



BY SANDY RHOADES

OLD TIME NORTHERN PLAINS BUSTLE

The most popular style of old-time bustle or crow belt usually constructed by hobbyists today is that style of bustle with upright spikes and circles of feathers attached to the middle of the bustle base. For those who are interested in various styles of old-time bustles, we are presenting an example of a bustle from an earlier period which features spikes that hang down and which lacks the later period feather circles.

This bustle is in the collection of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. It is specimen #49-44-10/32684, and is labeled: Feather Bustle (Crow Belt). Tribe Shoshone. Wyoming: Ft. Washakie. Remarks: Tentative identification by F. H. Douglas and associates based on point of collection of material. Positive identification impossible because of generalized Plains character of specimen.

BASE - The bustle base is a piece of heavy rawhide about 8" x 10". The

front side is covered with a piece of eagle hide with the body feathers intact just a little smaller than the rawhide base piece. There is a piece of red wool trade cloth loosely stitched to the top of the base with a piece of leather thong. This trade cloth overlaps about one inch on each side (Fig 1 , Photo 2).

TRAILERS - The two trailers are a single piece of white canvas which is cut into a "U" shape and covered with pink calico material that has dark red and little white designs in it. For trailer dimensions, see Fig 1 . Both trailers are additionally decorated with four rows of eagle wing feathers, each trailer having three rows of two feathers side by side, plus an additional feather at the bottom hanging about halfway below the bottom of the trailer. Each of these trailer feathers is decorated as follows: The bases are wrapped with a piece of yellow/gold cotton cloth held on with a piece of sinew wrapped crisscross completely over the top of the cloth.

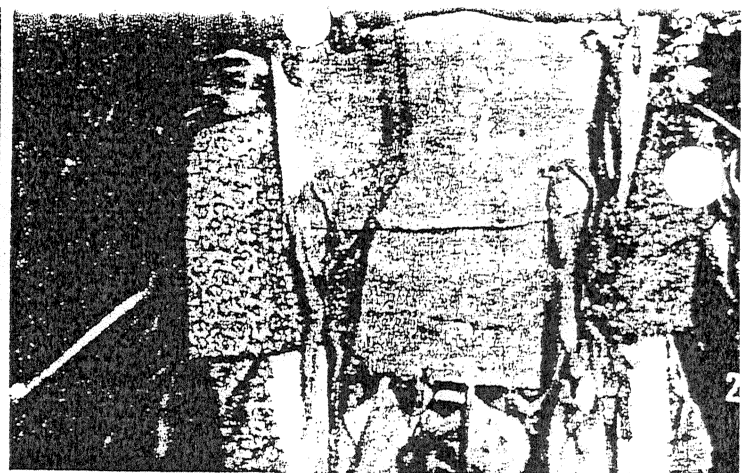
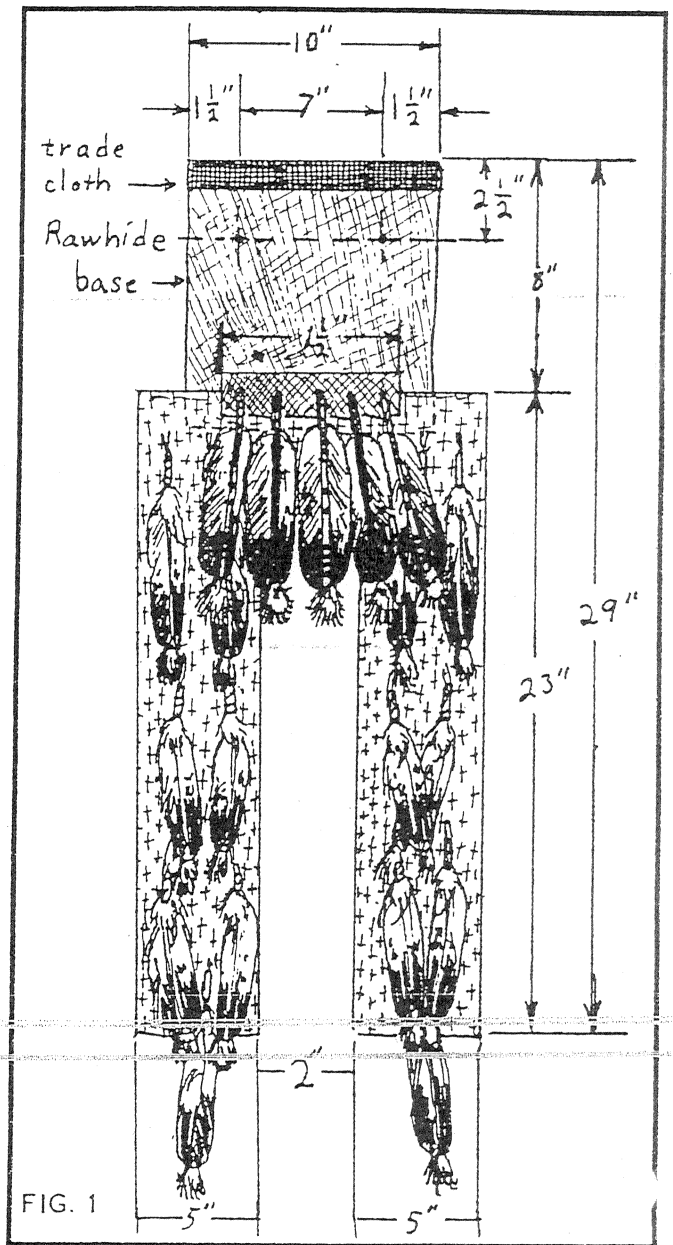


Photo 1. shows details of the quilled rawhide strips on the tail portion of the bustle. Photo 2 shows a close-up of the rawhide base and the position of the spikes where they are connected to the base.

A single leather thong connects each feather to the trailer with about one inch between the end of the feather quill and the cloth base of the trailer to allow the feather to dangle freely. The tips of the feathers are decorated with small red and blue fluff combinations glued on, with the spot of glue showing. At the base of each feather just above the cloth wrap there is both a red fluff and a red hackle.

TAIL DECORATION - There is an additional decoration consisting of a group of five eagle wing feathers attached to a small piece of rawhide which hangs from the bottom of the bustle base proper acting as a sort of a tail. Feathers 1, 3, and 5 are quilled, with a piece of rawhide-wrapped quillwork 8-1/2 inches long, with a red background and four light green stripes at each end, plus two stripes in the center of the quilled strip about one inch apart. The four stripes at each end are closer together. In addition, each of the quilled feathers is decorated with blue and yellow fluff combinations at the tips. The other two feathers in the tail are plain.

SPIKES - One of the outstanding features of this bustle is two long decorated spikes that hang from the back of the base. For placement of these spikes on the base, see Fig 1. Each bustle spike consists of a long heavy eagle wing spike feather that has been stripped. The stripped quill is wrap-





Photos 3, 4, & 5, show front, side, and top views of the bustle. Notice the angle of the spikes in photo 4, showing how they should hang when the bustle is being worn.

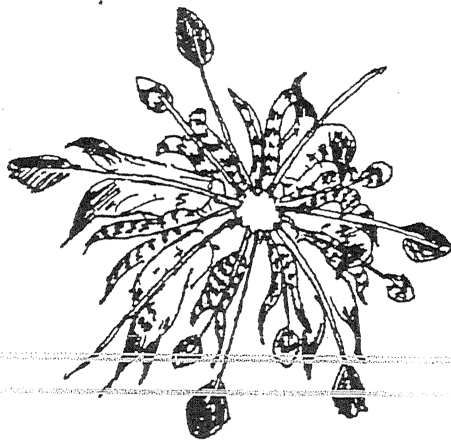
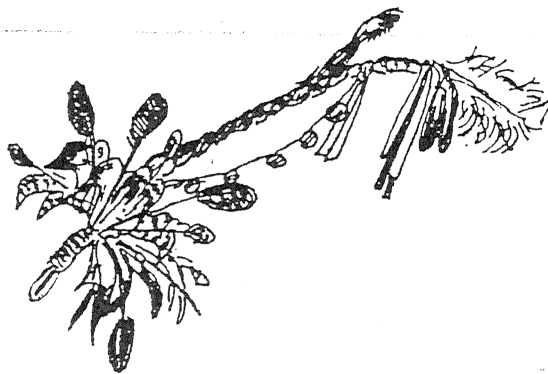


FIG. 2

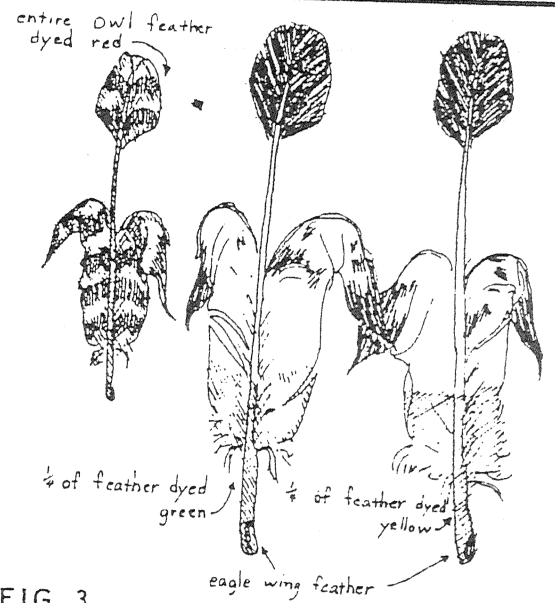


FIG. 3

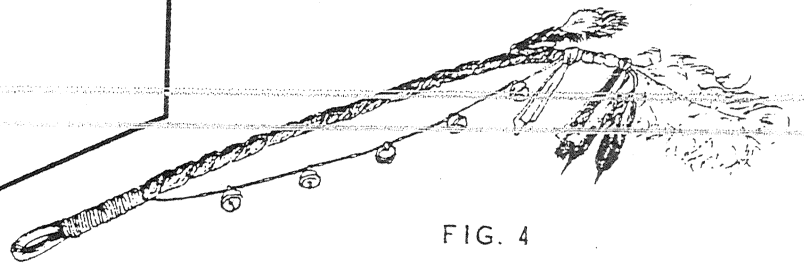


FIG. 4



Photo 6 is a full view of the back side of the bustle. This gives a clear view of the trailers and their construction. Photo 7 shows the method used to wrap the loose feathers around the spikes. Photo 8 shows the complete bustle.

ped with a piece of one-inch wide otter fur, and where that ends there is an additional small wrapping of ermine skin. Colored ribbons dangle from each end of the ermine skin wrap. At the top they are light yellow and kelly green, doubled. At the base, just a yellow ribbon, doubled. In addition, two flicker feathers attached to leather thongs dangle from the top end of the ermine wrap. Also about an inch below the lower end of the ermine wrap there is a single flicker feather attached to the upper side of the spike. A small yellow and green fluff combination adorned the tip of this flicker feather, which tends to stick out straight when the rest of the spike bends. There is also a large eagle breath plume which sticks out the end of each bustle spike. Each spike is additionally decorated with five medium size brass hawk bells which are knotted on heavy string similar to chalk line. This string of bells is attached to each end of the otter wrap decoration.

Wrapped around the base of each spike is a loose circle of 15 feathers (Fig 2) made up as follows: Every other feather is a stripped great horned owl feather which has been dyed red.

Between each of these is a stripped eagle wing feather, with only the lower fourth of the feather dyed; four are dyed green and three are dyed yellow (Fig 3). The bottom of each bustle spike is cut and looped back alongside the base of the quill and then wrapped with sinew to hold it in place (Fig 4)

This can be an easy bustle to construct, using substitute and imitation materials if necessary. Take your time, follow the illustrations, and you'll have a fine old-time bustle that you will be proud to wear on the dance floor.

For additional information on old-time bustles, we recommend the following:

Conn, Richard, "Northern Plains Bustles", American Indian Hobbyist, Vol 7, #1.

Tearney, Pat, "Old Time Bustles, Parts 1 & 2", The Singing Wire, Vol II, Nos. 7 & 8.

Past, Dick, "Feather Bustles", 1970 St. Charles Powwow Program.

Tucker, Michael, Old Time Sio Dancers, American Indian Crafts & Culture, California, 1969. ■

and make sure that the cord is taut. Consult Fig. 3 to make sure you have it strung correctly. Do not cut the cord because as you progress tying from right to left and fill the whole area, the right hand side can be loosened and the right vertical board can then be wrapped with the tied hair. Loop the cord several times over the left vertical board and resume tying. See Fig. 4 to clarify this point. The whole object here is to have one continuous length of fringe instead of several sections. Note: Keep the line taut and well waxed.

It is best to start tying the deer fringe first for several reasons. Among the most important is gaining proficiency before you start tying the porcupine hair. This requires some skill. Keep in mind when tying hair, not to have an over-abundance for each tie. Too much makes the hair, when tied, look bulky and out of place in a fringe of hair which has lesser amounts. Remember: Better too little than too much.

After you have gained some experience you will be able to judge rather rapidly the amount of hair to use in each tie. I have found that for deer hair, about 45-55 strands of hair worked real well.

Start tying the deer hair from right to left. You will start with the smallest length first. Fig. 5 depicts the graduations and length for the inner and outer rows of deer hair fringe that will be required for the roach.

Deer hair for each individual tie is cut from the tail as needed. Remember to use only the outer edges of deer hair from the tail. Do not use the darker hair as this will result in a multi-hued fringe.

As the deer hair gets closer to the base of the skin its diameter increases so it is not desirable to have equal lengths of deer hair on each side of the cord. (This is the reverse of the concept when tying deer hair for a hair base.) Consult Fig. 6 for a cross-section view of how the deer hair should look for the outer and inner fringes. Figs. 7a, 7b, 7c illustrate the technique of tying both deer hair and porcupine hair to the wrapping cord.

At this point you should have completed tying the deer hair fringes for the outer and inner rows (and the fringe for the hair base if you had decided on one), and are now ready to proceed tying the porcupine fringes.

In order to assure that all porcupine hair is of the same relative length, take a small bunch and put it in an aluminum drinking glass (tumbler). Tap the bottom of the tumbler for several minutes, after which time all hair should have its base at the bottom. It will now be easy to pull from the bunch the longest hairs down to the smallest and group them accordingly. Repeat this process until all the hair has been grouped.

There should be no more than 15-18 porcupine hairs in an individual tie. Prior to tying, the bottom of the hairs should be dipped in glycerin (which may be purchased in any drugstore). If you do not use glycerin or some other heavy oil substance to wet the bottoms

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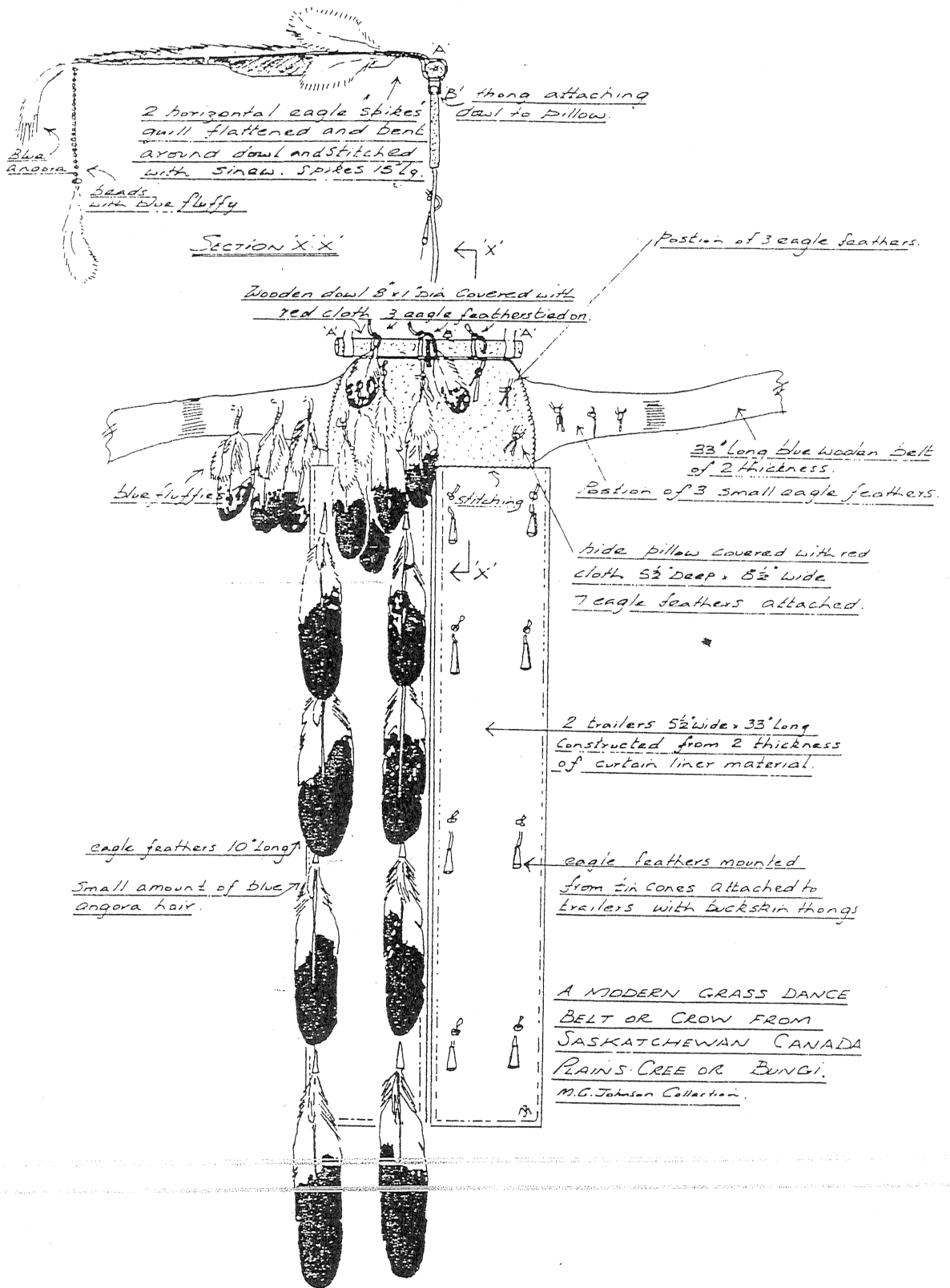
A CANADIAN "CROW BELT"

by Michael Johnson

The sketch shows a type of crow belt still seen on the Canadian Plains which strongly resembles the original Prairie crow belt of the 19th century. It lacks the wheel of feathers associated with later bustles farther south, and hence may be an influence from the Woodland people who also adopted the grass dance complex* in the later 19th century rather than an import from the Plains tribes proper, but this is speculation. The influence of the Santee, who largely removed to Canada, has probably been understated.

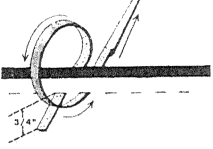
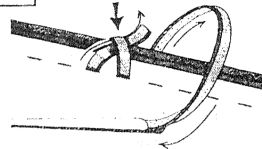
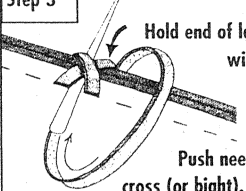
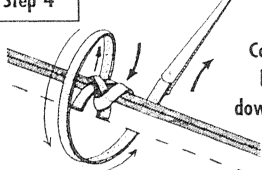
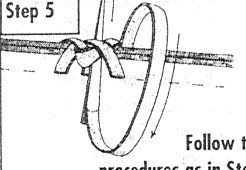
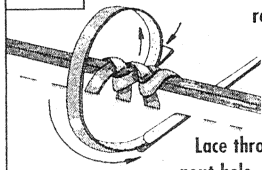
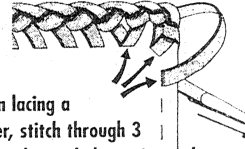
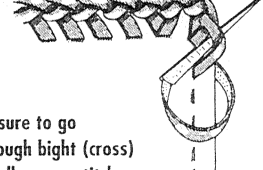
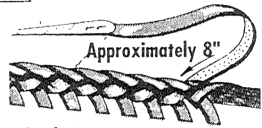
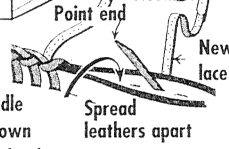
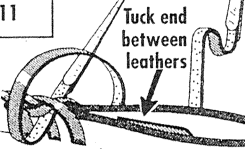
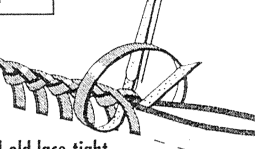
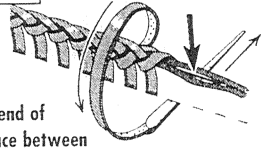
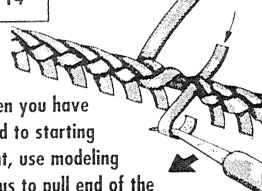
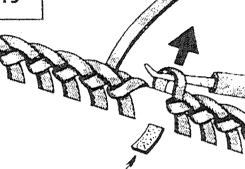
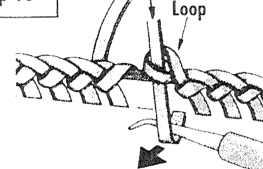
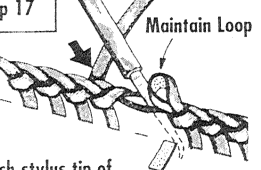
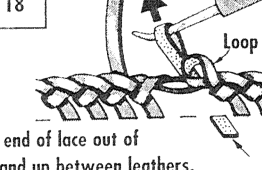
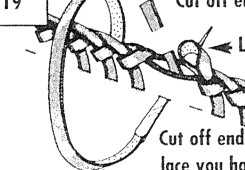
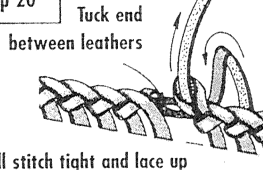
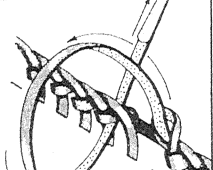
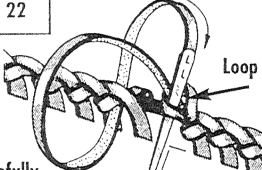
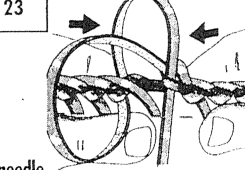
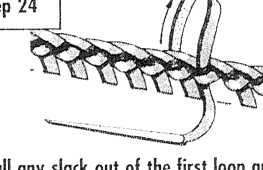
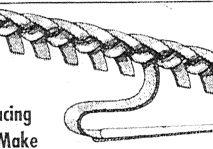
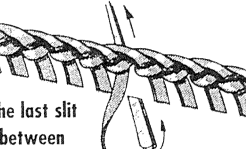
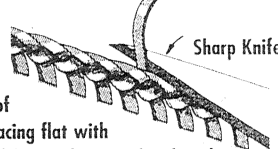
The specimen has two conventional trailers decorated with four rows of medium size eagle feathers attached with buckskin thongs through tin cones. The pillow is stiff hide covered with red cloth, with eagle feathers attached; to each side is stitched the cloth belt which is about the waist. The outstanding primary feathers or spikes are attached to a wooden dowel covered with red cloth by flattening the quills around the dowel and binding with sinew and also stitching to the red cloth. There is a strong thong tie between the center of the dowel and the head of the pillow which is tightened to give the required angle at which the spikes will stand out. This can give an upright or downward position of the spikes, or any intermediate position to suit the owner. The tie must be strong, however, to take the required tension.

*The Woodland and Chippewa, Menomonic, Potawatomi and Santee formalized the complex into the Dream religion.



How to Lace & Splice the Double Loop Stitch

Recommendations: Use 3/32" or 1/8" lace with the same sized slits or holes. Double-Loop Lacing uses 7-8 times more lace than the length of the project (ex: 2' will need 14' to 16' of lace).

<p>Step 1</p>  <p>Begin on front side, push needle through first slit or hole. Leave 3/4" lace end and continue on to next slit or hole.</p>	<p>Step 2 Bight (Cross)</p>  <p>Pull stitch tight; lace over the end you left free. This forms a cross or "bight".</p>	<p>Step 3</p>  <p>Hold end of lace down with finger. Push needle under cross (or bight). Hold end of lace down on opposite side.</p>	<p>Step 4</p>  <p>Continue holding down end. Pull stitch under bight snug, but not too tight. Lace through next slit.</p>
<p>Step 5</p>  <p>Follow the same procedures as in Step 1 & 2 making a cross (bight). Stitch under the bight and pull stitch snug.</p>	<p>Step 6 End of lace can be released.</p>  <p>Lace through the next hole. The end of the lace is now locked in place.</p>	<p>Step 7 Lace through 3 corner holes twice.</p>  <p>When lacing a corner, stitch through 3 corner slits or holes twice each.</p>	<p>Step 8</p>  <p>Be sure to go through bight (cross) on all corner stitches.</p>
<p>Step 9</p>  <p>Lace until only 8" of lace remains. You will now have to splice the lace.</p>	<p>Step 10 Splicing:</p>  <p>Insert new needle & lace down & spread leathers apart between leathers, 4 slits from lacing; pull out back; leave 3/4" of end between leathers.</p>	<p>Step 11</p>  <p>Tuck end of lace between leathers and continue your project with the old lace.</p>	<p>Step 12</p>  <p>Pull old lace tight. Cut off end at an angle, allowing about 1/2" to remain.</p>
<p>Step 13 Tuck end between leathers</p>  <p>Tuck end of old lace between leathers. Lace over with new lace so it's caught and won't show. Continue lacing.</p>	<p>Step 14</p>  <p>When you have laced to starting point, use modeling stylus to pull end of the beginning lace free of stitches.</p>	<p>Step 15</p>  <p>From back side, pull the end of lace out of slit.</p>	<p>Step 16</p>  <p>From front side, pull end of lace out of the loop.</p>
<p>Step 17 Maintain Loop</p>  <p>Push stylus tip of modeling tool down between leathers and hook it over end of the lace.</p>	<p>Step 18</p>  <p>Pull end of lace out of slit and up between leathers. Two empty slits should appear on the front side; one on the back.</p>	<p>Step 19 Cut off end</p>  <p>Cut off end of lace you have pulled out and tuck end between leathers. Lace through the next slit.</p>	<p>Step 20 Tuck end between leathers</p>  <p>Pull stitch tight and lace up through loop from back side. All slits on the back side should be filled.</p>
<p>Step 21</p>  <p>Lace under the bight. Do not pull this stitch tight.</p>	<p>Step 22</p>  <p>Carefully cross over as shown and push the needle down through loop.</p>	<p>Step 23</p>  <p>Pull needle through. Push laced edges together to adjust starting loops for easier completion.</p>	<p>Step 24</p>  <p>Pull any slack out of the first loop and adjust lacing with fingers to make all stitches appear equal.</p>
<p>Step 25</p>  <p>Pull end of lacing down tight. Make sure all stitches appear even and equally spaced.</p>	<p>Step 26</p>  <p>Push needle through the last slit as shown. Bring it up between the leathers and out between lacing.</p>	<p>Step 27</p>  <p>Carefully cut off end of lacing. Tap lacing flat with mallet or roll flat with a wooden dowel.</p>	

Sewing a Running Stitch

The amount of lace needed for the running stitch is 1-1/2 times the distance to be laced.

Step 1 **Lacing Needle**

Thread the needle and then pierce the opposite end of the lace with a sharp knife leaving a 1/8" slit.

Step 2

Begin lacing, starting between the two layers of leather. Leave about 1/4" at the end where you slit.

Step 3

Push the needle through the next hole from the back, through the slit and out through the opposite hole in front.

Step 4

Pull the stitch up tight to lock the lace. Continue lacing remainder of project.

Step 5

Pull the beginning stitch tight and continue lacing, pulling the stitches tight as you go.

Beginning Stitch

Step 6

Lace to the second to last hole and leave a loose hole.

Loose Loop

Beginning Stitch

Step 7

Push needle through last holes. Spread leathers; push needle through next-to-last hole on back, bring needle up between leathers.

Beginning Stitch

Step 8

Pull loose loop tight and continue pulling all slack out of the lace.

Step 9

Pull all stitching tight; pull end of lace tight. Trim off end of lace close to leather, tap all lacing flat with smooth mallet.

How to Lace the Whipstitch - #1

The following instructions for the Whipstitch are for use on a project with separate beginning and ending points. The amount of lacing required for the whipstitch is 3 to 3-1/2 times the distance to be laced.

Step 1

Begin lacing, starting in between the layers of leather. Leave about 1/2" at the end.

Step 2

Lace through hole as shown. Keep the lace from twisting. Pull the stitch up tight to lock the lace.

Step 3

Push needle through the second hole. Pull stitch up tight. Continue lacing, tightening the lace as you go.

Step 4

Push needle through last hole as shown. Bring it up between the leathers and out between lacing. Carefully cut off the end of lacing.

How to Lace the Whipstitch - #2

The following instructions for the Whipstitch are for use on projects with common beginning and ending points such as billfolds. The amount of lacing required for the Whipstitch is about 3 to 3-1/2 times the distance to be laced.

Step 1 **Lacing Needle**

Thread the needle and then pierce the opposite end of the lace with a sharp knife leaving a 1/8" slit.

Step 2

Begin lacing, starting between the two layers of leather. Leave about 1/4" at the end where you slit.

Step 3

Push needle through second hole, then thread it through slit in end of lace and through opposite hole.

Step 4

Continue lacing, tightening the lace as you go.

Beginning Stitch

Step 5

Lace around project leaving a loose loop in second hole from the beginning stitch. There will be one un-laced hole between first and last stitch.

Loose Loop

Beginning Stitch

Step 6

Lace through the last hole in front, then through last hole on back again, then through the first loose loop as shown.

Step 7

Pull the first loop tight, over end of lace as shown.

Step 8

Pull end of lace tight to take slack out of last loop. Cut off end of lace with sharp knife and tap all lacing flat with a smooth-faced mallet.

Tandy Leather Factory store managers are experts in leathercraft. They are happy to answer any questions you may have, as well as demonstrate any leathercraft technique.

