

The Village Meeting House, formerly the church of the Fiskdale, Massachusetts, Baptist Society, presented to the Village in 1946, restored and reerected in 1947. Rededicated in 1949 as symbol of spiritual heritage of New England.

OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE

AMONG THE BRIGHTER aspects of these troubled times is the strong revival of interest in our country's past, which contained, it is now more generally believed more values for the present than many persons have thought in the last decades. Among the many restorations which have been undertaken in the last few years two should be of special interest to handweavers and other craftsmen. At Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts, and at Virginia City, Montana, may be found contemporary weaving centers in authentic Early American backgrounds.

Old Sturbridge Village Museum and Crafts Center, opening for its Fifth season May 14, is not only a center of living history, bringing to life the late 18th century in New England, but it is also a community where the old arts and skills are being used as an inspiration for the people of today.

The period buildings and functional craft shops are arranged in the manner of a New England town of 1790. The Oliver Wight house, built in 1783, is the museum's reception center. The Village currently comprises over thirty buildings. Among the buildings are an inn, a church, a gen-

eral store and a school house. Exhibition buildings include a gun museum, a clock maker's shop, a spectacle maker's shop, a barn filled with antique agricultural implements, a wrought iron work museum, a wood working tool museum and a wagon shed that has many examples of early horse-drawn vehicles used in the vicinity. The visitor sees master craftsmen at work in the grist mill, blacksmith shop, weaving shop, pottery, printing plant, candlemaker's, cabinet maker's and furniture finisher's shops, textile decorating and metal smithing.

The project was made possible by the interest of the Wells family of nearby Southbridge, Massachusetts. Albert Wells and his brother, J. Cheney Wells, began collecting old New England furniture and clocks. Before long, their houses bulged with the fruits of their antique hunting, and it was decided that only a museum could do justice to the collections. The idea of housing the collection in an authentic historic setting came from George B. Wells, the son of Albert Wells. He and his wife have been actively interested in its development and Mrs. Wells has served as interim director until recently.

The purpose of the Village is to create an authentic background to teach American history through crafts and the display of household furnishings and equipment and so honor the early New Englanders whose ingenuity and thrift and self-reliance paved the way for some of man's greatest material achievements. Since the 18th century was an era of supreme individuality, it is this period around which Old Sturbridge Village is built.

Interest in the working craft shops has far exceeded expectations, according to Mrs. Wells, who now serves as Director of Crafts. She is deeply concerned with the development of sound craftsmanship not only as a revival of the past but also as a means of livelihood for craftsmen of the present. The renewed interest in the handicrafts is one of the most healthful signs of the times, she wrote in a recent issue of "Old Time New England."

With the increased leisure which modern industrial technique makes possible, Mrs. Wells said, and with a growing need for constructive avocations, the Village is functioning along far broader lines than originally planned.

The project is not endowed and does not have inexhaustible funds upon which to draw for support and so it is

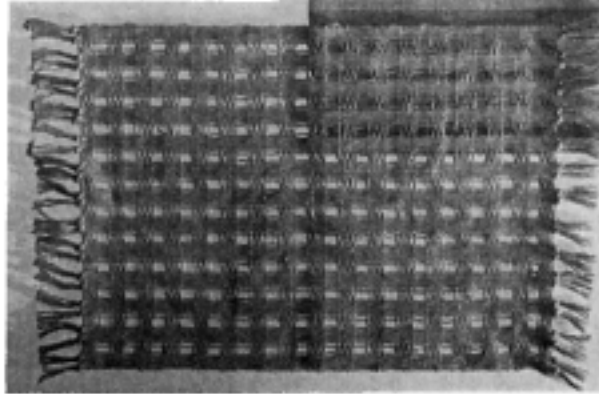
Miner Grant's General Store, an actual country store which at one time was operated in the village of Stafford Street, Connecticut. It now displays a colorful, amusing conglomeration of the merchandise which used to be found in every country store. Within are found a postoffice, milliner's shop, dressmaker's shop, and displays of pottery, glass, baskets, copper, brass and ironware.





Altana Tennant, weaving tweed, her specialty, on a modern loom in the weave shop. Miss Tennant also operates and demonstrates the antique looms that are part of the museum collection.

Place mats. Open work in slub linen. Striped mat is all linen in aqua and gray warp and gray weft. Fabrics at America House, New York City.



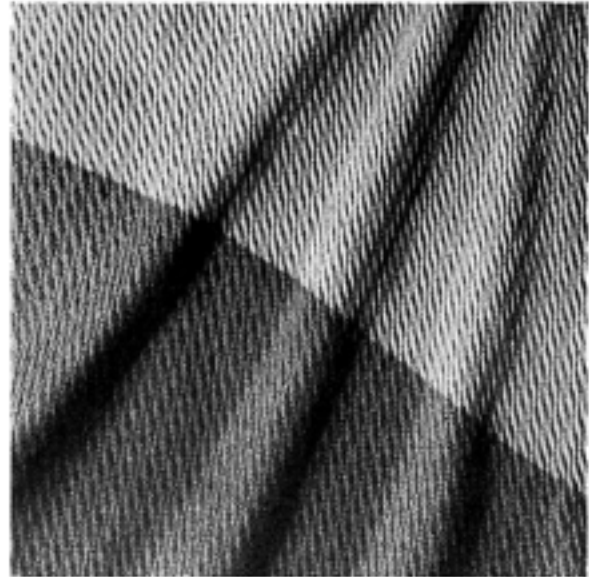
necessary for each craft shop to become as soon as possible a self-sufficient unit.

In spite of admissions to the Village carrying Museum maintenance costs, each craft shop must be operated on a sound business basis, following good Yankee tradition. To achieve this, each craftsman and apprentice must be included in the planning and managing of each individual enterprise, good training for any kind of business.

Because Old Sturbridge Village is a museum as well as a craft center, there are certain problems peculiar to its operation. It is part of the educational plan to assist visitors with their own craft problems and to make available to them the knowledge and skills of each individual craftsman. Another step of importance is that part of the plan which teaches knowledge of consumer demand. Craftsmen and apprentices must learn that there are certain products to be developed for steady "bread and butter" sales. They must learn to organize their time so that hours spent in purely creative work will not be out of balance with time spent on crafts on order or of proved saleability.

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Upholstery material, irregular twill with dark linen warp, contrasting color cotton or wool weft. Two color combinations are shown, both on same warp.



Great fireplace in the Village Inn and Museum, which duplicates an early hostelry. Rooms contain displays of woodenware, glass, pewter, tavern signs, early labor saving gadgets, and lighting devices illustrating the development of artificial illumination. One mile from Sturbridge Village is another historic inn, the Publick House, established in 1771, which houses Village guests.



Display from Old Sturbridge Village Craft Shops. Description of hanging, Figure 1, in text.



Old Sturbridge Village

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Styling for particular markets is an indispensable part of the knowledge that must be imparted to each craftsman. Crafts saleable in Sturbridge are not necessarily those that will be readily saleable in New York or Boston or California. The Village has a ready-made market for sales to visitors during the time when the museum is open to the public. While many of the visitors are interested only in the reproduction of an antique they have come to see, the majority prefer well-designed, reasonably priced handicrafts. The shops, to be completely self-supporting, must plan for outside sales for the other half of the year and in that time also work on inventories for Sturbridge sales.

Products from the craft shops have been on sale in one of the old houses in the Village. Mrs. James L. Newcomb, Director of the Craft Sales Department, is working on a new sales shop and an accelerated production program in goods as well as personnel.

The weaving shop, opened three years ago, has a variety of looms and employs two full time weavers at present. The weavers do their own designing and produce a variety of products including cotton and linen luncheon sets, mats, and runners; drapery materials and rugs, blankets, bags, upholstery materials, and apparel fabrics. Wool is dyed and spun for exhibition purposes as well as use, although commercially spun yarn is used for production.

The drapery fabric shown in Figure 1 has a pure linen



warp, either natural or brown, woven in a twill pattern. The same colors were used in the weft with each warp. In one sample the weaver used white, brown and grass green wool, and yellow carpet warp, in another, white and brown wool and silver tinsel. Each color also was used separately for a sample.

To learn to be a fine craftsman takes years of patient work and study, but it is a way of life that is particularly complete. The individual craftsman who is able to take his place in the economy of today deserves the happiness and satisfaction he has won through his well-planned efforts.

Facilities are available for groups of craftsmen and others who may wish to visit the Village in a group. Meetings may be held in the church, and food and refreshments are provided in the Village. There are also plenty of attractive picnicking spots.

For information about the apprentice training program write to the Crafts Department, Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, Massachusetts. • • •

In George S. Stone's blacksmith shop in Old Sturbridge Village smithing is carried on against a background of anvils, old tools, hand bellows, and an ox break. In the neighboring blacksmith's house, there is a collection of early wrought iron, and in a wagon shed a collection of old vehicles.