

"My Dear Miss Nicholson..."

Letters And Myths

William R. Benson
Shasta Indian

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"My dear Miss Nicholson"



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"MY DEAR MISS NICHOLSON"
LETTERS AND MYTHS
BY
WILLIAM R. BENSON
A POMO INDIAN

Edited by
María del Carmen Gasser

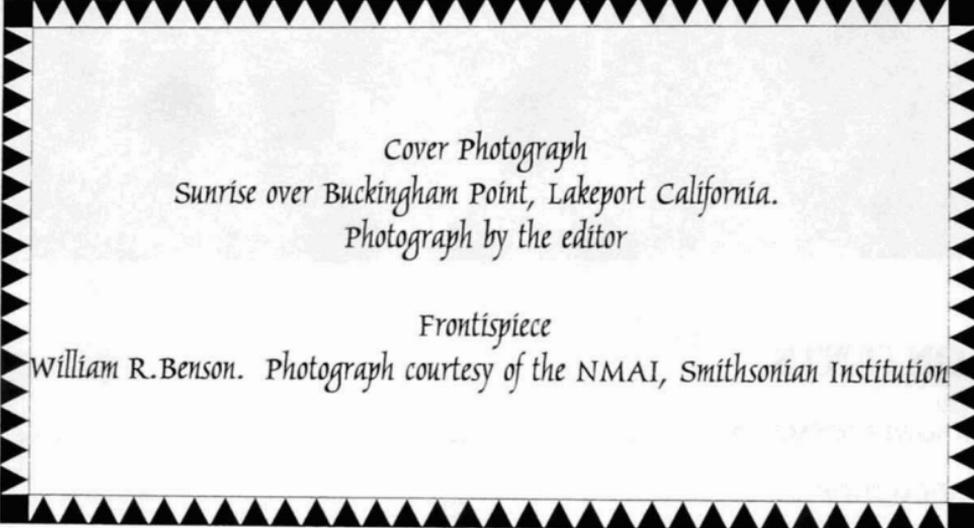
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The above photograph shows, from left to right, Grace Nicholson, Mary Benson, and William R. Benson holding the first basket that he made. Photograph courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California..



Cover Photograph
Sunrise over Buckingham Point, Lakeport California.
Photograph by the editor

Frontispiece
William R. Benson. Photograph courtesy of the NMAI, Smithsonian Institution

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I am indebted to the late William R. Benson for his tremendous effort at compiling ethnographic material from his cultural group, and to the late Grace Nicholson for having the foresight to save and keep Benson's original documents.

When this project germinated seven years ago, I had no idea of the many individuals whose help in various degrees would be necessary to bring it to fruition. They gave freely of their expertise, time and friendship. To them I am deeply grateful.

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Brooklyn Museum - N.Y

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Huntington Free Library - Bronx, N.Y.

Huntington Library - San Marino, Ca.

Lakeport Museum - Lake Co., Ca.

Mendocino Co. Museum - Mendocino Co., Ca.

National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (formerly Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation) - N.Y.

News from Native California - Berkeley, Ca.

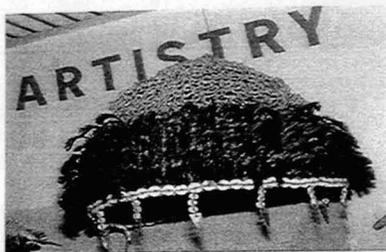
Phoebe Hearst Museum (formerly Lowie Museum) - Berkeley, Ca.

This project would have never gotten off the ground without the financial and moral support of my sister Nelly Gonzalez, and my husband, Jim Gasser (whose patience surpassed that of Job). Computer tutoring, by my son, James, and the culinary skills of my daughter, Cristina, proved invaluable.

I want to mention those members of my family who rejoiced and supported me in this endeavor, but did not live to see the end result: my father, Jose Gonzalez Molano, my sister Raquel Moore, and my brothers Jose and Juan Gonzalez. To all of you, thank you and peace.

INTRODUCTION

*“Dr. Hudson said that he had commissioned Will Benson to make a *guk-tsu* (headdress) for me, but he was uncertain how it would come out. Benson would probably make it entirely too beautiful” (Culin-1908).*



Model of headdress made by
William Benson
NMAI Cat. 16/9756

The above statement epitomizes the artistic abilities of William Ghalgalan Benson. Everything he made was beautiful, “**SHUTALI**,” in Eastern Pomo language (1).

This is William Benson’s story, pieced together from the letters he wrote and other documents. Most of the letters were addressed to Grace Nicholson, a dealer in American Indian art from Pasadena, California, who played a vital role in Benson’s adult life.

William Ghalgalan Benson (2) was born of mixed Pomo Indian and White ancestry, in 1862 at Buckingham Point (called *Shaxai* in Eastern Pomo), Clear Lake, California. His father, Addison Benson, was a white man from Worcester County, Massachusetts, who moved to Lake County, California, in 1854 where he owned and operated a ranch with two of his brothers. Addison Benson was a descendant of distinguished families. Prominent among them was William A. Wheeler, vice president of the United States under Rutherford B. Hayes (see Benson’s paternal genealogy).

No less distinguished was his mother, Gepigul (Sally), an Eastern Pomo Indian who was related to the chiefs of the *Xolo-Napo* (Water Lily People), and the *Xabe-Napo* (Rock People), who lived in an area now known as Lake County, California (see Benson’s maternal genealogy).

The union of these two people should have been ideal, but in 1862, it was taboo. White men who entered into such relationships were derogatorily referred to as “squaw men.” Addison Benson never legally married William Benson’s mother. Therefore, William Benson grew up with the ambivalence of not quite fully being a member of either culture.

(1) Unless otherwise stated, all native terms are defined as Eastern Pomo with William R. Benson as the primary informant. Comments have also been included by Nelson Hopper, an Eastern Pomo, who as a young man, knew Benson in the 1930’s.

(2) Benson’s Indian name is spelled as “Ghalgalan” by E. Loeb and “Rhalgalan” by J. DeAngulo.

As recounted in his autobiography, Benson as a child and adolescent had very strong ties to his father. He admired and was very fond of Addison Benson, and he told of a time when there was an epidemic of whooping cough throughout the county and all the children died but himself and two others. He survived because of his father's care for him: "*that night my father swam across the river to get some medicine for me. He tied the medicine on his head and swam back. He cured me with it.*" (De Angulo and Benson 1935a)

Although his father lived with Gepigul and their children for periods of time, William did not learn to speak English until he was an adolescent, and this he taught himself, together with reading and writing. According to Benson's autobiography, his father provided the family with some of the basic necessities of life. In 1873, Addison Benson died when William was only eleven years old, leaving him with his mother, a six-year old sister (Ellen), and a one-year old brother (Thomas), but since he and William's mother were not legally married, they did not inherit any part of the ranch. (probate file 370, Lake County)

Gepigul's family origin allowed Benson privileged information regarding the Eastern Pomo. From her family he learned the oral history of his cultural group. He was taught about ancient ceremonial rituals and the regalia used for each. Innately inquisitive and highly intelligent, Benson made it his business to learn everything his mother and her relatives had to teach him.

Among the Eastern Pomo, there were many specialized functions. People who were skillful at doing certain things often specialized in that specific activity, such as bead making, bone carving, making dance regalia, basket weaving, and so forth. Benson had the capacity and ability to learn not one or two of these functions, but all of them. In doing so, he also turned the objects he made into works of art. From his mother he learned the art of basket weaving, producing some of the most exquisite baskets ever made.

In the fall of 1895 William Benson married Mary Knight, a Central Pomo. Like her husband, Mary's father was white and her mother was of Indian descent. Benson told Grace Nicholson that the bride's family chose the wedding day on which presents were to be exchanged between the bride's family and the groom's family. On the selected day the groom gave presents of wampum (round shell beads on long strings often numbering a hundred or more) and blankets (which substituted for robes in pre-contact days, and, although Nicholson does not elaborate on this matter, I assume were probably skin robes) to the bride's family. In turn the bride's family gave wampum belts and baskets. After these exchanges they celebrated the marriage. (Grace Nicholson's diaries -- 1906.)

Both husband and wife possessed the remarkable skill of being able to use all the basketry techniques for which the Pomo people are so well known. At times they worked collectively, and it is impossible to tell where one left the work and the other took over the task. There was only one exception that can be identified. Mary had two baskets left unfinished when she died, and William was asked to finish them. One of the two appears to have been worked by two different weavers.

Benson shared the knowledge that he obtained from his maternal relatives, with many others of that time, particularly with scholars from the University of California at Berkeley including Alfred L. Kroeber, L.S. Freeland, Edwin M. Loeb, and Jaime DeAngulo. He also used this knowledge and skills to supplement his laborer's income. During the turn of the century and the early 1900's William Benson worked extensively for John Hudson, a physician living in Ukiah (Mendocino County, California).

Hudson became so fascinated with the Indian peoples that he gave up his medical practice and devoted the rest of his life to being a collector and scholar. By the late 1800's Hudson had amassed a substantial collection of Indian artifacts, especially baskets, some of which he sold in 1899 to the U. S. National Museum, Smithsonian Institution. From 1901 to 1906 he collected artifacts for the Field Museum in Chicago. In both of these Institutions William and Mary Benson's artifacts are represented.

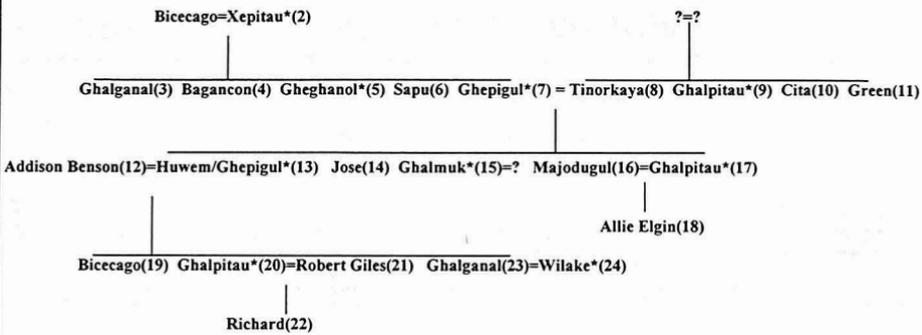
John Hudson commissioned Benson to replicate artifacts and introduced him to other scholars and collectors such as Stewart Culin from the Brooklyn Museum in New York, who came to the Clear Lake area in search of artifacts. Hudson was instrumental in taking the Bensons to the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri (1904), commemorating the Lewis and Clark expedition. The Bensons spent approximately three months at the fair, where they demonstrated basketry techniques and sold their works. A basket made by both William and Mary received the highest award given at the fair, a gold medal. This basket was a "ta-pi-ca" (literally meaning "red basket") or "sun" basket (a term used by collectors).

Grace Nicholson entered Benson's life around 1903, when he was 41. Nicholson came to California in 1901 at the age of 23, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Shortly after her arrival in California, together with a family friend and associate, Carroll S. Hartman, she began purchasing and selling artifacts from American Indians who were still relatively numerous. By 1902 Nicholson started traveling, seeking out contacts and sources for her already established shop in Pasadena, California. Like John Hudson, Grace Nicholson provided some of the major museums in the United States with ethnographic material. It is my assumption that John Hudson introduced the Bensons to Nicholson; however she may have heard about Benson's reputation as an artist and met him without Hudson's aid.

Upon recognizing Benson's artistic and entrepreneurial abilities Grace Nicholson hired him and his wife Mary, to do work for her. Benson was to secure objects of ethnographic value, as well as artistic value from other Indians throughout the County. He was also to make reproductions of certain artifacts, and to write the myths pertaining to the Eastern Pomo. Mary was to weave baskets.

Like any other mortal, Benson did some things that many people viewed negatively, and he probably regretted them later. His errors of poor judgment are known to many, especially where it matters most, in the place where he was born and lived. However, his accomplishments as an artist and writer and his other achievements are known to a few. It is the purpose of this paper to let Benson speak for himself through his written documents, in the hopes that he will be judged in a more favorable light. Regrettably, there are gaps that need to be filled, and I have tried to fill them through this introduction and with commentaries or quotations from applicable sources throughout the text.

WILLIAM R. BENSON'S MATERNAL GENEALOGY



*female

- (1) "Deer Leg"
- (2)
- (3) "Wampum Seeker"*** Chief, maker of beaded and feathered artifacts
- (4) Chief
- (5)
- (6)
- (7) "Cutting of Quail Plumes"
- (8) "Beaver Head" Fisherman
- (10) Fisherman
- (11) Indian name not known
- (12) Addison Benson/1822-1873 White man
- (13) "cutting of Quail Plumes"/"Sally Benson"
- (14) Chief, Indian name not known
- (15)
- (16)
- (17) Bought the family name "White Wampum"
- (18) Indian name not known
- (19) 1872-1892 "Deer Leg"/"Thomas Benson"
- (20) 1868-1890 "White Wampum"/Ellen Benson"
- (21) Robert Giles/White man
- (22) Richard Giles/1890-1893
- (23) "Wampum Seeker"***/William Benson. Also had the name "Tinorkaya" (Beaver Head) Chief
- (24) "Mary Benson" Yokaia or Central Pomo

**According to Nelson Hopper, Eastern Pomo elder, the name "Ghalganal" means "urging a child to go home, a sort of command."

Note: This genealogy was compiled with information taken from E. Loeb's "Pomo Folkways, 1926:230-37, archival material from the Lakeport Historical Society, and information provided by Nelson Hopper and Robert Benson.

WILLIAM R. BENSON'S PATERNAL GENEALOGYJohn Benson -1608 = Marie williams -1606 (1)Joseph Benson - 1640 = Sarah Hull - ca.1662 (2)Benoni Benson - 1689 = Sarah Thayer - 1691 (3)Joseph Benson - 1712 = Martha ... - ca.1704 (4)Moses Benson - 1732 = Eunice Halbrook - 1735 (5)David Benson - 1756 = Zillah Morse - 1760 (6)

 David Moses Lewis Danford Cyrus Willard - 1781 Jesse = Olive Wheeler *- ca.1788

 Alanson Lyman David = Rachel (7) Laura Flora Susanna Addison**= Huwen Anderson* *= Emeline(8)

 William 1862-1937 = Mary Knight 1876-1930 Ellen 1868-1890 = Robert Giles Thomas 1872-1892

 Richard 1890 - 1893

 Lucy A.= John (9) Ulyssa (10) Laura (11) Henry W. = Leta (12) Lyman D. (13) Charles A. = Cora (14)

 Margaret Marion Ross - 1907

 Emerald Arthur Rena Verna Ida Perry Harvey Grace

 Charles W. - 1906 Lyman D. - 1909 = Evelyn B. Linderholm - 1907

 Lyman D. - 1938 = Lois Martin Robert L. -1941 = Lois Earhart

 Lisa Deanne Paul R.

 Karl R. Phillip S.

- (1) Caverham, Oxford England
- (2) Plymouth Co., Mass.
- (3) Mendon, Worcester Co., Mass.
- (4) Mendon, Worcester Co., Mass.
- (5) Douglas, Worcester Co., Mass.
- (6) Sturbridge, Worcester Co., Mass.
- (7) Rachel Meeks
- (8) Emeline Thompson
- (9) Lucy A. - 1826, John Stottlemeyer
- (10) 1886
- (11) 1870
- (12) Leta Dorn
- (13) 1874
- (14) Charles A. - 1877, Cora West - 1879

* Olive Wheeler's family included: Benjamin Ide Wheeler - President, University of California
 George M. Wheeler - In charge of the topographical surveys of the West
 William A. Wheeler - Vice President under Rutherford B. Hayes (19th U.S. President)

** Addison and Anderson were twin brothers born 1822.

Note: The above information was provided by Robert L. Benson and archival material from the Lake Co., historical Society.

INTRODUCTION TO CORRESPONDENCE

Even though Grace Nicholson sold the artifact models and some of the baskets made by the Bensons to private collectors and museums throughout the United States, she also kept some for her private collection which consisted of what she called the “cream of years of my personal work.” (Nicholson’s letter dated 5-14-37 to the Director of the Museum of University of Arizona -- NMAI Archives)

Years after Mary Benson’s death and shortly before William Benson’s death, Nicholson tried unsuccessfully to sell the Bensons’ baskets as a collection. The same museums that had bought ethnographic artifacts from her in the past turned down her offers, either because they could not afford to buy, or, in one instance, did not “consider Indian baskets to be works of art.” (Nicholson’s papers, Henry Huntington Library, San Marino California)

Grace Nicholson died on August 31, 1948, without achieving her dream of finding a museum, preferably in the West, to display what she considered to be her most important collection, the Bensons’ baskets. She left her entire collection to her two assistants Thyra M. Maxwell and Estelle Bynum to be divided as they saw fit. Thyra Maxwell kept the Benson collection.

Twenty years after Nicholson’s death, prompted by advancing age and failing health, Thyra Maxwell managed to sell the collection to the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, in New York City, N.Y. Together with the baskets, Maxwell included two inventories with detailed notes that Grace Nicholson had made years before and a large collection of letters and myths from William Benson. Also included were a few letters from Mary Benson. This additional material spanned the thirty-some years that the Bensons had worked for her, providing a unique insight into the character of William Benson and into the Bensons’ relationship with Nicholson.

Unless otherwise specified, the letters and myths, including the creation myth, are courtesy of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution. Graphics unless otherwise stated, are by the editor. The credit lines tell where the artifact is located together with the accession catalog or inventory number in that repository.

The material presented herein is as Benson wrote it, and only the format of the letters and the inclusion of graphics have changed.

CORRESPONDENCE
1903-1932

Talmage
 Mendocino County California
 Jan 9th 1903

Mr. Dr. J. W. Hudson, Department Anthropology
 Field Columbian Museum Chicago

Dear Friend. we are all good and appreciate our presents very much specially the toad. Dr I have not Received anything from san Francisco yet. and I am deliad (*delayed*) on that account. so when you have time drop aline to the party so they will send it or I wish to get along with my work as raped as possible. the last of this month or the first of next I will send you what I have made or I can keep them until you com back. that is if you say so. you can tell me in your next letter what to do. the old lady is working on your basket. she may get it don by the time you com back. so you know every thing is moving slow but sure. the other old malagley (*milady*) is working on the one you ordered its about half don.

Mrs. Briggs rote to me and wanted me to get mother-in-law to make her abasket like she is making for you. in my reply I said that she would after finshing yours. she wanted it made and finished by April. I told her the old lady would do well if she would finshe the one she was making for the Doctor by that time.

I said that Barrett wanted two of those digers so the other day I made him two and took them up. and what do you think he said, he said they were not as nise as thos I made for you. after askeing me to make them for him when I brought them to him. he asked me if I wanted to sell them. I simply toled him to hand them things back to me. which he did. I would not make him any thing like that now for \$20 apease.

about the sweat house* Dr. I wish to know about when you will beiled (*built*) it. so I will know how to work here. som tims I go over to the coast to work so if you can tell me about when you will comence. then I know what to do.

Well Doctre Dear Friend. I am In little need jest now. if you could send me afew dollars to carry me through this winter while I am at work for you I will every so much oblige to you. this might be asking you to much but I cannot helpe it. what I want is about \$20. I thank you for your attention.

Yours Respectfully
 Wm. Benson

P.S. tell Grace **that Mary thanks her very much for the toad. its caught every fly in the house. that is when the fly lightes on him. he sets on the table all the day. wishing for the little fly to darte up on this part and right there is where he will stay.

Respectfully
 Wm. Benson

* A miniature version of a sweat house made for Hudson by Benson, is now at the Phoebe Hearst Museum, University of California in Berkeley

**Hudson's wife was also named "Grace".

This letter is courtesy of the Grace Hudson Museum and Sun House in Ukiah, California

Talmage
Mendocino California
Sept 15th 1903

Nicholson Pasadena

Friend. your wellcom *----- came to hand this evening. Miss Nicholson I am very much pleased with the photographs. I thank you very much for those Grace.

I was so busy with the hops and I am yet baleing hops and will be all this week. therefore I cannot finish the bag as soon as expected. next week I will begin work on it again and finish it. the shoewitkee (*this is the name for a type of basket weave - see glossary*) basket I will try and have it made for you as soon as I can.

I have ordered six tiny baskets and as soon as they are finished I will send them down.

Joseppa+ when she makes small baskets for an outsider she dosnot make them as good as she would for those that she knows. so I got my wife to make them. theyl be jest as good as those of Joseppa.

with best wishes for you and Mr. Hartman.

for your welfare

I remain

your sincere friend

Wm Benson

**An ink blot obscures the wording here.*

***William Benson made several bags and the ones I have located are at the following institutions: The Brooklyn Museum, The National Museum of the American Indian (both in New York), and the Grace Hudson Museum and Sun House in Ukiah, California. The bags are woven with nettle and milkweed fiber strings and ornamented with pendants of clam disc beads and abalone shell.*

+Joseppa was an excellent Pomo basket weaver. Some of the miniature baskets that she made for Nicholson were erroneously attributed to the Bensons.

Talmage
Mendocino County California
Jan 24th 1904

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Cal

Dear sir yours of the 25th was received and the money order. Dear Grace. I thank you very much. why I did not pack it. I was In ahurry that day. step Father-in-law of mine was killed that morning and I dint have much time to do any thing. and my mother-in-law was making the showitge(*type of basket*) of course shes filling bad now at present and she may not work on it for awhile. as soon as she gets better she will work on it. Grace as soon as I can get around to it I will send you the long one. Jeff Dick, Joe Elliott, White Jim and Mrs Jeff Dick is in jial for the killings of Pett Lama. theyer trile (*trial*) coms of on the first.

The best wishes for you

I Remain your Sincerely Friend

Wm Benson

(At the top of the letter "ansd" was pencilled.)

Talmage
 Mendocino County California
 Feb 14th 1904

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Ca

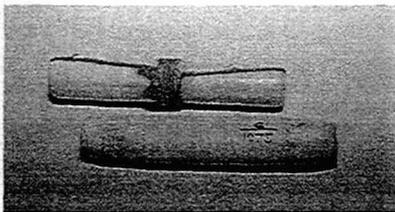
Dear Friend your wellcom letter of 4th came to hand yesterday. I send you apaper containing the report of the trial and the perticulars of the affair. the one I sent to you first is the largest fish trap made here. In lake county they make them about three times as large. I supose you have got the one I sent you last month. the small one the one that had the head pad. the pad was apresent and 50c for trap.

I will make you the sticks. now there is three kinds gambling sticks one is dowagr. grass game gambling bons and the other wichle. about 40 little sticks 1 1/2 ins long about, or 2 1/2 ins long. both for men and the other is for women is called kidai 6 of them like this [redacted] and 12 counts. the bons [redacted] [redacted] are with string tied around it and the other without. four of them is pear (pair). now Grace if you tell me which you want I will make them for you the dowagr \$2.00 wichle \$1.00 kidai \$1.50. you can take your choice and lett me know and I will make them. what do you think Grace. I made abasket this size ● how is that for abig basket. Il bet thats biggest one you ever seen. In the letter befor I said I was going to Albuquerque. Mr Hodson will fiend out about next week and I will lett you know. so answer soon so I will have time make gambling sticks.

with best wishes to you

I Remain you Friend

Wm Benson



NMAI Cat.6/1075 William Benson - Pair of Gambling Bones. Made from the forepaw bones of a wildcat. Photo by M.C. Gasser

Ukiah Calif.
March 24th 1904

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena Calif.

My Dear Grace.

Your letter and check received. I thank you very much Grace for sending me the check. I am glad to that you are pleased with baskets.

The drum was made In the spring of 1869. out of a old dugout. it was burnt before it was placed In the dance house. and it was used then until 1876. after annual ceremony about the 15th Aug 1876. it was layed away. In a house for foure years. this drum was kept and afterwards placed In a pond know as john sharleys pond. In Lake Co. Calif. and was takin out In feb 7th 1906.

Mary Pinto* is about dead. I think she will die tonight.

with best wishes for Mr Hartman and yourself

your Friend

Wm. Benson

**Mary Pinto was also an excellent Pomo weaver and apparently sold baskets to Nicholson through Benson.*

Talmage. Mendocino Co Cal
November 8th 1904

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena Calif

Dear sir. your wellcom letter came to hand today I am very glad to hear from you. I left Albuquerque the first of may for St Louis and left St. Louis for home the first day of Aug. Grace your Basket is worked on at times. the old lady is not well. you know. when she is fieling better she works on it. but she has it about half don. off course when its finished its yours and nobody else shell get it. I had bad luck on my trip to St. Louis. I lost all of my Basket roots it was in my trunk and the trunk I guss is lost and som basket I had shiped to me while I was there. and all of those Beads you seen of my wifes I think about five hunderde dolars worth of thing in all. it was to be shiped by freight I was told the things was shiped four days after I came which would be 4th of August. so I dont know what to do. I have been wrighting to the party ever sence and cant get head or lates (tails?) of it. now Grace if I can do any thing for you up hear jest let me know and I will try and do it for you.

My best wishes for you. Mrs. Mary Benson sends her best regards to you

I remain yours truly

Wm. Benson

(This letter consists of three pages. On the back of the third page there is a note done in shorthand, apparently written by Nicholson. The name "Joseppa" is apparent among the shorthand characters. I showed a copy of this letter to various people in the hopes of discovering its content. It turned out to be an old shorthand style (Gregg) and only one person was able to figure out a few of the symbols. The symbols were about materials and techniques used by Joseppa in basket weaving.)

Talmage Med Co. Calif
Nov 20th 1904

Miss Grace Nicholson

Dear Sir. your wellcom letter cam to hand this morning and was very glad to hear from you. and I thank you for your kind reply.

Yes Grace my lucky is in the trunk and all of Marys and my beads that you seen once. and lot of things I made for the meusum (museum), and all my legends. I dont know what to do about it. I got a letter from George Tietgel today. I had him to look up the matter for me. he says Mr Simms told him that my stuf was shiped to me. but Mr simms has not sent me any thing In regard of the shipping of my good.

I rote to Mr Dr Mcgee about this matter but he has not answered. Mr Tilgel says he is going to write Mr Hulburt about it. so after we hear from Hulburt I will then know what to do. I hav made up my mind to back there if I have to boar (*borrow*) money to go on and see simms. sence the trubal (*trouble*) last winter joseppa dont talk to us so I dont know whether she has any baskets or not. I dont think Mr Purdy bys any more baskets.

I will try and fiend som old gambling sticks. as soon as I have time. at present I am very busy working. I dont know of any elce but a paddle that is used taking the stones out of the basket after the food is cooked.

I have the Quail woman story 15 pages tipe reten. I would like to write for som magg. if you know of any one would like to have that kind of work. let me know and I will make a deal with the party. I have many of this kind of storys. but the one you copyed is in my last trunk. but I know it by hart.

my wife has three small baskets. two rown (*round*), one boat shape if you think you want them I can send them down.

with best wishes to you

I am sincerely

Wm Benson

Talmage Med. Co Calif

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Calif

Dear Sir I send you the Shuset (*type of basket - see glossary*) or Leit.ge (*type of basket - see glossary*) weve (weave) today by express and the gambling bones. I was so buzy this and last week that I could not get the counters for the bones and the stick for the mish (*mush*) rocks. the shuwetge (*type of basket*) is very near finished. I will send them with It with out feal (*fee?*). the Old lady wants you to send her \$5.00 or wish to ask you for that much money.

gambling bones	\$1.00
Leitge basket	<u>5.50</u>
	6.50

Best wishes to you.

sincerely

Wm Benson

Benson wrote this letter on a paper with the following letterhead:

Department Of the Interior

Indian Exhibit

Louisiana Purchase Exposition

St. Louis, Mo. - B.M. McCowan, superintendent

This letter had no date. Due to its content, I assume it was written between November or December 1904.

Talmage Mendocino, Calif
Dec 17th 1904

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena Calif

Dear Sir. I sent you the three baskets today by Express. two boat shape and one round. we had two round ones but I sold it befor I got your letter so Mary had to make one. she thought you would like the boat shape the best. so you know why I was slow In sending them.

In your letter befor you ask me how the basket sold at the fair. these kinds sold better then the large ones. that is ones about one to two inches in

I sold one boat shap about three inches long for \$25.00 and a pack basket for \$25. allso. I suppose If I had stayed little longer I could have sold all I had. I sold 6 baskets Inall.

I got my trunk last week but the box of basket I havent got yet.

I sent you one of my picturs I had taken at the fair. the baskets is \$2.50 each or \$7.50. write me agin about the other things you wanted. I can not fiend your letter at present containing the things you wanted.

with best wishes for you

very truly yours,

Wm Benson

Talmage
Mendocino County Calif
Apr 7th 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Calif

Dear Grace your letter and check I received. I thank you very much Mary is making a small shuwetge. she says as soon as she finishes it she will make them. shes making a baby shuwetge. all right Grace. I will not forget the tiny basket.

I will enclose a letter that was wreten to me. I answered and told him that you may have what he wanted. he may wright to you som time.

with best wishes I am

Sincerely

Wm Benson

A photograph from the Grace Nicholson Photo Albums (Album E., p.36. no.1) Collection at the Huntington Library, San Marino, shows Mary Benson holding a small basket that could very well be the one William refers to as a "baby shuwetge". The other baskets made by Mary using this weave are larger than the one shown in the photograph. The basket itself is at the NMAI.

Talmage Med. Co. Cal
July 22/05

Miss Grace Nicholson
Tacoma Wash.

My Dear Grace Nicholson

Your wellcom letter came to me today. and fiends us all well we was very glad to here from you.

I am very sorry that I am mistaking In my selecting this ranch. I am sorry not for this only but I been talking with the man that runs the place. about it. you are right In saying thats too much land or too much for the ranch. but we dont care for that. as long as we can make the ranch pay for itself in 4 or 5 years and this will do it. we are going to try hard to get a lond (*loan*) or som money to buy this place. I know 40 or 20 acres would be plenty. if we could get good land that we cant get. now Grace can you help us get som money or borrow som you cant be out any thing. so do you know where we can borrow some mony at resonbe (*reasonable*) interes. of course there is plenty of time to talk about this.

In the morning I am going over to the coast. but wright (*write*) to Talmage jest the same.

I hope Mr Hartman will way 200 pounds when he gets back.

best wishes for you and Mr C.S. Hartman

Wm Benson

over (*another page*)

its useless to try to do anything with the Benson* boys because they have got the things fixt as they want so I would have to talk many years befour I could get any thing out of them.

Sincerely

Wm Benson

**William Benson's father, Addison Benson, died in 1873 without leaving any provisions for his three children: Ghalganal (William), Bicecago (Thomas), and Ghalpitaui (Ellen). Addison Benson was not legally married to William's mother, and therefore his estate was divided between his two brothers (probate file No. 45, Lake County). William, being the eldest son probably had to help his mother in providing for the family. In 1890 his sister Ellen died of tuberculosis, leaving an infant son (Richard). In 1891 William Benson petitioned the court in behalf of the minor's share of Addison's estate, but was not successful (probate file 370, Lake Co.). His brother Thomas died the following year of tuberculosis also, and the child Richard died at age three of pneumonia.*

In a personal conversation I had with Robert Benson (a descendant of Addison Benson), he told me that on the occasions when the Indian laborers had to work on the Benson's ranch, William Benson refrained from work.

Ukiah Med Co. Cal
Sept 2st 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Calif

Dear Grace. Please find few of my Picturs enclose with this letter.

the no 1 is a Pomo with his Rabbit blanket and war hat on.
no 2 the Pomo is in act of shooting. no 3 how the Pomos
gathers basket roots in water the black roots. no 4 Capt Ike
and his wife packing wood. Pomos of Kelseyville mission.
no 5 the oldes Pomo woman in Kelseyville mission the one
who saw Kelsey and stone massacre thin old lady was
Kelseys servant at the time of massacre. and 6 Pomo
looking in a bear cave. on the boonville road. no 7 Pomo
boat basket. at Kelseyville mission. no 8 the same basket
showing the back. no 9 part of the mission.

give my best regards to Mr. Hartman. Hope you are not
working to hard.

My best wishes to you,

Respectfully

Wm Benson



Benson showing how the Pomos
gather basketroots. Photo Courtesy of
the Huntington Library, San Marino,
California

(At the top of the page "ansd" is pencilled)

The photos above mentioned by Benson are at the following institutions:

Pomo with his rabbit blanket - NMAI

How the Pomos gather basket roots - Huntington Library, San Marino. Grace Nicholson Album A p.43, no.8

Pomo Boat basket (two views) - Huntington Library, San Marino. Grace Nicholson Album B, p.12, nos. 4 and 5

Ukiah Calif
 Sept 26th 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Calif

Dear Grace. your wellcom letters came to me yesterday. and was very glad to hear from you. the letters were all over at Talmage. and I was wating for them on the rural delivery. I moved home yesterday and thought I would go up and see. and I found six letters in Talmage P.O. and som letters that Mr Hartman written from Portland Oregon. the party that wanted the moccasins was that man who runs the Uncle(?) Hotel. I told him it would cost him about \$2.50. I got a letter from George Tietzel of Albuquerque. Il write him and tel him to send me the moccasins or Il ask him if they have them. they did have som when I was there. of that large boat basket of lake Co. I took a snap of it of which I will send you as soon as printed and som of the others also. next week is a carnival in Ukiah. I may be able to get som baskets from the Indians. the hop crop was poor this year all over the valey. som Ranchers were three tons shorter then last years crop.

I suppose you seen the basket that I made for Mr. Briggs. that one with Indian gold on the botom. and he has one that the old lady mad(e) bamtush (*type of basket - see glossary*)) I am glad to know that you like the Pomos the best. I seen a few Indians too and I all went thought the Pomos was the best Indians. if I could get land down round Alexander it would be all right as far as I am concernd but Mary you know is hard to move from this valey. I can not be in hurrey the land may go down in a year or two and we may run accross a good chance. I am looking out all the time for little place. I think the hops will be down for three or fore years. then the land will go down. then we may have a chance.

Mary Pinto is little better.

about week after next I will comence on the bear hide. and the deer rope. well Grace. I wish I could helpe you with your work. but I am little too far away. give my best regards to Mr Hartman. I would write him today but I have no stamps. wish you the best of luck.

I remain yours sincere Friend

Wm Benson

over

begg pardon. I forgot to tel you that we got a diploma a peace* from the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. wish I will enclose with this letter. I wish Grace you would do me a faver. wright me an answer so I may copy it and send it to St. Louis. after you can send it in your letter to me. from this I see we have a medal coming.

Yours sincere Friend

Wm Benson

On envelop on one corner write R.F.D. then it will com on my line.

**Both William and Mary got an award certificate for their work at the Exposition.*

(at the top of the page "Ansd # #" is pencilled)



William Benson's certificate from the St. Louis's fair. Mary Benson got a similar certificate. Courtesy of the Lakeport Museum. Photo by M.C. Gasser.

Miss Grace Nocholson Pasadena Calif

Dear Grace. your wellcom letter Received. we wish to thank you for your kindness In sending the answer to Mr Water B. Stevens. Grace you must excuse me for not replying to the other letters. I will be more carfull, here after.

I am glad to know that you appreciate your baskets.

I think I will work on the small things first. that is deer rope and necklaces. for the bear robe work is a big job. all right Grace. I will look out for feather baskets.

I sent some snaps last week and will send some more as soon as I get them developed.

I thank Mr Hartman for his kindness regard. my best wishes to Mr Hartman and yourself

Your sincere friend

Wm Benson

Ukiah Calif
Oct 15th 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Calif

Dear Sir. your wellcom letter cam to me last evening and was very glad to know that you appreciate the photographs. I will be going to the lake some time this winter and I will go down and see if I can get som things for you at sulphur banks.

Mary is making a dress now and as soon as she finshes it she will begin on the little black one som time this week. Josapha died yesterday morning about 7:30 what caused her deth I did not lam.

Yours Respectfully

Wm Benson

R.F.D. Ukiah Calif

Ukiah Calif
Oct 30th 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Calif

Dear Grace. I thank you very much For the Photo Album and Badgers (*badges?*). Mr H.C. Meredith was over looking for baskets. he said bought a few up the line but not very many. he went to hopland to see if he could buy som down there.

Mr Alie Elgin was over and said he sold his baskets to a man in Cloverdale. I think will go over In about two or three weeks to lake Co. after I get few of your this don or made.

My best regards to Mr Hartman. and wish you the best of luck

your sincere Friend

Wm Benson

Ukiah Calif
Nov 11th 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

Dear Grace. your wellcom letter of the 2nd received.

yeas Grace we are bussy or have been for the last three weeks havent got much don. the deer rope and 5 small baskets. and 4 neckless are don. I thought I would hold them until I got some more things and send them little befor I went over in Lake Co. now if you can tell me about what you want from the lake. so I will know about what to get or try to get. of course Il have to have money to go on. Il let you know when I send the things down. about what I might need and what I dont use. you can charge it to me.

I must go out this morning and buy some beads som more necklace

Some way I miss puting in Mr Hartman shot pouch. I will send it down with the things next time. my best gards for both Mr Hartman and yourself

your sincere friend

Wm Benson

Ukiah Calif
Nov 22nd 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Calif
Dear Grace. by todays express I sent you

4 necklaces \$3.00 each	\$12.00	
5 Baskets no 1.2.3.4. and 5.	11.00	
1 Rattler	1.00	
		\$24.00

Also 1 Deer rope which is payed for. the Baskets no 1.2.3.4. I bought the fore (*four*) baskets for \$8.-- dollars, I may have payed tomuch for them if so let me know. the basket no 5 is Mary Pintos. \$3.00. my wife says she wants to make fore more of the tiny baskets befor she sends them down. she has six made. she says she wants group picturs* of the Old baskets you have. she wants it for the desing (*design*). to weve in the shuwetge (*type of basket*) and barntush (*type of basket*).

Now Grace. for the Lake County trip II want \$75.00 (dollars) what I dont use on the trip it will com handy to me this winter. the balance what you shell charge me with

I am not going count or charge you for my horse feed and my board and things like that because that dont cost me anything. all you have to pay for is what I buy. you dont pay no extrys on what I buy. what I pay for it here thats all it cost you. except the express. let me know about what you want in the old line. I may get som things all most for nothing and agin I may have to pay good price for a thing. but I will try and buy as cheapes as I can. and I suppose you want very old things and good.

my best regards to mr. Hartman and
yourself

as ever. Your Friend

Wm. Benson

* Nicholson provided the Bensons with photos of baskets from various sources to help them in selecting the designs.

Ukiah Calif
Nov 22nd 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena Calif

Dear Grace

Your wellcom letter received for a week. I did not call for my mail at Talmage and this morning I went to town around the other way. on my way back I called at Talmage and got your letter of 17th. the drum of the sulphurs bank Indians is a dug out loge (*log*) 4 or 5 ft. long and 14 or 16 inches wide. would you want it, the ceremonial stuff and doctor outfit is easier to ship. I mean not so expenceb as the drum would be. but if you want it Il try to buy it. of course baskets I know about what you want. Dear Grace. I Positively say that man who told Mr Hartman that I bought baskets for Fred Harvery is wrong. who ever told it to mr Hartman did not know what he was talking about. dont let such talk Impress up on your mind. for its a lie.

my best regards for mr Hartman and yourself

As ever. your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif
Dec 9th 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace

I Intended to go over in lake county last monday. but my wifes sickness came on. and it prevent me from going over. as she wanted to go with me to see the sulphur banks. I think she will be well by monday so we can go over. the weather is nice now to travel. I will write the day Il start over. you may write to Ukiah and Il wait for your letter. which will com about tuesday or wensday and by that time mary will have the little baskets finished and I can send them down before I go over. for you may want them.

Mary Pinto is down sick agan.
My best regards to Mr Hartman and yourself. I remain

Respectfully

Wm Benson
S.P. the awards sent us another diploma. I answered it as before. and sined both names.

(At the top of the paper is pencilled "ansd".)

Ukiah Calif
Dec 16th 1905

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace. your wellcom letter cam to me last evening. yes Grace if the old drum is there to behad I think I will get it. if any body can if. I ought to get it.

I am hapy to know that you sold the tiny baskets. I hope you got good price forthem. I am allso glad to know that there is a good Indication for basket trade.I hope the most you sell will be the pomo baskets. all right Grace. I will make som more as soon as I have time. I suppose you want little tiny baskets like those you got from me. In that bottle.

At present I am making you a ceremony hair pin. like the one I made for the field.

Mary finshed the last one this evening and I will send them down tomorrow. there is ten In all 9 of which is \$2.50 each. the smalest of all is \$1.50. total \$24.00. do you want small pack basket, 12 or 14 inches in hights. wishing you the best of success.

my best regards for Mr Hartman

Respectfully

Wm Benson

over

I got a letter from Elgin from the lake and he said In his letter that he was coming over next week. so I will wait for him befor I go over so it may be the last of next week befor I can get away. but ll let you know the day ll start

Respectfully yours

Wm Benson

(At bottom of letter, pencilled "ansd - sent check")

Ukiah Calif
Dec 28th /05

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Calif

Dear Grace. your letter check and package received. Mary and her mother is very much pleased with there christmas presents. they send many thanks to you and Mr Hartman. many thanks to you and Mr Hartman for my tie buttons. I am very much pleased with them. we all cannot say too much for Grace and Mr Hartman. wishing each of you happy new year.

sent you a christmas present by express. Antonio Apache was up buying baskets last week. he wants me and my wife to go to Los Angeles. he said he pay our way down and back. he said he would write to me as soon as he reach Los Angeles. but I havent heard from him yet. I think he went to Oregon. I told him if it was sutable I would go down. its been raining sence sunday. but as soon as good weather I will go to the sulphur banks.

my best wishes for you and Mr Hartman

Respectfully

Wm Benson

Ukiah Calif
Jan 1st 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena Calif.

My Dear Grace

I will start In the morning for lake county. I will be goin about one week. when you wright. you may address the same as above. or if you think your letter can rech me befor the 7th you can address to Kelseyville c/o mission Ranch,.

I will be at the Banks on about the 3 or 4th and In lakeport about the 6th and will try to get house on the 8th or 9th.

my best regards to Mr Hartman and yourself. wish you both hapy
new years

Respectfully

Wm Benson

Ukiah Calif
 jan 10th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

my Dear Grace

I got home last night from lake co. and received your letter of 3td. I went down on the 3td and found every thing all distroyed. chief Salvedo died about 4 weeks after we was there. the man who you gave 25c is the one thats who died.

so the drum and other things was all destroy. at the place I bought 8 baskets \$16.75, 22 arrow heads \$2.00 and one photo 25c. total \$19.00. renting a boat 2.00, \$21.00.

Il have Mary to wash baskets befor I send them down. about friday or saturday. and also will send a semoney (*ceremony*) whistle that I made and two tiny baskets. my make also.

the baskets \$1.25 each. whistle \$2.00. total \$4.50

you can give me credit of the amount for the baskets and whistle. I found a drum in mission Ranch, Kelseyville, there was only one man who know where the drum is headen (*hidden*) capt Cah.i.da.no he was away and so I left \$5.00 for him. In care of Elgin so when the capt coms home. Elgin will let me know and I will go over and have him dig it out. I am sure of this drum because he left awarde (*a word*) with Elgin saying if I should want this drum he would tel me where it was. the capt clames its elder then that of sulphur banks. I will try and get a snape of them diging it out. capt cah.i.da.no went to healdsburg last week to spend about weekes with his friends. Doctor Fred Hogan of the sam place said he would sel his outfit for \$25. he claims the outfit to be about 150 years old it was given to him by his uncle 45 years ago. I met him on my way home. he was coming home from upper lake. I think its a good outfit. I know its old. now if you think you want this. I will buy it when I go over agan. and I may get som other old things from the old capt. I left a word for him to hold what old things he had for me.

I payed out \$26. so \$25. remains.
 meredith bought all the baskets in mission.

I remain your sincere friend.

Wm. Benson

(At the bottom of the page is pencilled "ansd".)

Ukiah Calif
Jan 15th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace.

by todays express. 22 arrow heads. 8 sulphurs Bank baskets. 2 tiny baskets. and a whistle. I hope thy will reach you in good condition.

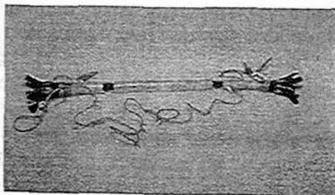
tiny baskets	\$2.50
whistle	<u>2.00</u>
	\$4.50

In my other letter I said to give me a credit for the amount. I thought it was to smal to bother with.

the photo. if Il get it developed today. I will enclose it with this letter. if not. Il send it down som other time.

Respectfully

Wm Benson



NMAI Cat. 16/3305 - William Benson
Model of a ceremonial whistle made for Grace
Nicholson. Photo by M.C. Gasser

Ukiah Calif
jan 30th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace

Mr Hartman informs me that you have been very sick. I am very sorry that you are sick and Mary and her mother is feeling very bad when they were told that you was sick in bed. we all hope that you are better. I got mr Hartmans letter and your check. \$4.50. I thank you very much Grace for sending the check.

I will go over to the lake next week and get the Doctors outfit and the drum also. and what ever I can get of old things. I will also enclose the photo of an old man in a dugout at sulphur Banks. and pictures of the three baskets. the one with star on the bottom is red blew and green feathers. sun basket like. they ask \$40.00 for it. and the others they would not sell. and other is the basket made at mission Ranch Kelseyville. look on back of photo.

(over)

I began to work on the bear hide this week. it will take fore or five weeks to finish it. about the 18th of next month. Grace I have to ask you for som money for my own use. I have to pay my grocerie bill. after I come back from the lake I let you know how much I will need.

Mary and her mother sends you theyer best wishes and hope you are better now.

I remain. Respectfully yours

Wm. Benson

(At the top of the page is pencilled "ansd".)

Ukiah Md. Co. Calif
Feb 1 th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Cal.

My Dear Grace.

tomorrow morning I am going over to the Mission Ranch Lake county to get the Doctors outfit and the Drum. Mr Elgin tells me that the old capt is back home and redy to give the the old Drum.

In my other letter I said I would need som money. Grace. Il want \$25.00. this will carrey me until I finish the Bear hid. of cours if I fiend som thing that I think you should have. Il let you know and you can send me the amount what thing will caust.

I hope you are better In health. My best regards to Mr Hartman and yourself

Respectfully yours

Wm. Benson

(At the top of the page pencilled "ansd and sent check".)

Ukiah Calif
Feb 13th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena. Calif.

My Dear Grace.

I am so glad to know that you are well again. I wreten to this morning In regard of the doctors outfit. Im intended to go over and get the Doctors outfit In the morning. but this evening it comence to rain and it look like its set In for a good storm. so as soon as good weather I will go over and get those things.

"I will take off week or ten days and make the hair ornament. to make the hair ornament it will take me about 10 days. no Grace. I would never think that anybody would be as mean as Hudson was to me." Grace as soon as I get it finished I will send the little book* down. I have about two days work to do on it yet.

I got a letter from Antonio Apache. he wants me and my wife to com down to Los Angeles. to construct and old fashioned Pomo house. if I go down. I will go for about two weeks. for I have contract runing Hops for Hornt Bros. so it will not disturb our business and I may have a chance to see my friends down there.
of cours he gives me transporation both ways.

Mary Pinto is very sick she is geting worse every day.

my best regards to each of my friends

I am as ever

Wm Benson

Ukiah Calif
Feb 24th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace

By todays Express I sent you the drum. Doctors outfit and an old time spear. I raped (*wrapped*) the spear up with sack and tacked (*tucked*) it on the insid(e) of the drum. and one of the doctors sicks (*sticks?*) is also tied on the spear and on the other sid(e) I tacked the doctors diger and the box in the senter has the rest of the doctors outfit. the outfit has 30 diferent articles. I had the Doctor to overhall the things and to tel me everything about it and what deferent things were used for. so he did. but I did not name the things. for I did not think it would be any use. for they will all go together. the outfit is suppose to be about 120 years old. it was handed down to the fifth grandson. it was Doctor Fred Hogans Possession 37 years.

the point of this spear was used in the last battle between the Kulanapo & cahbanapo In which the Kulanapos was victorious. about 85 years ago. it was used by capt Ikes father. (cah-ie-dano, crow mountain) capt said his father gave this spear point to him little before he died for him to remember him by. he put the handle on and the four feathers and told me to put it where it would be well taken care of. the old capt charge me \$2.50. and I gave capt \$2.50 for taking the drum out of the ground. from where it was buried. I had him to wash it off as clean as he could. I could not get any Photo for it was raining all the time I was over there. I wanted to get a picture of the Doctor but the weather was bad. som other time I may get theyer picturs. I payed for the Doctors

outfit	\$25.00
Drum	2.50
Spear	2.50
lumber for box	<u>.75</u>
	\$30.75
give me credit for	<u>25.00</u>
	\$ 5.75

my best regards to Mr Hartman and yourself as ever your friend

Wm Benson

(At the top of the page pencilled "ansd".)

Feb 24 1906

Mr C.S. Hartman Pasadena. Calif.

Dear Friend.

yours of the 17th Received and the check and photo. I thank you very much for sending the check. I am very glad to know that Miss Nicholson is well again. I sent the drum and the doctors outfit today. and one fine spear. I got over In Lake Co. I Rote Grace all about the things.

my best regards for Miss Grace Nicholson and yourself

I Remain as ever
your Friend

Wm Benson

Ukiah Calif
Feb 27th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace

I send you the little book by todays mail. it contains three storys. first the story about the woman killing the bagel. 19 pages. the second. the story about the old bear and the gray squirell killing the rock and battle with the Dragon (delak) 25 pages. the third story about the birds of all kind had a race around the lake, clear lake, lake co calif, 21 pags.

this evening I will finish the hair ornament and will send it down tomorrow express the charges on them for making. \$12.50. and you may give me (credit?) for the amount.

Mary Pinto thanks you very much for the dollar. and wishes that she was well so she could make a basket for you.

Mary is starting the shuwetge (*basket*) and week or two will finsh one. that is if she dont get lazy.

I remain as ever.

Respectfully

Wm. Benson

(At the top of the letter pencilled "ansd".)

Ukiah Calif
Feb 27th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Cal

My Dear Grace

yours of the 23rd came to me this evening. Inquiring of the feather basket. I will communicate with the party by mail as soon as possible and will also fiend out if they have the basket yet. the grupe photo of the baskets was taken at sulphur banks. I will also look around here for one. I suppose you mean a sun basket shape, if I had the money I could have bough several little baskets round here. I was short and I dinto want to borrow money and the Indians wont wait. so I was up against it.

I think it will be about aweek before I can find out about the feather basket.

I finshed the hair ornament this evening and will send it away tomorrow.

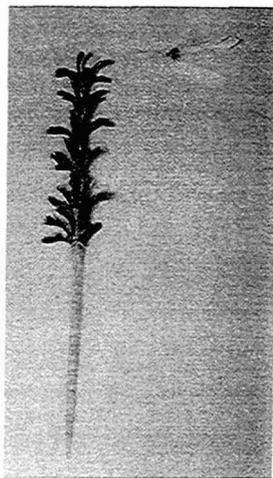
as ever your friend

Wm Benson

S.P. the feather basket was about 9 or 10 inches across

Respectfully

Wm Benson



NMA1 Cat. 24/2141 William Benson
Model of Hairpin, made for Grace Nicholson.
Photo by M.C. Gasser

Ukiah Calif
April 14th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace.

Your Basket (shuwetge) will be finished in about 8 or 10 days. and will send it to you as soon as finished. I haven't done much with the bear hide. the material I want is not ripe yet. as soon as the soap root gets ripe I will work on it again. I was so busy that I had no time to make tiny baskets. Mary made two this size ● if you want them I can send them down any time. or with the shuwetge. I got a letter from the man in sulphur banks which I will enclose but I haven't heard from him yet. there is one in Penoly town but not finished. I can get a large wapo from that same woman. but its too coarse (*coarse*) I can not find an old one around here. but will look for one.

with best wishes to all

as ever

Wm. Benson

Ukiah, Calif
April 28th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace

Your wellcom letter of the 24th cam to me this morning. and fiend us all well. the earthquake scared som of the Indian but not bad as it did som of the whites of ukiah city. there was more then five hunderde people went out In the streets without theyre clothes. one of the boys was picking up chips along side the house when the shock cam. the shock came unexpected and befor he had time it throwed him against the house and back on the ground flat on his seat. the next day he said he thought he broken that board with his head. he thought he hit both the house and the earth very hard lick.

the shuwitge (*basket*) will be finshed In two or three days and then will send them down. I may pick up one or two by that time. Apache wants me to send him the long boat basket of mission lake Co.

I remain yours Respectfully

Wm. Benson

Ukiah, Calif
May 24th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace

Yours of the 14th and the check Received. I am glad to know that the basket reached you safely. and I am also glad to know that you are coming up to see us once more*.

the weed Ya-Na. I do not know the English name for it. but its somthing similar to the anjelica. it also grows in the mountains.

I Received my silver medal last week from the Exposition company of St. Louis. Mo. Mary thanks you very much for the check. and says she will make the shuset and shuwitge.

with best wishes from Mary and William to Mr. Hartman and yourself.

as ever.

Wm Benson

(At bottom of letter, pencilled "ansd".)

**This fateful visit by Nicholson to the Bensons had a devastating impact on William Benson's future.*

To understand the following letters from Benson, it is imperative to explain events that were taking place during that time.

As documented in her diaries and papers, Grace Nicholson kept abreast of many of the anthropological and archeological activities in California. As if by magic, she appears in the same geographical locations where studies are being conducted regarding the native population and their cultures, mainly by scholars from the University of California at Berkeley. These parallel movements of Nicholson were not coincidental, but the planning of a shrewd business

person. As a dealer and collector of ethnological artifacts it made sense for her to do so. She also enjoyed researching the artifacts she bought and wrote meticulous notes about them.

Nicholson was a dynamic individual, having great persuasive powers (attested by the heir of her Benson collection of artifacts, Thyra Maxwell). It appears that Nicholson used her persuasive powers to convince Benson in helping her and her assistant, C.S. Hartman, to dig up the remains of one of Benson's uncles. The remains lay in the right-of-way for a county road, and Benson's understanding was that Nicholson's intention was to put them into a museum

Benson and Nicholson made no attempt to hide their activity, suggesting that they saw nothing wrong with it, probably because the site was going to be dug up anyway. The dig was accomplished during the day with the consent of the owner of the land, and Nicholson documented it with photographs that can be seen in her photo albums.

Prior to the Benson/Nicholson dig, there were rumors that Benson and an anthropologist from Berkeley had been involved in a similar activity. Benson denied having anything to do with it, but the fact remains that Benson was already suspect. When he involved himself in a similar activity, the Pomo community was very upset and threatened to kill him.

As if the furor caused by this activity was not damaging enough, Nicholson returned the remains to Benson for re-burial, rather than donating them to a museum. Again, Benson was seen in an activity that easily could have been misconstrued.

From that day forward, Benson was accused of being a grave robber. I was told by a person who wishes to remain anonymous that Benson had "dug up bones to sell to the University of California at Berkeley." I have researched this activity, however, and the earlier claims of grave robbing seem to have been hearsay. The only concrete evidence I have found relates to the Benson/Nicholson dig, which is amply documented. This error in judgment, nevertheless, survived him, for even today, some Pomo Indians remember only this about him.

It is possible that the belief that Benson was a grave robber was aggravated by deliberate rumor. During the time of this unfortunate episode there was an artifact rush throughout California, and Indian artifacts, especially baskets and ceremonial regalia, were sought by collectors, dealers, and anthropologists who were vying with each other for these goods. To help him in his predicament with the Indians, Benson sought the help of the Reverend H.C. Meredith, who lived in the area. This was a mistake, however, because Meredith was an avid collector of these artifacts and was involved in their sale to other collectors. Benson, perhaps without realizing it, had sought the help of someone who probably recognized that Benson and Nicholson were formidable competitors with his activities.

In a paper written by Meredith in 1900 (Moorhead-p259) he stated: "In a large mound, north of Sacramento City, I found the skeletons lying upon the back, and cased over with the wood and bark of the redwood. Immense quantities of wampum, and an unusual number of large stone beads were found in the mound." In the same article Meredith illustrated artifacts from his personal collection and said about his findings in Northwestern California: "Splendid obsidian knives are sufficiently numerous to encourage all wide awake collectors to possess examples."

During the Stewart Culin expeditions to the Clear Lake area in California, Culin made the following observations regarding Meredith:

July 13, 1907,(p.114) -- "Benson told me about an Indian named Lee Peters who was making a stone pestle. I met the man this afternoon and promised to visit him tomorrow. He lives on J.H. Burke's ranch, down near the Yokeye rancheria. He said that Meredith had offered him a dollar an inch for the pestle, but that he was unable to work it down thin enough to suit him."

July 8, 1908, (p.100) -- "Benson expressed a poor opinion of the Rev. Meredith's integrity. He declared he would give a trifle, say twenty-five cents, to a woman who was making a basket, and thus engage it. When it was finished he would declare it was not satisfactory, and decline to take it except for much less than its value. I satisfied myself last year that Meredith's philanthropic scheme of enabling the Indians to secure a market for their baskets was a mere pretense, and that he was engaged, like any other trader, in buying as cheaply as possible

It may also be of interest to the reader that in July 28 and 29, 1906, few days before Benson participated into the above mentioned activities with Nicholson, he had attended a conference in Santa Cruz, California called "Zayante Indian Conference of Friends of Indians" where he was a spokesman:

Mr. William Benson, an Indian from Ukiah, next addressed the Conference. He earnestly begged the white friends of Indians to provide better educational advantages for Indian children, particularly along the line of industrial training. He pleaded that liquor might be taken from them, saying "You brought it to us, and you ought to take it away!" He spoke at length on the need for land for settled homes. "You have taken it from us, and you might give us a little bit!" He told of the difficulties which hinder Indians from obtaining land for themselves, as illustrated by the story of the band to which he belongs, who made bargains with white men, over and over again, to clear brush land for the right to occupy it for five years, but every time they were evicted for some reason, or none, at the end of one year's occupancy.

Ukiah, Calif
june 22nd 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif
My Dear Grace.

yours of the 18th Received and contents noticed. I will try and get som baskets for you by that time. there was som whits (*whites*) up from below buying baskets and was giving good price for any old thing. so Indians are asking big price for theyer baskets. although I might be able to pick up one or two.

I thank you very much Grace. for the enclosed slip. I never was out with Barret on his expedition. the Indians of this place says somebody robed theyer graveyard across the river on Burk ranch near El Robles, about a month ago. four white men were seen diging in the graveyard late in the evening by a rancher near by. but did not know the men. Barret was up here in march. april. and may. when he was last here he said he would com up agian but he hasnt com yet. this news looks bad on Barrets side. he had no right to take those bodys with out asking the Indians for it. Grace I wish you would Please fiend out who the man that brought the skeletons to Berkeley and write me. I am going down there tomorrow to see where they doug for the dead bodys and who they belong to.

have you any round Turquoise, about thous size and   shape I want it for boat shape basket. you know about I mean. I want to make a pin for you.

with kind regars from Mary and I for Mr Hartman and yourself

as ever

Wm. Benson

excuse me. I havent heard anything about the celebration on forth of july in Ukiah, but the Indians of Penoleyville is talk of celebrating the fourth day of july. they will settle on it this Sunday.

Respectfully

Wm. Benson



Miniature basket made by

Benson with a turquoise inserted inside covering the entire opening. NMAI Cat. No. 24/2111. Photo by M.C. Gasser.

Allie Elgin - Tuesday, Aug. 14, 1906
Kelseyville Lake Co Cal
August the 14 1906

Mr. Wm. Benson Dear sir I thought I would write you few lines to day. we are all well. I hope this few lines will find you all well. well Bill I hate to tell you that you are going to get in truble. I did no you do shuch a thing as that I was very suprise at you. you and Mr hartmen took out some corps down at lynch. old ike clame you took his sister out so he is going tohave you fellows resterd (*arrested*). the jester (*justice*) of pece (*peace*) has got it in his hand now. ----Baggs is the men is working this thing old ike want me to talk for him. I went to Lakeport yesterday to see what the was going to do. But I did not hear what the was going to do. the white people is mad about it. I think the are going to work hard to put you fellows through. if I had money I would pay old ike he told me if you fellows pay him hundered dollar he would be sattied. why did you tell me you wanted to do that. you no (*know?*) the (*they?*) blame you in ukiah for same thing. now all the indian blive (*believe*) that now. I thought you was making money without taking out dead bodys. I dont no (*know?*) what to think about you. well this is all for today. I will write you some more the next time. in hoping to hear from you soon your truly Allie Elgin

Ukiah Calif
 Aug 16th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson

My Dear Grace

I Received a bad news last evening from Elgin. which I Will eclose. the last one we taking I guess is old Ikes sister. I will write Elgin if its a mistake we will make it right with the old and that I did not Intended to take his sisters grave. but Intended to take my uncles grave which I have a right to. and will also write Elgin. if it mistake Mr Hartman the money or the bones back and that we do not want harm any one if possible. you or Mr Hartman write Elgin also. and have him to tell the old man. the man he spoken of in his letter, Pet Boggs(?), is Indian.

I am sorry that we left bad news behind but I hope it will be forgotten.

I remain your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif
 Aug 20th 1906

Mr C.S. Hartman, Pasadena Calif
 My Dear Friend Mr Hartman

your wellcom letter cam to me last evening. I found Mary all right. every thing is all right here. excepting our diging over Kelseyville. I got letter from Elgin friday. saying that I was to be arrested for taken the grave of Ikes sister or pay Ike one hunderd dollar. I wrote to Grace about it and enclosed the letter of Elgins with it and sent it to santa rosa. and wrote Elgin the same time, teling him to tel Ike if we made amisstake that we would make it allright. or send the bones back. you know at time I said I thought it was Ikes sister and I also tool (*told*) Elgin to tel the old man to not feel bad. that we did not mean to do him any harm or any one else and that I did not know that sister was buried there. but I knew my uncle was burred there and I the rights to take the remains this man. I did not say whether we took two skeletons or not. but said if you wanted the skeleteon you would pay Ike or send the skeleton back if it was female. and that we found two other old bones so you write to Elgin alos (*also?*) so he might tel old Ike. and if feel like you can make a offer. Elgin said In his letter the whites was talking about it a good deal. so I expect to land behind the bars anytime now.

Excuse me for writing with pencil for I did not have no ink.

as ever your friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah, Calif
Aug 30th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace

your wellcom letter cam to me this evening. I am sorry to know that my news had shooked you so hard. I knew well it would be. but I had to let you and mr Hartman about it so you would know what was going on behind you. sence the letter I got from Elgin I havent heard from any one. it seems to me if they was to do anything the officers would notfied me before this. I wrote Elgin yesterday about the matter and asked him what lke said about it. and to let me know soon. so you must not think about it as you have been. you shall not be in any truble about *the matter* or shall Mr Hartman be in truble. if there is any truble I think I must bere (*bear*) the consequence. as long as I am resting easey you must do the same and Mr Hartman also. as soon as I get answer from Elgin I will write you. about the other bones you can send them away any time you feel like. those bones no one shall have the right to say or claim them. that I know belongs to me. my best wishes for Mr Hartman and yourself.

as ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif
Aug 30th. 1906

Mr C.S. Hartman. Pasadena Calif

My Dear Friend

yours of the 27th Received.

I know you and Grace would be surprised. this news did not surprise you as much as it did me. I thought over it for three days. after I was not notified by the officers I rested easy. now I think it was nothing but a bluff (bluff?) that some body made for Ike. I wrote yesterday to Elgin asking him what Ike said about it after I written Inregard the matter. and I also answered your telegram. saying I did not heard from the party since I havent heard anything said about since Elgin wrote me. I think on the 11th saying that Ike was going to have me arrested for taking up his sisters grave. I answered the same day. telling Elgin to tel Ike that I took my uncles remains which I had the right to do so without asking any one. and that I did not know that his sister was buried in that place. and if this remains that I taken was sisters remains I would cheerfully return it. but would ask you if the remains was male or female. if this was female I would have it returned. since that time I heard from any one. and also said if this was his sister it should be taken out from under the road bed and it was a shame to let the remains of any ones relative lay road like it was in that place. and it is a good thing to take up such things and place them in some nice museum. I also said if I can make the arrangement with some museums I would take up all of my relatives remains and have them put in some nice place. it would be better then to have them laying in the road or some whereelse. mr Hartman. I feel as you do about the matter. I thought and yet think that I was right. but if I was positive that was his sister I would have asked Ike for it. but as I told you I was not positive. although would take it. I know and you know or any body else knows its a good thing for it. I can not believe the demand was Ikes own idea. I think some one got him up to this. I will tel better when I get Elgins answer. I expect it any day now. so you and Grace must rest easy, you know I must not put Grace or you in any trouble. I must bear the consequences if there is any.

its strange to me how Ike knew it so soon as he did. this leads me to think that some one is trying to run ablof on us. the one we took out first, mr Hartman you can send away any time you feel like. that one I know no one can claim. those remains belongs to me. I know that. I will tend to the matter as rapid as I can with little expense as possible.

Best wishes for Grace and yourself. as ever your friend.

Wm. Benson

*The following letter is from C.S. Hartman to Allie Elgin:
August 31st, 1906.*

*Mr. Allie Elgin,
Kelseyville, Calif.*

Dear Mr. Elgin,

Upon my return to Pasadena a few days ago I found a letter from Benson, stating that there was some question about the bones we removed from the public highway, near the Lynch ranch and that old Ike believe to be those of his sister. If this is the case I regret, the same as Mr. Benson does, that they were removed from the road; for surely no intentional wrong was done to anyone.

When Benson told me that his old uncle's bones were buried somewhere in the roadway, near Kelseyville, he said he would rather the bones would be removed and carefully placed in a Museum, along with what few things might be found in the grave. The bones to be properly labeled with a history of the man and his position in the tribe. Benson wished it distinctly understood that no money consideration was to be thought of, because he believed the bones in the Museum would be more respected than they possibly could be, buried in an unknown grave, in a public road which was being traveled over by man and beast every day. He also felt that he had a perfect right, as he undoubtedly did as the only living relative to remove the bones if he could find them.

As there was nothing to locate the grave we had about given up finding it, when a Mr. Lynch came to us and told us about where to dig and assisted us in the work a number of times. He agreed with us that it would be better to have the bones taken out of the roadway and then placed in a Museum where they would be highly respected. After we had located the bones of Benson's uncle, Mr. Lynch told us that some old lady had been buried about four years later a few feet from where Benson's uncle lay. I asked Mr. Lynch if the party buried had any relatives living and he said he did not think there was anyone, as she was an old woman and no one had ever looked after the grave. He said he did not think anyone could object if we took the bones if we could find them.

Benson did not even know that the woman was buried there and doubted very much if we would find any bones or not.

No one could accuse us of stealing the bones, because we did the work in the daytime, in a public roadway and with the help of the neighbors. The only money anyone got out of the transaction was pay for day labor. It is not a money making scheme on Benson's part or mine either. I am sure after you understand the matter thoroughly you will not blame Benson in the slightest degree because he had an unquestioned right to take up the bones of his uncle knowing they would be placed where they would be respected and well cared for. If by any possibility the other bones we found are old Ike's sister's bones, we are ready to return them immediately to Benson, with the plates, cups and saucers and wampum found, and Benson will go personally and replace same with all respect in the exact location where found, taking you and Ike or any other Indian along, and also have Mr. Lynch and the boy who assisted with the work there as witnesses, that there may be no question whatever about the bones being returned properly. Surely no one can ask for any more to be done than this. No blame can possibly be attached to anyone. On the other hand if old Ike is sure the bones are those of his sister and he would prefer to have them placed besides the bones of

Benson's uncle, in the Museum, properly marked with her name and history, which old Ike could personally furnish Benson, I will personally give Ike the sum of \$25 for the trouble we may have made him. I could not possibly think of giving old Ike \$100 for these or any other bones; because whatever I pay old Ike will be in the nature of a gift, as I get no money from the Museum for the bones, neither will Benson or anyone else get a penny out of it. I would rather return them than have it done this way.

Benson wrote us as soon as he got your letter and sent your letter with his to Santa Rosa, but we were only in Santa Rosa a few hours and did not know of the letter. when I returned Benson's letter was here and I wrote at once to Santa Rosa to have the letter forwarded and have just received it. This is the reason you have not heard from me before. We telegraphed Benson and wrote him at once to give old Ike the \$25, if he wanted that. If he does not care for the money we will send the bones to Benson just the moment we hear from him, as they have not been unpacked and can be returned just exactly as they were taken from the ground.

The one thing I want you to understand thoroughly is the fact that Benson is getting no money out of this except for the little labor he did and you must tell Ike and everyone else that this is a fact. All that Benson did in the matter is one of respect. Besides this we know that Benson had absolutely nothing to do with the Ukiah affair. Had we received the letter in Santa Rosa we would have returned immediately to see Ike personally, because there was no underhand work and we are not ashamed of any part we took in the matter, as the place where the bones were removed were not a cemetery; the graves being unmarked and in a public highway. But we are sorry that we did not know of Ike's relationship, for in that case we would not have disturbed the bones. We are more sorry that it places Benson in a wrong light, for he is a true friend of the Indian and you should all know, by this time, that he would do no one harm.

As promised you I am sending the beads today and in a few days will be able to send copies of the photographs taken of Fred to him.

Now, Elgin, I want you to write me when you receive this letter, and, if there is anything you do not understand I want you to ask me.

Most sincerely,

Ukiah Calif
Sept 4th 1906

Mr C.S. Hartman. Pasadena, Calif

My Dear Friend

yours of the 31st last Received and the copy of Elgins letter. I was talking to Elgin over the phone sunday. he said that Ikes stepson was the man that made the kick. claiming that my uncles bones was his uncles also. and went to the attorney to have me arrested. it was his fathers half brother. but he never cared for it. more than that he never went to his funeral. I wrote to him today and told him why I did it. and also asked him what Ike wanted me to do with his sisters bones. I havent been notfde (*notified*) by anyone or attorney so fair it seams to me if they was going to do anything In regard the matter some one would write me before this time. or notify me. we will finsh picking hops in 8 or 10 days.

I wish I was down there now. for I am tired of hop work. what must I do about the big basket In upperlake. I wrote you about it. they wanted \$27.00 for it. if its all right I can send the money over or have them bring the basket over. Grace said something about som basket in Hopland what was it? I cant fiend (*find*) the latter (*letter*) that Grace wrote.

with best wishes for miss Grace Nicholson and

yourself, as ever

your friend,

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif
Sept 11th 1906

Mr Hartman, Pasadena, Calif.
My Dear Friend

I guss we will return the bones of Ikes sister. I see its going to cause us lot of trouble. I got a letter from Meredith this morning saying the matter was in the attorneys hands. and that he was wating for the grand jury to meet to take action first. he also said the Indians threaten to kill me over there but I am going over to Lakeport next sunday. send me a telagram on the day you send the bones. send R.F.D. I will start from here on saturday to Lakeport and may com back on monday or if the bones coms I can go to Kelseyville when you send it send it to Kelseyville, the bones,

if you send the telagram to Ukiah send it friday morning so I can get it that evening. then I will know what to do when I go to Lake Co. they may have somthing to say about both of them. I will let you know about later on. I can tel better after I get over there. have you talked with any attorney about the matter, if I am arrested. I hope you will bali (*bail?*) me out. maybe this letter wont reach you for som time so I will enclose it with that Grace letter.

as ever your friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif
Sept 11th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Cal

My Dear

after all of our trouble I think we will have to return the bones that of Ikes sister. I have told Mr Hartman what to do about it in his letter. I thought he might be away. Mr Hartman will tel you what meredith wrote me. if I ever get down there I will tel you som more things that meredith wrote me.

with best of luck for Mr. Hartman and yourself

as ever your friend

Wm Benson

Ukiah, Calif
Sept 12th 1906

Mr C.S. Hartman. Pasadena California

My Dear Friend

your wellcom letter cam to me this evening. and am glad to know that you have the bones yet. I wrote to Grace today saying to send the bones of Ikes sisters on to Kelseyville. and also enclosed a letter for you with Graces. I wrote to meredith yesterday saying that I would go over to lakeport saturday and see him on sunday. I think I will write him this evening and tel him to make an offer for me in case I dont go over. have him tel the attorney that I will return the bones and bury them where ever he wants me to. In merediths letter he said he would do all he could to help me in matter. I asked he to see the attorney to see what kind of talk the Indian made with the attorney. so he did. yesterday he wanted me to go to Hopland to see me there. I got his letter tolate and dint go. so I wrote him aletter. if I write to him it will save me the trip.

I am picking hops yet. may finsh this week. and then will go down and see tack (*a basket weaver*) and get the basket. Its strange that Grace did not get my letter. I enclosed a letter that was written to me from upper lake by George Vicente. it was about the big basket. Mr Hartman I thak you very much for the picturs. they something fine.

my best regards to Grace and yourself.

as ever your friend

Wm. Benson

Kelseyville Calif
Sept 15th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson Calif

My Dear Grace,

jest received your letter and the Box. I got in 4:30 this evening. tomorrow I will get som one to go with me and bury the box then try and get a per---(*permit?*) to get one of them. I am going to have my uncle if posible. so every thing is all right sofar. In week or to I will have more time and I will see into the matter better. you need not feel bad about it. we will bring the thing around In shape som tim later on

with kind regards to Mr Hartman and yourself.

as ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

Kelseyville Calif
Sept 17th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif
My Dear Grace

about an hour ago I wrote you a letter date 15th not known the date but I guss its all right. after I wrote the letter I seen the Mr. Henderson the supervisor here. Mr Henderson said he would give me a permet to take them both and that them should be taken out of there. and I could do as I please with them. he also said for me to bury them where they ware and when the next board met he will giv me the rights to take them. but I told him I did not care to bother with Ikes sisters bones, but I wanted that one of my uncles bones. so Mr Henderson said I shall have them. so we will lose little truble and expence. befor I go way tomorrow I will have another talk with Mr Henderson and have him to fix it so I can get both of them

I wount do this but sence them make a kick about it I am going to show them Indians that such things can be don. every man I spoke to about the matter this evening said it was nothing but right to take or remove the both graves. and this man that made the kick was nothing but spite work. so I think we will have them anyhow. as soon as I get home I will send you the letter of Mr Meredith. O bage fronder (*a beige folder?*) I think I have it In my pocket book I look and see. I have it with me so I will enclose it with this letter. dont menchton (*mention*) my name if you say any thing to Meredith about it. When I answered Merediths letter, this one, I said that Mr Hartman was not to blame In this case or anybody elce was to blame. and that I did it because I had been trying to fiend a place for it for som time. and that Mr Hartman never ottered a word In trying me to get these bones and said if anyone is to blame I am the man to blame for the act because Mr Hartman did not know nothing of this man being burred there. and that mr Linch would say so himself.

I seen mrs Tack as came through Hopland and spoke for the basket. she said it was finished so when on my way back I will get it. I tried to phone meredith this evening but he and and her was out of town. I wanted to see the attorney had to say to him about the matter.

sense I had the talk with Mr Henderson I am glad and hapy. want you bee too

goodby. as ever your friend

Wm. Benson

Sept 19th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

My Dear Grace

In my yesterdays letter I forgot to tel you not to send any of the things that was dug out with the bones. for I will get them after the next board metts. and I also sent you a telegram yesterday saying will be mine the after writen you. I went in saying this I was going to get the bones after the first of Oct.

I buried the bones yesterday about 10-30 a.m. and went back to Mr. Handersons and told him that the bones was buried in theyre graves. and to fiext it so there wont be no truble when I com to get them the next time. he said he would. and took the names of the dead man and woman. after having thure understandering with Mr. Henderson I started for home about 12 oclock and on my way in Hopland I got your pan (?) basket from mrs Tack and she wanted to know if you wanted the basket that she is making. I told her that you wanted it also. but did not see the basket. now Dear Grace you and I and Mr Hartman can rest easy. and shall do som of my work for Grace.

I hope you have not disturbed Mr Hartman in Arizona. jest write Mr Hartman a nise letter in regard the matter. so he wont be uneasy about it.

as ever your friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif
Nov 1st 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena, Calif

My Dear Grace

yours of the Oct 26th came to me yesterday. I will be ready to move down right away after the 6th. I would like to voat (vote) befour I go down.

I inquired about the fare to Pasadena. but they did not know. but said it was \$15. to Los Angeles from san Francisco and its \$3.50 from Ukiah to S.F. so I guss about \$20 each will cover the fare. I have \$60. on hand of your money so I think you wont have to settled on it yet. that is the how much we was to get per day or month. I and Mary talked the matter over. about what we thought was reasonable. I thought and so did Mary that \$20.00 per month each was about right. we charge you nothing for the basket we make and of course we furnish the material. if this is too much let me know. of cours we go on your expense down and back an(d) while we are down there we will bring our bed clouthing with us. all we need there will be meteres (*matresses?*) of some kind. of cours II stay down there with you until you sen(d) me away. but its not that way with Mary. if every thing is satsfaction write me.

I dont think that I ever said that any one ever influence me to dig the remains of my uncle. if any one tels you that Mr Hartman influence me to dig the bones of my uncle. is a grate mistake. as I told Clark at finley. he said to me that there was nothing Involving on me but it was on that other man with you. I said Mr Hartman, he said yes. I says to him Mr Clark I dont see what you people are thinking about over here. Mr Hartman has been all over the united states and never was spoken of as a bad man. and you people In this county as I understand it hav found him out as a bad man. I said that Mr. Hartman had absolutely nothing to do with the digging of my uncts (*uncles*) remains or Influencing me In any way to do so. he said. he is the man that would go to the prison if any body was to be conviceted. I said no body shall go to state prison for my doings if you people In this community are going to send any one to state prison for the disturbing graves. send me. I am the man. why dont you say it to me. I have told you and every body else that man the man that did the act. stil you people are pufing at Mr Hartman som body that had nothing to do with it. Mr Hartman is a gentleman and any person that had any besiness dealings with Mr Hartman will say so any wheres In the state. its only you people In this little old county has found Mr Hartman as a bad man. I dont care what you people say Mr Hartman is jest as good a gentleman that ever steeped in lake county. I said and another thing if it was rong to disterbe agrave why did you people put aroad a county road over my uncles grave. you could not see the rong was don there. if this matter gos In coart. (court) it will cost you people som money that you will regret. I am perfectly willing to be

arrested. I see that the county will do the right thing with me. In regard of opening a road over the graves. you people are believing a man that never did any one no good In his hole life and never will. I have knone him all my life and I never seen him do any one a faver and that is Ben and Elgin. what good is it to you or anyone else those bones laying under the ground for next 100 years or 1000 years. I think I am doing good by taking the bones to put them befour the world. so it may do som good to som one In the future. I left the man thinking.

no Grace. the reverends poison letter will never turn me against Mr Hartman. for I know well Mr Hartman is gentelman In every respect. and never shall believe that Mr. Hartman had any thing to do with the crescent city affair. Grace you are Intirly (*entirely*) wellcom for the thanks that you sent to me. I shall go down and see Mrs Tack som day next week for the basket. and also will see the mail carreyer about that letter.

I wrote over to Vicente about the larg basket In upper lake. if they wanted \$25 to send it over to Ukiah and I would send them the money.

my Kelseyville trip cost me jest \$4.00. I stayed only one night In Kelseyville. I went over In my own rigs. the first time I go out Il get som roots shrubs.

Best wishes for Mr Hartman and Grace Nicholson

as ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah, Calif
Nov 11th 1906

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Cal

My Dear Grace

I sent one box of goods by freight on th (*the*) 9th and payed \$1.00 on it. and the freight agent did not know what the charges would be from los Angeles to Pasadena. but he said it would go on to Pasadena. I would have been down there all redy. but Mary thought it would be better to weat until we hear from you. so we are weating for your call.

with best wishes from us to Mr Hartman and yourself

as ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

over

if there is mail or letters for me there whold it until I com down. Please.

yours Truly

Wm Benson

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena Calif.

My Dear Grace

Your letter and the record cam to me last evening. I am very much pleased with the records. we thank you very much for the records. the Mt. Harman meeting was the sam as last year. they paid our fares. I was very much pleased In Mr H.W. Gilchusts speech. it was confidently. he said the Association had about 16 or 17 thousand dollars on hand to buy about 1000 acars of land. for school. for a large industrial school which will be conducted by the association. and this school is to be built by the Indians themselves and the Indians are to pick the land. and he also said. there was two or three places located by the leader of the association. the hop pickers made a strick but did not make it work. shuch things do not affect me at all.

yes. Culin has orderd several thing. he also wanted the hat I am making. I told him if you would not take it he could have it and I would see you about it befour teling him have it. although the hat is not finshed. I also told Culin that that if you should send in a order I would fill it first. he said it would be all right.

Many thanks Grace for the records.

I am as ever you Friend. Kind regards to Mr. Hartman and your self

your Friend

Wm. Benson

(This letter had no date, based on its context I assume that it most have been written during the summer of 1907)

Ukiah, Calif
Feb 29th 1908

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena Calif

My Dear Friend

Your welcom letter cam to me a few days ago. I was very glad to hear from you. and also glad to know that you are still In the basket benes (*business*). I have been working on miss Hubbys* basket this winter and it will take one two months yet to finish it. if the party will wait until I finish miss Hubbys basket. I will the builled the shusses weve basket. about the size of your shuwitge. you know afine basket takes goodel of time and work. about the shuwetge I could not build it for the prise you said (\$25). you know how long it took me to make the one I made for you. so I would not think of builleding one for no less then \$50. you know Grace. my time is worth somthing besides my metrial (*material*)

will you be so kind to tell miss Hubby that her basket is growing gragulay (*gradually*) its three stick wide. and started on 62 stiches to an inch. its begin to com over. its now 65 stiches to the inch. on the other side you will see the size of the basket.

is miss Hubby in Pasadena, kind regards to all my friend. and with remembrance to Mr Hartman

I am Respectfully

Mrs Mary Benson

I want to point out that the letters from Mary Benson were written in William's handwriting; therefore I assume that Mary dictated them.

**Miss Hubby collected Indian baskets.*

Ukiah Calif.
April 15th 1908

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena, Cal.

My Dear Friend.

the packege you sent to me jest cam to me. I thank very much for your kindness In sending me the present. I am so delighted with it. its been very hot the last month and I did not work on miss Hubbys very much.

I hope you and miss Hubby is better. well, but say dont die. for Il loose the best friend on earth.

with best of wishes from Mr Benson to Mr. Hartman and yourself.

I am as ever.

Mrs Mary Benson

William encloses a letter also to you.

(At the top of the page "ansd" was pencilled)

Ukiah Calif
April 15th 1908

Miss Grace Nicholson,
Pasadena Calif

Dear Sir.

Would you be so kind to trust me with a ladys hair belt. Mixcan hair work, aman wanted one to send away to his sister. I told him the prise I thought about \$2.00 to \$2.50. so I told him I would write you and find out. a meddiam ladys size. if you have one please send me one and of cours the price.

My best regards to Mr. Hartman and yourself

Wm. Benson

Ukiah. Calif.
April 22/08

miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Cal.

My Dear Friend

We Received the presents last evening and was very much pleased with them.

today the wether looks though if it might be cooler for a while. if so I will work on miss Hubbys basket. I hope you had a good time as we had on the boon trip. when you went to see the fleet. I remember ship hotel very well. william ads. I thank you Grace. very much for the tie and the pen. I thought it was very nice of you in sending me the presents. Kind regard Mr Hartman and yourself. we are as ever

Mary & William Benson

Ukiah, Calif.
April 30/08

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena Cal.

My Dear Friend.

your welcom letter cam to me day befor yesterday. we was glad to know that you were well and enjoying good health. yes. I got the tie and was very much pleased with it. I thank you very much, Grace. for your kindness In sending the easter present.

Capt Louis asked me to ask you if you wanted any baskets. he said he had three baskets he wanted to sell. I told him I would ask you. and if you wanted them I would send them down if you could stand the price take them or if not send them back. I told him you often do this when their is baskets sent to you. the old lady is biulding another shuwitge (*basket*) about the same size she made for you some time ago. may not be as fine as one before but the desine is prettyer. George Porterfield wanted to engage it. I told him that. all our work was yours. and if you would not take it that he could have the basket. the photo enclosed is the one of the shuwitge and its 29 to 30 rounds to the inch.

my best wishes for Mr Hartman and your self.

I am as ever your friend

Wm Benson

Remember me to miss Hubby

Ukiah Calif
May 30th 1908

Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena Calif

My Dear Friend

Bouth of your letters cam to me afew days ago. and was very glad to hear from you. and Mr. Hartman. Capt Louis baskets were very poor so I thought It was not worth while fooling with them.

the shuwitge (*basket*) will be finished in about three weeks and the one Mary is working on is growing very slow. I counted the stiches this morning. or I tried to. I could hardly see stiches. I countyed 104 stiches to an inch. the basket is about two thirds finished. the wether has been cole (*cold*) the last month. so she has worked on it very steady. but if it turns off hot she will have to stop work. I have all most lost confidence In the northern california Indians Association. they have been talking of helping the Indians for the last two years and nothing has been don yet. last year they said the land was to be given to them right away after hop picking. to the Hopland Indians nothing has been don yet. som of the Indians cam to me and ask me why Kelsey dos not com and do what he agreed to do. all I could say was to tel them to write him to san jose and find out. now last conference. I asked Mr Kelsey if he could not get me an acer (*acre*) or two of land, he said he could not buy land individually. after saying that they would buy land where ever the Indian wanted it. and after getting all the valuable information from me. and I have even left my work to go down to their meeting to furnish them information and after all of trubl I have went over they discarded me. this is why I say that I am loosing confidence In this association it seams like that the(y) want to get all the money they can out of it before the Indian gets his dus (*dues*) I see In a little book that was sent to me by the association that they are going to put in position 17,000 Indians of self helping and good citizens. I tel you it will be long time before they will do it. and I bet they will get their shere (*share*) out of the \$150,000 that has been appropriated for the Indians. Well. I may have said two much about unnecessary things. so I will close. hopen you will not get tired reading this letter. as ever your Friend.

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif
Aug 30/08

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena

My Dear Grace.

Your letter came to hand last week and the picturs. it is funey (*funny*) picturs all right. the one with no face specially that mans fut (*foot*) where his head ought to be. he had the big feet in sted of big head. well Grace. laying all joks asaid I am awfully glad that you found one of those head bands for I have been trying to find out where this special kind band cam from. but only can find the one mad by the napa Indians. which used by the lake Indians allso.

I Intend som day. I will make one. I hope you got the one you seen in hupa. it was very hot here during the forest fires. we did not suffer any damage by the heat or fire. although I think I am little blacker then I was before the fire.

Mary will finsh the broken basket or stiches today. but when I will send it I cannot say. but as soon as I can.. the hop picking comences tomorrow from all of us the best wishes for Mr. Hartman and yourself. I remain as ever your friend.

WM. Benson

(At the top of the page is pencilled "ansd".)

Ukiah, Calif
Sept 2/08

Miss Grace Nicholson, Calif

My Dear Grace

your basket is sent by todays express. I writen to you the other day. but I see the letters In the box yet.

there is no charges for mending the basket.

wishing you good luck on your trip south.

kind regards to all my friends

As ever your friend

Wm Benson

Ukiah Calif
Oct 13th 1908
Miss Grace Nicholson. Calif

My Dear Grace.

I am writing this evening to you to ask you for a kind favor. I wish to ask you for a loan for \$75.00. My wife and talked matter over and decided up on aske you for this favor. I built an addition on our house. and I bought som hay which put me little behind for the winter. of course. I expect to do what is right in paying you interest on the amount. Remember my best wishes to Mr. Hartman. I remain your friend.

Wm. Benson

(At the top of the page is pencilled "ansd no!".)

Ukiah, Calif
Dec 29th 1908

Mr C.S. Hartman, Pasadena, Calif.
My Dear Friend.

the package cam to me In good condition. it is very kind of you In deed. I am very much delighted with christmas present. we thank you very much for the christmas presents. we also wish you and all the Hartman marry christmass and hapy new years.

whiskey Jenney drank herself to death.

the trial of this place was desided at last. the people won.
best wishes for all my friends.

I remain Respectfully Wm. Benson

Jan 7th 1910
Ukiah Calif

Mr C.S. Hartman Pasadena, Calif.
My Dear Friend.

I am very much Pleased with present you sent me. I wish every day was sunday so I could weare the pen. we had a nice time on christmas. we had a little tree for the little ones. they Injoyed it very much on new years we also had a good time.

I wish you and all your famly a hapy new years and success.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. Benson

(At the top of the page is stamped "WM. A. BENSON".)

Ukiah Calif
Jan 7th 1910

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena, Calif

My Dear Friend.

I thank you very much for the presents. I was very much pleased with them and so was Mary she thought the little sarape was the prettyst thing on earth. we had a nice time on christmas. we had a little tree for the little ones. we had a good time on new years also.

I wish you and all your friend a hapy new years.

Sincerely yours,

Wm. Benson

(At the top of the page is stamped "WM. A. BENSON")

Ukiah Calif.
March 7th 1910

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena Calif.

My Dear Old Friend Grace.

Your most Kind letter cam to hand this Evening. I was very glad to hear from you and am Pleased to know that Hartman family are all well.

Baskets. I havent had time to work on any this winter. I was busy working In vineyard this winter and at present I am clearing off land for Ven Nader. and may work there all spring. Mary is working on that flat one. she thinks she can finsh it In about three weeks and she made two tiny ones. I have been trying to get her to make a fine one like that one of Miss Hubby but she wants to finsh the one shes working on first. then she may start one

best wishes to the Hartman family and Remember us to Miss Hubby.

Your Dear Old Bill B.

(I have a feeling that Nicholson did not approve of Benson's familiar closing signature. This is the only letter signed in this form)

Ukiah. Calif.
Dec 31st 1910

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Cal.
My Dear Friend

Mary jest finshed the basket which I am sending today. the Price of it is \$40.00. ten dollars (?). this basket was started feb 15th 1908 and finshed Dec 30th 1910. it contains 53 rounds to the Inch. Mary and I send many many thanks to both of you, for the christmas presents.

Remember us to the Hartmans.

I remain as ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah. Calif
Sept 16th. 1911

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena. Calif.

My Dear Friend

I Received a card from the wells fargo co last night saying that there was a box for me at the office. so I went up this evening and got the box. I almost knew what was In it. when I cam home I found your lettter In my mail box. Grace, I am so Delighted so Pleased. I Dont know what to do with myself. I Appreciate it very much. its just the thing Grace to kill them little red headed birds. Il be careful with it. I know how to handle those little things.

got don picking hops yesterday and moved back up the hill this morning. I am here alone, me and Mary, every body is gone to sonoma Co. but I think they will be back about next week. I heard the work was short down there.

Respectfully Remain your Friend

Wm. Benson

Mary sends best regards to Mr. C.S. Hartman and Yourself and all her Friends.

(In Nicholson's diaries at the Huntington Library in San Marino, I found the following note: "22 rifle for Wm. sent lent.")

Ukiah Calif.
Dec 8th 1911

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena. Calif

My Dear Friend

your wellcom letter cam to me yesterday and was very glad to know that you were In good health and Enjoying yourself the same as ever. we are more then Delighted. When we saw the news that said. In you letter that Miss Grace Nicholson was to Pay for the Operation. Grace. this we appreciate very very much.

tomorrow I will make arangements for the Operation and will write agin and let you know. Mr Steve Knights wife has finshed the Basket that you saw her making so I will send it down and cople of others. the price payed will be taged on the baskets. I payed Mr Knight for his basket \$2.50.

I finshed walling my well today. tomorrow will get the pump. and will be redy for use.

with all good wishes. I am

very Respectfull

Wm. Benson

The following note from John Hudson is in the files with the rest of Benson's letters at the NMAI:

Miss Grace Nicholson

Pasadena Cal

My dear Miss Nicholson

The (?) photo enclosed in your letter of recent date is very acceptable - many thanks for it - Mary Benson has an advanced stage of double pteriggium - a disease requiring delicate surgical yet simple procedure- as you mention, the hospital attention is imperative and a convalescence of about two weeks - I am anxious to have her regain perfect sight and see no reason why she should thus delay such a pressing necessity - and I am ready at any time to promote any movement taken towards this end.

Very truly

John Hudson

Ukiah. Calif.
Dec 11th 1911

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif.

My Dear Friend.

I seen Mr Dr Deane saturday and the Doctor said he would make the Operation next saturday three oclock P.M. this is the day set if nothing gos rong. the cards you spoke of can be sent to Mary In care of Dr. Deane. While shes In the Hospital for Il be working and wont be able to see her for two or three days.I finshed the well today and Mary is going to wash with new water tomorrow. the well is 43 feet 6 inches deap. it took me 11 days to dig and wall it.

I hope you got the little pack that I sent saturday In good order.

with wishes to all my Friends

as ever your Friend.

Wm. Benson

Ukiah. Calif.
Dec 17th 1911

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif.

My Dear Friend.

I took Mary to Ukiah yesterday for the Operation. but the Doctor said it was too cool. it rained very hard yesterday afternoon so he said he would do it this morning. there is two more persons are also weating to be Operated on after Marys Operation. I went to Ukiah very Earley this morning to see the Operation. but the Doctor was called to see a woman who was giving birth. I did not see the Doctor today but the Nurse told me that the Doctor told her to have Mary redy tomorrow morning by nine oclock. so I am going up agian In the morning to see the Operation. Mary and the Nurse stayed at the Hospital last night. I guss they dint fight for they were feeling fine this morning.

with all good wishes

I am your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah, Calif.
Dec 20th 1911

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena, Calif.
Dear Friend

Yours of 17th Received.

I went to town this morning to see how Mary was getting along. Mary was up and said she feeling fine the nurse said the Eye was getting on fine. I did not see the Doctor. he was away. Mary said the Doctor said he was going to write you and tell you about Marys Eye. she said the Doctor told her the stitches might be taken out saturday. Perhaps I'll bring her home sunday or monday.

I am glad that you got the basket from jack. I wreten to jack about the basket. I was afraid that that man from Los Angeles buying baskets. He trampe In this place and bought a basket I spokn for. it was unfinished shuset. I dint blame him as much as I did the maker. perhaps you know Mrs. R.C. Dyer of Schurz Nev. I got a letter from her the other day saying she wanted six tiney baskets. she knew my name som way. I told her I would. later on she said she wanted them as small as I could make them. and then she said and made the mark about so big ● ● , and she wanted to know how much a basket would cost her. a larger one with Dimoud (*Diamond?*) Dye work. she says she Deals In Piute baskets.

best Wishes to Mr. C.S. Hartman and yourself.

as Ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif
Dec 23 - 11

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena Calif

Dear Friend

I am taking Mary home today. the stiches In Marys Eyes was taken out yesterday. the Doctor says he will write you also and the letter will be Inclosed with this letter and the bill of operation and nurse.

so you can send the check to the Doctor. Mr Tenison Deane. Every thing looks faverble.

Very Respectfully,

Wm Benson

Enclose a line to you explaining about his wife's eyes -

She had a Pterygium growing from the inner portion of her Eye and growing over the cornea toward the pupil.

I removed it performing the "Knapp" operation which is the only sure operation to prevent its returning.

She came in last Saturday a week ago today & she will return with her husband home this afternoon. I will see her several times & look out for her to see that all goes well - I will about that time examine her eyes to determine wether she needs glasses to work with -

I enclose my bill which will include the extra visits she will make me & the examination for glasses.

Write me if you wish any further information.

Very truly yours,

signed

*Address
Dr. T. Deane
c/o North California Hospital
P.O. Box 196
Ukiah, Calif*

Ukiah Calif.
Dec 24th 1911

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena. Calif.

Dear Friend

I wrote yesterday telling you that I was taking Mary home. so I did. and also telling you that the Doctor was writing you and was Inclosing the bill for the Operation. it was \$80. but deducted \$2.15. I think any way the bill was \$77.35 or \$77.15. I cant remember but its one of the two. I said to send the check to the Doctor. I think that is the best and then every thing will be settle for and you can write me the same. Mary says she is felling fine she said she dint like it In town there was too much noise and could sleep at nights she says she can sleep now. jest got the picurs (pictures) this Evening. which I am Inclosing.

hoping you are not working too hard.

with best wishes to Mr. Hartman and yourself

As Ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah. Calif.
Dec 29th 1911

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena. Calif.
My Dear Friend.

Your Wellcom letter of the 26th cam to me yesterday Evening and was very glad to hear from you. and that you and your Friend had a hapy time chuing on that turkey. I know it was good Eating. I gave a little dinner on christmas and little tree for the childen it was of cors over the success of Mary. dont forget that you alwis are to have the first chance of our baskets. there is no danger of any baskets goirg out of our hands without you knowing.

I received the Packege you sent by Exp. was very much Pleased with it and Mary was also Pleased with her Pin. but I think my Pin is the best one. All Right Grace. all the baskets we make you shall have.

if its not snowing or raining tomorrow I will take Mary to Ukiah. for the Doctor wanted see her. he gave her shaded glasses which she weres now. but he did not say any thing about charging for them. Everything has been satisfactory to me and Mary. the Doctor has treated Mary as a lady. he was very nice to her while she was there. its been snowing here for the last three days. this morning whin I got up it was snowing. lot of snow laying on the hills.

with all good Wishes and hapy New Years

to Mr Hartman and yourself
Very Respectfully
Your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif.
Dec 30th 1911

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena. Cal.
My Dear Friend

I Hardly Know how to begin In Regard your Kindness. I am so Delighted I dont Hardly Know how to say it. to thank you for your Kindness Grace. I appreciate what you have don for me very very much. I sheall never forget you. you are the only Friend I have In this world. there is no other Friend who is a Friend as you have been which I appreciate very much. thanking you ever so much for you kindness and presents you sent me.

I am feeling fine. my Eye is coming on fine. and mother also feeling well. the last three or fore days has been very cold and all I can do now is to set In the house once and a while build fire In the stove when William or Mother is out. we gave a little chicken dinner on christmas. I had my neast (niece) cook the chickens and when the cooked chickens were served you ought to see the childern dive In to it. one of the boys said to William. you will have to get the Doctor tomorrow and someone said you will have to get more then one Doctor for ther(e) will be more then a dozen Indian kids sick tomorrow. som one said you better get a Indian Doctor (old joe) and let him sing a chicken song. thats the Doctor they want no white Doctor can coure them. every one had to laugh. the childern went on eating jest the sam. it was a grate eat day for the childern and after the dinner was over William streped the little christmas tree he had prepaired for the childern. every body Injoyed themselves very much. when William told the people why the dinner was given and what a grate Friend Miss Nicholson was to me every body said Miss Nicholson was the best Friend I ever had and ever will have In this world

Bank of Happiness Deliver to Miss Grace Nicholson
Three Hundred and Sixty Five days of
Health. Wealth and Prosperity.

Happy New years to you
and all my Friends In Pasadena.

Your Friend

Mrs Mary Benson

Ukiah, Calif.
jan 2nd 1912

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena, Calif.

My Dear Friend

I took Mary to Ukiah this morning for the Doctor to see. he looked at the Eye and said that it was better then he Expected he also tested both Eyes. he is sending for glasses for her to work with. he said she could do som work next week.

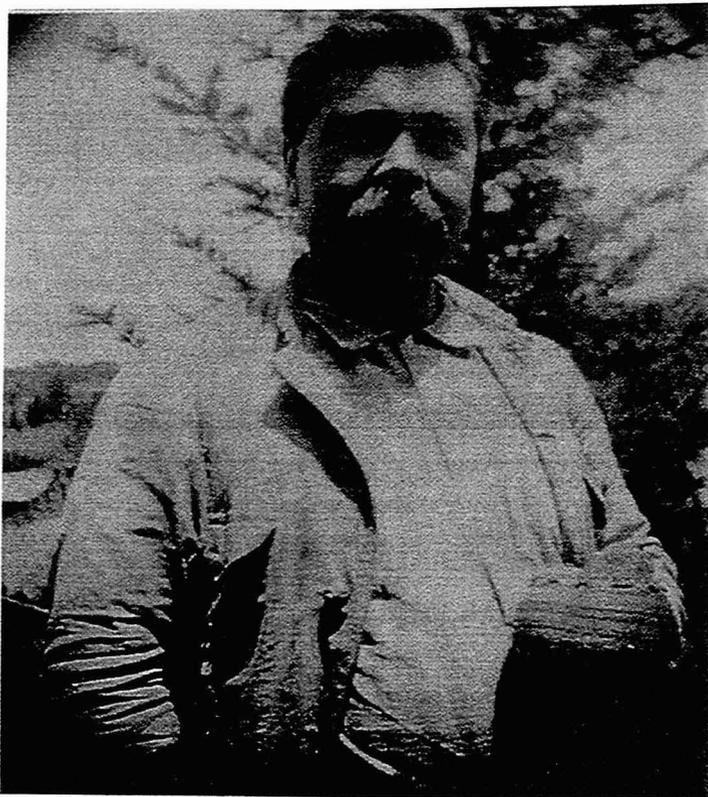
I also received Marys Present today. the Old lady is very much Pleased with her present. she sends many. many Thanks.

Mary is also very much Pleased with her present and also sends many thanks for her present

with best wishes to Mr Hartman and yourself

Very Respectfully

Wm. Benson



"This basket made by William when he was a boy to hold his charms. He presented this to me after a successful operation on his wife's eyes which I paid for".

Grace Nicholson

William Benson holding the first basket he made, and which he gave to Grace Nicholson to thank her for her payment of Mary's surgery. Photo courtesy of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Ukiah Calif.
 jen 22th 1913

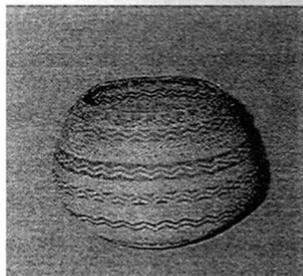
Miss Grace Nicholson
 Pasadena, Calif.

Dear Friend.

yours of the 18th at hand and cowhtes (*contents*) noticed.

I am Pleased to know that you are pleased with the little gift. I am also glad that Mr Hartman is Pleased with his little Present.

its been very cold up hear for about month and last week we had heavy wind but it lasted only few hours. I think I told you once about the little old basket. the basket is my own hand work. I builtd the basket in the spring of 1882. I finshed it on the 22 day of june of the same year. I Remember this by the big valey school house. it was built that same year and was open on that day. this is how I Remembered the day and year. the black desing is cotton thread. the red and blue is threds taken from silk handkerchief. I was little over five weeks making the basket. this basket was the first basket I made and the next basket I made was a feather basket. I sold it to a lady. I dont remember her name. so the little old basket is little over 30 years old. the idea of weving thread was and idia of my own. I dont know of any other basket that has thread wooving In like this one. at that time. I did not know of any other Indians that wove baskets. that did the same as that was woven. many of them thought it rong to weve anything like thread In to a basket. there is many at present thinks the sam. any way we had a little dinner day or two after the basket was finshed. so it was celebrated jst the same. best wishes to all my Friends.



Respectfully yours
 Wm. Benson

William Benson's first basket. The basket is 8.5cm. in diameter and 8cm in height. It begins with a crossed wrapped start, followed by 3 rows of plain twining, 7 rows of three strand braid twining, and primary weave of diagonal twining. The designs are made with multicolor threads taken from a handkerchief. The basket ends with 2 rows of diagonal twining over three warps, 3 rows of diagonal twining over three warps with finishing design, and one row of three strand braid twining (up to the right). The warps are cut almost flush to the rim. The little basket has been repaired in two torn areas along its side. Presumably repaired by Benson, they are almost imperceptible. NMAI Cat. 24/2106 Photo by M.C. Gasser

Ukiah. Calif.
May 3th / 13

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena. Calif.

Dear Friend

Your letter cam to me few days ago but was so busy working did not answer as soon as I should. no Grace we dont want to sell the basket that I sent you the photo of. I could sold them the other day but Mary wants to keep them. if I had a hunderd baskets I could have sold them In last month.

Mary has not mad any small baskets but is going to make one for a man In Hoopa chargeing him \$5. for it. Mary says she will not make any more small baskets. the Pictures that Mrs Hudson Paint is not alwis from alive person. som time from photos. so that may not been seen by Mrs Hudson or any body elce.

Grace som time when you have nothing elce to do could you give me Miss Hubbys Address. She sent som scraps to Mary and wrote a few lines which I had not answered. the 1915 talk has been going on for two years now. a man was talking to me about 1915 the other day he wanted me to gather or get few old people to go with him. I told him I would see later on. the white people up hear seams to very much Interested about 1915. of cors all the Indians will be down there.

with best wishes for Mr Hartman and yourself. from your old

Wm. Benson

Ukiah, Calif
July 14/13

Miss Grace Nicholson, Pasadena, Calif
Dear Friend

Your Postal cards cam to us yesterday. we were glad to hear from you. I am sure you are haveing good time In Boston. Iam sorry to Inform you that we all are In sorrow. on the 20th of june we lost the old lady. (mother-in-law) she was sick about 10 days. mary was very much shoucked she was very sick for a week. now shes better. I dont know what will hapen next. I am laying on my back while writing this letter. last tuesday. I was building chimney for a man while finishing above the roof My foot sleped and I fell to the ground about 20 feet. and the result is ankel broken

we have few baskets now if you want them. Grace Il have them sent down. we have three tiny ones and three large ones. three small ones is Marys work the others we recived as Presents when the old lady died. Willey Barttlet wanted the baskets . I told Willy I thought you would want them and if you dint he could have them. so in your answer you can tell me what to do.

Mary joins me In sending her best regard to all her Friends.
best wishes to Mr. C.S. Hartman and my old Friend Grace.
Very Respectfully yours

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Calif.
May 4th 1914

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena, Calif

My Dear Friend

We was very glad to hear From our old Friend again Mary Is very glad to know that you were the Lucky one. she says she allmost know how you felt when the Hotel Maryland was on Fire. Its to bad. Hotel Maryland was a nice Hotel.

about ten days ago Mary took down sick again. I change doctor on her. this doctor sais she Is trubled with dibedies (*diabetes*) this doctor has helpe her wonderfully and she Is up now and doing Pach (*patch*) work. and she says if you have any pesses (pieces) to save It for her.

I got som deer bones yesterday and I worked on it today but It was very Poor, so Il try to get som more and make that Pin. did the Picturs reach you? I thought they were lost.

As ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah. Calif.
Aug 10th 1914

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena. Calif

Dear Friend. few days ago your wellcom letter cam to hand. and was very glad to Know that you were haveing a good Time. I got the shirt all right and its Plenty big. Mary says she forgot to thank you For the Dress and she is feeling sore over it. and she is sending menney thanks for the Dress. the shuwetge (*basket*) that Mary made last was started on Jen 1st. 1912 and was Finished june 20th 1914.

out of the 30 months thers 15 1/2 months work on the basket and 6 coiles of White roots and 1 1/2 coile of redbud. so it makes the basket little over two years old.

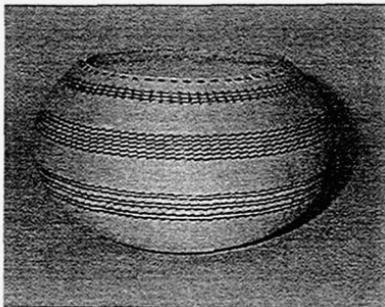
som of the hops are geting ripe. som will begin Picking on the 20th.

many. many. thanks Grace. for the shirt it will com In handy this winter.

with best Wishes I Remain as Ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

Remember us to Mr Hartman



NMAI Cat. 24/2125 Mary Benson
This is an example of a "shuwetge" or a three strand braid twined basket. Photo by M.C. Gasser

Ukiah, Calif
April 14th 1915

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena. Cal
Dear Friend

Your letter came to us this Evening and was very glad to hear from you.

Mary is not felling well and she day befor yesterday finished the Inside and today she washed the basket(5). no Grace the Po basket (6) havent grode much sense the warm weather. at Present I am Planting Hops for the Ranch. (Indians). I think I can send the basket on Saturday 17 and you get It about on the 20th. mary says she will try to make the little rounds ones. she says the shuwitge she will make later on when the weather gets coler. and shes short of red buds also for the shuwitge.



This is the unfinished basket left by Mary's mother, Sarah Knight. Photo courtesy of the Huntington Library

About this Basket that you are to get I mean the Basket that Mary jest finished. I have asked Indian about abasket like this and they tell me there never was shuck thing hapen befor In basket history. they say never was abasket finshed by a daughter after the mother is dead who started and partly woven the basket. its said to be the first one of Its kind. the lore design tells you that It would be changed hand som time and the upper designs tells you It was woven after deth. so this basket Is something od. Mary dos not like to Part with basket. but the mothers voice she still hears. about 20 min befor the old lady died she said I promised Grace this basket so make my Promess good. and she said I know Its hard thing to do. but fear not I hope god will helpe you. so you see why the basket carys such design.

Mary says that she will be very much Please if you will keep your Promis to keep the basket In your collection. She says the basket Is the mother of all baskets. she says dont send anything until you receive the basket. her charges Is one hunderd dolars \$100-, les \$10- or Ninty dolars \$90- she says. if you thing Its too much to let her know.

with best wishes for all our Friend of Pasadena

As Ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

(At the bottom of the page "Paid" is penciled.)

Ukiah Calif
May 1st 1915

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena, Calif

Dear Friend

Your letter and the check cam to us last Saturday. Mary thank you many times for It. I could Wreten sooner but I was weating on Mary. she wanted to finsh one of the little baskets so they could go all together. so I am sending them on todays Express. two round ones and two boat shape. two dollars and fifty cent each \$10.- we had no rain up hear but fogy mornings thats why it took Mary so long to make the little ones. she worked only of mornings she says shes out of redbud for the shuset (*basket*) and it almost Imposible to make the kind of basket you want. so she dosent know what to do but to let it go until fall. she says she may start It.

the baskets on the photos rough one. the smalest one Is the one you got as a present while back. they are so rough dont think you could use them. you may com up this summer and you can see them you know we dont sell baskets to no one the baskets will be In our Possession until you com. that is if youl com up this summer which I think you will.

basket roots can be gathered any time of year (white & black) but redbud is gather only In fall or In winter. the white willos are gathered In spring & fall.

the older people of this tribe and the tribes up above never wove a basket that dead person had worked on. there might be other tribes that did this kind of work. we have no photo of that basket. if you could have one taken so the design can be seen plane. Il tell you more about It.

For us tell Dorothy* we wish her success and long hapy life on 12th of may.

with best wishes I Remain as Ever your Friend.

Wm. Benson

R.F.D. Box 78

**Dorothy was Nicholson's housekeeper*

(At the top of the page penciled "sent check May 10, 1915 10.00 C.S.H.")

Ukiah. Calif
Feb 5th 1916

Mr C.S. Hartman. Pasadena Cal.

Dear Friend

yours of the 31st cam to me yesterday and was glad to hear from you. I am also Pleased to know that the bag reached you In good condition.

the stick is a fack (*fake*). who ever bought that thing got bet and bet bad. its Prophets charming stick. he or her made it the way they thought they dreamt and tells the People som kind of god tells them to make such a thing. som times you see they have a long stick fixed the same way and som times they fix their clouth (*clothes*) with som od color and wampums and abelones shell. but all this is fack.

the sulpher Banks lowr lake and middle town Indians has fore (*four*) dreamers. last christmas they had a big blowout. I was told. perhaps that stick came from som of these Dreamers. any way it a fack.

with best wishes

I Remain as Ever your Friend

Wm. Benson

Ukiah Indian Ranch
Feb 22th 1916

Mr J.W. Hudson Ukiah Calif.

Dear Friend

Your Pasa Is on the way. I want you to com down and tell me how large you want It. up date six days work on It. Four days weven (*weaving*) and two days gathering material. the basket Is now 7 feet 3 inches In Diameter. Wove this morning three rounds up to 12 Oclock four hours work. com if Possible.

As Ever Your Friend

Wm. Benson

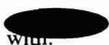
(This letter is courtesy of the Grace Hudson Museum, in Ukiah)

Ukiah Calif
 March 9th 1916
 Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif.
 My Dear Grace.

Your letter and check, \$25.00 cam to me this evening. I thank you very much Grace. for sending me the \$12.50. and the \$12.50 I will try and use it to good advantage for you. I will try and find a wappo beaded basket. Mary is working on a shuwitge at present, as soon as she finishes it she will make the others. the spiral design I dont understand. you may draw it in your next letter or about what you want*. I tried twice to make the tiny baskets but failed. but I must make them befor I give it up. thats easey Grace. you ask Mr Hartman what to do. I know Mr Hartman will put you on the next train and before you know it you will pick your self up in Ukiah.

Doctors. Fred Hogans outfit contains 30 diferents things. the long red stick one or two others for pining on head dress. two flat sticks with strings in one end is to make thunder noise. two sticks with rattel snake skins for appying poison. two clapers used when Doctoring a person is frighten. and the strings of feathers is used with the clappers also. Four sticks about 6 or 9 inches long. for counting times when Doctoring. the long bone is Human bone. use for medicine.

the long whistle is used when doctoring if the person gets sick while dancing. the two short whistles used when doctoring. if the person gets sick while hunting the whistle then used to imitating birds. one feather hat and mole skin gos with these whistles. the pipe is used to blowing smoke up on the sick. the rattle used while sining (*singing?*). the diging stick used diging bed hole like for hot bath. the head net doctor puts on befor puting on the feathers. the 3 gray rocks found In a tree. these are made hot and applied to where the pain. the cup is used for mixing medicine. the canty(?) paw is used when doctoring cramps. 2 diferent roots. yellow, for vomiting. the woodcock heads is used when doctoring swiling (*swelling*). the net is spred over the sick and white downs is placed over the net. 8 of the feather hats is placed around a hoop and put over the sick.

the dride snakes and lizards of all kinds for hot bath. and dried snakes of all kinds for poison. black roots is for the blood. blosoms of all kinds for washing and also black root for sleeping and the obsidian thos shape  for cutting snakes and lezards and som. and other obsidians is to bleed the sick with. if I was there I could arrange the those things and tell you better about it. so this is the best I can do now at present.

morning of the 10th

I went over and seen Wappo woman and bought three of her baskets for \$7.50. which I will send down to you today by express.

Respectfully yours.
 Wm. Benson

**Nicholson provided the Bensons with photos of baskets with designs that she may have wanted them to copy. She also sketched designs for them. She particularly liked the baskets made by Louisa Kaiser, a Washo weaver.
 (At the top of the page "ansd" is penciled.)*

Ukiah Calif
May 7 - 1916

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena Cal

Dear Friend

By yesterdays Express I sent Marys basket (shuwitge) and hope It Reaches you In good condition. Marys Price on the basket is \$30. started jan 5. funshed may 8. I thought I would get my basket finshed last month. the warm wether and little out side work put me back. but I think I can bring It Very near to close torge the last of this month.

Our best wishes to the Hartmans and to our old Friend Grace.

From your old Friends
William and Mary
Benson

R.F.D. Box 78

June 11th 1916
Ukiah. Calif

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena. Calif

Dear Friend.

Your letter of the 6th were weating for us. we were out with the Hay baler this week and we will be now until we finish baling. so if you come later on you can look us up out in the Hay field. somewhere in the valley.

I must tell you about sun basket of ----- the basket is said to be built wrong. Every one that has seen the basket said it was not made right. the feathers were not put in right. and the shape is not a sun basket shape. so we never see the basket since it was built. they won't show it to us. we were told. they wanted one hundred dollars for it. from what I am told. I would not have it as a gift. We have often said if Grace buys that basket she will get bet and bet hard. of course you will know what to do when you see the basket. I might be saying too much about the basket. but this is the fact. I don't like to see you get bet on a basket.

Our best regards to the Hartmans and to our old friend Grace.
as ever We remain very truly

William and Mary

Ukiah, Calif.
July 30th 1916

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena, Calif.

Dear Friend.

We Return from the coast last night. Mary was sick all the wile we were there so we did not get much roots. We Expect to go over agian after Hop Picking. Il begin work In the morning on som of the things. wile waiting for hop picking.

the man from Highland Springs is coming over today. I was told. to buy ---- sun basket. I supose you got acard from Labray of Point Reana. he said he had 300 fine baskets. I saw som of them. I could stand 50 ft away and count the stiches. on the most of those he had In the window. so they must be fine.

with best wishes to both Mr.C.S. Hartman and our Old Friend Grace

Remain as Ever your Friend

Very Respectfully
Wm. Benson
R.F.D. Box 78

Ukiah. Calif.
Feb 3td 1917

Miss Grace Nicholson
Pasadena Calif

Dear Friend

Your letter and check of \$40 cam to me last night. this amount I note for December work. yes. I started work for you on the 22 of this month. and I have Mary helping me on the basket. and od times I work on something else. today I am sending only two that I have redy. the basket is growing but it cannot be rushed. it lack about 15 rounds and it takes three to four days to the round. the stiches are now going up the 67 mark and you know if we rush it we might spoile it. so its best to work on it as we are working.

I have photos of what I have started. and as soon as I have them Printed I shall send som down and I am sending the legend which you can look over. I have som more to go with it that I have not added and I have two other storys* I write on when I have the time. as soon as I finsh them I will send them down also. I hope you will have good luck with the museum man.

thank you Very much for the check and most kind letter.

with all good wishes to all our Friends

Very Respectfully Yours

Wm. Benson

R.F.D. Box 78

**The above mentioned stories are included under "Old Earth Talk" section.*

Ukiah
Mendocino County Calif
Feb 26th 1917

Miss Grace Nicholson.
Pasadena Calif.

Dear Friend

Your letter cam to me this Evening and was very glad to hear from you. and am also glad that the Instruments* reached you In good condition.

you are not any anxiouser then I am to see the little basket at its last stich. its growing slow but sure. and the head band is also growing som every day. if the sun coms out tomorrow Il snap the head band so you can see about what it looks like. when Mary helps me on the basket I work on the head band so that way I got In ten days work on it up to dat(e), and I am sending you under another cover the story of the coyota. dont let Mr Hartman read it for he might do likewise. later perhaps in the spring when you are not busey you can send me tipewriten copy of the storys.

Gilham was hear the other day. Mary showed him that little basket in the bottle. he said that he would take his hat off three times to her and that he did not know any thing at all about baskets and said he would give up known anything about baskets and also said no wonder Miss Nicholson keeps you to weve for her. he said dint care what any one says. you are the bst basket maker in the world. so Mary sold him two baskets. the two was given to by a woman in upper lake. the stiches were about 12 to the Inch and the other about 15 to the Inch. Old Gilham said now I can say that I have Marys basket. Mary said your buying your own people basket. thats the kind of baskets your people over there makes. Mary said. the basket I make I dont sell. I give them to Miss Nicholson and she sels them. if you want one that I had made you can buy it from Miss Nicholson. the old man said. Il tak my hat off to you three times any how. so he went off. say my, my, my, I never seen anything like it.

with best wishes I Remain as Ever

Your Friend

Wm. Benson

**The "instrument" Benson refers to, consists of a mush paddle. The story of this paddle appears under Old Earth Talk section.*

Ukiah, Calif
Jen 1918

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena. Calif

Dear Friend. by today Express I am sending the head band and Ear rings or bones. I hope they will reach you in good condition.



*NMAI 16/1176 William Benson - Ear
Bones . Photo by M.C. Gasser*

the Ear bones are stufed with tuly fiber and sealed over with pick (pitch) on Eather Eard. the tuly fiber is used because its light and drubel (durable). the strings are made of Deer sinew. the bones are put throw the holes of the Ear and the strings tied together back of the head. the head band is used in old time ceremonial. the ceremonial has not been Practiced for a long time over 40 years that I know of. Every bunch of feather in the head band is dipeted in soap root juss befour its woven in the string works. the soaproot is cooked befour using. the strings where the feathers are woven is also socked with soaproot. how the people cam to use this head band and why the used it. I will write later and send you the

copy. above I said today. but I will send it tomorrow for I have no paper box at present.

With best Wishes I Remain as Ever Your Friend

Wm. Benson

R.F.D. Box 78

Ukiah Calif.
Jen 30th 1918

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena Calif

Dear Friend

I suppose the wages will be the same as it was last year. I comenced work on 2nd of this month and I worked 4 days Dec. but we will call it jen (January) work. so it will be amonth work all the same. after finshing the things I sent down. I am working on pin this time and after the pin is finshed I am think of starting red head dress. the Indian name she-ta-lah. this head dress the Indians value very high.

I dont know of any one that has one in the country unless you have som other thing for me to make.

Mary is working on a basket. she dosint know what to call it. its three stick weave. Mary joins me in sending her best regards to her Friends of Pasadena.

With best wishes. I Remain as Ever your Friend.

Very Respectfully

Wm. Benson

R.F.D. Box 78

Feb 1st 1918
Miss Grace Nicholson Pasadena. Calif.

Dear Friend

Your Letter cam to me this Evening Iam glad to know that the Package containing the head band and the Ear Rings reached you In good condition. it makes me fell hapy to know that you are pleased with the goods.

the broken hair pin perhaps you better send it up. it might be that I can mend it. I am making one now. I think it will be a nice one. if anything like that hapens send it up and I will try and fiext it. Poor People wont be able to drive cars if the tires gos so high in this country as they are france. the tires are high enough now. som good man will make som new Invention In place of rubber tires. I guess you cant pick up som old tiers and send them up they will do for me to ride to town about once in two weeks. and maybe over to the coast and back.

next week I shall write about the head band and Ear bones*. as I said in my letter befour. next I will start the red head dress its much Prettyer. its all red with quial plumes design. and now is the best time to get the red heads. the feathers are good now. when I start it there will be a snap of it. Mary wants to know where you got the fine seft (*sifter?*) you sent her year befour. she says she would like very much have another one but not so fine a mesh as the one before. the old one is 32 mesh to the Inch. so she wants one about 26 mesh to the Inch. she says som time when you are not doing any thing you could see if you could get one. but dont put yourself out of the way looking for it.

All I want is old tires. Mr Hartman can do that. and Il go down som day and get them. Mary joines me In sending her best regard to her Friends of Pasadena.

With Best Wishes I Remain as Ever your Friend.

Respectfully Yours

Wm. Benson

R.F.D. Box 78

**I have included the story of the head band and the ear bones under the "Old Earth Talk" section.*

Ukiah Calif.
May 3rd 1918

Miss Grace Nicholson. Pasadena. Calif.

Dear Friend.

Your letter and check cam to me this Evening. and was very glad to know you were Pleased with the Picturs..... above all I thank you very much for the check.

No Mary dont want to lern to drive she rather do the rideing in the back seat.

If I could hitch it to the old boiler I would make it hum.

All the strings are of milkweed. when that was snaped* the lum was jest finished. now its got red feathers and quial plumes. next week Il take another photo of it and send one down.

Mary has not been feeling well for the last few day. but thinks she will do little work on the basket next week.

the Indians are about the same no hops. they will have little more hay this year than last. little more alfalfa this time. With best Wishes I Remain as Ever your Friend.

Very Respectfully yours.

Wm. Benson
(over)

Mary wish to know how the dresss goods are down there In price. she says up hear the dresgood gingmn is 35c a yard. she says if its cheaper down there you could get her about 10 yards and charge it up to her on the basket work.

she wants to be remembered to her friends of Pasadena

Yours Truly

Wm. Benson

*The NMAI Photo Archives contains a series of photographs detailing the progress of Benson's loom weaving in various stages of progress.