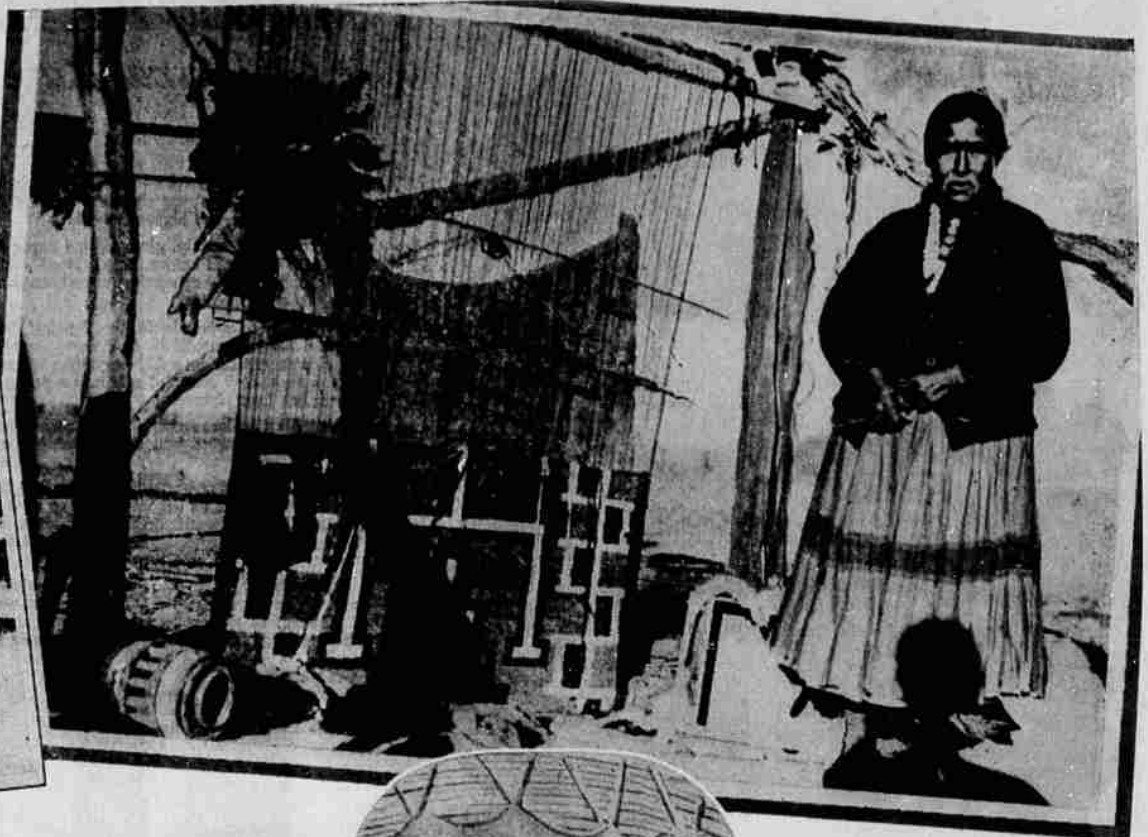


Flagstaff Scene Of Monster Indian Powwow

Scenes Reminiscent Of Pioneer Days Enacted As 7,000 Arizona Redskins Travel Historic Trails Of West



By Peter Wolff

"W-O-O-O-O-O! Owo-o-o-ow-o-o-o!" It's a wild cry, high and piercing — flinging through the warm night, cutting the stillness like a knife. It echoes, drifts into the sky with the gray streaks from Indian smoke signals, and begins again.

If you were within a few miles of Flagstaff, Arizona, on July Fourth, you might have said, "The Indians are off the reservation—they're coming!" And, you'd have been right.

For days preceding the greatest Indian conference of the past century, bronzed Indian runners trotted up the canyons, over the desert, and dropped down from mountain ridges like swift ghosts of a reviving past, to announce the gathering of the red tribes of the Southwest.

The Indians were coming!

Forty-niners would have seized their rifles, barricaded themselves in the nearest trading post, and awaited the attack. Covered wagons would have rumbled hurriedly toward the closest log fort, and prepared for siege.

Citizens of Flagstaff rubbed their eyes and wondered how many extra beds they would need to care for crowds of visitors—white men and women who came to see the teepees, the wild dancing, and who must be housed.

Over the worn old trails trooped the Indians, 7,000 strong. Hopis, Apaches, Zunis and Navajos, with women and papooses—whooing, laughing, painted and in costume—glory, bent not on taking scalps, but on business and pleasure.

There was no raiding, except on the pocket books and bank accounts of white bargain-hunters.

It was a powwow for profit.

IN A THICK pine forest on the edge of the little mountain town gathered some of the finest native artisans in America. Spread out on the ground for inspection and sale were hundreds of Navajo rugs, Hopi jewelry, baskets, beads, hand-made pottery, blankets, and moccasins. Rug weavers worked on primitive looms, showed how magnificent blankets were started from the ground and woven expertly to the top. Powwow debutantes paraded in their finery, sedate, copper-colored, and many of them handsome.

Elected the prettiest maiden of them all, Josephine Jane of the Navajos, represented her tribe astride a roan steed, garbed in a black velvet jacket, a flowing skirt like a gipsy's, and a necklace of heavy white beads.

Business took place during daylight hours, when the redmen could do little but rest and offer their wares. The financial arrangements were instigated by the town people, who discovered that their Indian friends were poor promoters, but excellent artists. The white men's idea was to get the seller and customer together, and the Indians agreed it might be all right. For their part, business was a necessary evil, in which they engaged occasionally because in a white man's world a red man must have money. After business hours they planned to have a good time. If pleasure interfered with business next day, and the out-of-door store keepers felt a bit sleepy, this was unfortunate but couldn't be helped. What the tribes did not sell this year, could be sold twelve months later.

The powwow has been going on for some three years. The first attracted only 400 Indians, but word soon passed around that everyone had a good vacation from tending their fields—some even made money!

AT DUSK business was over. Union hours were in force, following the set schedule of the sun. When it rose, they stirred themselves and sold things to fascinated visitors. When it glowed scarlet for a moment over the desert's rim, the fun began.

At dinner time the young bucks threw off the conventions of a white civilization, locked arms and formed a great circle under the pines. The dance began, slowly at first, then gradually reaching a faster rhythm. The braves began to chant, weird, symbolical snatches of old song. In the center of the group a bonfire was lighted, and its sparks touched the moving bodies.



A rare and beautiful example of Navajo weaving. Rugs, such as these, bring a handsome price when offered on the white man's market.

A few young men became hundreds. By morning a thousand Indians were chanting together, recalling tales told by their fathers and grandfathers, heroic deeds performed by ancestors in bloody Indian wars before the white man came. Deerslayer, Fenimore Cooper's immortal scout, might have been lurking behind a tree, watching the ceremony. Kit Carson, famous trapper of earlier days, attended many such dances, and once even participated in similar rites.

Hopis, Navajos and painted Apaches, horrors of 50 years ago. This tribe sent representatives and a Devil Dance team from San Carlos, weirdly decorated and curiously costumed in feathers and witches headresses.

A ZUNI dance team represented another tribe, its members looking somewhat more civilized in costume oddly like those of Albanian peasants. Even the faces of the children on this team looked less primitive, showing the results of modern schooling.

Clarence S. Taptuka, a Hopi tenor from Luupp, Arizona, sang ancient, almost forgotten

White men and women traveled thousands of miles to witness the Indians carry out tribal customs and dances. At the left is pictured a Zuni dance team in full regalia.



Clarence S. Taptuka, a Hopi tenor, who entertained visitors to the powwow with his interpretations of tribal songs.

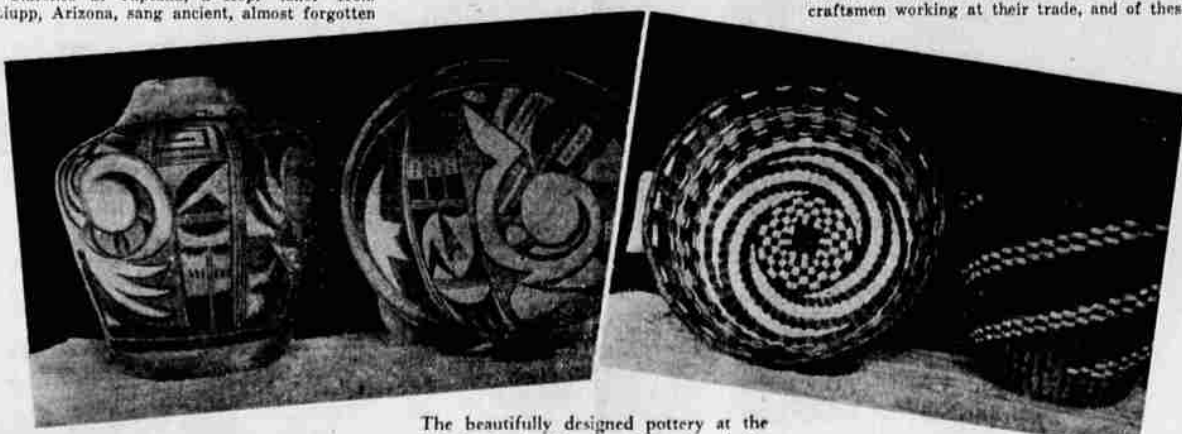


Little Lighter Face herself. This young lady is a papoose of the Apache tribe and was an interested spectator at the powwow.

The gathering, possibly, required the services of such a man as Richardson, whose imagination and enthusiasm made a human and moving spectacle of a conference which otherwise would have met with less acclaim—and, incidentally, brought less money to the Indians.

And money, although supposedly scorned by redmen who once roamed the forest and desert with bow and arrow, is a necessity to tribes who come into contact with their white conquerors. Clothes can be made, food can be grown, but it is easier to buy them. So baskets, bracelets, legins, and a hundred other Indian specialties are manufactured by hand during the conference and offered for sale at moderate prices.

FLAGSTAFF realized the educational possibilities of the event, and invited hundreds of school teachers to attend—to view authentic and ancient ceremonies. Pictures were taken of craftsmen working at their trade, and of these



The beautifully designed pottery at the left is the handiwork of Hopis and the basket work (right) that of the Navajos.

songs of his race—and permitted himself to be photographed in full regalia.

No one slept for several nights. The redmen were busy celebrating ceremonials, and the white visitors perforce stayed awake to watch and listen, unable to sleep amid the haunting voices that filled the night.

For three days, beginning July 3, merriment, serious revival of ancient customs, and business was carried on among these merchants and warriors. For the first time in many years white faces were few compared to the primitive, straight-nosed, red-skinned people of the desert.

same craftsmen taking part in savage dances after the sun went down.

Back to thousands of school children went true stories of scenes which have not been witnessed for many years, and which in spite of historians' efforts, will one day disappear forever.

The Flagstaff powwow has become one of the important folk ceremonials in America, drawing white artists, writers, musicians, and photographers to the pine forest on the mountain side.

Citizens of the little town had become so accustomed to their surrounding Indian tribes, that the significance of the redmen's dances and

The Apaches and the Arapahoes were noted for their fierceness in battle, but the Navajos are best known for their adeptness at weaving. Here is a Navajo squaw with a brilliant rug which she will offer for sale to the palefaces.

rituals was overlooked. An Indian was just an Indian. It required the interest of an outside world to bring to light the value of reviving and maintaining the colorful tribal life of a vanishing race.

IT IS partly the purpose of these conferences to instill new enthusiasm and life into their arts and crafts, and to keep alive the memory of old dances and ceremonies.

Like the average American business man going to a convention, these Apaches, Hopis, Zunis, and Navajos return to their encampment somewhat reassured. Their importance grows because so many white visitors think them important. Confidence returns with each successive conference, as the whites take more interest in their customs and make larger purchases from the "market place" in the pine forest.

A convention, political or business, rates publicity where an individual commercial firm is overlooked. So with Arizona's Indian convention, which brings several great tribes before an otherwise apathetic public, where a single redman attracts no attention.

Observers of this recent gathering say it marks the beginning of new growth and strength for the oldest and most interesting race on the continent.

These Indian tribes of the Southwest realize the value of perpetuating their ancient dances, particularly the traditional war dances, which are still occasionally given. This war ritual comes closer to the white man's conception of tribal dances than any others; a succession of gyrations and war-whoops, against a realistic background of old painted shields of buffalo hide, beaded quivers of arrows, old-fashioned flintlocks, powder-horns, and scalp saved from the days of American occupation.

There is a doom upon Indian culture, especially the ceremonies springing from war, since they go to war no more. Once actual prayers for courage and strength to overcome the enemy, these dances are now preserved as survivals of an earlier day. Gradually these dances will lose meaning even to the Indians themselves, as the original cause is forgotten.

IN DANCING, these tribes find their highest expression of art. Ted Shawn and other famous students of the dance in many countries, believe that the Indians have a full appreciation and understanding of the underlying spirit of the dance. Their dancing is natural, taking place in the open air, and not in heated, crowded halls. It is a community affair, and everyone in the tribe participates as singer, dancer, or as spectator.

Complications of rhythm depend upon music, which strangely enough lacks any harmony appealing to white musicians, who say that American Indian music is the most difficult to master. In several dances as many as three or four rhythms are used at one time, with brief intervals and pauses—one rhythm struck up by tom-toms, one by the dancers, one by the singers, and finally one by the clowns of the dance.

For many years the chiefs objected to allowing the presentation of their intimate ceremonials away from the reservations, fearing the effect of commercialization upon religious rituals. But as these wise elders learned that the white men's intention was to aid in preserving ancient customs, rather than making money by them, this prejudice has changed to tolerance, and finally to cooperation. Dances performed before white audiences, however, are frequently only given in part, and lack something of the deep reverence expressed by the dancers when on their own reservations.

To see Indian dances executed in the "way of the ancients" in an atmosphere of antiquity, it is necessary to visit the pueblos and the tribal centers, where for four generations the redmen have maintained their own life, under the domination of white conquerors, preserved their arts and culture despite a machine age which has encroached but not overwhelmed the proud and primitive accomplishments of the tribes.