and Hopkins (photographer), Uriah S. Hollister, ca. 1886–1901. Silver gelatin print.

Denver Public Library Special Collections, call no. H-46.

**Uriah S. Hollister** (1838–1929) was one of the pioneering collectors and writers on Navajo textiles. Born in upstate New York and raised in Wisconsin,

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Hollister served in the Union Army during the Civil War before taking up a career in mining, eventually holding senior managerial positions at both the Standard Oil and Continental Oil Companies. Sometime between 1884 and 1894, Hollister moved to Denver. As he traveled in the Intermountain West, he found himself attracted to the vibrant textiles of the Diné and over time accumulated one of the country's larger private collections. In 1903 he self-published *The Navajo and His Blanket* – the first book on Navajo textiles – illustrated with his own collection.<sup>41</sup> By that time Hollister was familiar with Pepper and his work, but he was introduced to AMNH by John G. Worth, a Philadelphia businessman with a large Native American collection of his own. Hollister sold his collection to the museum in 1910 and retired to Los Angeles in 1917.

**Emil W. Lenders** (1864–1934) was a Philadelphia-based painter, born in London and raised in Germany, where he received his early training and became fascinated by American Indians. He emigrated to the United States around 1900. Lenders accompanied Buffalo Bill's traveling Wild West shows, which provided the opportunity to paint wildlife, cowboys, and Indians. His mostly Plains collection – valued at \$30,000 and sold for half that amount, even then a great sum – was purchased for the museum by trustee J. Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913).<sup>42</sup> Lenders died in Oklahoma City, where he had settled in order to paint the local scene.



Richard Wetherill (photographer), George H. Pepper in his office at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, 1900. Courtesy the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, University of New Mexico, Catalogue no. 88.41.63.

**George H. Pepper** (1873–1924) was effectively a self-taught anthropologist. Raised in Staten Island, Pepper worked with and was mentored by AMNH curator Frederic Putnam, and was soon put to work collecting both ethnographic and archaeological material in the Southwest – on expeditions sponsored by the brothers Benjamin Talbot Babbitt Hyde (1872–1933) and Frederick Erastus Hyde, Jr. (1874–1944). In addition to their more scientific collecting, the Hyde brothers operated a string of trading posts and stores, where Pepper even worked for a time. Beginning in 1904, he worked as a consultant for George Gustav Heye, and in 1910

Ira Jacknis, “A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History,” *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest* (2023), Bard Graduate Center, <https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/shapedbytheloom/>. © Bard Graduate Center.

was hired by Heye as a full-time employee. In 1914 and 1919, he acquired many Navajo textiles for Heye's Museum of the American Indian in New York. While he followed in Washington Matthews's footsteps as a serious student of Navajo textiles, Pepper died prematurely before he could publish his manuscript, "Navaho Weaving."<sup>43</sup>

**Clarence E. Pullen** (1850–1902), a native of Maine, worked as an engineer for railroads in the West. Between 1884 and 1885, he served as Surveyor General of New Mexico. After returning to New England, he took up a career as a newspaper contributor, magazine writer, and lecturer, which he often illustrated with his collection. Not only did Pullen sell AMNH its first Navajo textiles in 1895, he also did the same for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, in 1887.

**Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage** (1828–1918), a New York-based philanthropist, was an early supporter of national and local Indian causes. In addition to AMNH, she supported the Metropolitan Museum of Art, George Heye's Museum of the American Indian, the New York Zoological Society, and the New York Botanical Garden.<sup>44</sup> In early 1910, Sage was encouraged to purchase a collection of Navajo textiles by her personal lawyer, Robert de Forest, who was then serving as the President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After traveling to Pasadena between February and May of 1910, she donated collections to the two museums upon her return. In the same year, she also donated Adam Clark Vroman's large collection of Japanese netsuke to the Met.<sup>45</sup>

**Herbert J. Spinden** (1879–1967) was a noted expert on Mayan art. Shortly after receiving his PhD from Harvard in 1909, he was hired by AMNH (principally to replace George Pepper) and sent to the Southwest, where he focused on the Rio Grande Pueblos and, to a lesser extent, the Hopi. Although he collected some Navajo textiles incidentally, they were really not a focus of his research. He later collected for AMNH in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. After leaving the institution in 1921, he served as a curator at Harvard’s Peabody Museum (1921–26), the Buffalo Museum of Science (1926–29), and the Brooklyn Museum (1929–51).

**Erastus T. Tefft** (1877–1935), a prominent member of the New York Stock Exchange, was also known as an avid collector of American Indian objects and a breeder of hunting dogs. In 1904 he hired Seneca artist Jessie Cornplanter to prepare a hand-illustrated catalogue of his collection, which according to one report was “regarded as the most complete in the country.”<sup>46</sup> In 1910 Tefft sold the collection to AMNH. One of Tefft’s business partners was R. T. H. Halsey, a devoted patron (and curator) of the collections of American decorative arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

**Adam Clark Vroman** (1856–1916) combined careers as a photographer, stationery seller, and bookstore owner. In 1892 he moved to Pasadena from his native Illinois. Between 1894 and 1904, he extensively documented Indians of the Southwest, often traveling with his friend Charles F. Lummis, founder of the Southwest Museum. His circle of friends and colleagues in Pasadena also included

collector and author George Wharton James and dealer Grace Nicholson. Vroman, who soon became a passionate collector of both American Indian and Japanese crafts, acquired Navajo textiles directly from Native artists as well as from traders. In Pasadena he was well-known as a source for Indian crafts for a local clientele, as well as for visitors such as Margaret Olivia Sage.<sup>47</sup>

**Thomas S. Walker** (1861–1929) was a real-estate broker who lived in a small town in the middle of New York’s Adirondack State Park. His friend George Wharton James wrote a memorable account of Walker’s collection of American Indian baskets, which Walker had personally gathered on his trips to Arizona.<sup>48</sup> Although we know little about his collecting of Navajo textiles, he obviously took advantage of personal opportunities in the Southwest. After his death, his sister Mary Louise Walker donated his collection to the museum.

**Amelia Elizabeth White** (1878–1972) was a lifelong patron of the Native arts of the Southwest. Born in New York, she first visited Santa Fe in 1923 and built an estate there called *El Delirio* (“the Madness”), which later became home to the School for American (now, Advanced) Research. Here she entertained many artists, anthropologists, and socialites. In 1922 she opened a gallery for American Indian arts on Madison Avenue in New York. After closing the shop in 1937, she dispersed her inventory, donating much of its contents to AMNH and to the Harvard Peabody Museum, which received another fifteen Navajo textiles.

## **Collector Identities and Professions**

Who were the museum's collectors of Navajo textiles? A review of the accession files reveals that, not unexpectedly, almost all of the donors to the Navajo collections were either current or former inhabitants of the New York City region, or had relatives who lived there. A similar regional focus characterizes the patronage of most American museums.

To a great extent, the nature and size of the respective collections has much to do with the professions and general identities of their makers. In no particular order, they may be grouped into eight categories: anthropologists, engineers/surveyors, army officers, businessmen, artists, dealers, patrons, and Native Americans.<sup>49</sup>

Five museum anthropologists contributed Navajo textiles to the AMNH collection: George H. Pepper, who was self-trained; Ales Hrdlicka, a physician who later became a physical anthropologist; Pliny E. Goddard, a linguist from the University of California; Clark Wissler, a Boas student at Columbia; and Herbert J. Spinden, who trained at the Harvard Peabody Museum. Somewhat surprising perhaps in a museum of anthropology and natural history, these professionals were in the minority as contributors to the overall collection. Spinden and Wissler collected very little in the Southwest generally or from the Diné in particular. Although George Pepper and Pliny Goddard made the best collections in terms of



ethnographic documentation, both focused on raw materials and looms rather than finished textiles.

The two earliest Navajo collections were acquired from engineers, Clarence Pullen and Carl Eickemeyer, who became interested in Native life during their time in the Southwest.<sup>50</sup> Although he gave only a single Navajo blanket, James Douglas was a noted mining engineer and businessman with extensive interests in Arizona who became a trustee of the museum. Douglas also made a small contribution to the major gift from Felix M. Warburg that enabled the museum to purchase the Tefft collection.

Given the frequent military encounters with Natives prior to their forced relocation and resettlement on government-sanctioned reservations, it is perhaps unsurprising that soldiers contributed some of the earliest items in the collection. This military tradition was most clearly exemplified by the first non-Native scholar of Navajo weaving, US Army physician Washington Matthews. A few textiles were donated directly by military personnel, such as Lieutenants George T. Emmons (more active later as a professional collector) and Alfred W. Gardner, and Colonels Archibald Rogers and J. M. Andrews. However, many such items were donated by their descendants: the collection of General Early Thomas by Major General Robert Alexander; of Captain Carter N. B. Macauley by George H. Macauley; of Colonel F. V. Krug by J. K. Semseman; of Rozier Clagett by Mrs. Lawrence A. Baker; of Colonel

Hinton by Jesseye Dickerman; and of Colonel Junius W. MacMurray by Ethel MacMurray Wright, Edna MacMurray Robinson, and J. V. A. MacMurray.

The businessmen who contributed to the collection included Benjamin T. B. and Frederick E. Hyde, heirs to a lucrative soap company and later dealers; Erastus Tefft, stockbroker; Uriah Hollister, oil executive; Anson Hard, coffee merchant; Charles Bernheimer, textile merchant; Thomas S. Walker, real-estate broker; and John Burnet Nash, lawyer. Some of these men collected in the region (the brothers Hyde, Hollister, Bernheimer, and Walker), while others, such as Tefft, tended to buy only from dealers or, like Anson Hard, acted as patron for the acquisition of an existing collection.

Many American Indian objects, including Navajo textiles, were collected by artists who traveled throughout the West to document Indigenous peoples, including painters Rudolf Cronau, Emil Lenders, DeCost Smith, and Andrew Dasburg; photographer Adam Clark Vroman; sculptor Alexander Phimister Proctor; and composer Rubin Goldmark. Lenders and Proctor both made large Plains collections, while the others were minor and incidental.

Although George T. Emmons was a voracious and well-known Northwest Coast collector, including for AMNH, his trading in Southwestern items was incidental. In terms of dealing, Amelia E. White was a special case, combining her private philanthropy with a commercial gallery that she ran for fifteen years in

Manhattan. House of Shalako, a relatively small gallery in Albuquerque, had a diverse stock of Southwestern items.

While Margaret Olivia Sage and J. Pierpont Morgan were art collectors in their own right, for AMNH they served as purchasers of collections made by others (Adam C. Vroman and Emil Lenders, respectively). Funds provided by the estates of Morris K. Jesup and banker Felix M. Warburg paid for the Hollister and Tefft collections, respectively. In addition to his fundamental support at AMNH, Archer M. Huntington was well-known for founding the Hispanic Society of America, located in upper Manhattan, in 1904. Ernest Erickson, a passionate collector who had made his fortune in the paper industry, was a devoted patron of both AMNH and the Brooklyn Museum.

Of all of the sixty or so donors of Navajo textiles, only two identified as Native American: Alaquah B. Flood (probably a Cherokee), from Oklahoma, who for a while in the 1910s sold Indian crafts on Broadway, in New York City; and Vine V. Deloria, Sr., a Sioux and Episcopal minister, who in 1924 transferred to Mrs. William S. Titus a Navajo blanket that his father Philip Deloria had collected around 1890.<sup>51</sup>

Unfortunately, the available documentation does not allow us to probe the motivations of the original collectors, let alone those of Diné weavers. While some anthropologists, such as Pepper and Goddard, did contribute excellent and thorough collection documentation, others, such as Wissler and Spinden, seem to have been less invested in doing so. Although the two engineer-made collections

were relatively small, they demonstrate an informed desire to document the local cultures of the regions through which they traveled. Certainly, businessmen such as Hollister (also living in the West) or well-endowed patrons like Sage had the means to purchase items that were already embedded in a highly competitive commercial market. Soldiers tended to hold fairly negative opinions toward Natives, but they had the advantage of traveling in the Southwest during the early years of the trade. Artists, as might be expected, were excited by the visual impact of Native crafts and tended to amass the larger collections. Despite the limitations of these generalizations, the museum records do let us reconstruct how the museum attempted to mold the larger collection over time.

### **Object Biographies and Acquisition Chains**

A review of the temporal relationships between dates of making, dates of collection, and dates of accessioning reveals more gaps than one might like in the biographies of most Navajo textiles. As in all museums, the date of accession is often the only firm one present in collection records, and in many cases it is the only one. Much rarer is an indication of when exactly items were collected; the dates of creation are almost never documented, and must be guessed. Clearly the accession date, when the work entered the museum collection, represents a terminal date for the weaving of the textile, but the actual date of making could be decades earlier. At each point in its travels over space and time the textile can be subject to different regimes of

value, at different times seen as a souvenir, an item of home furnishing, a family heirloom, or a museum specimen.

For many Navajo textiles at AMNH, there was a substantial delay between creation and the museum's ultimate acquisition. Many early textiles were collected casually by people traveling in the Southwest and donated to the museum decades later by their relatives – children (McNeely, Alexander, MacMurray, Proctor, Macy), grandchildren (Cisco, Bittinger, McKelvy Bird), siblings (Goldmark, Macauley, Walker), and nieces and nephews (Semseman, Reyburn). Over time, donations from estates became a more common source for the museum's Navajo textiles; the first arriving in 1935 from Agnes Gray Boyd. This mode was especially common in the 1940s.

Such time lags are almost always an important issue, since even original collectors often delayed the donation of their collections until many years after they had acquired them. Inevitably and frequently they forgot where, when, and from whom they had obtained items. As Smithsonian curator William C. Sturtevant noted, the quantity and quality of museum documentation decreases inversely from the point of collection; every time there is a shift in ownership, there is apt to be a decrease in the documentation.<sup>52</sup>

Disjunctions between collector and donor (patron) are also common in museum acquisitions, in both the natural history and art worlds. In some situations, the museum curators identify a collection that they wish to acquire and then ask

one of their patrons to purchase it. We have already noted this for the Vroman/Sage, Lenders/Morgan, Tefft/Warburg, Bumpus/Hard, and Hollister/Jesup collections.

Importantly, the extent of direct collecting from Native peoples is not always clear from the catalogue records. Some donors had never visited the Southwest but acquired their textiles from shops and auctions. Others inherited textiles lineally and by marriage. Many of those who did travel in the region (including Hollister, Vroman, and Sage) bought textiles from traders (especially the Fred Harvey Company and J. Lorenzo Hubbell) as well as from American Indians themselves.

Quite a number of the museum's Navajo textile collections were sourced from dealers, traders, galleries, and auction houses, a mode of acquisition that one would not have expected in a science-oriented museum of natural history. New York businessman Erastus Tefft personally acquired little of his collection, assembling it instead from a network of dealers and traders scattered throughout the country. Although B. T. B. Hyde certainly spent a small fortune collecting in the Southwest, he also purchased one textile at auction, as did Lincoln Ellsworth, who acquired much of his collection at auctions. To this extent, many of the undocumented Navajo textiles act more like the un-contextualized works in art museums than as ethnographic documents of Native lifeways.<sup>53</sup>

## **Temporal Documentation**

Ira Jacknis, "A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History," *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest* (2023), Bard Graduate Center, <https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/shapedbytheloom/>. © Bard Graduate Center.

In reviewing the chronological scope of the collection, one soon realizes that the objects in the collection date mostly from the second half of the nineteenth century. The institution stopped actively acquiring Navajo textiles soon after it began, around 1910, and was thereafter subject to what people had and wished to donate, with the added lag of ancestral inheritance.

Yet twentieth-century textiles are present. While the more “collectable” blankets tend to be older, many of the smaller functional items, such as sashes and women’s dresses, are more recent. Most of the twentieth-century textiles were woven during the first decades of the century, when the museum was still actively acquiring. In reviewing the Hollister collection, Clark Wissler noted that twenty (or about one-third of the total of sixty-six) dated from the decade 1900–10.<sup>54</sup> One of the most interesting and important was an early figurative rug from 1905 with an interpretation of a sandpainting design.<sup>55</sup> As the years went on, some early to mid-twentieth-century textiles were acquired in the collections of Amelia E. White (1937), Thomas S. Walker (1946), and Kemper C. Martin (1971). As one might suspect from the typical lag between dates of weaving and donation, these tend to date from before 1950.



Diné artist, Navajo Corn Ye'ii rug, ca. 1905. Wool and cotton, tapestry weave, with natural and synthetic dyes. Courtesy the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York, Collected by Uriah S. Hollister, 50.1 / 4373.

The notable exceptions were the very last accessions: two groups of items purchased from House of the Shalako (2002, 2008), the transfer from the museum's Education Department (2003), and a gift from Suzanne Lamarre (2012). The first two, bought by Peter Whiteley, curator of North American ethnology, to complement an exhibition of Native American jewelry, also represent the only works in the collection by named weavers.<sup>56</sup> This temporal focus has obvious implications for the museum's representation of twentieth-century textiles, which are poorly documented even though almost the entire collection arrived during that century.

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Many similar Native American collections in older, Eastern United States museums focus on the nineteenth century, leaving the twentieth and twenty-first centuries for younger museums in the West.

### **Building a Collection: Curatorial Rhetoric**

As anthropology curators formed the Navajo collection over time, of necessity they interacted with museum administrators as well as prospective donors. In their correspondence, they created a “curatorial rhetoric” to express their ideological motivations for acquiring or not acquiring particular collections and pieces.

In her classic account of collecting, the literary scholar Susan Stewart poetically suggested that Noah’s Ark was the archetypal collection, in that it first defined a totality which would then guide the search for representatives of each defined type.<sup>57</sup> As we can see from the curatorial commentary, building a collection over time is largely about creating object types and then evaluating individual tokens within these categories by their closeness or distance from the ideal type; in other words, by their perceived quality according to variable criteria of value.

A curator such as Pliny Goddard, who had his own field experience collecting Navajo textiles, often expressed his personal pleasure in acquiring them, a passion absent among later curators who had not been to the reservation: “The Museum will be very glad to have your Navajo specimens. Personally, I shall be particularly glad to have your Navajo blankets.” In his acknowledgment of the gift, Goddard added: “I

was very much delighted with the Navajo blankets. One of them was a fine old chief and all four were very good. My praise for the blankets does not mean that the other articles were not accordingly welcome. I have a weakness for blankets.”<sup>58</sup>

Even for such commodified items as Navajo textiles, the museum adhered to the salvage paradigm. An almost universally held belief at the turn of the last century (among museum anthropologists and collectors), the salvage paradigm incorrectly assumed that because Native peoples were being subjected to such drastic culture change it was necessary to collect the very earliest specimens possible in order to try to reconstruct Indigenous cultures as they existed before contact. Curators therefore constantly strove to acquire *early dated examples*.<sup>59</sup> In his assessment of the Hollister collection, Wissler made note of the periods represented, especially with regard to the older Lender and Sage pieces.<sup>60</sup> As Goddard wrote: “We have quite a good many in our collections but blankets made more than forty-seven years ago [from the date of the prospective donation] are of particular interest.”<sup>61</sup> To another donor, an assistant wrote: “However, as they are dated examples, I am reasonably certain that they will be desirable additions to the collection.”<sup>62</sup>

At the same time, one needed to avoid the repetition of simply adding additional items to the collection that were too similar or, worse, were of inferior quality to those already present. At the pinnacle were the culturally unique and the exquisitely beautiful.<sup>63</sup> As time went on and the collection became larger, curators became more selective. In the spirit of Noah’s Ark, they were eager to fill in *missing*

*examples of a type*. To one offer, they responded: “We have no examples in our present collections which duplicate these rugs and would be very happy to have them.”<sup>64</sup> To another, a curator noted: “Its style of decoration is not represented in our collection of Navajo blankets and for this reason it is a helpful addition to our collection.”<sup>65</sup> Similarly, “The rugs . . . differ in style from those already in our collections. There are enough pieces to make a worthwhile analysis. And the pieces, except for one that has been repaired, are in first class condition.”<sup>66</sup>

Yet even when the offer duplicated something in the collection, the new item could be desirable if it was a *better example of an existing type*, especially on grounds of condition: “It is a good one and in excellent condition. However our collection of blankets is quite large and contains several blankets rather similar to yours. . . . However no two blankets are exactly alike. For this reason we would like to have your blanket in our collection.”<sup>67</sup>

One of the criteria for acceptance was *condition*: “They are traditional types, and we have pieces that are similar, but the Ellsworth specimens are in spectacularly good condition, and are not identical to what we have.”<sup>68</sup> While some of the weavings in the collection – from the Sage and Hollister collections, for example – are impeccable, the museum also possesses many fragmented and damaged Navajo textiles, especially in the Lenders and Wissler accessions. These distressed items, exhibiting signs of use and wear, can still be important from an

ethnographic or historical perspective and are often of particular interest to contemporary weavers who can examine their weave structure and technique.

As early as 1920, curators were explaining to prospective donors that due to the great size of the collection and the restriction on gallery space they could not guarantee that the donations would be exhibited, but would be *preserved for researchers*: “You may be sure your specimens will be carefully taken care of and definitely preserved for students and the general public. At the present time we are not able to exhibit all the specimens we have but we do keep them very carefully in our specially built storage rooms where they are often seen by students and others particularly interested.”<sup>69</sup> In fact, the museum used the potential appeal to researchers, rather than to the general public, as a reason to accept an item: “I believe one of the two has some features which will be of interest to specialists in weaving techniques.”<sup>70</sup>

### **Uses of the Collections: Exhibition and Publication**

Since acquisition, the museum’s collection of Navajo textiles has been used extensively for research. Moved repeatedly from storeroom to storeroom over the decades, items were inventoried and rehoused between 2003 and 2006.<sup>71</sup>

Prominent among the many scholars who have reviewed the collection was Joe Ben Wheat (1916–1997), then a curator at the University of Colorado Museum, who examined in detail the museum’s entire Southwestern textile collection in 1972 and

1973. In all, Wheat surveyed over 3,500 textiles – mostly but not all Navajo – in approximately 50 museums, including at least 195 Southwest textiles from AMNH.<sup>72</sup> He was aided there by anthropology assistant Lisa Whittall (1926–2019), who was charged with the care of the ethnographic textile collections.

*Exhibitions.* Especially in the earlier years, when the museum was in the process of rapidly expanding its buildings and galleries, display was an important motivation for collecting, including in the Southwest.<sup>73</sup> First, a special temporary exhibition of Navajo weaving drew from George H. Pepper’s work for the Hyde Expedition. The making of his collection of Navajo raw materials in 1897 (accessioned the following year) had been motivated by a “wool exhibit” or “dye exhibit,” which would illustrate the making of a Navajo blanket. Pepper’s extensive photographic documentation of the process, preserved at the Peabody and AMNH, was intended to be included in a related exhibition, also presented in each institution. After several delays, it opened in 1901 in the AMNH gallery, then devoted to the museum’s southwestern collections. In the winter of 1901–2, and again in January 1902, the Hyde brothers brought Diné weavers to offer demonstrations for the public and especially for local teachers.<sup>74</sup>

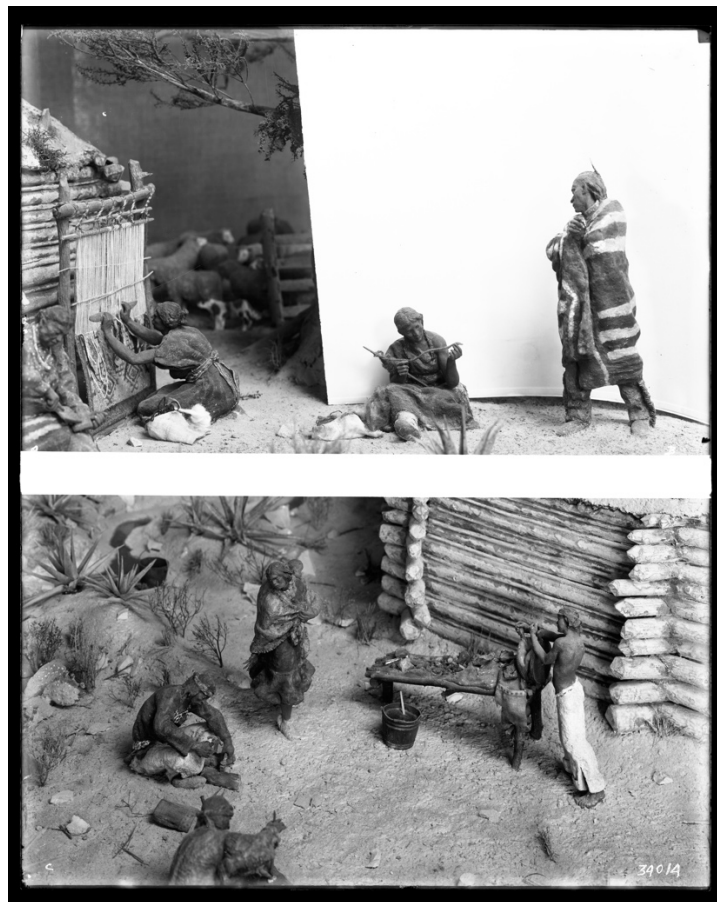


Textiles in the Navajo sandpainting diorama, Southwest Indian Hall, American Museum of Natural History, 1924. Courtesy the American Museum of Natural History Library, New York, neg. no. 310797.

Pliny Goddard made a similar collection for exhibition. His trip to the Navajo in 1910 was very short, as he was instructed to acquire just enough to prepare a life group for the Southwest Indian Hall. The first iteration of the exhibit included a miniature diorama of Navajo life, intended to serve as a model for a full-size group to be installed within an actual hogan.<sup>75</sup> Goddard's photos were used as guides for the preparation, under his supervision, of the miniature model – which included the stages of carding, spinning, and weaving.<sup>76</sup> During the 1920s, two large life-group

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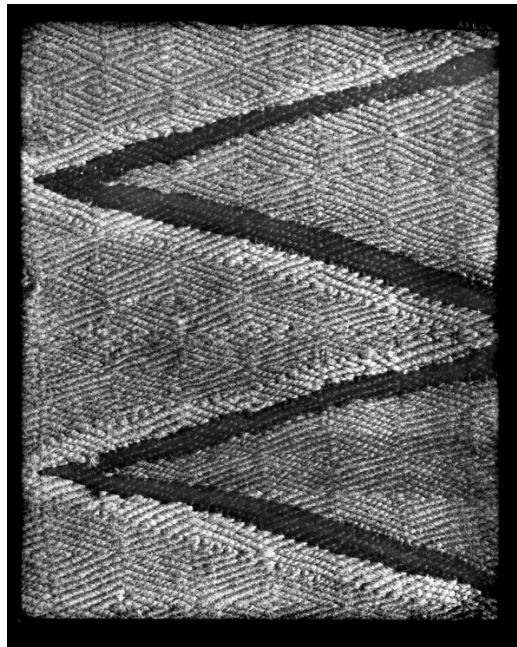
dioramas were devoted to the Navajo. Although they featured ceremonial life, the dioramas included six textiles, supplementing an adjacent case of textiles.<sup>77</sup> Since the removal of the Hall in 1960 there has been no permanent display of the Navajo textiles. Some, however, were included in a special exhibition of Southwest and Northwest Coast jewelry, *Totems to Turquoise*, in 2005–6.<sup>78</sup>



Nessa Cohen, miniature model of a Diné weaver Southwest Indian Hall, American Museum of Natural History, 1913. Courtesy the American Museum of Natural History Library, New York, neg. no. 34014a.

Ira Jacknis, "A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History," *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest* (2023), Bard Graduate Center, <https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/shapedbytheloom/>. © Bard Graduate Center.

*Publications.* Many of the museum's Navajo textiles have been included in publications by collectors, museum professionals, and independent scholars. Although Uriah S. Hollister's book, *The Navajo and His Blanket*, was published in 1903, before the institution acquired his collection, Hollister was the first independent collector to publish on the museum's Navajo textiles.<sup>79</sup> The first museum curator to do so was George Pepper, who included his field photographs in two popular articles of 1902 and 1903.<sup>80</sup> Pliny Goddard wrote an article about the early textile collections in the *American Museum Journal* and discussed them in the several editions of his guide to the Southwest Hall.<sup>81</sup>



Pliny E. Goddard (photographer), "Navajo Blankets," *American Museum Journal* (1910), p. 201. Courtesy the American Museum of Natural History Library, New York.

Ira Jacknis, "A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History," *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest* (2023), Bard Graduate Center, <https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/shapedbytheloom/>. © Bard Graduate Center.



The museum's collection has been described and illustrated in all of the early principal publications on Navajo textiles.<sup>82</sup> Many of the general studies of Navajo textiles since the revival in interest in the early 1970s have illustrated or discussed examples in AMNH.<sup>83</sup>

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Upon acquiring the large Hollister collection in 1910, curator Clark Wissler boasted to the director: "I cannot . . . make an absolute statement as to just how this collection would compare with that in other institutions. So far as my knowledge goes, however, our present collection is about equal to that of any other in America."<sup>84</sup> Since that time, other museums, especially in the West (such as Santa Fe, Phoenix, Denver, and Los Angeles), have created large and important collections of Navajo textiles. While AMNH is not particularly noted for its Southwest collections, and has not had a Southwestern Indian gallery for over half a century, it still has one of the oldest, largest, and, arguably, one of the best collections of Navajo textiles in an American museum.<sup>85</sup>

## American Museum of Natural History: Navajo Textile Accessions Table

Accession number	Donor	Collector (if different)	Acquisition mode	Number of Navajo textiles*
1895-1	Clarence E. Pullen		purchase	6
1898-47	Carl Eickemeyer		gift	4
1900-27	Col. Archibald Rogers		gift	1
1901-29	L. B. Putney and Frank Voorhies		Hyde Expedition	1
1901-30	Rudolf Cronau		purchase	2
1902-85	Ales Hrdlicka		Hyde Expedition	1
1910-17	Clark Wissler		Huntington Expedition [Peoples of the Southwest Fund]	7
1910-18	J. Pierpont Morgan	Emil W. Lenders	purchase	27
1910-22	Pliny E. Goddard		Huntington Expedition	9
1910-35	Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage [Mrs. Russell Sage]	Adam C. Vroman and the Harvey Company	gift	20
1910-41	Felix M. Warburg and James Douglas	Erastus T. Tefft	purchase	3
1910-48	Anson W. Hard	Hermon C. Bumpus	gift	4
1911-6	Jesup Fund	Uriah S. Hollister	purchase	66
1911-13	Herbert J. Spinden		Huntington Expedition	3
1912-23 (?)	Herbert J. Spinden		Huntington Expedition	1
1915-52	Alfred L. Kroeber		Huntington Expedition	1
1916-65	Alfred L. Kroeber and Leslie Spier		Huntington Expedition	2
1916-100	Mrs. Paul Morton		gift	1
1919-13	Andrew Dasburg		gift	1
1920-10	B. T. B. Hyde		purchase	1
1921-23	Mrs. E. H. Danforth		gift	4
1921-45	Alaquah B. Flood		purchase and exchange	5
1923-35	Lt. Alfred W. Gardner		gift	1
1923-61	Mrs. H. A. J. Wilkins		gift	1
1924-47	Col. J. M. Andrews		gift	1
1924-98	Lt. George T. Emmons	Edward E. Ayer	exchange	2
1926-55	Beatrice Abbott	Lyman Abbott	purchase	1
1930-20	Lt. George T. Emmons		exchange	1
1931-54	Charles L. Bernheimer	Zeke Johnson	gift	1
1935-40	Agnes Gray Boyd		gift, from estate	1

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<b>1936-19</b>	Carl Goldmark	Rubin Goldmark	gift, from RG estate	6
<b>1937-38</b>	Amelia Elizabeth White		gift	10
<b>1940-15</b>	DeCost Smith		gift, from estate	2
<b>1940-39</b>	Mrs. B. W. McNeely	William H. Waldby	gift	1
<b>1941-37</b>	Mrs. Robert Alexander, in memory of Major General Robert Alexander	General Earl Thomas	gift	3
<b>1941-59</b>	Mr. J. K. Semseman	Colonel F. V. Krug	gift	2
<b>1942-36</b>	Sarah Elizabeth Goodenough, in memory of Walter Goodenough		gift, from estate	7
<b>1942-51</b>	George H. Macauley	Capt. Carter N. B. Macauley, brother of donor	gift	5
<b>1942-54</b>	Mrs. John Reyburn	Uncle of donor	gift	3
<b>1946-32</b>	Mary Louise Walker	Thomas S. Walker	gift, from estate	23
<b>1946-63</b>	Ethel MacMurray Wright [Mrs. J. Marvin Wright], Edna MacMurray Robinson [Mrs. J. P. Robinson], J. V. A. MacMurray	Junius W. MacMurray	gift	7
<b>1949-2</b>	Mrs. Cordelia C. D. Nash	Spencer M. Nash	gift	1
<b>1949-29</b>	Mrs. William S. Titus	Vine Deloria, Sr., from Philip Deloria	gift	1
<b>1950-58</b>	Mrs. Rockwell Addison Loomis		gift	1
<b>1951-1</b>	Mr. and Mrs. James Brewster Hallet		gift	3
<b>1952-68</b>	Gifford M. Proctor	Alexander Phimister Proctor	purchase	4
<b>1956-8</b>	Charles Spickler	Frank Applegate	gift	2
<b>1956-81</b>	Mrs. Walter Lowell	Great-grandmother of donor	gift	3
<b>1958-62</b>	Eleanor H. Richards [Mrs. Lloyd Richards]		gift	2
<b>1959-13</b>	Valentine E. Macy	father of donor	gift	2
<b>1960-81</b>	Mrs. Lawrence A. Baker	Rozier Clagett, uncle of donor	gift	1
<b>1961-51</b>	Miss Jesseye Dickerman	Colonel Hinton	gift	1
<b>1962-23</b>	John Jay Cisco	grandfather of donor	gift	1
<b>1971-5</b>	Kemper C. Martin	Anna Long	gift	8

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1972-56	Dr. Isabel Bittinger	Mary Loud Gay, grandmother of donor	gift	5
1980-12	Mary Louise Ulmer Ellsworth [Mrs. Lincoln Ellsworth]	Grandfather of donor	gift	3
1983-23	Margaret McKelvy Bird [Mrs. Junius Bird]	Grandfather of donor	gift	1
1988-10	Ernest Erickson Foundation	Ernest Erickson	gift	2
2002-8	House of the Shalako	purchased by curator Peter Whiteley	purchase	6
2003-12	AMNH Dept. of Education		departmental transfer	3
2008-17	House of the Shalako	purchased by curator Peter Whiteley	purchase	4
2012-1	Suzanne Lamarre		gift, from estate	1

**\* Note:** The number of textiles listed is what was originally accessioned and cataloged as Navajo. In some cases, items have been slightly reduced through exchanges or loss, or added to, through re-cataloging. See also the list of looms, all of which included partially or completely woven textiles.

### Textiles listed without a provenance\*\*

Catalog number	Object type	Comments
NAE/ 0527	blanket fragment	
NAE/ 0528	rug	
NAE/ 0536	belt	
50.2/ 2982	legging	ca. 1928. found in storeroom without catalog number.
50.2/ 5818	blanket	1952. found uncataloged in S. West storeroom. probably 50.2/ 6326, Mrs. Louise Walker, gift, 1946-32.
50.2/ 6263	rug	1957. found in storage without catalog number. recataloged.

**\*\* Note:** Some, or even most, of these are likely to correspond to textiles noted as “missing” from accessions listed above.

## Navajo looms and materials, with unfinished textiles

Accession number	Donor	Collector (if different)	Acquisition mode	Comments
1897-24	James S. Douglas		gift	2 loom parts
1898-14	B. T. B. Hyde	George H. Pepper	Hyde Expedition	Chaco Canyon, NM. 67 raw materials (wool and buckskin) and dyes for textiles, including one blanket on a loom (1/ 5335)
1898-47	Carl Eickemeyer		gift	1 loom, dyed wool
1909-63	Chicago Academy of Sciences		exchange	1 blanket on loom
1910-16	B. T. B. Hyde		gift	9 looms with partially-woven blankets ("in frames, ... intended for the use of schools, and for the lecture hall"), 5 sash looms.
1910-22	Pliny E. Goddard		Huntington Expedition	7 tools and materials; 7 parts for a loom with an unfinished blanket (50/ 9246)
1910-35	Margaret Olivia Sage		gift	1 model loom
1910-41	Felix M. Warburg and James S. Douglas	Erastus T. Tefft	purchase	1 miniature loom
1923-35	Lt. Alfred W. Gardner		gift	2 blankets on loom, batten stick
1924-47	Col. J. M. Andrews		gift	1 blanket on loom
1931-63	Bernard W. and Ethel A. Aginsky		gift	1 blanket on loom
1932-59	L. B. Coshland		gift	1 model loom, made for sale
1944-50	Mary Phillips Bleecker [Mrs. William R. Bleecker]		gift	1 blanket on loom, from Coolidge, NM

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*This essay is an expanded and revised treatment of research that I first presented as “Art or Anthropology: Collecting Navajo Textiles in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, 1900–45,” at the 2014 biennial meeting of the Textile Society of America in Los Angeles. I am grateful to Hadley Jensen for asking me to contribute it to this project, and to Caroline Jean Fernald for helpful suggestions in the research. For assistance in researching the accession records, I would like to thank Kristen Mable, senior registrar for archives and loans, and Mary Lou Murillo, senior museum specialist for textiles, both of the Anthropology Division at AMNH.*

**Editorial note:** Ira Jacknis submitted this essay for *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest*, intended as an appendix, shortly before he passed away in September 2021. It has been copyedited for consistency and clarity, and we have added editorial notes (identified as such) where further context may be helpful. Otherwise, we present it here as submitted.

<sup>1</sup> **Editorial note:** Ira Jacknis previously demonstrated that part of the purpose of the Huntington Southwest Expedition – in addition to establishing a basic chronology for the region by combining archaeological and ethnological research – was to acquire “exhibitible collections” in support of AMNH’s shift toward dioramas and murals as a means of engaging audiences. Ira Jacknis, “In the Field / *En Plein Air*: The Art of Anthropological Display at the American Museum of Natural History, 1905–30,” in *The Anthropology of Expeditions: Travel, Visualities, Afterlives*, ed. Joshua A. Bell and Erin L. Hasinoff, *Cultural Histories of the Material World* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2015), 119–73. The Huntington Southwest Expedition was part of a pattern of “expeditionary collecting” by museums between the 1890s and 1930s. See Hasinoff and Bell, “Introduction,” in *The Anthropology of Expeditions*, 1–32.

<sup>2</sup> **Editorial note:** There is some slippage in Jacknis’s text among various means of such acquisition: for example, a collection purchased on behalf of the museum by a board member is mentioned both

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as a donation and as a museum purchase. We have attempted to clarify distinctions between gifts, purchases, and acquisitions where possible.

<sup>3</sup> Clark Wissler to Henry Fairfield Osborn, October 7, 1910 (Division of Anthropology, AMNH, acc. 1911–6).

<sup>4</sup> Here and elsewhere in this essay the number of textiles listed for each accession corresponds to what was originally catalogued; in some cases, the totals have been reduced slightly through exchanges or loss, or added to, through re-cataloguing. So, for example, the Hollister collection is now 61 out of an original 66, while the Sage now has 18 out of 20. White's collection of 10 was reduced by 1 when it was re-catalogued as Rio Grande Hispanic, and 1 was added to the Lenders collection, for the reverse reason, making 27.

<sup>5</sup> Pliny E. Goddard to Uriah S. Hollister, August 3, 1910 (acc. 1911–6).

<sup>6</sup> For a basic review of Navajo textiles, see Kate Peck Kent, *Navajo Weaving: Three Centuries of Change, With a Catalogue of the School of American Research Collection*, Studies in American Indian Art (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1985). For traders and collecting, see Marta Weigle and Barbara A. Babcock, eds., *The Great Southwest of the Fred Harvey Company and the Santa Fe Railway* (Phoenix: Heard Museum; Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Joe Ben Wheat, *Blanket Weaving in the Southwest*, ed. Ann Lane Hedlund (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003), especially Teresa J. Wilkins, "Collectors of Nineteenth-Century Southwestern Textiles," 353–56; Erika Marie Bsumek, *Indian-Made: Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1868–1940*, Culture America (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); Wilkins, "Collectors of Nineteenth-Century Southwestern Textiles"; and Erica Cottam, *Hubbell Trading Post: Trade, Tourism, and the Navajo Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015). For a more general consideration of the American Southwest in cultural perspective, see Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).

Ira Jacknis, "A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History," *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest* (2023), Bard Graduate Center, <https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/shapedbytheloom/>. © Bard Graduate Center.



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<sup>7</sup> See Susan Brown McGreevy, “Matthews’ Studies of Navajo Arts,” in *Washington Matthews: Studies of Navajo Culture, 1880–1894*, ed. Katherine Spencer Halpern and Susan Brown McGreevy (Santa Fe: Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 16–27.

<sup>8</sup> The Field Museum of Natural History was founded in 1894 with collections assembled for the World’s Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago the previous year; see Stephen E. Nash and Gary M. Feinman, *Curators, Collections, and Contexts: Anthropology at the Field Museum, 1893–2002*, *Fieldiana: Anthropology*, n.s., 36 (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 2003). Despite having one of the largest extant Hopi collections, the Field holds relatively little from the Navajo.

<sup>9</sup> See Wheat, *Blanket Weaving*, 249.

<sup>10</sup> For general reviews of Southwest collecting, see Nancy J. Parezo, “The Formation of Ethnographic Collections: The Smithsonian Institution in the American Southwest,” in *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 10 (1987): 1–47; and Don D. Fowler, *A Laboratory for Anthropology: Science and Romanticism in the American Southwest, 1846–1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000). Surprisingly, there has been relatively little scholarly research on the history of collecting of Navajo textiles – as opposed to scholarship (which has been reviewed by Suzanne Baizerman, “The Study of Material Culture: The Case of Southwest Textiles,” *Museum Anthropology* 13, no. 2 (May 1989): 14–18; Ann Lane Hedlund, “The Study of Nineteenth-Century Southwestern Textiles,” in *Perspectives on Anthropological Collections from the American Southwest: Proceedings of a Symposium*, ed. Ann Lane Hedlund [Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University, 1989], 121–38; and Ann Lane Hedlund, “Beyond Beauty: Exploring the Ethnoaesthetics of Navajo Weaving,” *American Indian Art Magazine* 40, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 44–59) – especially on the institutional and comparative, rather than personal, level. **[Editorial note:** We have corrected the bibliographic citations in this sentence but Jacknis’s intended meaning is somewhat unclear as originally written]. For the substantial historical literature on the production of the textiles, and on traders and the history of marketing, see note 4. There has been some concern with personal collections, for example Edward Ira Jacknis, “A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History,” *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest* (2023), Bard Graduate Center, <https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/shapedbytheloom/>. © Bard Graduate Center.

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E. Ayer's collection of fourteen Navajo textiles, which he ultimately donated to the Field Museum; see Carolyn Kastner, "Unraveling a Collection of Nineteenth-Century Navajo Textiles: A Narrative History" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1999). The literature on institutional collecting focuses almost completely on individual museums, such as the William Claflin collection at the Harvard Peabody Museum (Laurie D. Webster, *Collecting the Weaver's Art: The William Claflin Collection of Southwestern Textiles*, Peabody Museum Collections Series [Cambridge: Peabody Museum Press, Harvard University, 2003]); the Stewart Culin collection at the Brooklyn Museum (Diana Fane, Ira Jacknis, and Lise M. Breen, *Objects of Myth and Memory: American Indian Art at The Brooklyn Museum* [Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991]); Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (Eulalie Bonar, ed., *Woven by the Grandmothers: Nineteenth-Century Navajo Textiles from the National Museum of the American Indian*, exh. cat. [Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996]); Smithsonian's US National Museum (Parezo, "Formation of Ethnographic Collections"); University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology (Joe Ben Wheat, *The Gift of Spiderwoman: Southwestern Textiles, the Navajo Tradition* [Philadelphia: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1984]), and Lucy Fowler Williams, "Southwest Collections of the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of the University of Pennsylvania," *American Indian Art Magazine* 16, no. 2 [1991]: 50–59); Mary and Francis Crane collection at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (Laurie D. Webster et al., *Navajo Textiles: The Crane Collection at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science* [Denver: Denver Museum of Nature and Science; Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017]); Museum of Indian Arts and Culture (Shelby J. Tisdale, *Spider Woman's Gift: Nineteenth-Century Diné Textiles at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture* [Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2011]); School of American Research/Laboratory of Anthropology (Roseann Sandoval Willink and Paul G. Zolbrod, *Weaving a World: Textiles and the Navajo Way of Seeing* [Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1996]); School of American Research (Kent, *Navajo Weaving*), Maxwell Museum (Rodee, *Weaving of the Southwest: From the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, University of New Mexico*, rev. 2nd ed. Ira Jacknis, "A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History," *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest* (2023), Bard Graduate Center, <https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/shapedbytheloom/>. © Bard Graduate Center.

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[Schiffer Publishing, West Chester, PA, 1987; Atglen, PA.: Schiffer Publishing, 2003]); Southwest Museum (Kathleen Whitaker, *Southwest Textiles: Weavings of the Navajo and Pueblo* [Los Angeles: Southwest Museum; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002]); and the William R. Hearst collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History (Nancy J. Blomberg, *Navajo Textiles: The William Randolph Hearst Collection* [Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988]).

<sup>11</sup> During his time directing anthropology at AMNH (1894–1903), Frederic Putnam never relinquished his position as director of Harvard’s Peabody Museum. In 1901 he also took on the directorship of the University of California Museum of Anthropology, where he served until his full retirement in 1909.

**Editorial note:** For shifts in AMNH institutional and departmental priorities, see also Jacknis, “In the Field,” 121.

<sup>12</sup> **Editorial note:** See Jacknis, “In the Field,” 144. He cites the terminal report of the expedition, “The Archer M. Huntington Survey of Southwestern United States Conducted by the Department of Anthropology, 1909–1921,” filed with Henry F. Osborn to Archer M. Huntington, March 8, 1924; CA: file 845, folder 1923–24, AMNH. For expeditions in the Southwest, see James E. Snead, *Ruins and Rivals: The Making of Southwest Archaeology* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Beside the Apache and Navajo, some of the larger Southwestern groups at AMNH are the Zuni (1,769 objects), Hopi (1,543), Papago/Tohono O’odham (774), Taos (396), Pima/Akimel O’odham (246), General Southwest (153), Acoma (120), and General Pueblo (119). These are out of a total of 9,530 ethnological items and 33,949 archaeological objects; see Freed, *Anthropology Unmasked*, 409.

<sup>14</sup> For discussion of the museum’s Southwest collections, see Freed, *Anthropology Unmasked*; James E. Snead, *Ruins and Rivals: The Making of Southwest Archaeology* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001); and Jacknis, “In the Field.” The latter also considers regional shifts in the 1930s.

**Editorial note:** Jacknis also addresses the shift away from a focus on dioramas and life groups amid debates over authenticity; see “In the Field,” 150–9.

Ira Jacknis, “A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History,” *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest* (2023), Bard Graduate Center, <https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/shapedbytheloom/>. © Bard Graduate Center.

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<sup>15</sup> In fact, this kind of provenience documentation was precisely the aim of Joe Ben Wheat's pioneering research in the early 1970s, which included the museum's collections. On issues of attribution, see Candace S. Greene, "Documentation, Attribution and the Ideal Type," in *Art and Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture and Museum Studies in Honor of Jane Powell Dwyer*, ed. Harold David Juli, Brown University Research Papers in Anthropology 5 (Providence, RI: Department of Anthropology, Brown University, 1992), 9–18. For specifically Navajo issues, see Wheat, *Blanket Weaving*.

<sup>16</sup> For example, three of the blankets in the Lenders collection (acc. 1910–18) originally thought to be Navajo (50.2/6772, 6774, 6775) were re-catalogued as Rio Grande in the 1980s, as was another (50.2/6776) in the Goldmark collection (acc. 1936–19). One in the Goodenough accession (1942–36) originally catalogued as Navajo (50.2/4577) was later re-catalogued as Mexican (65/6031).

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, "The Anson W. Hard Collection of Saltillos and Chimayo Blankets," *American Museum Journal* 12, no. 1 (January 1912): 33–34.

<sup>18</sup> Philip Gifford to Mrs. Walter Lowell, January 8, 1957 (acc. 1956–51). This preference was also raised in the museum's rejection of a similarly mixed collection of folk pottery offered by Emily de Forest. See Ira Jacknis, "Anthropology, Art, and Folklore: Competing Visions of Museum Collecting in Early Twentieth-Century America," *Museum Worlds* 7, no. 1 (2019): 109–33. **Editorial note:** The use of "aboriginal" in this context seems to be the author's own interpretation that the offered textile "apparently does not represent primitive work." Gifford's comment is reflective of period categories and authenticity, in which the desired "primitive" objects were thought to capture or "salvage" precolonial culture (as opposed to both "folk" craft and "Hispanic" [Spanish colonial] hybrids). It is also indicative of the lack of knowledge on the part of such curators as to the intercultural influence, adaptation, and exchange in the region that has been integral to Navajo weaving, seen as both process and product. For the semantic relationship of the various object terms and classifications, see Ira Jacknis, "The First Art of the First Americans at the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *West 86th*

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29, no. 1 (Spring–Summer 2022): 18–22. The dioramas at AMNH “avoided signs of acculturation to create an ‘ethnographic present’” – the exception being the Navajo group. Jacknis, “In the Field,” 148.

<sup>19</sup> One collector, John Jay Cisco, thought his blanket (50.2/6548, from acc. 1962–23) was Hopi, but the museum decided it was Navajo. Similarly, Mrs. Rockwell Addison-Loomis (acc. 1950–58) donated a Mexican saddle blanket (50.2/5767) that turned out to be Navajo. Alfred Kroeber collected two blankets originally thought to be Navajo (50.1/9600, 50.2/286), but which are now attributed to Zuni.

<sup>20</sup> For more on the Plains trade in Navajo textiles, see Roshii Montano and Jill Ahlberg Yohe, “Blanketing the Plains: *Hanoolchaadi* in Indian Country,” *First American Art Magazine* 14 (Spring 2017): 20–25; and Webster et al., *Navajo Textiles*, 50–53.

<sup>21</sup> Pepper collection for the Hyde brothers (acc. 1898–14); Pliny Goddard for the Navajo and Apache collection (acc. 1910–22).

<sup>22</sup> **Editorial note:** Jacknis includes museum purchases and items collected on expeditions and “donated” by museum staff in these accessions; see also below, “Modes of Acquisition.”

<sup>23</sup> Clark Wissler to Pliny Goddard, March 20, 1910 (acc. 1910–22). **Editorial note:** See also Jacknis, “In the Field,” 142–43.

<sup>24</sup> My research on the early Native American collections at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, including the shared M. Olivia Sage donations in each institution, was first presented in 2013 as “The First Art of the First Americans at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” at the biennial meeting of the Native American Art Studies Association (NAASA), Denver. **Editorial note:** See Jacknis, “First Art.”

<sup>25</sup> In the matter of expeditions, one might also note Charles Bernheimer. Although he had sponsored major archaeological expeditions in the Southwest, his two Navajo donations were quite minor and were listed as a personal gift, not as the result of one of his expeditions.

<sup>26</sup> Richard I. Ford, *Systematic Research Collections in Anthropology: An Irreplaceable National Resource* (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum, Harvard University, for the Council on Museum Anthropology, 1977), 5; cf. Ira Jacknis, “Museum Collections as Cultural Samples: Documentation, Systematicity, and Authenticity,” in *Putting Theory and Things Together: Working with Museum* Ira Jacknis, “A History of the Navajo Textile Collection at the American Museum of Natural History,” *Shaped by the Loom: Weaving Worlds in the American Southwest* (2023), Bard Graduate Center, <https://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/shapedbytheloom/>. © Bard Graduate Center.

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*Collections*, ed. Joshua Bell and Jennifer Shannon (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, forthcoming).

<sup>27</sup> **Editorial note:** The field collections mentioned here reflect the specific curatorial interests of Pepper and Goddard, both of whom took a more holistic approach to collecting. While AMNH did not consider “incomplete textiles” in their own category of “textile” (for cataloguing purposes), Jacknis is more inclusive in this essay and its accompanying table.

<sup>28</sup> For the Peabody Museum version, see acc. 98–9; and for the AMNH version, see acc. 1898–14; AMNH *Annual Report* for 1898: 12, 55. Pepper’s photographs at AMNH are in files PH 1/6 and 7 in the Anthropology Division archives. **Editorial note:** This unique focus on process informed the recontextualization and reinterpretation of Pepper’s collection in *Shaped by the Loom*. Both the online and gallery versions of the exhibition feature a selection of dye and fiber samples as well as several unfinished textiles on the loom, reflecting the affinity between process and product. These items are important to the project’s curatorial approach, which emphasizes a more expansive understanding of Navajo weaving through its material and nonmaterial counterparts.

<sup>29</sup> Included in Goddard’s collection (acc. 1910–22), were all the parts of a working loom, containing a partially woven textile from the weaver, Mrs. Louis Watchman, from the Fort Defiance area of eastern Arizona (50/9239–9246) [**Editorial note:** Jacknis does not include this item among works by named weavers (see below, “Temporal Documentation”), perhaps because it is unfinished]. Like Pepper, Goddard also collected samples of wool, some dyes, a spindle whorl, and a pair of carding paddles.

<sup>30</sup> In fact, George Pepper engaged in serious ethnography of Navajo weaving but died before being able to publish his research (“Navajo Weaving,” [unpublished manuscript, 1923]). The ethnographic study of Navajo weaving begun by Matthews came to fruition with the publication of Gladys Amanda Reichard, *Spider Woman: A Story of Navajo Weavers and Chanters* (New York: MacMillan, 1934).

<sup>31</sup> Clark Wissler to Hermon C. Bumpus, November 30, 1909, “Anthropology of the Southwest,” file no. 845, Central Archives, Library, American Museum of Natural History.

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<sup>32</sup> The funding source for the Hollister collection was never mentioned in the accession file but was indicated in AMNH's *Annual Report* for 1911 as coming from the Fund established by former museum President Morris K. Jesup. *Forty-Third Annual Report of the Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History for the Year 1911* (New York, 1912), 24.

<sup>33</sup> As Skinner wrote to the director: "I have just gone over the Landers list and frankly speaking, when one sees the itemized account in the cold blood, it is rather startling. Ninety dollars for one horn spoon, even if large and elegant seems to me to be about eighty dollars to [*sic*] much at the very least." Alanson Skinner to Hermon C. Bumpus, November 22, 1909 (acc. 1910–18).

<sup>34</sup> Stanley Freed to John Jay Cisco, September 29, 1961 (acc. 1962–23).

<sup>35</sup> **Editorial note:** Again, there is slippage between discussion of the collection formed by Emil Lenders and purchased for AMNH by J. Pierpont Morgan, and the collection that Margaret Olivia Sage formed from at least two sources (Adam C. Vroman and the Harvey company) and then gave to AMNH and the Met. It is unclear whether Vroman and Harvey deliberately built their collections for either museum.

<sup>36</sup> That this relative lack of cultural documentation was not unique to AMNH is supported by Whitaker's characterization based on the collections of the Southwest Museum (now the Autry Museum of the American West): "Despite arguments that museums were working in the interests of science and had no commercial motives, there is little evidence of a 'scientific method' at the turn of the century. Collectors gathered things that looked old, rare, or unusual, and the idea was to purchase them regardless of their provenance. Too often objects were found in 'curio' shops or in granny's attic. More to the point, very little was known about the objects that were acquired. Adding to the uncertainty was the prevailing assumption that if an object was collected in, say, a Hopi village it must have been made by the Hopi, the fallacy of that thinking has compounded the errors in museum archives for decades." Kathleen Whitaker, *Common Threads: Pueblo and Navajo Textiles in the Southwest Museum*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Southwest Museum, 1998), 53.

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<sup>37</sup> On family folklore, see Wheat, *Blanket Weaving*, 13. For example, Jesseye Dickerman reported that the Navajo rug/blanket she donated to the museum (cat. no. 50.2/6347; acc. 1961–51) had been given by a local Indian chief to a Colonel Hinton when he settled in Kansas in the early 1850s. But Wheat determined that this had to be an error because of the presence of aniline dyes, which were not introduced to the Diné until the late 1870s (*Blanket Weaving*, 64–65).

<sup>38</sup> For instance, Carl Eickemeyer narrated his collecting of Navajo textiles in *Over the Great Navajo Trail* (New York: Little, 1900).

<sup>39</sup> On Gay, see Wheat, *Blanket Weaving*, 13. In the historical record, the collector's name has been given as both Mary Loud Gay (see Hedlund, *Beyond the Loom*) and Mary Leod Gay (see Wheat, *Blanket Weaving*).

<sup>40</sup> Mary Loud Gay's blankets in the Museum of the University of Colorado, donated by her granddaughter Isabel Bittinger, are documented and illustrated in Ann Lane Hedlund, *Beyond the Loom: Keys to Understanding Early Southwestern Weaving*, with an Introduction and Observations by Joe Ben Wheat, ed. Teresa Wilkins and Diana Leonard (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 1997), 37, 64 (26147), 71 (26148), 55 (26341), 66–68 (26382), 59 (26383), 57 (26620), 57–58 (28849), and 59–61 (29053).

<sup>41</sup> Uriah S. Hollister, *The Navajo and His Blanket* (Denver: United States Colortype, 1903). Apparently Hollister was unaware of the work of Matthews. On the other hand, the surgeon had a low opinion of the collector, as quoted in McGreevy, "Matthews' Studies of Navajo Arts," 22.

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous, "Lenders Indian Collection," *American Museum Journal* 10, no. 4 (April 1910): 92–95.

<sup>43</sup> For Pepper, see Paul J. Tarver and Cristin J. Nunez, *Ancestors and Descendants: Ancient Southwestern America at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century: Selections from the George Hubbard Pepper Native American Archive at Tulane University's Middle American Research Institute and Latin American Library*, exh. cat. (New Orleans: New Orleans Museum of Art, 2010); Snead, *Ruins and Rivals*; Marian E. Rodee, *Old Navajo Rugs: Their Development from 1900 to 1940* (Albuquerque:

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University of New Mexico Press, 1981), 14–15, 25–26, 120–21; and Bonar, *Woven by the Grandmothers*, 176–77.

<sup>44</sup> Ruth Crocker, *Mrs. Russell Sage: Women's Activism and Philanthropy in Gilded Age and Progressive Era America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> **Editorial note:** See Jacknis, "First Art," 11–13.

<sup>46</sup> "Indian Displays Feature of Show," *New York Times*, December 27, 1907.

<sup>47</sup> For Vroman, see William Webb and Robert A. Weinstein, *Dwellers at the Source: Southwestern Indian Photographs of A. C. Vroman, 1895–1904* (New York: Grossman, 1973); Suzanne G. Kenagy, "The A. C. Vroman Collection of Southwest Artifacts at the Southwest Museum," *Masterkey: Anthropology of the Americas* 63, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 12–23; and Stephen Dow Beckham, "Notes on Adam Clark Vroman and Navajo Weaving, 19 September 2014" (unpublished manuscript in author's possession).

<sup>48</sup> George Wharton James, "Indian Basketry in House Decoration," *House Beautiful* 12, no. 6 (1902): 363–66.

<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, this list cannot be complete, as the identities of some of the collectors, along with their professions, were often absent from the museum's accession records.

<sup>50</sup> **Editorial note:** In the late nineteenth century, engineering was closely linked to the imposition of capitalism and the growth of non-Native industry, tourism, train travel, and settlement across the Southwest. These technological innovations paralleled the colonial context of military engagement in the region.

<sup>51</sup> Given this essay's publication by Bard Graduate Center, one might note that in 1924 Vine Deloria, Sr., was a student at St. Stephen's College (renamed Bard College in 1934). His sister was noted anthropologist and Boas student Ella Deloria; his son, Vine Deloria, Jr., was the famous Native American lawyer, activist, and scholar of religion; and his grandson, Philip Deloria, is a historian of American cultural history.

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<sup>52</sup> William C. Sturtevant, "Ethnological Collections and Curatorial Records," *Museum News* 44, no. 7 (1966): 16–19.

<sup>53</sup> **Editorial note:** Given Jacknis's specific interest in documenting the AMNH collection and his emphasis on the social actors involved in its formation and display, there are absences in his essay that might provide additional analytical insight. For example, further research might reveal whether there was any correlation between the identities of collectors and the types of textiles they collected.

<sup>54</sup> Clark Wissler to Henry Fairfield Osborn, October 3, 1910 (acc. 1911–6). Wissler felt that these more recent items would complement the older examples in the Sage and Landers collections.

<sup>55</sup> Hollister acquired this early Corn Ye'ii rug (cat. no. 50.1/4373) from Mrs. Lucy E. Peabody of Washington, DC, who had commissioned it from a weaver living at the San Juan Agency. The design belonged to the Shootingway complex; see Rebecca M. Valette, "Early Navajo Sandpainting Blankets: A Reassessment," *American Indian Art Magazine* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 58.

<sup>56</sup> **Editorial note:** See n. 30.

<sup>57</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 152, 161.

<sup>58</sup> Pliny Goddard to Mrs. E. H. Danforth, March 24, 1921 (acc. 1921–23).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. James Clifford, "The Others: Beyond the 'Salvage' Paradigm," *Third Text* 3, no. 6 (Spring 1989): 73–78.

<sup>60</sup> Clark Wissler to Henry Fairfield Osborn, October 3, 1910 (acc. 1911–6). "In decades they are as follows: previous to 1850, five; 1850–60, six; 1860–70, two; 1870–80, five; 1880–90, twelve; 1890–1900, four; 1900–1910, twenty. While, as you will notice, there are a larger number of modern blankets in this collection, they are welcome since the blankets of the Landers' collection and most of those of the Mrs. Sage collection are of the older periods." Of course, in 1910 this was a relative statement as most of the collection, in fact, was pre-twentieth century.

<sup>61</sup> Pliny Goddard to Mrs. E. H. Danforth, March 4, 1921 (acc. 1921–23).

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<sup>62</sup> Bella Weitzner to George H. Macauley, October 15, 1942 (acc. 1942–51).

<sup>63</sup> **Editorial note:** For anthropological salvage collections, aesthetics alone were not a typical criteria of value. Instead, these items were considered to be “ethnographic documents of Native lifeways,” as Jacknis explains above. In this essay, he also notes that many of the AMNH textiles were collected by artists or art collectors for whom aesthetics mattered and who were *not* the typical donors to anthropological collections.

<sup>64</sup> Philip Gifford to Mrs. Walter Lowell, January 8, 1957 (acc. 1956–81).

<sup>65</sup> Stanley Freed to Jesse Dickerman, September 5, 1961 (acc. 1961–51).

<sup>66</sup> Philip Gifford departmental memo on the Kemper C. Martin collection, June 21, 1970 (acc. 1971–5).

<sup>67</sup> Stanley Freed to John Jay Cisco, March 8, 1962 (acc. 1962–23).

<sup>68</sup> David H. Thomas to Beekman Poole, lawyer for Mary Louise Ulmer Ellsworth (Mrs. Lincoln Ellsworth), December 19, 1977, quoting Philip Gifford’s review of the collection (memo to David H. Thomas, November 30, 1977) (acc. 1980–12).

<sup>69</sup> Pliny E. Goddard to Mrs. E. H. Danforth, March 4, 1921 (acc. 1921–23). Similar sentiments were expressed in a letter from departmental assistant Bella Weitzner to George H. Macauley, September 4, 1940 (acc. 1942–51).

<sup>70</sup> Bella Weitzner to Valentine E. Macy, February 26, 1959 (acc. 1959–13).

<sup>71</sup> For a good review of the museum’s rehousing of the ethnographic textile collections, see “Textile Collection,” American Museum of Natural History, Division of Anthropology, <https://anthro.amnh.org/textile>.

<sup>72</sup> Wheat, *Blanket Weaving*, xix. These 195 were in his online collections database, which unfortunately is no longer available at the Arizona State Museum website. Wheat described and illustrated twelve of the museum’s Navajo textiles: Wheat, *Blanket Weaving*, 185 (Tefft, 50.1/2012), 188 (Sage-Vroman, 50/9265), 195 (Hollister, 50.1/4422 and 4423), 204 (Hollister, 50.1/4425), 205 (Hollister, 50.1/4429), 212 (Cronau, which Wheat listed incorrectly as Gesneau, 50/2091), 222

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(Hollister, 50.1/4419), 227 (Hollister, 50.1/4416), 231 (Bittinger-Gay, 50.2/6671), 282 (Bittinger-Gay, 50.2/6673), and 313 (Bumpus, 50.2/6759). See also Hedlund, *Beyond the Loom*.

<sup>73</sup> Jacknis, "In the Field / *En Plein Air*." For a general review of exhibitions of Navajo textiles in the twentieth century, see Elizabeth Kalbfleisch and Janet Catherine Berlo, "Indigenous Textiles of North America: A Century of Exhibitions," in *A Companion to Textile Culture*, ed. Jennifer Harris, Wiley Blackwell Companions to Art History 19 (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020).

<sup>74</sup> The Peabody collection was accessioned as no. 98–9, and the AMNH collection as acc. 1898–14. On the AMNH exhibition, see *AMNH Annual Report for 1899*, 22; *Annual Report for 1901*, 19; *Annual Report for 1901*, 20; *American Museum Journal*, 3(2), 19–20. Hyde-sponsored demonstrations were also arranged for the Wanamaker Department Store in 1901 (*New York Times*, April 16, 1901, 4) and at Columbia University's Teachers College in 1902 (*New York Daily Tribune*, January 14, 1902, 5) and 1903 (*New York Daily Tribune*, March 11, 1903, 7).

<sup>75</sup> **Editorial note:** See Jacknis, "In the Field,"

<sup>76</sup> Anonymous, "Indians of the Southwest," *American Museum Journal* 13, no. 2 (February 1913): 83–84, 95. For the model of a Navajo group (cat. no. M-125), the house and accessories were made by Dr. Block of the Dept. of Preparation, and the figures by Nessa Cohen. "Models Made in the Department or in Exhibition" (unpublished manuscript, Anthropology Division, AMNH, 1912?).

<sup>77</sup> These center cases held the finer textiles from the Hollister or Sage collections. Since most of the mannequins in the side dioramas were rendered as painted plaster, the actual textiles included here were obscured and so tended to be damaged; they included a saddle blanket from Eickemeyer's gift (1/5456), four blankets from the Lenders collection (50/9987, 50/9993, 50/9997, 50.1/5), and a blanket collected by? Wissler (50.1/4243).

<sup>78</sup> Kari Chalker, ed., *Totems to Turquoise: Native North American Jewelry Arts of the Northwest and Southwest*, exh. cat. (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with the American Museum of Natural History, 2004).

<sup>79</sup> Hollister, *The Navajo and His Blanket*.

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<sup>80</sup> George H. Pepper, "The Making of a Navajo Blanket," *Everybody's Magazine* 6 (January–June, 1902): 33–43; and George H. Pepper, "Native Navajo Dyes," *Papoose* 1, no. 3 (1903): 1–11.

<sup>81</sup> Pliny E. Goddard, "Navajo Blankets," *American Museum Journal* 10: no. 7 (November 1910): 201–11; and the four editions of his guide to the Southwest Hall: *Indians of the Southwest* AMNH Handbook, no. 2, editions 1–4 (New York, American Museum of Natural History, 1913, 1921, 1927, 1931).

<sup>82</sup> See Hollister, *The Navajo and His Blanket*; George Wharton James, *Indian Blankets and Their Makers* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1914), 10 (fig. 6), 22 (fig. 12), 35 (fig. 23), 192 (fig. 241), 32, 35, 37, 156, and 164; and specimen of weaving in colors (80); Charles A. Amsden, *Navaho Weaving: Its Technic and History* (Santa Ana, CA: Fine Arts Press, 1934), 11 (fig. 5), plate 7; and Gladys Amanda Reichard, *Navajo Shepherd and Weaver* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1936), 120, 158 (pl. 12-a), and 268. Reichard also cites the Navajo collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art donated by M. Olivia Sage. The George H. Pepper manuscript ("Navajo Weaving") was cited by both Hollister and Amsden, even though it was then and remains unpublished.

<sup>83</sup> For example, Mary Hunt Kahlenberg and Anthony Berlant, *The Navajo Blanket*, exh. cat. (New York: Praeger, 1972), 32, 59; and Anthony Berlant and Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, *Walk in Beauty: The Navajo and Their Blankets* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977), pl. 7, fig. 47.

<sup>84</sup> Clark Wissler to Henry Fairfield Osborn, October 7, 1910 (acc. 1911–6).

<sup>85</sup> It is difficult to directly compare the sizes of collections, partly because some museums include Pueblo and Navajo together in their counts of Southwestern textiles (such as the 1,100 in the Southwest Museum; see Whitaker, *Southwest Textiles*, 22); others focus on blankets and/or those from the nineteenth century (120 such in the National Museum of the American Indian; see Bonar, *Woven by the Grandmothers*, 181). The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology holds about 150 Navajo textiles; see Williams, "Southwest Collections," 58.