

Pick-up or Brocade Weaving on a Simple Heddle Loom

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Weaving on the simple heddle loom deserves to be much better known and more generally used than it now is. For it is entirely practical and useful for teaching weaving in public school work for children as well as for adult groups. And the equipment is small, simple, and very inexpensive when compared with the cost of a large loom.

This type of weaving, in a very primitive way, is still used quite extensively by the Zuni and Pueblo Indians of the Southwest, as well as by the people of Mexico and Guatemala. The sketch of the Indian woman as shown at Figure No. 1 illustrates how the heddle is tied to the belt of the weaver. She is squatted on the ground, her warp tied up somewhere to a stake in the ground, and both of her hands are free to use for her work. Her heddle is made of wood or possibly of reeds, which have holes punched in them, probably by a hot wire. And these are lashed to a strip of wood at the top and bottom to form a frame, with tightly twisted wool cord. On this loom she weaves many different types of fabrics. Especially handsome and very elaborate are the belts she weaves for the ceremonial dancers of her tribe. But this loom is found in similar form in many other parts of the world as well as among our own Southwest Indians. Last summer while in Wisconsin, I saw some very old Norwegian heddles which were beautifully carved and painted in bright colors. The Swedish people use them also. And a year or so ago I saw some interesting belts being woven on this same type of loom by a Latvian woman. This loom has been used by the people of many different nationalities and in many parts of the world.

The runner at Figure No. 2, was woven by one of the mountain tribes in the Philippines. It is made of very fine blue cotton. The warp threads on the edges are of yellow cotton and the borders with the little figures are also of yellow which has been pick-up or brocaded in as will be described later in this article. This illustration is clear enough so these little figures may be copied if desired. They could be used attractively for the weaving of children's place mats or possibly for bibs, with the modern adaptation of the heddle loom which will now be described for you.

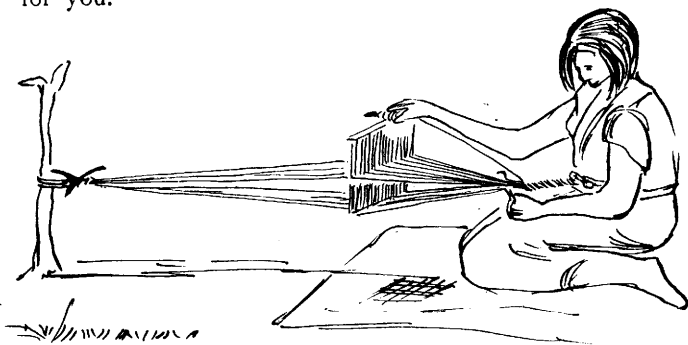


Figure No. 1—Indiana Woman weaving on a heddle loom.

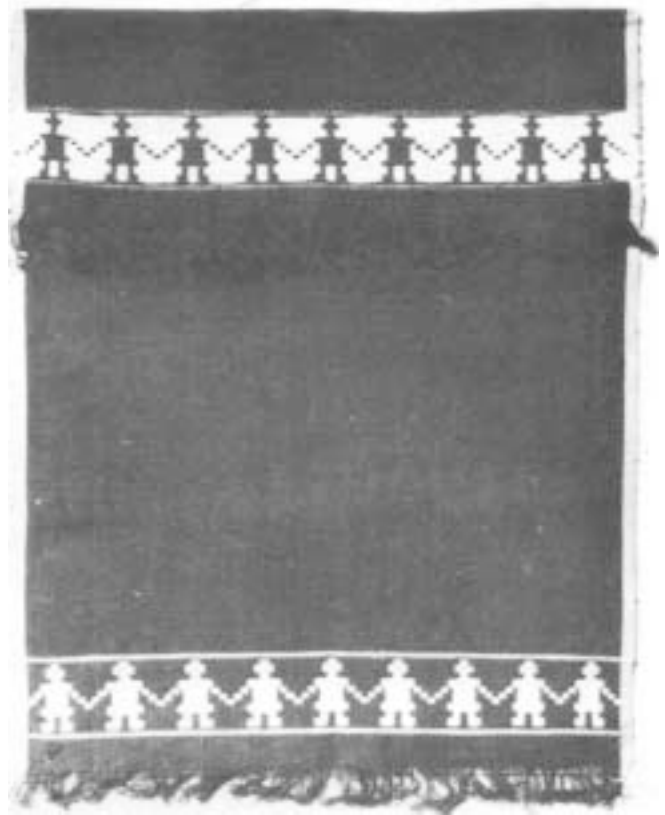


Figure No. 2—Blue Cotton Runner woven in the Philippine Islands.

At Figure No. 3 is a photograph of the heddle threaded and tied into a picture frame already for weaving. The heddles are easier to handle, and to use if tied to a frame of some sort. But they can be tied up to the belt or chair of the weaver, and the same results obtained. The heddles come in two sizes, 10" and 20". The 20" size is somewhat easier to use if attached to a frame with rollers at the back and front, and gives an inexpensive two harness loom to the person who is handy with carpenter tools. It is easy, simple and quick to thread, and even a very long warp can be used if desired. The small heddle is about 10 dents to the inch, and the large one about eight to the inch.

The detail of the setting up and threading of this loom will not be described here for lack of space, but I will refer you to my leaflet *Handweaving News* for August 1936 where this was given in exact detail. The weaving shown on the loom at Figure No. 3 is woven on a mercerized cotton warp No. 5, with dark blue fine chenille for the pick-up pattern, and silver and blue thread for the plain weave or tabby back of the pattern. The photograph at Figure No. 4 shows an old Russian runner, and if you look at this closely you will see the same border on this piece as on the loom at Figure No. 3. But carried out in



Figure No. 3—Photograph of simple heddle loom ready for weaving.

entirely different yarns and in an entirely different weaving technique. This piece is to be for a bag. The detail of its pattern shown at Figure No. 5. The other six designs for borders on this runner were given in November 1936 Handweaving News, and will not be repeated here.

The bag shown at Figure No. 6 is a bag of white silk bouclé for the plain weave, with silver tinsel for the pattern. It is mounted on a small especially designed bag frame, also in white, $4\frac{1}{2}$ " long. These frames can also be obtained in crystal, blue, wood, or black, and make a very attractive small bag for evening or afternoon dressy wear, and they are quite inexpensive.

This same technique can be used with almost any type of yarn, and yarn can be used for the warp also if it is smooth and does not rough up too much in the weaving. The warp used in this case was also mercerized cotton No. 5. As the depth of this bag is only $4\frac{1}{4}$ ", only one width of the material was necessary, the fold coming on the bottom of the bag.

Weave as follows:—Two inches of plain tabby weave with the white silk bouclé. Then with the warp flat, with a black pick-up stick or shuttle, go over three threads and under three threads all across the width of the warp. Then throw a shot of plain weave. Then with the silver, go over and under the same warp threads as before, all across the width of the warp. Then put in the opposite shot of plain weave with the silk bouclé. Now 4 shots of silver in plain tabby weave.



Figure No. 4—An old Russian Runner.

Do alternate plain weave between each row of the picked up pattern as you would for over-shot weaving. Repeat over 3 and under 3, as at the beginning. Then 2 shots white plain weave.

(Continued weaving of Bag at Figure No. 6.)

Now with the silver go over 1 thread and under 7, the next row over 2, and under 5, the next row over 5 and under 3. Be sure and put alternate shots of plain weave between each row of the pick-up. The last two rows are the same, over 7 and under 1. Then for the center do about 2" of plain weave with the silver. Repeat the same border of pattern on the other side of this as you put in for the first, and also repeat then the 2" of plain weave and your bag material is finished, ready to be taken off the loom and made up.

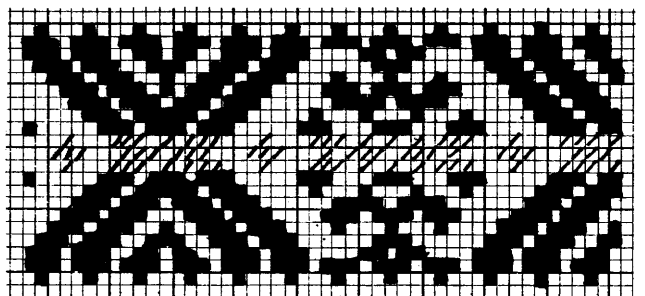


Figure No. 5—Detail drawing of border from Russian Runner.



Figure No. 6—4" White Silk Evening Bag woven on heddle loom.

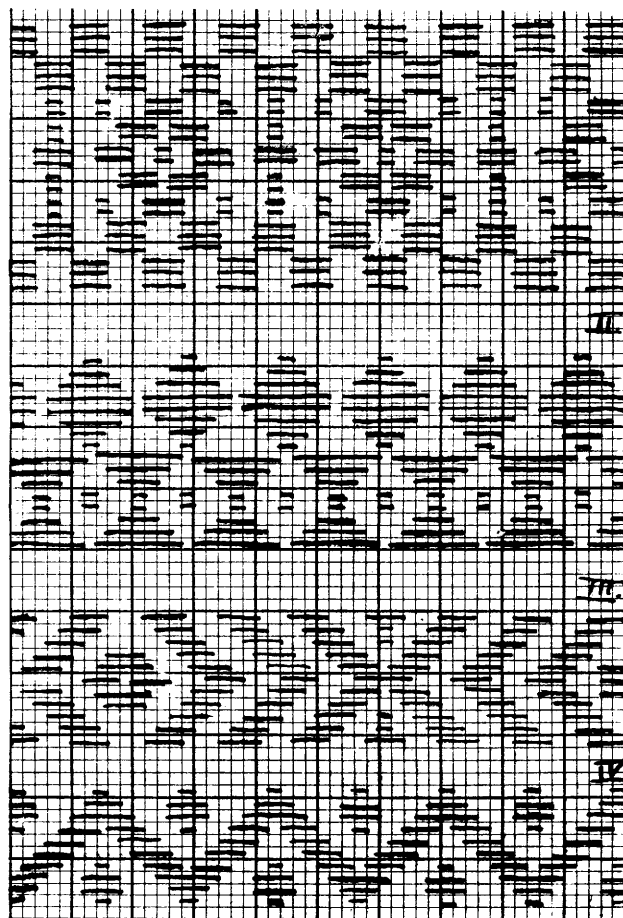


Figure No. 7—Detail of patterns for Pick-up or Brocade Weaving.



Figure No. 8—8" blue bag woven on simple heddle loom.

At figure No. 7 is shown other patterns which are easy for the beginner in this technique to use. And woven with fairly coarse yarns they do not take very long to weave. The bag shown at Figure No. 8 shows how some of these borders are carried out in the weaving. It was woven of blue bouclé, light blue, with a heavy dark blue cotton for the picked up pattern, on a white cotton warp. This bag was mounted on an 8" special bag frame. The depth of the bag took the full width of the 10" heddle so it was necessary to weave two pieces just alike for this bag which has a seam at the bottom.

Many other possibilities lie in the use of this very simple equipment, but I think enough direction has been given for this simple pick-up brocade type of weaving so that it can be easily followed, and you can experiment with cross section paper patterns yourself and develop other designs that are of interest and unusual. Care should be taken not to have the skips on the back of the weaving too long, if the back of the material will show much. But they can be as long as desired for bag material as the back is not visible when made up. Also the designs need not be bi-symmetrical unless you wish to have them so. If you do very much of this type of weaving, you will find a black shuttle of much help in picking up light warp threads.

Any questions concerning the weaving described in this article will be gladly answered by the author if you wish to write her.