

The Cheyenne had a rich material culture and manufactured many items which made life comfortable and esthetically pleasing. The decorative arts of quillwork, beadwork, and hide painting were well developed. Formerly porcupine quill embroidery was applied to many items including shirts, dresses, leggings, moccasins, pipe bags, buffalo robes, tipi liners, baby cradles, back-rests, and tipi "stars" or ornaments. Bead embroidery later replaced quillwork on these items, particularly among the southern Cheyenne. Much of the finest decoration was done ceremonially by women who were members of a quilling society. Decorating a buffalo robe, for example, was sacred work, not done casually. In sacred quill and beadwork there were strict rules in the use of designs and colors, and the symbolism of the work was kept secret from the uninitiated. In recent years women have tended to follow the old designs in their beadwork but there has been an increasing tendency to introduce changes according to an individual's fancy. Cheyenne beadwork is notable for the care taken in its execution. Small beads are generally used and are applied with the lay stitch as is the practice among other Plains tribes. However much Cheyenne work is so even and flat that it resembles work done in overlay stitch.

Treaties and Reservations

The Cheyenne signed their first treaty with the United States in 1825. By this treaty the Cheyenne simply acknowledged the sovereignty of the United States and its right to regulate all trade. During the decade of the 1820's the Cheyenne were widely scattered from the Missouri River to the Arkansas. The decades of the 1830's and 1840's were perhaps the high point of the Cheyenne as Plains Indians, for this was a time when buffalo were plentiful, essential trade goods were easily obtained, and white threats to Indian lands were not yet a pressing concern. During this time most of the Cheyenne