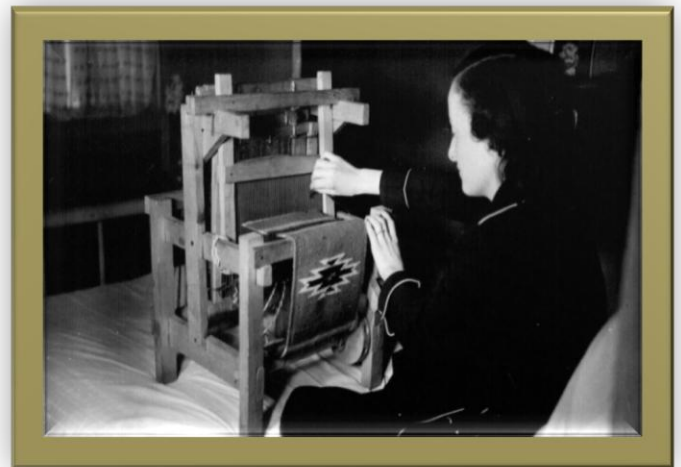




The Role of Health in Shaping Perceptions of the Southwest

By the early 1900s, tens of thousands of people had ventured to the Southwest, breathed its air, imbibed its culture, and anticipated healing, but it had not always been so. In the mid-nineteenth century, at the time of U.S. Mexican War and rapid U.S. colonial expansion, the Southwest, its landscape and people, seemed very unhealthy to many Americans. Kelly Roark explores how the region became “healthy” and what the implications of this transition were for Southwestern people and places.

In everything from makeshift encampments to stately sanatoria, healthseekers looked for cures in a region many of them considered foreign and cruel. Most traveled to the Southwest as a last resort, after conventional medicine in their home communities failed. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Anglo perceptions of the Southwest had changed. Many healthseekers believed that it was the culture of the region – in addition to climate – that cured ailing bodies. Eating Southwestern foods, making Southwestern crafts, and participating in Southwestern events, healthseekers struggled to regain their lost vitality. In the process, they reshaped perceptions of the Southwest.



A Tubercular Patient Practices Rug Weaving in Bed;
Occupational Therapy at Valmore Sanatorium