

Definitions starting with H: Handicrafts

For many years most Bahamians had to make for themselves everything from houses and boats to household articles. While a great deal of creative energy is lavished on the magnificent costumes of [JUNKANOO](#) -an art form highly developed in the Bahamas-a more practical craft with artistic merit of its own is [STRAW WORK](#) , which has provided handy articles for domestic use and export ever since the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The [STRAW](#) for delicate work comes from [MANELLA](#) , a variety of sisal whose leaves are soaked until decaying, then pounded to extract the fibres to be [PLAITED](#) or braided. Broader strips are obtained from the fronds of coconut trees or the central, unopened leaves of several varieties of palmetto such as [BOAR TOP](#) , [POND TOP](#) , or [SILVER TOP](#) . The [LEAVES](#) are dried, then stripped from the [BONE](#) or central spine of the palm frond, producing [STRINGS](#) for plaiting as well as [TRASH](#) for brooms or floor covering. The breadth of the string varies according to the different [PLAIT](#) pattern for which it is intended.

From four to thirteen strips of similar width are woven by hand into one continuous length, new strings being inserted as the previous one is finished. A fixed length of plait, usually five [FATHOMS](#) or thirty feet, is customarily shipped as a [BALL](#) when the work is to be completed elsewhere. There are many different styles of plaiting, the names for which often describe the pattern produced. Fine string is used in [SPIDER WEB](#) and [LACE EDGE](#) ; two patterns with holes are [VENTILATOR](#) and [HOLE-IN-THE-WALL](#) ; varied color patterns achieved by mixing coconut and [TOP STRING](#) are known as [PEAS AND RICE](#) , [SALT AND PEPPER](#) , or [CHECKERBOARD](#) . Other names suggest the pattern - [V-PLAIT](#) , [SHARK TEETH](#) , [JACOB'S LADDER](#) , [SHINGLE](#) , [PINEAPPLE](#) , [FISH GILL](#) , and [CONCERTINE](#) .

Many articles for everyday use were once produced in this fashion, such as [CROP-BASKETS](#) , [CHIRONES](#) or [CROOKS](#) , [CRAB-BASKETS](#) , [FISH POTS](#) , and [SHOULDER BASKET](#) . Nowadays these plaits are largely made for the souvenirs that [VENDORS](#) sell to tourists at the Nassau straw market, such as [NATIVE BAGS](#) , hats, and other articles decorated in [DYE STRAW](#) , shells, and raffia.

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