Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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A special collection of Navajo Indian rugs and blankets will be shown publicly for the first time in the Eastern United States at the Department of Interior Art Gallery, beginning September 22.

Navajo rugs and blankets have been prime collectors' items for more than a century, being first praised for fine quality by the Spanish Conquistadores who ruled the New Mexico and Arizona region in 1706. American interest in Navajo textiles increased sharply in the 1860's as a result of greater contact with the Navajos.

The fabrics to be displayed are part of the Gilbert S. Maxwell collection, permanently housed at the University of New Mexico. Maxwell, long an outstanding collector of Navajo arts and crafts, began assembling the collection in 1927. This is the first time, however, the public has been able to view the historic collection in the East.

Tom Bahti, an anthropologist and collector of Indian art for 16 years, from Tucson, Arizona, who selected the weaving to be displayed, is in Washington to arrange the show's opening.

Slave blankets, rugs named after a yarn: milled in Germantown, Pennsylvania; Indigo and Two Grey Hills designs are among the pieces selected to represent the history of Navajo weaving. The rugs and blankets date from 1850 to a 1961 product called Yei-bei-chai. An authentic Navajo loom will be set up in the gallery to illustrate the complexity of the art.

The public is invited to view without charge the collection from 10:00 a.m. -40:0 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, at the Department of Interior Art Gallery, fifth floor, 18th and C Streets, N.W., Washington, D. C. The show will be open from September 22 through November 5, 1965.