

Carding

In early times cards consisted of burrs held in place by strips of leather mounted on small boards with handles at one side. These were replaced when metal cards of American manufacture were procurable at the trading posts. When a weaver is ready to card her wool, she first loosens it by hand, then combs it between carding tools until the hairs lie all in one direction. Carded wool emerges in the form of soft pads ready to be twisted into a continuous strand. If a weaver wants to produce good grey color, she mixes wool from black sheep with that from white as she cards the wool. This method makes the finest grey used in many rugs, particularly those from the Two Grey Hills area.

Spinning

The Navaho spindle is more like those used by Plains Indians than those of the Pueblo spinners and its use differs ^{distinctively} ~~drastically~~. The spindle consists of a round stick about 25 to 30 inches long, pointed at both ends. The whorl is a flat disk four to five inches in diameter with a hole in the center into which the stick fits. The whorl, which acts as a balance, is securely fastened to the stick about five inches from the butt end of the stick.

The spinner first attaches a roving, a twisted strand of carded wool, to the upper end of the spindle, and with the butt end resting on the ground she starts the roving onto the spindle with a spinning motion of the stick. Then resting the upper part of the spindle on her thigh, she rolls the spindle with the palm of her hand in a drawing motion towards her body. With the free end of the roving held in her left hand out from the top of the stick, she winds the roving onto the spindle with a twirling motion. When one

and spun
roving is wound , others are joined. There is always the stretching motion as the spindle turns. Yarn is stretched at least twice until it is fine and smooth. All Navaho hand spun yarn is one ply except the two ply cords which are made for the selvages, so characteristic of Navaho weaving. *page 9*

The quality of the wool, even more than the skill of the spinner, determines the character of the yarn. Coarse, short fibred wool cannot be spun into smooth fine yarn, but wool from the old type Navaho sheep, almost spins in itself. This is why the weavers objected to the introduction of the Rambouillet sheep.

Since the American occupation of the Southwest, traders and others have tried to introduce the spinning wheel, but the Navaho women have always rejected it. The probably reason being lack of room in the hogans, and portability. Perhaps now that so many Navaho move less frequently and have sufficient space in a modern house, they might be more interested in this less laborious method of hand spinning.