

Illustration 1

KENTUCKY HANDWEAVINGS—*Photograph courtesy J. B. Speed Museum, Louisville, Ky., showing loom, cotton gin, wool wheel, other research into early and 19th century American handweavings.*

Kentucky Handweavings

by LOU TATE

Kentucky handweavings are of interest to Kentuckians as well as to the rest of the United States. The J. B. Speed Memorial Museum, Louisville, Kentucky, opened its South Gallery to the exhibition KENTUCKY HANDWEAVINGS by Lou Tate. This exhibit shows some of the accumulations of a hundred and fifty years of weaving in the state. The west side of the gallery was devoted to the research of Lou Tate into early Kentucky handweavings and showed (Illustration 1) early drafts dating from 1775 to 1881, other early items pertaining to weaving, the wool wheel of Mrs. Richard Palmore, a cotton-gin of the type yet in use in Kentucky, a loom reproduced for Lou Tate by The Highland Institute at Guerant in Breathitt County, Kentucky, a SNAIL TRAIL AND CAT TRACK coverlet (circa 1850) of Mrs. Sarah E. McClure, a double CHARIOT WHEELS with double square coverlet of Mr. R. C. Ballard Thruston, a WHIG ROSE linen tablecloth of Mrs. J. H. Bousman, a rare

counterpane of woven knots (circa 1840) of Mrs. Henry Hail (Illustration 3 gives detail), and smaller weavings from early patterns.

The east wall held small tapestries (Illustration 2) and included a modern reproduction of an Egypto-Arabic piece from the collection of Miss Frances Morris and depicting a leopard making his kill, the Carden Arms, the Tothill Arms, the Schooner Clio of Milwaukee, Princess taking a fence, a silhouette L. H. H. (Mrs. Herbert Hoover), several race horses, the Warren Arms, the Teare Arms (Illustration 4 gives detail), several ships, Limon Bay in Panama, and linens with laid-in tapestry designs.

Kentucky has been important for those interested in this field of Americana. As early as 1884, Mr. R. C. Ballard Thruston made a photographic record of the folk arts found on a trip thru rural Kentucky.

Among these photographs are several of spinning and weaving equipment. "The Book of Handwoven Cover-



Illustration 2 "Courtesy of the J. B. Speed Memorial Museum" Ky.,

lets" by Eliza Calvert Hall, which has probably done more to renew interest in weaving for both layman and weaver than any other book, is closely tied to Kentucky. Even today, after twenty-five years, pleasant recollections of this early lover of the old coverlets crop up in Warren, Barren, and other Kentucky counties. Early in the twentieth century, several of the mountain schools did notable work in reviving weaving in their communities. The present research by Lou Tate into early Kentucky handweavings is recent. She started weaving as a hobby in 1927, and after stumbling onto some very early drafts in 1928, she began researching for other early American handweavings. In 1933, Miss Tate decided upon weaving as a profession, continuing the research, teaching a limited number of students highly interested in the creative pos-



Illustration 3 "Courtesy of the J. B. Speed Memorial Museum" Ky.,



Illustration 4 "Courtesy of the J. B. Speed Memorial Museum" Ky.,

sibilities of weaving, and weaving authentic reproductions and individually designed modern textiles. The exhibition FOLK ARTS OF KENTUCKY, May 22 to November 16, 1937, Folk Arts Center New York was assembled by Miss Tate and included many outstanding items of early Kentucky handweavings. The exhibition KENTUCKY HANDWEAVINGS included over three hundred early drafts, nearly two thousand copies and photographs of early drafts or coverlets, dyeing recipes, old account books having references to weaving, besides old pieces of textiles in the division of the exhibit pertaining to the research, and included reproductions and modern designs in recently woven textiles in the division of the exhibit pertaining to present day weavings.

Tho there is no formal weaving organization in Kentucky, many of those interested in the old weavings exchange drafts and photographs, swap dyeing recipes, help one weaver find a good cotton spinner, help another weaver locate some old man who remembers how to make the little loom used in Kentucky for making saddle girts, or aid some beginning enthusiast to take the draft from her grandmother's coverlets. Even tho the prospect of a textile museum is far in the future, they are locating items for that potential museum; and several of these weavers have small museum collections for their loom rooms. The exhibition of KENTUCKY HANDWEAVINGS has a wide appeal to the layman interested in textiles, to school groups, to art groups, to those interested in Americana, and especially to weavers.

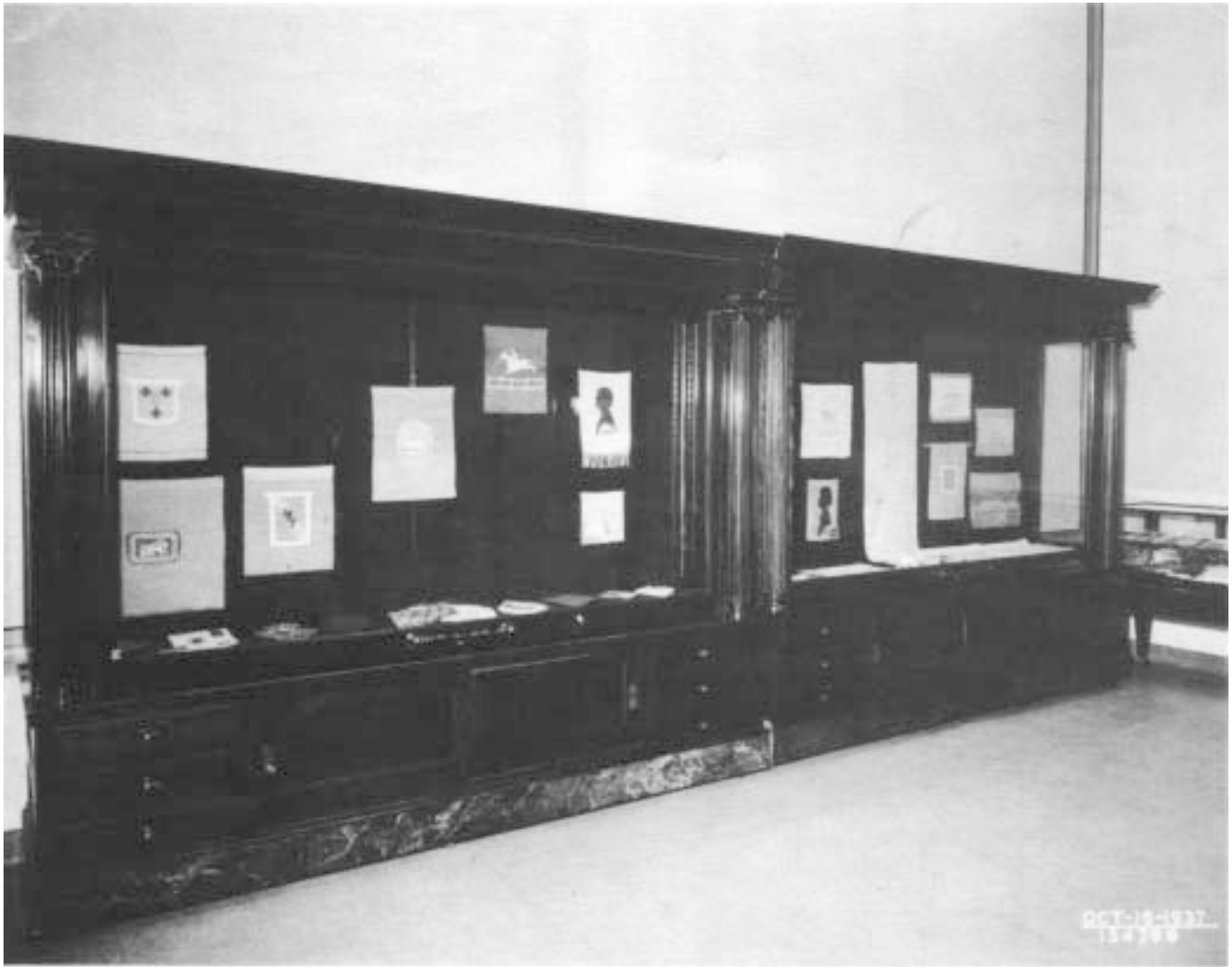


Illustration 2

KENTUCKY HANDWEAVINGS—Photograph Courtesy J. B. Speed Museum, Louisville, Ky., showing modern weavings—Carden Arms—1934.

A LEOPARD MAKES HIS KILL 1936 from 10th c Egypto-Arabic Tothill arms 1935

Schooner Clio of Milwaukee — 1935

Princess — 1933

L. H. H.—Silhouette of Mrs. Herbert Hoover 1932

The Weaver — 1930

Teare Arms

The Weaver 1937 — Brokers Tip, Kentucky Derby

Lou Tate 1930

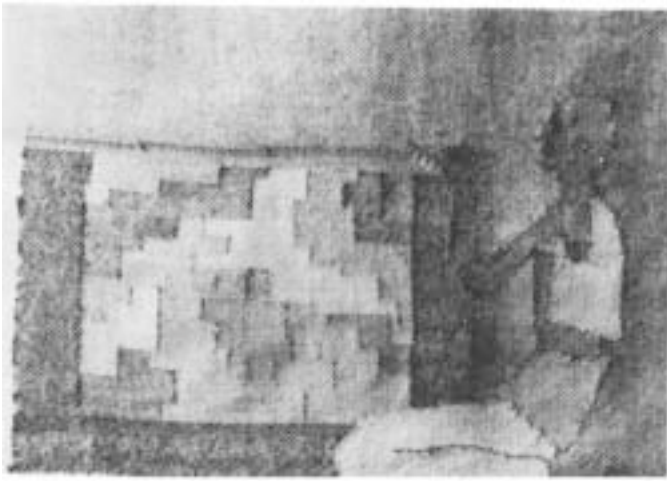
Twenty Grand 1934

The Folly 1935

Warren Arms — 1936

The Viking Ship 1935

Limon Bay — 1935 — Panama



The Weaver — woven 1930

"Courtesy of the J. B. Speed Memorial Museum" Ky.,

During the exhibition Miss Jessie Lambert (occupational therapist in Louisville) and Miss Mary Anderson Courtenay (12 year old weaver) wove at the museum and Mrs. Richard Palmore spun wool on the wheel made by her grandfather.

Students from various classes from second grade thru college wove on a piece. Tho this was their first weaving experience, the result was perfect enough to be added to the Museum textiles.

Then there were several talks on various angles of weaving, research seems to arouse more interest for the layman. Mr. Edward Warder Rannels, head of the Art Department at the University of Kentucky, spoke on "Textiles and Traditions" — giving a nice linking of the art and textile traditions of the past to the present folk art development.

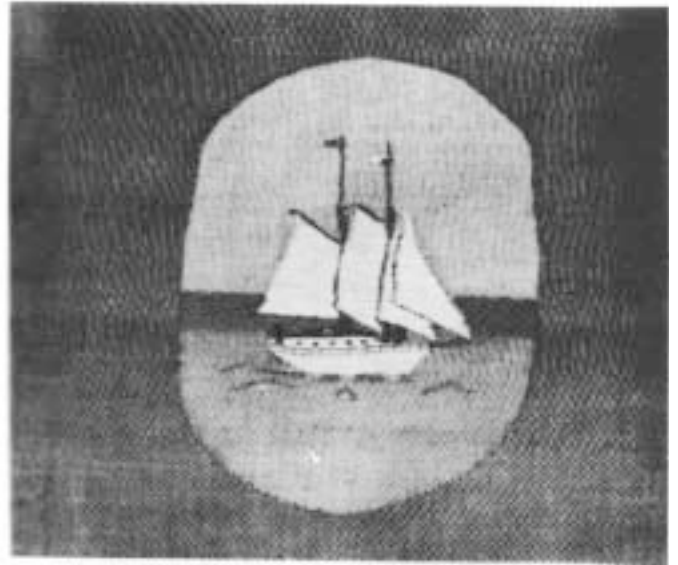
The little weaver "stole the show" — she is a charming unaffected child who was so engrossed with her work that she was totally unaware of the tremendous attention. Incidentally she is a very capable weaver — is working on the cartoon for a tapestry of her home with its lovely century old doorway — and signs her weavings like a master-craftsman.

Concerning Lou Tate and Handweavings
1726 Third Street
Louisville, Kentucky

The J. B. Speed Memorial Museum (Louisville, Ky.) exhibited in the south gallery during October 1937 KENTUCKY HANDWEAVINGS from the research collection and from the modern textiles of Lou Tate.

The Courier-Journal (Louisville, Ky.) had three articles on various angles of the exhibit Sundays Oct. 3, 10, and 31. The following is from section one, October 10, and written by Barbara Anderson, Editor of Kentucky Progress.

. . . "No visitor to the current textile exhibition at the J. B. Speed Memorial Museum can fail to remark that the Kentucky woman's oldest handcraft is by way of becom-



*Schooner Clio of Milwaukee—work copy—Lou Tate 1935
courtesy J. B. Speed Museum, Louisville, Ky.,*

ing her newest hobby. The women who call every day to see Lou Tate's exhibition of old and modern textiles are not there merely to see and to admire. They are making notes and asking questions. One hears of spinning wheels and looms that are being brought out of attics and sought in antique shops, and the ancient heritage of American women bids fair to take its place as a permanent art.

In the old days women wove for two reasons—to protect and comfort their families and to give expression to their artistic impulses, and the modern weaver finds her chief inspiration in the beauty of the designs created by her ancestors. Lou Tate has contributed enormously to the present enthusiastic revival of the art which, like every renaissance, is due to a fresh wave of appreciation of the treasures of the past.

The service of Lou Tate in collecting and preserving early Kentucky textiles and in adapting the art of weaving to modern use is excitingly illustrated by more than 100 pieces, drafts, cartoons, photographs and so on now being shown at the museum.

This afternoon at 3:30 o'clock Miss Tate will talk informally about her rare collection and her adventurous research expeditions into the remote mountain regions where the practice of weaving has continued without interruption from generation to generation and to the rich river lands where, in the leisure provided by greater affluence, the finest examples of old weaving were created.....

Lou Tate is in no sense a prophet without honor in her own country, but the remarkable success of her present exhibit at the Folk Art Center (May 22-Nov. 18, 1937) has added distinct glory to her fame here at home. Her exhibitions in New York, Washington, and other cities have focused national interest on Kentucky's pre-eminence in the folk arts and have proved an impetus to local appreciation of Miss Tate's revelations and interpretations of early Kentucky Culture.

More than 900 visitors, including a party from Lexington, have seen the exhibitions during the past week.... "