Borders

by MARY M. ATWATER

The effect of a piece of weaving often depends largely on the design and arrangement of the border, and weavers often find the choice of a border for a particular piece a somewhat difficult little problem. No rules can be formulated, as each such problem is a special problem, but there are a few generalities that may be stated, and that will prove helpful.

In the first place, what things require borders? and what is the value of a border?

In a general way, all such things as coverlets, table pieces, blankets, rugs, and so on — that stand as units, not as yardage,—need borders. The border gives a finished effect, like the frame about a picture. Without a border such pieces give the effect of lengths of yardage chopped off to suit convenience and do not give the effect as a well-planned whole.

A coverlet, in particular, should always have a border, as I think everyone will agree—but whether this border should be wide or narrow, plain or elaborate, heavy or coarse in detail, depends not only on the main pattern used for the weaving but also on the size and shape of the bed on which the proposed coverlet will be used, and on other considerations.

In a general way, if the pattern used for the coverlet is a large and elaborate one, the border should be plain and comparatively narrow; but if the main pattern is a small and compact figure, giving a rather plain all-over effect, the border should be wide and elaborate. Contrast between border and main pattern is the essence of the thing, though of course the border and the main pattern should harmonize in general style. For instance it would be very unpleasant to see a border in Finnweave around a coverlet in overshot weaving.

It is true that theoretically any pattern in overshot weaving may be used as a border with any other pattern in this weave, but from a practical point of view this is far from being a safe rule. The figure used for a border should not even approximate the main pattern in size and effect or the result will appear more like a mistake in threading than like a border.

All this may make the thing seem unduly complicated. As a matter of fact there are several easy solutions. Most coverlets are made with a fairly large pattern as the top of the bed is the surface to be decorated, and a small figure is monotonous over so large an expanse. The simplest possible border — I am dealing now with coverlets done in the overshot weave—is to thread the border in plain twill: 1, 2, 3, 4, and repeat,—4, 3, 2, 1, and repeat, —for the desired width. This produces a very plain, almost solid effect of wavy lines, good for a narrow border with a rather compact pattern, though too monotonous for a wide border, and not altogether satisfactory for top and bottom borders—especially if the main pattern includes some long skips — as single long floats of weft are impractical. This threading, therefore, is not often used. However it makes a good border for such a pattern as

the small single Chariot-Wheel, especially when used in the following manner: three inches plain twill, one complete figure of the pattern, three inches of twill, and then the main threading.

A modification of the twill border is to thread as at (b), Diagram No. 1. This is a twill arrangement of four-thread pattern blocks. Six-thread blocks may be used if the smallest blocks of the main figure are six-thread blocks. This border arrangement is often used, — probably because it is so easy — but it must be admitted that it is usually far from handsome. The only class of patterns with which it is decorative is the "radiating" class — patterns like "Sunrise" and "Double Bow-Knot." It should never be used for a wide border as it is too monotonous, and altogether lacking in distinction.

The threading oftenest used for coverlet borders in overshot weaving is the "Diamond," in one or another of its many forms. Most coverlet patterns of the Colonial style include a small cross or diamond figure, and when this is the case this part of the main threading, repeated as required, may be depended on to make a satisfactory threading for the border. There are many forms of the diamond figure, but the two main forms are the four-block diamond, which has its two returns on different blocks, and the five-block form which returns each time on the same block. The first makes an open diamond and the second makes a diamond with a dot in the center.

Of course these figures may be written to return on any of the four pattern blocks, and in using the diamond threading for a border it is essential to use the one that makes its returns on the same block or blocks as the returns of the main figure. For convenience, I have shown on the diagram at (c 1), (c 2), (c 3) and (c 4) the four possible forms of the simple four-block diamond. These threadings, when woven as drawn in produce exactly the same figure, of course. The one to select for a border threading for a coverlet is the one that corresponds to the main figure in the matter of the blocks on which the pattern returns. In the same manner I have shown on Diagram No. 1 the four possible forms of the five-block diamond or "Russian Diaper" pattern at (d 1), (d 2), (d 3) and (d 4).

The diamond pattern, of course, takes many other forms. There are sometimes six-block diamonds, and sometimes diamonds in which the return blocks are larger than the others. For lack of space these cannot be shown here. Reference is made to draft No. 19, page 161. of my "Shuttle-Craft Book,"—"The White Mountain Coverlet." For this pattern the 26 threads from thread 111 to and including thread 136 may be used with excellent effect as a border threading, repeated as required.
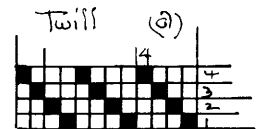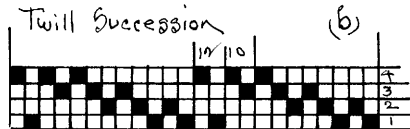
The threadings mentioned above are all suggested for patterns written in the regular manner—to "twill." But we have many patterns in which all or part of the figure is written "on opposites." For these we should use a corresponding form of the twill succession or the diamond, of

Border Threadings.
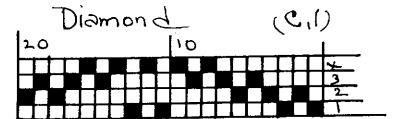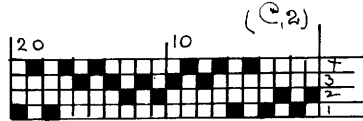
(a) Plain twill, —

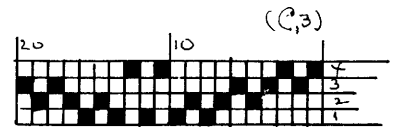(b) twill successio of blocks
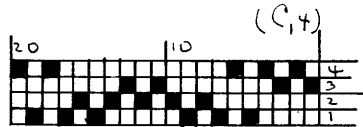
(c) Diamond.
   1, returns on 1-2 and 1-4
   2.   "   "   1-2 " 2-3
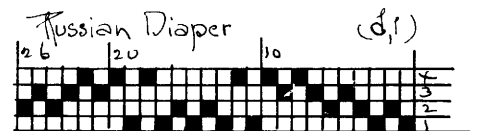   3,   "   "   3-4 " 1-4
   4,   "   "   3-4 " 2-3
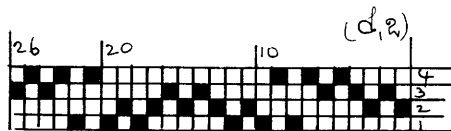
(d) Russian Diaper
   1, returns on 1-2
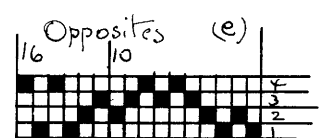   2,   "   "   2-3
   3,   "   "   3-4
   4,   "   "   1-4
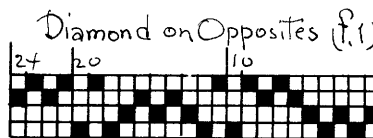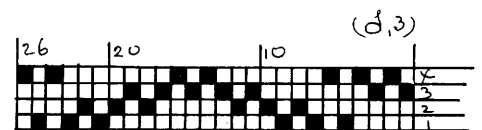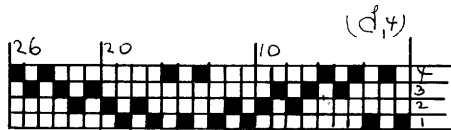
(e) Twill succession on opposites

(f) Diamond on opposites
   1, returns on 1-2 and 2-3
   2, returns on 1-2 and 1-4
   3, returns on 2-3 and 3-4
   4, returns on 1-2 and 1-4

(g) Diamond, partly on opposites
   1, returns on 1-2 and 3-4
   2, returns on 1-2 and 3-4
   3, returns on 1-4 and 2-3
   4, returns on 1-4 and 2-3

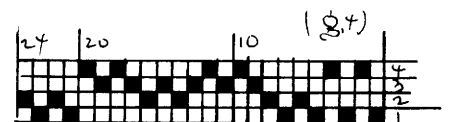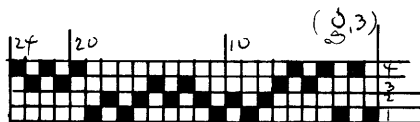Select the threading that returns on the same blocks as the main pattern
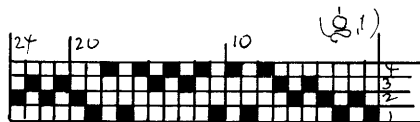

Twill Succession (b)

Twill (a)

Diamond (c,1)

(c,2)

(c,3)

(c,4)

Russian Diaper (d,1)

(d,2)

(d,3)

(d,4)

Opposites (e)

Diamond on Opposites (f,1)
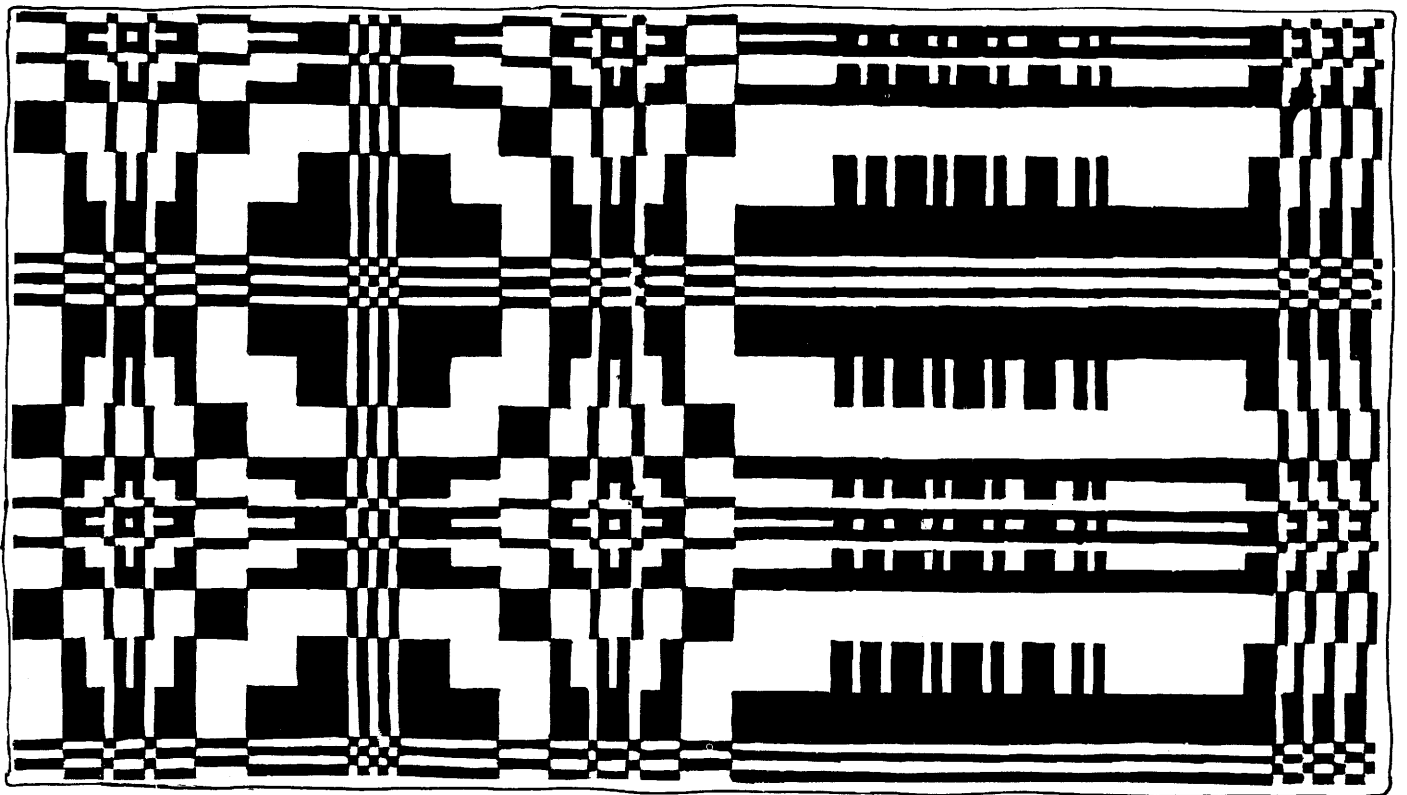
(f,2)

(f,3)

(f,4)

(g,1)

(g,2)

(g,3)

(g,4)

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Diagram No. 2.
Crackle-Weave Pattern with a
Simulated "Pine-Tree" border.

Tie-up

(a)
Narrow Border
3 times
Selvage

(b)   Simulated "Pine Tree" Border

260 256 208   184 168   156 140   124 108   92 22 20   4

← 6 →← 18 →   ← 4 →   ← 4 →   ← 4 →   ← 18 →← 4 →
times times   times   times   times   times times

Main Figure (c)

238 24 212 166 186 162   142 118 116 92 90 66 58 56 48   18 10 8

← 6 →← 6 →← 6 →   ← 6 →← 6 →← 6 →← 2 →← 2 →   ← 2 →← 2 →
times times times   times times times times times   times times
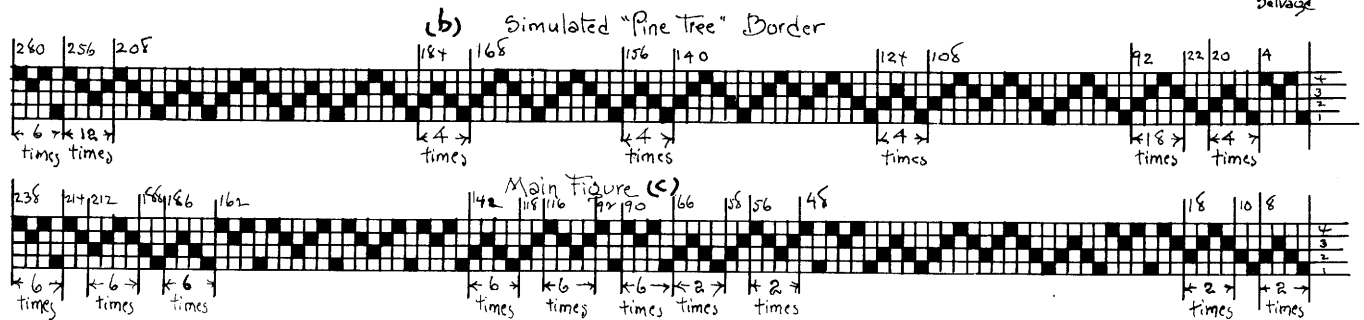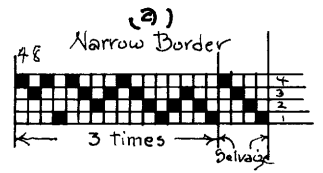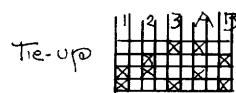
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course. At (e) Diagram No. 1 is given the threading for the twill arrangement of blocks for use with such a pattern; and at (f 1), (f 2), (f 3), and (f 4) the four forms of a diamond on opposites. In this diamond arrangement the two blocks that make the cross are in opposition. The drafts at (g 1), (g 2), (g 3) and (g 4) give the four forms of a diamond in which the two blocks making the cross are overlapping blocks, with a jump to opposites between the crosses. This is a good form of diamond for use with certain patterns partly on opposites. The threading to choose, of course, is the one that corresponds to the main pattern.

In weaving any of these border threadings, treadle as drawn in. Weaving the border threading produces across the main threading the same border that is produced along the sides when weaving the main figure across the border threading.

One point of importance is to arrange the joining of the border and main pattern correctly. It is astonishing to note how many coverlets — old ones as well as modern ones—are faulty at this point, the main figure being cut off in the center or left otherwise incomplete to run into the border. Unless the pattern can be clearly visualized from the draft it is a good idea to test this matter on paper before threading the loom.

Borders may vary greatly in width. The border should be wide enough to make a proper frame around the main figure but not wide enough to be monotonous. The shape of the bed also makes a difference. For a high, narrow bed the overhang of the coverlet may be as much in evidence as the top of the bed. For such a case a wide and elaborate border is desirable. If, however, the bed is not high and the overhang is not deep the border should be plain and narrow. It is unpleasant to have the border extend up over the curve of the edge. At least to most tastes this is so. I do not know why. It is better to allow the main figure to extend down over the edge a little.

Probably the most celebrated of all coverlet borders is the famous "Pine Tree." It is not possible to make a Pine-Tree border in overshot weaving, for obvious reasons, but a simulated Pine-Tree can be produced with some patterns in four-harness crackle weave. Such a pattern is given on Diagram No. 2. This is a three-block figure arranged from an ancient Colonial pattern in the summer and winter weave. It will be noted that the 3-4 shed is not used. The little 48-thread border at (a) may be used by itself as a border for the pattern if desired, or the first 70 threads of the main pattern—draft (c)—may be repeated for a border if preferred. However the Pine-Tree arrangement makes a handsome effect. The threading, of course, pro-duces the side borders. For the bottom border treadle: 3, 5 shots (note that treadle 3 corresponds to treadle 4 on the standard tie-up, treadle 3 being omitted); treadle 2, 5 shots; treadle 1, 5 shots. Repeat this three times. Then: treadle 3, 5 shots; treadle 2, 13 or 15 shots (for the foot of the tree); treadle 1 as may be required for the trunk of the tree; treadle 2 for the branches; treadle 1 for the top of the tree.

The border as written will be about 12″ wide, and is suitable for a coverlet with a deep overhang. The border can be made narrower by omitting part of the trunk and top of the tree and some of the branches, and by omitting one or two repeats of the narrow border.

The Pine-Tree border is at its best for coverlets in the summer and winter weave. It can be used with any pattern that includes a three-block figure with overlapping blocks—a figure of the "snow-ball" family. The border may be designed in many ways and a great variety of pine-tree figures will be found among the ancient pieces. The simple form of tree shown on Diagram No. 3 is usually satisfactory. Of course it develops a different "tree" with each pattern. On the diagram are shown three patterns, the same border threading used for each. With pattern (a) we have a single tree; with pattern (b) a double tree; with pattern (c) a group of three small trees.

The threading, of course, produces the side borders when the main figure is woven. To weave the top and bottom borders follow the design of the side borders as shown on the diagram. These borders are not woven as drawn in. The corner will show a design of cross-bars—disregard the corner in weaving and let it take care of itself.
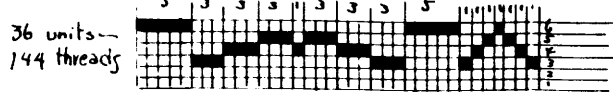
The borders suggested may, of course, be used for other things as well as for coverlets. For rugs and runners, however, the side borders should be very narrow and the main borders be in the weaving, at the ends. In using the crackle-weave pattern for a rug, for instance, thread the side borders to the narrow border at (a) and use the tree figure only in the end borders,—produced in the treadeling. The patterns on Diagram No. 3 if used for rugs should be arranged in a similar manner. This arrangement of borders is also desirable for table runners and similar pieces. Hangings are very handsome when threaded in this manner and woven with successive tree-figures, the figure proper not being woven at all, or only for the upper part of the piece.

The subject of borders will be continued in a later article, which will treat of borders for linens, borders in pattern all around a plain center, and so on.
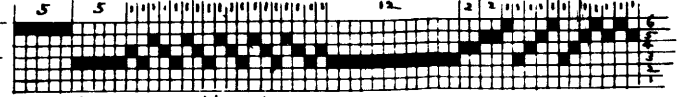
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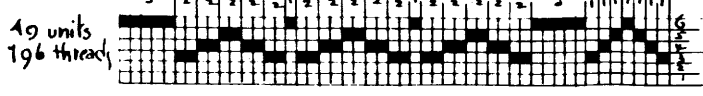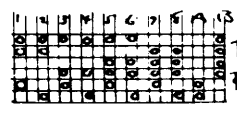# "Pine-Tree" Border, Summer and Winter Weave.

"Single Snow-Ball" (a)

36 units —
144 threads

"Pine-Tree" Border

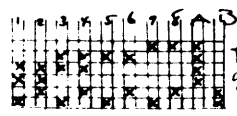56 units — 224 threads

"Nine Slates" (C)

19 units
196 threads

"Double Snow-Ball" (b)

53 units, 212 threads

Tie-Up —
(a) and (c)
Sinking Shed

Tie-Up (b)
Sinking Shed

Tie-Up —
(a) and (c) —
Rising Shed

Tie-up (b)
Rising Shed
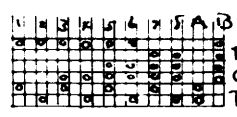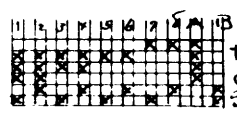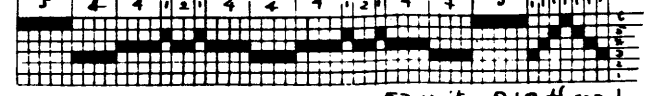
Pattern (a)

Pattern (b)

Pattern (c)

M.M.A. 1936