Chitimacha Indian baskets to be exhibited in Baton Rouge

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA—The Indian Arts and Crafts Board of the U.S. Department of the Interior announces the opening of the exhibition Masterpieces of Chitimacha Basketry, Contemporary and Traditional, at the Anglo-American Art Museum, Memorial Tower, Louisiana State University, on Sunday afternoon the 11th of January, 1981.

The museum is open Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to 12 noon, and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.; and Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Baskets by the Chitimacha Indians of Louisiana have been prized for the beauty of their intricate designs, their wealth of natural vegetable dyes, and a peculiar lifestyle of association with nature. Their weaving culminated in works of art with designs reflecting a close study of the natural world and a peculiar lifestyle of the Louisiana Bayous.

Through this display, the public will be afforded the exceptional opportunity to review and lend support to the efforts being made to revive this segment of Native American Art.

The contemporary baskets in this exhibition were made by Mrs. Ada V. Thomas, the only surviving Chitimacha Indian with the skill and knowledge in all aspects of her tribe's heritage in basketweaving. Neither the Reservation nor the tribe has been able to provide a source of supplemental income for her family.

In 1937, the National Endowment for the Arts awarded Mrs. Thomas a Fellowship Grant that enabled her to research further the Chitimacha basketweaving history and produce the contemporary materials for this exhibition. She has kept this art alive and to the Chitimacha Indians.

As Ada V. Thomas, a Chitimacha Indian Basketweaver from Charenton, peels the outer fiber of the swamp cane that has been split in preparation for weaving her doubleweave baskets, the inner porous fiber, which is useless in basket weaving, is held in her mouth while she strips the stalk. Basketry is a slow and painstaking process, requiring many hours of work, and this documented is the first comprehensive showing of the baskets by Ada Thomas.

The exhibition was organized by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board in cooperation with the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, the Anglo-American Art Museum, and the Museum of Geoscience of Louisiana State University and was made possible through a grant from the National Endowment from the Arts, Washington, D.C.

BASKETWEAVER — Ada V. Thomas, a Chitimacha Indian Basketweaver from Charenton, peels the outer fiber of the swamp cane that has been split in preparation for weaving her doubleweave baskets. The inner porous fiber, which is useless in basket weaving, is held in her mouth while she strips the stalk. Baskets by Mrs. Thomas are on exhibition at the Anglo-American Art Museum of LSU, Baton Rouge now through March 14.