

South Central Kentucky Basket Making Traditions

Documented back to specific families in the mid-1800s in south central Kentucky, white oak basket making is a tradition that still thrives. While the art of basketry is timeless, this specific aesthetic and technical style of basket making has developed out of generations of fine-tuning.



Records indicate that early practitioners often traded their baskets for groceries and goods at the local stores in the region, until the creation of the Dixie Highway (Hwy 31W) in the early 20th century when basket makers set up shop along the road and peddled their craft to travelers. With the development of I-65 in 1965, the market for these baskets once again began to change, moving from the “basket stand era” to the promotion of this traditional art through a national arts and crafts movement, led in Kentucky in the 1980s by Phyllis George Brown.

White oak basketry skills are still being shared in this region of the state and continue to be bought, sold and traded in Kentucky and the world.

Oral history interviews with and about basket makers can be found at <http://passtheword.ky.gov>.

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