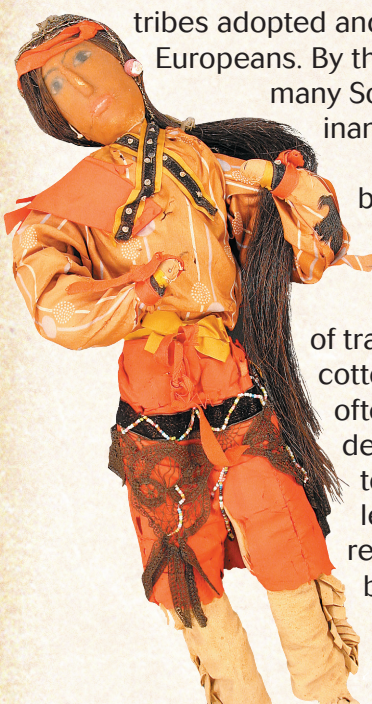


TRADITIONS in Transition

Clothing



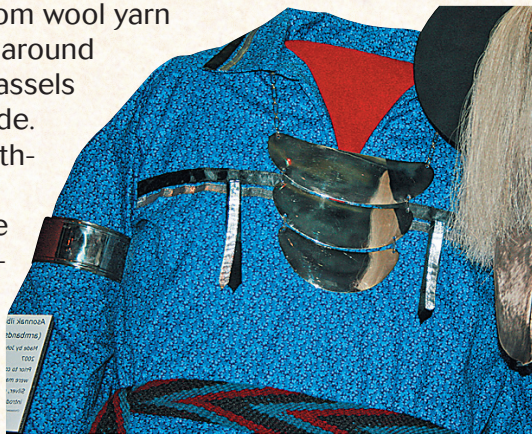
Until European cloth was introduced, early South-eastern clothing was made primarily of beaten bark, buffalo wool blended with rabbit hair, and feathers sewn with sinew by using fish or other bone needles. In winter, it would not be uncommon to find individuals wrapped in buffalo skins with the shaggy wool inward for warmth. Over time European cloth replaced many of the American Indians' natural materials. Later on, many tribes adopted and adapted clothing styles from Europeans. By the time of removal, in the 1830s, many Southeastern Indians wore predominantly Anglo-influenced clothing.



Men's clothing included a breechclout, long shirt, an over shirt, a belt or sash, leggings, moccasins, and a turban. The breechclout was often made of trade wool from England or trade cotton from France. The long shirt, often made of calico or other decorative cotton, was worn next to the skin and hung free. Early leggings made from deerskin were replaced with stroud cloth or heavy broadcloth. These leggings would reach from the foot to mid-thigh and tied with a string or thong to a belt with garters just below the knee which kept them from sag-

ging. Moccasins made from one piece of deerskin had a center seam running from the toes across the top of the foot. The turban was made from a long strip of wool or calico and simply wound around the head with the end tucked in to hold it in place. Sometimes plumes of feathers would be used as ornaments. Sashes were finger woven from wool yarn and were worn around the waist with tassels falling to one side.

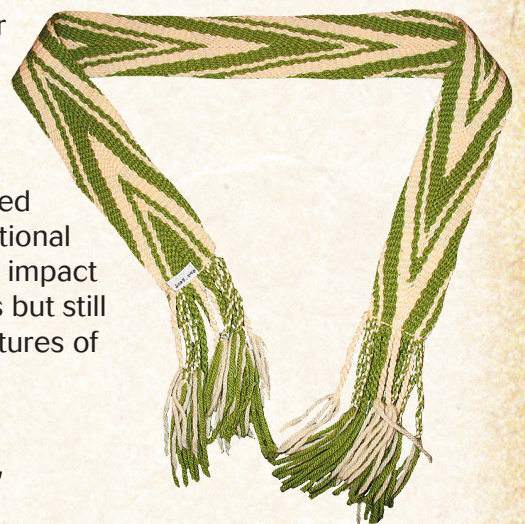
Women's clothing varied dramatically. By the end of the eighteenth century women wore calico dresses.



These dresses were often decorated with colored ribbons. In addition, women often wore belts made of leather or trade cloth with embroidery for decoration. Many tribes added unique contributions to their own particular style of dress. For instances, Chickasaw women, as did women from other tribes, often wore silver combs in their hair with long ribbons reaching as far as the ankles. Also, their dresses had tribal specific collars not seen on other women's clothing.

Today Chickasaw men typically wear jeans, cowboy

boots, ribbon shirt, western hat with a roach and eagle feather (*or yaatala*), yarn belt which is sometimes finger woven, and trade silver cuffs and gorget. This is similar to the traditional wear with some modern accommodations. The women wear an eighteenth or nineteenth century inspired dress with a traditional Chickasaw collar, center seamed moccasins, apron, silver hair comb with ribbon, and turtle shell shakers. Like so many other American Indian tribes, Chickasaws have adapted and changed their traditional dance clothing with the impact of the Anglo-Europeans but still hold tight to certain features of their clothing.



SPORT: Stickball

Popular in both the past and the present, stickball (*or anetsodi in Cherokee*) is a game played by many American Indian tribes, particularly those of the southeast. It is also called "Little Brother of War," a reference to stickball's traditional use as an alternative to war for settling disputes. About five hundred years old, stickball had few rules and no set field boundaries. The game, therefore, could be extremely violent and stretch over several miles. Today, it is often played as a recreational sport with teams formed within a tribal community. While serving social purposes, the sport also continues to serve important ritual and ceremonial purposes. The game is frequently part of the Green Corn Ceremony and stomp dance and is played during the Cherokee National Holiday celebration in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

The game is most often compared to lacrosse with the ruthlessness of rugby. Participants do not wear protective pads or gear, making the game dangerous for

players and exciting for spectators. Players can tackle individuals with possession of the ball, as long as the tackler drops the sticks first.

In the past, only men played stickball. Today, however, both men and women play. Men typically use two wooden hickory sticks, often compared to racquets used in racquet ball. They make the sticks by hand by curving the sticks at the end and fastening leather thongs to form a cup used to catch and throw the ball. Women often use their bare hands. The ball is about the size of a golf ball and made of animal hide. Between different tribes and across different time periods, there are a variety of ways to play. These include using two posts at opposing sides of a field, while others use a single, centrally placed post. The object of the game is to earn points by striking the opposing teams' post with the ball. A team wins when they achieve the highest score at the end of a time limit, or whenever a team reaches a previously agreed upon score first.

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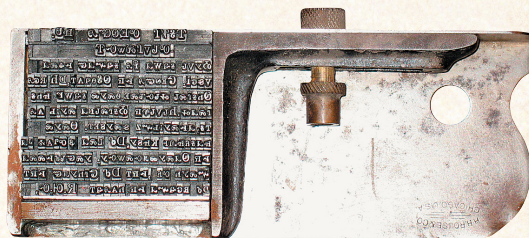
Cherokee Language

While fighting under General Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812, Sequoyah observed he and his men could not read the military orders or write letters home. This realization sparked his interest in creating a written system of Cherokee. After some trial and error, he finally decided on eighty-five different symbols representing sounds, instead of letters. This is called a syllabary instead of an alphabet. Some years later, he introduced his written system to the tribe and was called a witch by his people. They did not believe he had created a written language but Sequoyah eventually convinced them. The ease to which the syllabary could be used helped to make the Cherokee Nation ninety-six percent literate in 1860. The Bible and a newspaper, the *“Cherokee Phoenix,”* were published using the syllabary. As the



tribe interacted with the Anglo-American culture, the value of having their own writing system disappeared in favor of English and people began to stop teaching, speaking, or writing in Cherokee. By 1907 the literacy rate dropped below that of the United States. It was not until recently that the value of Cherokee syllabary was realized and began to be restored.

Today, the Cherokee syllabary is integrated into tribal culture and spoken around the country. There are thousands of people who are fluent in the language because of the work of the Cherokee Nation. In Tahlequah, the tribe’s headquarters, an immersion school teaches students their lessons entirely in Cherokee without using any English. In 2003, Apple began supporting the revitalization of the Cherokee language by including a font and keyboard for the syllabary on Apple products. The Cherokee Nation offers free classes on the syllabary online and anyone interested can enroll, furthering the revitalization of the Cherokee language.



Beadwork

Beadwork is an artform typically associated with American Indians. Traditional quillwork and beadwork co-existed but early beads did not allow for detailed intricate patterns. These early beads were made of shell, stone, seeds, and bone. European contact with Indian tribes in North America introduced manufactured glass beads. For Southeastern Indians, beadwork was a merging of ancient design and construction with European materials. Artisans sometimes used these smaller beads in lieu of quillwork for several reasons including size, range of color, availability, and ease with which to work. Technique, patterns, colors, and size were sometimes tribe specific.

Beads are manufactured from glass in a variety of colors. Traders and natives often developed unique names for many such as greasy yellow, Cheyenne pink, pony trader blue, Sioux green, red white hearts, and blue Russians. In addition to colors, beads come in a range of sizes. Size varies from as big as 3/0 (pronounced three ought) to the very small 18/0 (eighteen ought). Hence, the bigger the bead, the lower the number and the smaller the bead, and the higher the number.

Styles of beadwork include lazy stitch, edge beading, two-needle applique, gourd stitch, and loom beadwork.

Within each style, there are variations. Two-needle applique is very common in Southeastern beadwork. In this form, the artist uses two needles and two threads to create the piece. In two-needle applique, a pattern is marked out on the material before any beading starts. The first thread comes up through the fabric and holds beads to create the design. The second needle is passed through the material from the underside and holds down the bead thread by passing back through the underside of the material. This technique is repeated every two beads. Edge beading provides the finishing touch to a piece. Two common forms of edge beading are single-bead edging and two-bead edging. In basic edge beading, one bead at a time is stitched in place.

Pre-reservation beadwork often had symbolism and meaning important to individual tribes. While elements of this still exist in contemporary beadwork, some of the meaning has been lost. The reservation era brought sharing of ideas, patterns, and symbols among tribes. Contemporary beadwork has evolved out of this process. Today, one of the leaders in Cherokee beadwork is artist Martha Berry. This is her quote on what influenced her to start beading.

When I started studying Cherokee beadwork, I found there were no how-to craft books about it, no classes being taught, and very little mention of it in history books. I was only able to find a few photographs of historic beaded artifacts and that’s how I learned to appreciate the exquisite beauty and level of difficulty in the beadwork my ancestors created. It broke my heart a little that we Cherokees had just dropped this beautiful art form and some Cherokees even said that our people never created beadwork.

After years of study, collecting photos of artifacts, and receiving a scholarship to study the Cherokee and Southeastern Woodlands beadwork at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., I vowed that I would do all I can

to preserve and perpetuate the beadwork of my Cherokee ancestors. It is important because we know that the those [sic.] old beadworkers used beadwork to preserve and teach the old ways when they were in the midst of blending European culture with their own.

I believe that we must study and master the old art forms in order to understand who we are. We didn’t just spring from a box of instant mix, we are products of a culture and way of life that goes back tens of thousands of years. That history is the fiber of our being. We add to it and pass it on to our children, and they add to it and pass it on to theirs. It is what we do. It is who we are. It is what brings us peace.

– Martha Berry - Cherokee Beadwork Artist