Chitimacha Crafts Exhibit Displayed At Southwestern

Chitimacha INDIAN WOMEN — Chitimacha Indian jewelry, baskets, wood carvings, etc., are being shown this month in the Dupre Library at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. Shown discussing some of the early designs on Chitimacha baskets are, from left, Mrs. Nicholas Stouff, wife of the present chief of the tribe; Mrs. E. A. Stouff; and Mrs. Harry Simooneaux, all of the Chitimacha Indian reservation, Indian’s Bend, near Jeanerette on Highway 326. Mrs. E. A. Stouff is wearing a traditional dress of the tribe made of 1,000 pieces, including special designs of the tribe.

Chitimacha Crafts, including wood carvings, jewelry, bead work, basketry, and historical items of the tribe is being displayed this month in Dupre Library at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

The Chitimacha Indians, who live on an Indian Reservation, Indian Bend, on Highway 326 near Jeanerette, are the oldest and only recognized tribe of Indians in the State of Louisiana. They were in this area before the time of Christ. These on the reservation are the last remaining descendants of a once powerful tribe who left their mark on the history of the state. The earliest written record of the tribe is in Iberville’s Journal of 1899.

Key eight families, about 200 Indians, live on the reservation. There are about 600 who are recorded in the tribe.

The present chief of the tribe is Nicholas Stouff. At a tribal meeting recently, the Indians agreed to join the Northwestern Association of Indians.

Mrs. E. A. Stouff maintains that there are over 4,000 Indians in Louisiana who are not recognized by the Federal government.

Until 1932 the Chitimachas has no opportunity for education, but in that year Chief Ernest Darden gave a room in his house for a classroom. In 1935 the U.S. government erected a one-room schoolhouse on the reservation, which is still being operated by the Federal government as an elementary school.

Peace and harmony with neighboring tribes until 1899, when war broke out between them and the French and their Indian allies.

The Chitimacha held title to their land during the Spanish occupation of Louisiana through a treaty signed Feb. 14, 1722 at the Hotel New Orleans in New Orleans by Bernardo Galvez.

They also have title to their peaceful tribe until molested, land by treaty signed in 1803.

Records reveal that they lived in with the United States.

Few Still Speaks

Only a few of the Chitimachas still speak their native language. The chief is advised by a council of four members elected by the tribe. Members have begun to intermarry with other races primarily because they are almost all closely related.

At one time the tribe numbered more than 3,000, including seven or eight hundred warriors, living on over 7,000 acres of land. Today their land is reduced to only 183 acres.

Researchers have characterized the Chitimacha as a peaceful tribe until molested, land by treaty signed in 1803.
CHITIMACHA INDIAN CRAFTS — E. A. Stouff, left, once chief of the tribe of Chitimacha Indians who live on an Indian Reservation, Indian’s Bend near Jeanerette on Highway 328, is shown discussing the woodcarvings and jewelry made by the tribe with Glenn Conrad, USL archivist. A display of the tribe’s crafts and historical material is on display this month in the Dupre Library at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.