



Juliette Gauthier wears a costume made from Canadian handcraft fabrics from old looms and spinning wheels. A "ceinture flechee" hangs against the fireplace at the left.

'Maiden Canada' Stirs Interest With Birch Bark Art, Own Dyes

By OLIVE DICKASON

Canadians are fortunate in their really authentic folk art. This art includes such rare items as birch bark transparencies with the designs cut by Indian women using their teeth and folk songs dating back to the earliest history of our country.

Ottawa-born Juliette Gauthier, curator of the Gatineau Park Museum, has made a life-time work of collecting such items. She held up a hooked rug during an interview in Montreal over the weekend.

"This rug," she said, "was made by a woman nearly 100 years old, a descendant of Louis Hebert. The design is her own. The materials are Canadian-made . . . no such thing as rags or anything like that. The dyes are made from Canadian plants.

Wide Interest

Miss Gauthier's dye-making activities have aroused a good deal of interest, both in Canada and in Europe. "We used the tulips sent over by the Queen of Holland to make dyes after the flowers had been used for display. I showed rugs in Holland colored with those dyes, and the Dutch were very enthusiastic. They wanted to learn how to make them . . . with all their tulips they had never thought to use them for that purpose."

The matter of dyes takes up a good deal of Miss Gauthier's time. She has searched far and wide across Canada for the plants that will produce the effects she is seeking. Her methods of making the dyes are those of tradition; she doesn't have anything to do with modern "improvements". The result is that her dyes are much in demand for restoring old tapestries, etc., for her shades best approximate those of historical fabrics.

Miss Gauthier was the first to show Canadian folk art in Europe. "They call me 'Made In Canada' in England," she smiled. "Europeans are interested in our art. At the Paris Exhibition, 40,000 a day came to see our exhibit."

Elderly, grey-haired Miss Gauthier rather fell into the business of collecting folk lore. A McGill student, she won the Strathcona scholarship to study singing in Italy and later studied violin in Hungary. The more she studied music, the more she became interested in Canada's folk songs. "Some of them are very beautiful," she said.

She travelled about the country collecting these songs and getting them recorded. She now has about 300 of them. "Collecting the songs

was a natural step towards getting interested in other forms of folk art," she said.

Now she has such collector's items as birch bark drawings by the Algonquin Indians of the Gatineau illustrating old Indian legends. She is in the process of publishing a book, "Around the Birch Bark Wigwam," a collection of these legends along with authentic Indian illustrations.

"Most Canadians just don't realize how good their folk art is," Miss Gauthier said. "In French Canada we have one of the largest handcraft centres in the world."

The curator is a descendant of Gauthier de la Verandrye, seigneur de Varenne, of Three Rivers . . . the first white man to see the Canadian Rockies. That is why she spells her name with the "I." "That's the old form of the name," she declared, "and I stick by the old forms."

Miss Gauthier is proud of her museum in Gatineau Park where those who still remember the ancient arts come to practice under her sharp eyes.

"These people are of the forest," she said. "They are poor, and

from them that the genuine folk art comes. No high hat stuff for me."

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