

THE STONE AGE IN NORTH AMERICA

AN ARCHÆOLOGICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE IMPLEMENTS,
ORNAMENTS, WEAPONS, UTENSILS, ETC., OF THE PRE-
HISTORIC TRIBES OF NORTH AMERICA, WITH MORE
THAN THREE HUNDRED FULL-PAGE PLATES AND
FOUR HUNDRED FIGURES ILLUSTRATING OVER
FOUR THOUSAND DIFFERENT OBJECTS

BY

WARREN K. MOOREHEAD, A.M.

CURATOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN ARCHÆ-
OLOGY, PHILLIPS ACADEMY, MEMBER OF THE
BOARD OF INDIAN COMMISSIONERS, ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

London

CONSTABLE & CO. LIMITED

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

1911

CHAPTER XXXI

TEXTILE FABRICS

It would be comparatively easy for one to write a lengthy chapter upon textile fabrics. But because of the limited space now at my disposal and for the further reason that "The Stone Age" is purposely restricted chiefly to descriptions of art in stone rather than in fabrics, this chapter must necessarily be brief.

It is unfortunate that almost none of the fabrics of prehistoric times, made use of by the natives of that period, are in existence to-day, and aside from pieces of mats and here and there a bit of cloth from the dry caves of Kentucky and the Ozark Mountains, there is nothing in our museums to give a clue as to the nature and material of the garments, robes, blankets, etc. We are dependent chiefly on history for our knowledge of the use of textile fabrics.

But in the Southwest the aridity of the climate, together with the fact that the walls of the cliff-houses kept out the occasional rains, and that the sands of the desert drifting over the ruined pueblos, worked in harmony to preserve a goodly number of fragments of textile fabrics. Some of these are in the American Museum, New York City, others in Washington, Denver, and Philadelphia museums. All are of great interest and were made use of by stone-age man.

The copper plates found in the mounds of the Mississippi Valley sometimes contain impressions of cloth and other fabrics. There are occasionally bits of charred cloth, found in altars or ash-pits or between copper plates. Professors Holmes, Mills, Putnam, and others have described these in various reports.

An inspection of the material illustrated in this chapter will acquaint readers with the fact that the natives of Kentucky made use of various plants, the favorite of which is the ordinary flag, for the manufacture of baskets, sandals, etc.

In the Southwest, desert plants, such as the yucca, possessing elasticity and strength, were employed for a multitude of purposes.

Could we have preserved for our inspection the textile fabrics made use of in the Mississippi Valley, we doubtless should observe

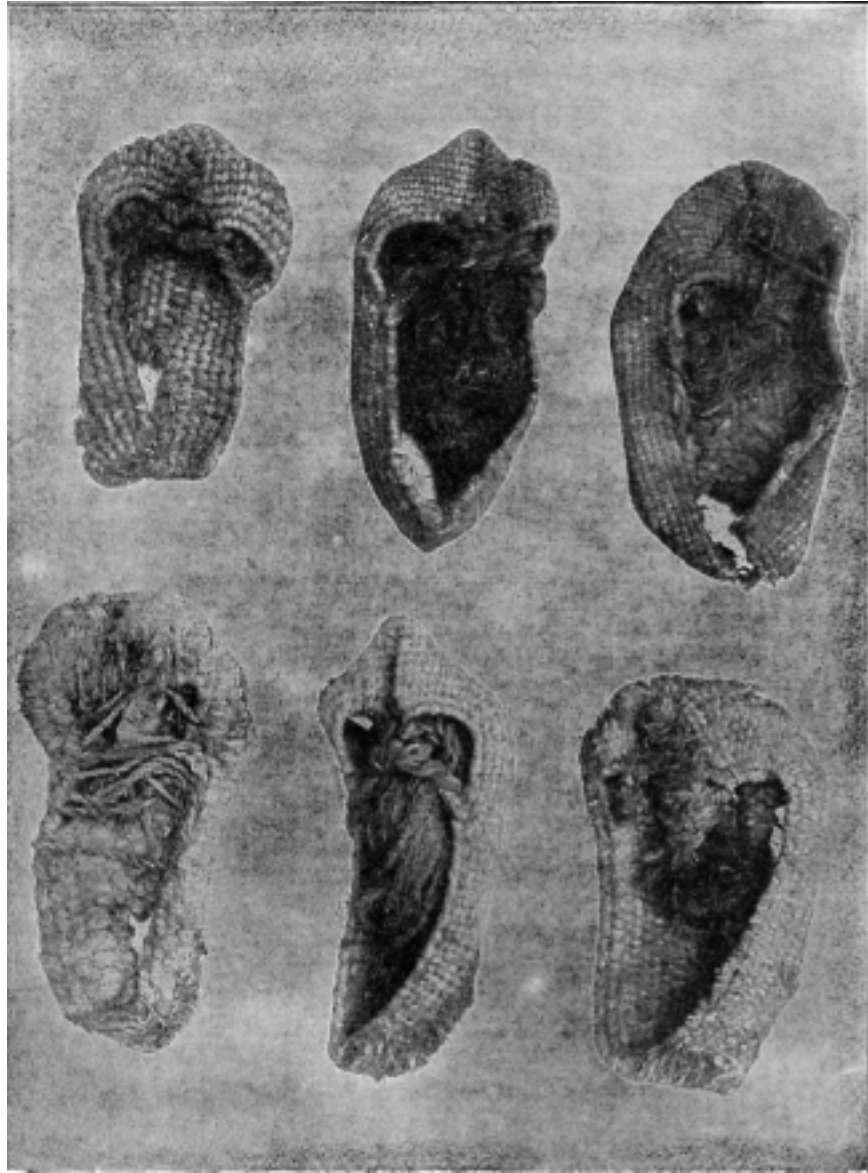


FIG. 625. (S. 1-4 to 1-5.) Sandals from Salts Cave, made of bark and wild hemp. Collection of Bennett H. Young, Louisville, Kentucky.

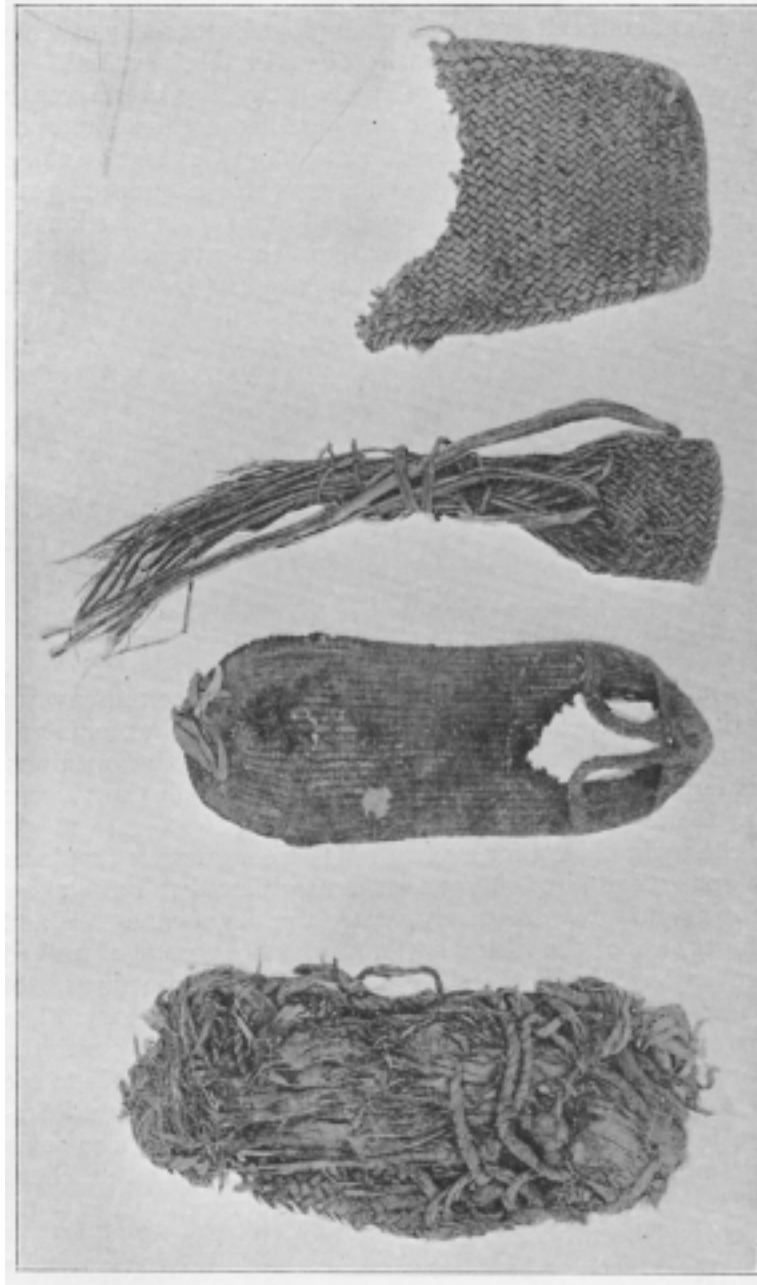


FIG. 626. (S. about 1-3.) Andover collection. Three sandals and an unfinished object from Pueblo Bonito, Chaco Group, New Mexico. Found by W. K. Moorehead.

that primitive man in this great region employed utensils, garments, weapons, tools, and other things made of perishable material.

Salts Cave, near Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, has been recently explored by Colonel Young, and I am indebted to him for proof-sheets of his work, "Discoveries in Kentucky Caves." Colonel Young states that the cave has been known for a hundred years and is an extremely interesting place. Upon examination he ascertained that many holes had been dug in the cave floor (for it is covered with debris and cave earth), apparently by the ancient



FIG. 627. (S. 2-5.) Moccasin worn through at toe and heel, from Salts Cave. Material, leaves of cat-tail. Collection of Bennett H. Young, Louisville, Kentucky.

people who had at some time lived there. Contrary to the caverns in the Ozarks, this cave has been visited and explored in prehistoric times, and the remains of man are not confined to the openings, where it is light, but extend for several miles through the various labyrinths. Colonel Young writes:—

“Along the main cavern for several miles are numerous fireplaces and ash-heaps; small piles of stone, evidently placed to hold fagots used in lighting; innumerable partly burned torches of cane-reed, and even the footprints of the men who, hundreds of years ago, walked along these majestic avenues. The cave contains a large amount of saltpeter, and has a mean temperature of fifty-four degrees. The atmosphere of the interior is dry and pure, and this, together with the nitrous matter in the earth, has produced conditions favorable to the preservation of all kinds of materials. About the hearths and fireplaces were found hundreds of fragments of gourds, and also some shells of the aboriginal squash, both of which were in an excellent state of preservation. Torches of reed, to be counted by the thousands, which had been filled with grease or soaked in oil, traces of which may still be seen on some specimens, appeared as if they had



FIG. 628. (S. 1-4.) Collection of Bennett H. Young, Louisville, Kentucky. Moccasins and pieces of cloth from Salts Cave.



FIG. 629. (S. 1-4.) Flags, wild hemp, and other materials used in making cloth. From Salts Cave. Collection of Bennett H. Young, Louisville, Kentucky.

been cast aside but yesterday. Along the main avenues and the second or lower layer of caves, as well as in many side avenues, these torches were found. Those who have spent much time in this cavern say that they have discovered no places where these and other traces of aboriginal man are absent.

“Among the most interesting discoveries were a number of neatly braided slippers or sandals, and fragments of textile art. Several materials seem to have been used in the manufacture of these. Some were made of the fibre of the cat-tail, or *Typha*, a plant which

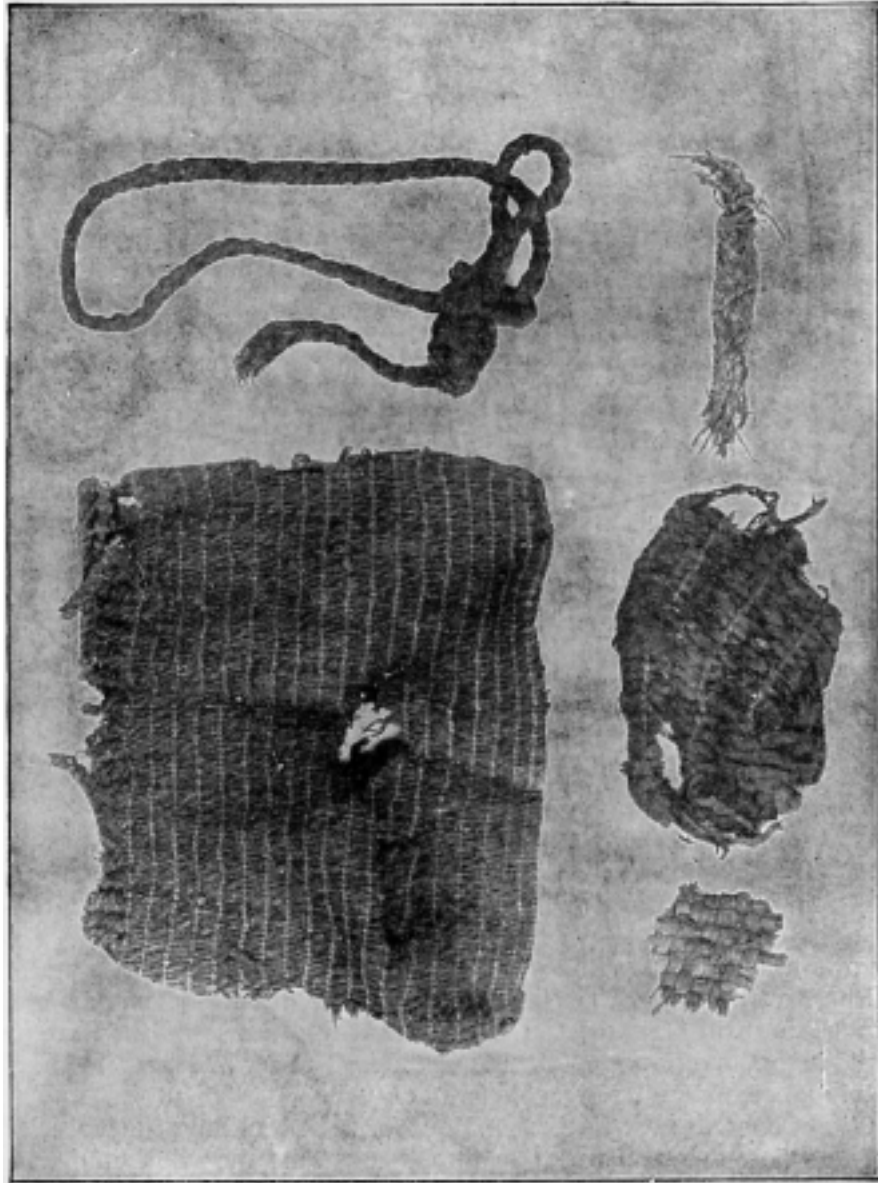


FIG. 630. (S. varying.) Collection of Bennett H. Young, Louisville, Kentucky. Bag of woven cloth from Salts Cave — nine by seven inches; plaited rope; fragments of cloth.



FIG. 631. (S. 1-4.) Pair of leggings, with the bone needles used in making them. From cave-house ruins in eastern Utah, 1895. Collection of Henry Montgomery.

grows abundantly in the ponds in the southern part of the state. Others were woven of the inner bark of trees, probably the pawpaw and linn. Still others were made of what appears to be the fibre of wild hemp, and yet others from a species of grass which grew in great abundance on the Barrens of Kentucky.

“The sandals show several distinct forms of braiding; the material of the more delicate and graceful appears to be the wild hemp, and the plait on the outer side exhibits a beautiful triangular figure. They have raised sides from the heel to the toe, the braids being worked forward, uniting in a seam in the middle line above the toes.



FIG. 632. (S. 1-5.) Wooden pail or tub from cave-house ruins, San Juan County, Utah, 1894. H. Montgomery's collection.



FIG. 633. (S. reduced 2-3.) Vase, turkey form. Feathers are indicated by marks made with black paint. Collection of B. H. Young, Louisville, Kentucky.

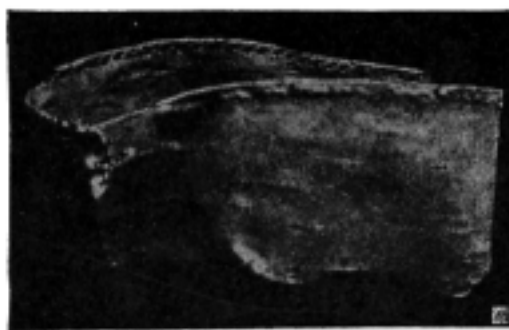


FIG. 634. (S. 1-3.) Birch bark from a burial-pit in North Dakota. Henry Montgomery's collection, Toronto.

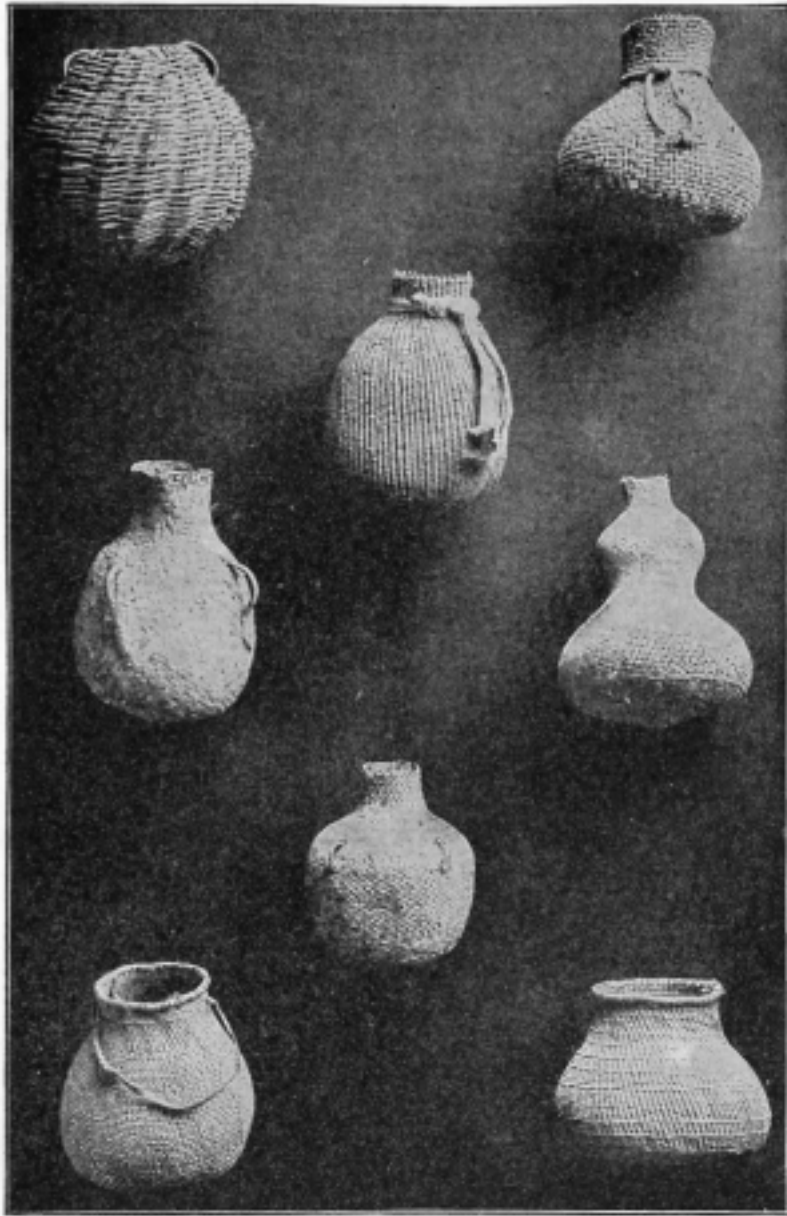


FIG. 635. (S. 1-7.) Old wicker and twined baskets from the Pueblo of Zuñi, New Mexico. This figure shows some old so-called Zuñi-ware, collected for the Bureau of American Ethnology by James Stevenson, in New Mexico, long ago.

Over the instep many were laced with cords, the lacing still being preserved in some of the specimens. Frequently long ornamental tassels were placed above the instep. These slippers are found in the crevices of the rock and on the ledges in out-of-the-way places where they evidently had been cast aside by these people. All show signs of wear at toe and heel. Several display a more or less skillful attempt on the part of the owner at mending or darning. This was done sometimes with cord, but frequently with bark. In size they vary from small ones, made for children, to specimens corresponding to a number seven shoe."

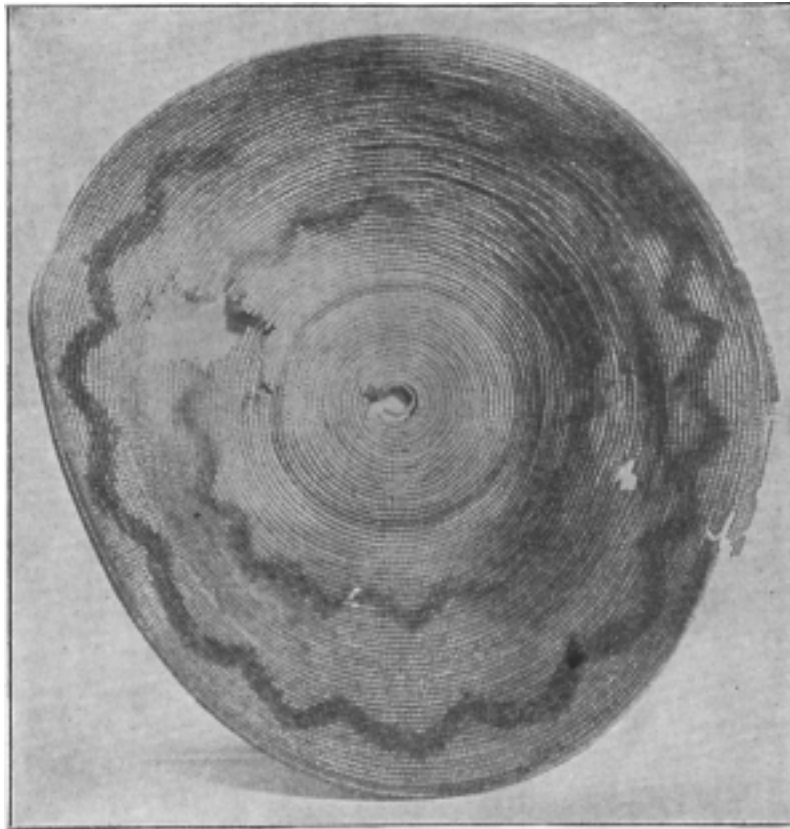


FIG. 636. (S. 1-4.) Coiled bowl-tray of the ancient basket-makers, cliffs of southeastern Utah. Ornamented by two sinuous rings in black. Collection of American Museum of Natural History, New York.

While we have some numbers of textiles preserved for our inspection, yet our study of the subject is somewhat narrowed. As has been previously stated, the bulk of prehistoric artifacts are composed of more lasting materials. It is unfortunate that we have so few of the garments, robes, head-dresses, baskets, wooden and other things once in use in America.

Thorough exploration of the caves and caverns, the cliff-houses and ruined pueblos may bring to light quantities of this textile and wooden material, and I would urge that such investigations be carried on. Many of the caverns are ransacked by curiosity-seekers, and soon all the objects buried therein will have disappeared.