

Art of Timeless Beauty

The Navajo Child's Blanket

Taos Art Museum at Fechin House

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"Art of Timeless Beauty-The Navajo Child's Blanket"
is an exhibit opening September 19, 2023.

This exhibition will showcase classic period Navajo child's blankets in the traditional fine art setting of the Taos Art Museum. These small serapes, mostly dating from 1850-1870, are among the finest examples of classic period Navajo weaving.

Curated by Robert L. Parsons
Displayed at Taos Art Museum at Fechin House in Taos, New Mexico
September 19, 2023 - May 30, 2024

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FORWARD

Navajo mythology tells the story of Spider woman, Na'ashjéii Asdzáá, who originally taught the Navajo to weave blankets. Spider Woman lived in a crevice within the towering rock formation of Canyon de Chelly (Tsegi") in northern Arizona. It is by no coincidence that this place was once one of the main epicenters of Navajo weaving in the 19th century. Many of the finest Navajo weavings came from this region and tell a story of commerce and creativity, occupation and relocation.

Navajo weaving tells many stories of Diné encounters with so many people and places. The blankets tell stories of night rituals and traditionalism, the ceremonies within those fertile canyons echoing with night chants and the arid smell of cedar smoke and cottonwoods. They also tell the stories of early trading days with the Spanish, Utes, Anglo traders, colonialism, dis-location and latter assimilations; all woven into the warp and weft of what are considered some of the finest aesthetically balanced weavings created by human hands.

Experiences of these cultures are interwoven with a story of each encounter, marking the widths of indigo and dark brown bands from the nearby Pueblos. Images of complex terraces forming central diamond motifs came from the Spanish. Pictorial elements woven in newfound colors of aniline dyes traded from the Anglos inevitably dictated directions that Diné weavers were to take into the century ahead.

Experts are often conflicted as to dates and times when this all occurred, though all agree that Navajo weaving in the 19th century saw some of the most profound and satisfyingly balanced designs, continuing with today's most developed contemporary weavers. The aesthetics are dynamic compositions of repetitive motifs, often radiating from their centers with visual frequencies of intermittent pause and balance. The colors, derived from native plants and raveled trade cloth, continue to tell the story of the changing world they lived in.

The Navajo Childs' blankets are testaments of the prowess of Navajo weavers. Proportionally they were to have all the elements of the larger wearing blankets that preceded them but within the manageable scale of a Navajo woman's dress half. The idea of the Childs wearing blanket as being utilitarian is often argued; there are only a few photos of these fine blankets worn by the Navajo people, most of them adults. The earliest versions were perhaps used to wrap and cradle small children. Regardless of their intended purpose, these smaller format blankets prevailed as some of the finest achievements from the Navajo loom.

When we describe how these blankets came to be and the numbers of them produced, we should acknowledge the tumultuous years of conflicts with the Spanish, Utes, Apaches and Kit Carson's cavalry from the periods of 1850-1878. The result

was a tragic relocation of the Navajo people from their homelands to Ft. Sumner (Bosque Redondo) in eastern New Mexico by the U.S. military. Historic photographs along that trail show that a pause of the of Navajo weavers occurred. What was once magnificent, the classic blankets woven of fine wool and well spun churro, were to decline into utilitarian natural brown- and white-banded wearing blankets that would serve the painful journey into the unknown. This was a period where weaving spoke more to the trauma of a people, when traditional pride and a disconnection from their vital life source became woven into the Navajo blanket.

During the period in Bosque Redondo, the Navajos had a ceremony involving a coyote. Upon conclusion of the ceremony, the coyote was set free and the imprisoned Navajo watched as he bounded to the West, towards their original Diné homeland, predicting the return of the Navajo people. The remaining story is one of celebration, of the slow healing from the traumas of relocation and of those who would never return from the grueling journey to the east.

When each family returned, there was new life to be woven into their blankets; perhaps a period of many of the finest weavings which were to tell the story of their very survival. The Itinerant loom found its place back in its homelands. The trading posts were to provide new dyes, processed wool, and a demand for the finest blankets one could weave.

The Navajo experiences are woven into each of the blankets in this exhibit, each weft woven with songs and a sense of place where they were woven in a home with their own sheep's wool. This tradition continues today with newfound directions all informed by our past. The evolution is always returning to the original source of tradition and the teachings of Spider Woman, as well as the earlier weavers who lived these lives of survival and assimilation. The Navajo weaver often rubs a spider's web into her hands to bless herself before beginning a weaving. A child also received the blessing of the web so that one day she may grow to be a fine weaver as well; a blanket woven by a child of Spiderwoman for a child.

Tony Abeyta
Santa Fe

“ Navajo blankets are objects of fascination.....The word fascination has its root in the Latin word fascino, “to bind, or to bewitch.” When something is fascinating, it holds people spellbound and keeps them under its spell. Few works of art have the immediacy of a great child’s blanket.....

From: “Collecting The Navajo Child’s Blanket” by Joshua Baer, 1986

“The bayeta serape was an object produced to astound and impress”

*From: “Walking in Beauty: The Navajo and their Blankets”
Anthony Berlant and Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, 1977*

INTRODUCTION

Navajo child's blankets may be one of the most sought after forms of Navajo weaving, and one of the most debated. Was it made for a child? Was it simply a nice horse blanket? Was it small because the weaver had limited time and materials? All of these things are likely true at one time or another. The use of Navajo child's blankets was determined by the need at hand and the wealth of the owner. They were expensive, even in the 1860's. Navajo blankets were always a secular trade item from the time the Navajo learned to weave. It is believed the Navajo were first exposed to blanket weaving from Pueblo weavers. Many Puebloan people fled their homes to seek refuge with the Navajo upon the Spanish reconquest of New Mexico following the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

The weaving of these small serapes had been going on in some capacity for decades by the time it reached its peak around 1860. Early Navajo blankets, in general, were traded to the Pueblos, then taken to the Taos Trade fair, and from there on to Bent's Fort out on the Great Plains. William Bent, who owned Bent's Fort with his Taos partners, was married to a Cheyenne woman whose father was a tribal leader. The Cheyenne owned hundreds of Navajo blankets. From period descriptions and images they were mostly Chief's blankets. These striped manta scale blankets were especially coveted by the Cheyenne women. When the cholera pandemic of 1849 reached the plains, as many as 2/3 of the entire Cheyenne tribe died along with tens of millions of people worldwide. This pandemic caused an immediate disruption in the Plains Indian trade in the 1850s which had flowed through the Cheyenne to the rest of the plains. Bent's Fort was abandoned. The Plains Indian market disappeared. This disruption demanded the Navajo focus on a different product for a different market. The Navajo child's blanket evolved during this troubled time.

Child's blankets were both easier to finish and to get to the trade centers of that time compared to the much bulkier man's serapes or Chief's blankets. Bent's Fort was gone and the tribes of the Great Plains that survived, the Cheyenne, the Sioux, and others, were in ever greater turmoil. Full size Navajo blankets were still being made but child's blankets fit a need of the time and became much more prevalent. By 1860, these small, art size serapes came to encapsulate all the energy and dynamic patterning of the much-revered Navajo blankets of the early classic period.

Regardless of the reason of their initial popularity in the 1800s, child's blankets continued to be popular as long as Navajo blankets were made to wear, and are still an acclaimed artform today.

Robert Parsons, Taos, New Mexico, 2023

#1 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1850

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

Ex- Collection of Roy H. Robinson

A tour-de-force of Navajo weaving. This powerful and explosive visual statement precedes the typical child's blanket layouts produced during the heyday of child's blanket production, 1860-1870. The center dominates and the ends recede, more in the manner of an early Classic Period Navajo man's serape. Woven on a background of lac-dyed bayeta with early serape design elements, this monumental example suggests that it was an early version of the Navajo child's blanket. Compare it to the cover piece on the 1972 Kahlenberg/Berlant catalog "The Navajo Blanket."

The blanket measures 48" x 30" and is woven of lac-dyed bayeta, indigo blue and handspun white.



#2 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1860-65

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

This compelling example of design is virtually the opposite of the preceding plate #1. It features the peak period design layout of a small controlled center along with unrestrained end elements. The stepped block double diamonds radiate energy into a field punctuated by the spider woman crosses. Woven on a field of lac-dyed bayeta with deep blue indigo, the materials suggest a date that precedes the commonly accepted later use of the crosses, stepped diamonds and stepped block diamonds.

The blanket measures 52" x 32" and is woven of lac-dyed bayeta, indigo blue and handspun white.



#3 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1860

Lent to the exhibition by Joshua Baer & Company, Santa Fe

This blanket exemplifies the concept of one motif superimposed upon another. In this case, the very basic, early Navajo design of plain tight and narrow stripes is overlaid with meandering lines. The stepped meanders create diamonds in the middle and anchor points on the ends. This very classic Navajo layout is accentuated by the utilization of green bayeta on the outer meanders forming the center. This same green raveled yarn is used again on the end anchor points. Simple stepped meanders and crosses on the ends complete a very satisfying, contemplative design.

The blanket measures 50" x 30" and is woven with over a cochineal-dyed bayeta background, vegetal-dyed green bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#4 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1860

Private Collection

This fine blanket is composed of nine wide horizontal bands: three terraced wavy bands in red, four striped bands in white, and two boldly patterned end bands that anchor the composition. The eye-catching waves exist entirely in negative space. It's Navajo weaver magic, and the effect is electric. The white bands with red and blue stripes appear more subdued, but equally engaging. The arrangement of the stripes is hypnotic, and there's a wonderful sense of rhythm. The two end bands incorporate concentric squares, a design element with a long history in Navajo Classic blankets, and terraced designs that appear to spell out the words "MOM WOW" - which is quite charming, albeit unintentional.

The blanket measures 49" x 29" and is woven of cochineal-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#5 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1860

Collection of Jerry and Deanna Becker

An elegant and sophisticated piece of Navajo weaving, this blanket never fails to cast a magical spell. It is at once energizing and meditative. The bands of red appear to levitate above a calm medium blue field, giving the illusion of three dimensions. The center is a powerful flowing stream of energy. Everything is in balance, every aspect delights. It is the collector's desire to honor the weaver with the inclusion of this blanket in the exhibition.

The blanket measures 53" x 31" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, indigo blue in two shades, and handspun white.



#6 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1855

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

A subtle and satisfying combination of colors and materials makes this blanket a pleasure to behold. Woven in a series of striped zones, more in the manner of a Navajo utility blanket, its beauty is in its fineness, reflecting the delicate use of early bayeta. The fine bayeta, both in colors of red and yellow, is woven in simple zones along with lines of indigo blue. Its careful design reflects a sophisticated simplicity. The white, sometimes carded with a brown to make a grey, is evocative of cashmere.

The blanket measures 49" x 31" with lac-dyed bayeta, cochineal-dyed bayeta and saxony, vegetal-dyed yellow bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white sometimes carded with natural brown.



#7 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1860

Lent to the exhibition by Joshua Baer & Company, Santa Fe

In this classic banded child's blanket, the blue and red central panel, the stepped triangles at the corners, and the striped bands appear as foreground design elements. The grey bands appear as a background. At first, the child's blanket seems more simple than complicated. The more time you spend watching the alternations between its bands and stripes, the more complicated its initial simplicity becomes.

The blanket measures 49" x 32" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, vegetal-dyed yellow bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#8 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

The combed central diamonds draw the eye and at once cause a lack of focus, anticipating Germantown eye dazzlers popular two decades later. Double-stepped block (candy stripe) zones frame the central row of diamonds giving strength to the center. By comparison, the rest of the blanket is rather subdued in a bayeta background classic serape manner. The combing is repeated in the corner anchors but lacks the dizzying effect. Solid indigo stripes delineate the blue and white meanders occupying the mid-field between the center and the classic three spot anchor points of the ends.

The blanket measures 51" x 31" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#9 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

I find this blanket to be a simple but complete example of the classic serape layout without much fuss. All the elements are present with great balance. Indigo and white diamonds are superimposed upon a broken stripe background which is itself overlaid on a field of cochineal-dyed bayeta. The three diamonds on each side of the center give extra strength to the central design of meander-formed diamonds with yellow crosses highlighting the center. The yellow crosses highlight and crown the center of the blanket, making it the object of focus. Crosses have always been a favorite element of mine. The cross design is thought to have become popular during the 1860s, the heyday of classic child's blankets.

The blanket measures 51" x 32" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, vegetal-dyed yellow bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#10 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

The unusually large central diamonds are set off by the flattened, stepped hexagonal figures. The flattening gives these central elements a rounded look as seen in early men's serapes. Framed by the numerous indigo and white stripes forming stepped triangles, this blanket has an unusually strong, aggressive central design. The white and blue stepped triangles in the mid-field are a good example of the change in focus that comes with adding white to a stepped triangle in a red zone. The triangle comes forward and the meander recedes. In spite of the strength of the center, this blanket is dominated by seemingly unrelated end panels. The slashed corner or anchor points are almost lost in a cacophony of design.

The blanket measures 54" x 32" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, cochineal-dyed saxony, light green vegetal-dyed 3-ply, medium green vegetal-dyed 3-ply, and handspun white.



#11 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865

Collection of David and Linda Cook

This blanket is a dynamic sampler of classic child's blanket elements, colors, and designs. Laid out on a white background, these delicate designs and colors each come forward with vigor. Vertical zigzags, stepped triangles, multicolor stripes, broken stripes, crosses, stacked blocks, slashed corner designs, concentric squares... this one has it all. The center, created out of zones of cochineal with white and indigo blue vertical zigzags, leads the eye to the central zone of stepped triangles or hats. This center actually recedes, making the framing elements even more pronounced.

The blanket measures 53" x 31" with multiple types of cochineal-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, vegetal-dyed yellow and green 3-ply, and handspun white.



#12 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865
ALSO KNOWN AS THE DEWART CHILD'S BLANKET

Lent to the exhibition by Joshua Baer & Company, Santa Fe

Before 1860, demand for Navajo blankets came mostly from non-Navajo Native Americans, and from Mexican or Spanish merchants. After 1860, demand came from Anglo-Americans, many of whom were U. S. Army officers. Anglo-Americans valued complexity over simplicity. Child's blankets woven after 1860 reflect that preference. Their design elements tend to be more decorative and more exaggerated than the design elements in child's blankets woven before 1860.

The blanket measures 51" x 31" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, pink from cochineal-dyed bayeta carded with white, indigo blue, and handspun white.

The child's blanket is ex- Anne Dewart, Boston.

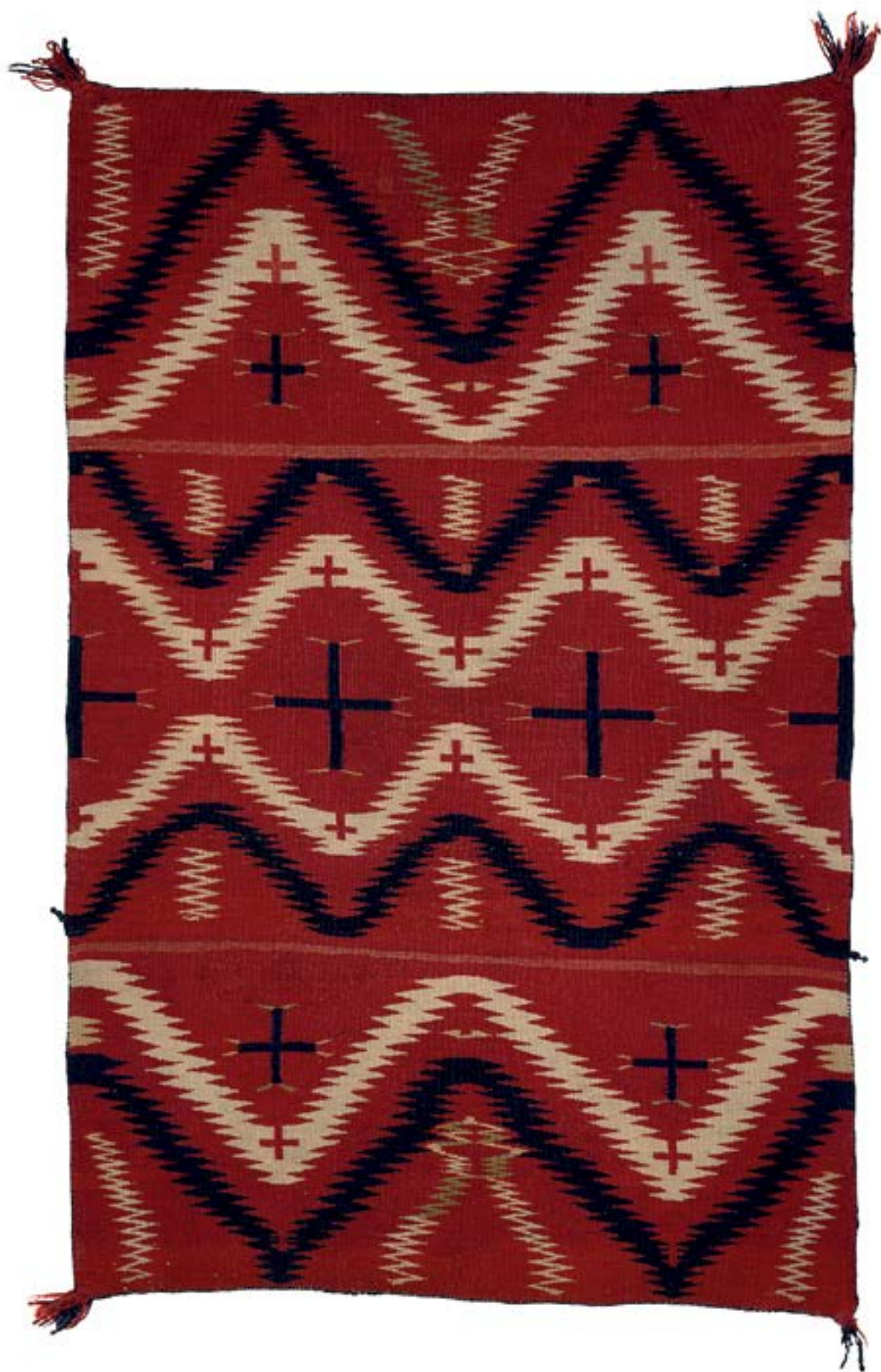


#13 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

The serrated elements in this bayeta blanket may at first conjure up thoughts of the influence of Bosque Redondo. Upon spending time with this piece, one realizes that the serrations are not the vertical Rio Grande inspired designs but are utilized on what are horizontal meanders, classic period Navajo designs. The consistency of the cochineal-dyed bayeta background also suggests a weaving not victim to the hard times of Bosque Redondo and its aftermath. My feeling is that this is a piece made by one of the Navajo who did not go to Bosque Redondo. The central spider woman crosses are classic Navajo designs dating from at least the early 1860s and are a nice touch. The smaller crosses in the white come off with jewel like quality, my favorite part of this piece.

The blanket measures 50" x 32" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#14 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

This is a great example of the bold spider woman outlined cross design that comes into prominence during the heyday of the classic child's blanket and persisted long after. Late classic and transitional specimens are not uncommon but pure classic pieces are rare and highly sought after. Woven on a field of various cochineal bayeta yarns, this was a piece of contemporary art to the Navajo in the late 1860s.

The blanket measures 47" x 30" with various dye lots of cochineal-dyed bayeta, golden tan vegetal-dyed saxony, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#15 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865

Collection of Greg Nelson

The checker board design used to form the diamonds in this piece dates back to early classic Navajo serapes, at least to 1850. The design figures prominently in the Navajo serape featured on the cover of the iconic 1972 museum catalog "The Navajo Blanket." The crosses punctuate the diamond designs adding interest. However, the most interesting aspect of this classic blanket is the four sheep images woven between the diamonds in the field of fine cochineal-dyed bayeta. These would certainly be among the earliest pictorial elements on a Navajo weaving and likely the earliest on a Navajo child's blanket.

The blanket measures 48" x 29" with two types of cochineal-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, vegetal green.



#16 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1860

Lent to the exhibition by Joshua Baer & Company, Santa Fe

In this classic child's blanket, the serrated and terraced diamonds appear as foreground elements, and the red and blue stripes and the white bands appear as the background. The use of beige knitting yarns, or Zephyr yarns, around the edges of the terraced diamonds creates an atmospheric middle ground. It is unusual to see serrated designs and terraced designs side-by-side in the same classic child's blanket.

The blanket measures 50" x 31" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, vegetal-dyed beige 3-ply, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#17 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1860

Collection of Anthony Sobin

The wonder of this example, much like plate #6, is in the extraordinary silky, softness of the weaving. As if in keeping with the concept, the blanket contains several colors of very fine bayeta which are now faded down to very soft colors. The beige bayeta has now faded to more of an ivory. A soft toned, vegetal green bayeta outlines the center of stacked bar indigo diamonds which at once both recede and then come forward. Interesting to note, and miss, the beige bayeta is also used between the indigo central bars. The now faded, fine beige bayeta is almost invisible until one notices the raveled nature of the yarn.

The blanket measures 44" x 28" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, vegetal-dyed beige bayeta, vegetal-dyed green bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#18 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865-1870

Collection of Terri Kelly Moyers

This blanket is an example of typical Navajo design experimentation and the shuffling of typical elements. While the central crosses make for a powerful center, the switching of the indigo with the white of the cross outlines diminishes that effect. The pleasing result is more graphic action with less punch. The geometric meandering lines on the ends also employ a switch of blue and white lines. The mid field and ends are nicely appointed with two very different meandering lines, one curvilinear, one geometric. Cochineal-dyed bayeta carded with white create a very complimentary pink which changes to a carded grey as the center is approached. Vegetal green and yellow appear as jewel like highlights.

The blanket measures 54" x 34" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, pink from cochineal-dyed bayeta carded with white, indigo blue, indigo and vegetal green, vegetal yellow, and handspun white.



#19 LATE CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA 1870

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

This blanket really shows how simple bands of elements can make a great blanket design. Geometric meanders are used to create the center and ends, while a band containing vertical zigzags in the field gives the whole blanket a powerful presence. The tiny red stripes within the vertical zigzags are a really nice touch. The overall pink carded background gives this blanket a commanding look. The central zone has a worsted bayeta background that looks the same as the cochineal-dyed bayeta at first glance. Closer inspection and testing shows this yarn to be aniline-dyed, rendering the blanket the designation of Late Classic. The rest of the blanket is cochineal-dyed bayeta.

The blanket measures 54" x 33" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, aniline-dyed red bayeta, pink from cochineal-dyed bayeta carded with white, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#20 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

Ex. Collection of Daniel Brown

This blanket, in a banded blanket format, simply repeats in multiple zones a single classic period element, the single stepped triangle or “little hats.” The light indigo blue in the interim bands over cochineal-dyed bayeta is dramatic. It is beautifully woven with a simple but fully classic group of elements, creating yet another blanket design from its time. This is a piece that is most appealing in person. The cochineal-dyed bayeta is beautiful as is the light indigo blue, both of which are lost in reproduced images. I have seen numerous examples and versions of this layout on Late Classic blankets from the 1870s, confirming its continued popularity with the early Navajo weavers.

The blanket measures 48” x 30” with cochineal-dyed bayeta, light indigo blue, dark indigo blue, and handspun white.



#21 CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1865

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

Hat forms or stepped triangles once again dominate the graphics of this blanket. A different effect from the previous piece is created by solid-colored hats alternating in white and indigo blue. These single-stepped triangles, “hats or Ts,” likely originated from edge décor of mantas and dress halves dating back at least to Massacre Cave in 1825. Curiously, these images almost never show up on serapes larger than child’s blankets. The white background showcases the simple stripes of luminescent cochineal and indigo blue and green. This weaving, though woven longer than wide in the manner of a serape, would have a scale reminiscent of a manta when worn.

The blanket measures 43” x 31” with cochineal-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, indigo and vegetal green, and handspun white.



22 LATE CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1870

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

The vertical zigzag element in Navajo weaving shows up in serapes and chief's blankets at least as early as the 1850s. This post-Bosque late classic is a great example of the vertical zigzag design on a banded blanket. While most Bosque Redondo influenced serrations create a vertical orientation, this piece adheres to the classic period layout of horizontal bands with the early type vertical zigzag forming the zonal elements. Cochineal-dyed bayeta zones in the field, juxtaposed with brighter aniline-dyed bayeta in the center and ends, would become common as the Navajo transitioned into synthetically dyed yarns.

The blanket measures 50" x 32" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, aniline-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#23 LATE CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA.1870

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

In spite of the tall and strong anchor points on the ends, this piece is nicely balanced. The single meander in the center is a powerful element in its own right. This blanket appears to have been woven by a mature weaver who had undoubtedly woven numerous serapes during the early classic period. Great use of indigo green sets this blanket apart, as does the early aesthetic of tight and numerous stripes overlaying the synthetically dyed raveled red background. (See Plate 20 in *Collecting The Navajo Child's Blanket* by Joshua Baer, 1986, for a related classic period example).

The blanket measures 53" x 31" with aniline-dyed bayeta, cochineal-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, indigo and vegetal green, and handspun white.



#24 LATE CLASSIC NAVAJO CHILD'S BLANKET, CA. 1870

Collection of Terri Kelly Moyers

This Late Classic example once again illustrates the Navajo propensity to adapt designs from previous weavings in a new way. These forms, contained within the aniline-dyed bayeta zones, are previously shown in plate #21 in a piece which is woven of purely classic materials. I refer to these as broken chevrons. This blanket uses these forms in a restrained way, anticipating the eye dazzler designs which will, within the next ten years, become so common. This blanket could be considered a bridge piece between the classic period and the Germantown eye dazzlers of the 1880s.

The blanket measures 51" x 30" with aniline-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, and handspun white.



#25 Navajo Classic Child's Blanket, ca. 1865

Collection of Robert and Sherry Parsons

The vertical zigzag prominent in the center of this blanket is an old design motif that shows up both in classic serapes and chief's blankets. It is repeated in the opposite direction on the ends, framing the anchor points and giving more power to the end elements. Of interest in this piece is the early use of indigo green used liberally throughout the blanket. This color, a combination of indigo blue and vegetal yellow, creates a warm pleasing green tone. The white bands beg the question, what is the background color, white or red?

The blanket measures 55" x 31" with cochineal-dyed bayeta, indigo blue, indigo and vegetal green, and handspun white.

