

HAND-WOVEN COVERLETS
IN THE
NEWARK MUSEUM

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NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

1947

NOTE

The collection of American hand-woven coverlets in the Newark Museum contains many fine examples of especial interest to weavers. It is hoped the illustrations will help in identifying the old coverlet patterns, and the format will provide a practical working handbook. Miss Margaret E. White of the Museum Staff has made a study of coverlets and has compiled this catalogue.

We have the permission of the publishers to quote from the books here listed:

- Atwater, Mary Meigs *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving* New York, The Macmillan Company, 1935
- Eaton, Allen H. *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1937
- Hall, Eliza Calvert *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* Boston, Little, Brown & Company, 1925
- Wright, Richardson *Hawkers & Walkers in Early America* 2 ed. Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Company, 1927

Beatrice Winsor, Director

AMERICAN HAND-WOVEN COVERLETS

Hand-woven coverlets are examples of folk art, for just as our folk paintings were done by self-taught artists and itinerant limners so our coverlets were woven by amateurs in every household as well as by trained itinerant weavers.

We admire the simple dignity of the patterns and the richness of the colors yet often fail to appreciate the labor involved in the preparations for weaving a coverlet. Many a housewife trod twenty miles in a day as she walked to and fro at the great wheel spinning the woolen yarn required for her weft. However, the preliminary tasks could be forgotten once the weaver sat at the loom.

During the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century coverlets were woven throughout the country. Accustomed to the handsomely appointed beds of the English or European home she had left behind, the pioneer woman tried to recreate in her new home an atmosphere of well-being. Facing loneliness and privation, the housewife undoubtedly found release in making something colorful and lovely. There must have been infinite satisfaction in watching blue flowers appear in a coverlet, or in adorning the four-poster with work of her own hands.

As Allen Eaton says, "There are many forms of hand weaving in America besides the coverlet, but it is doubtful if any other will continue to hold the interest of our people as this pioneer textile does. The opportunity to make a thing of use and beauty is a rare experience."

The Museum is greatly indebted to Mrs. Mary Meigs Atwater for her helpful comments on the weaves and patterns of our coverlets

Margaret E. White

COVERLET COLORS

Blue was the predominant color in our homespun coverlets for the simple reason that indigo was the most readily available dyestuff. It was also effective and durable. Until the middle of the seventeenth century, the woad plant was used in England and the continent as the source of blue dye. The indigo plant comes largely from India. It gives a stronger and finer blue than the woad, but its quality and color is said to be improved by mixing woad dye with it. Wild indigo has always grown plentifully in our South and blue dye is still obtained from it although synthetic indigo came into general use after 1890.

To obtain indigo dye the plant was bruised and fermented in vats of water, depositing a blue powdery substance which was collected and dried. The indigo tub was a regular feature of the big kitchens in early homes.

Alice Morse Earle tells in *Home Life in Colonial Days* how blue dye was obtained from the deep purple-blue paper that came wrapped around the big cones of loaf-sugar. These wrapping papers were carefully saved and soaked in order to obtain from them the rich unusual blue tint for some choice bit of weaving.

"In South Carolina Mrs. Charles Cotesworthy Pinckney introduced the cultivation of indigo in 1745, and for half a century, until cotton took its place in the fields, indigo was a profitable crop for the people of the province. An acre of good land would produce 80 pounds of indigo, and one negro could take care of two acres. After the Revolution, indigo was raised so cheaply in the East Indies that its cultivation here stopped. . . .

"For half a century, the indigo peddler made his regular visits to the Connecticut Valley, going from town to town on horseback, and he was a welcome salesman." Wright *Hawkers & Walkers in Early America* p. 56. Sometimes the indigo peddler carried brown, black, saffron and other colors in his stock.

Nor did such peddlers journey only through New England. In Horn's *Overland Guide to California*, referred to by Wright as the Baedeker of the '49ers, there is an advertisement of a Mr. Sypher in Fort Des Moines, Iowa, who could supply peddlers with various commodities, including dyestuffs, "at the lowest possible rates."

Those familiar with the warm rich tones of old coverlets will agree

that "Home-dyed colors kindly meller down
Better than these new fatched-on ones from town."
Ann Cobb *Kivers**

Flowers from one's garden, weeds by the roadside, barks from woodland trees, produced the dyestuffs. "Enormous quantities of roots, leaves, bark, etc. were required to produce strong colors. The vegetable matters must be boiled a long time in order to extract the coloring agent, and then the liquor must be strained off and reheated before the material can be dyed.

"All dyes 'take' better on wool than on any other material, and this may be one of the reasons why in the old coverlets it is always the wool that makes the colored part of the effect, the ground being bleached or 'natural' cotton or linen." Atwater* p. 73

The madder plant, which seems to have ranked second to indigo in importance, was both home grown and imported. It gave reds and pinks, as did also logwood and cochineal, camwood, Nicaragua and Brazil woods. These were included in the cargoes of ships returning from foreign parts.

According to *Worst Foot-Power Loom Weaving*, madder and cochineal were sometimes used in combination or else combined with Brazil wood or bedstraw roots. The madder plant was widespread in Europe and Asia and was also native to Mexico. The "Turkey red" so popular everywhere in the last century was produced from madder, so also were the lovely brownish rose tones in some of our coverlets.

Pliny the Elder, A. D. 23-79, tells of cultivating madder in the neighborhood of Rome. By the end of the fifteenth century madder cultivation had reached a high standard in Holland where madder led the world's production for some 300 years. To restore the cultivation of the madder plant in France, Louis Philippe 1830-1848, ordered the trousers and caps of French soldiers to be dyed with madder. By 1869 the dye was produced synthetically.

Cochineal is a brilliant crimson dye which comes from Mexico. It is obtained from the dried bodies of insects. Cochineal was known to the Aztecs who used the dye as an article of tribute. When, in 1512, the Spaniards landed in Mexico they became acquainted with the red pigment used by the natives both for dyes and paints. The Spaniards

* Eaton *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* p. 112

* The *Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. By permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers

shipped the cochineal to Spain whence its use spread to other countries of Europe. The production of cochineal was carried successfully to other parts of Central America, the Canary Islands and Java.

These are the colors most commonly used in our early American coverlets. The sources for black, yellow, brown, and tan dyes are discussed under the description of the various coverlets in the Museum's collection. New England weavers rarely used other dyes than indigo, madder and some walnut colors. Southern weavers were more venturesome. In *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* Eaton has a chapter on herbs and dyes as used by present-day weavers, many of these recipes dating back to pioneer days.



LOOM ROOMS AND LOOM HOUSES

For its Textile Exhibit of 1937 the Museum sought the help of Mrs. Marion Nicoll Rawson, Miss Lou Tate, Mrs. Kate Milner Rabb, and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, regarding the type of room in which early hand-loom weaving was done. Through their interest and cooperation the following information was gathered.

As is well known, the simply constructed houses of colonial and pioneer days had a "common room" in which all activity centered. Here some members of the family slept. Here, at the big fireplace, the cooking was done. Here would be found the loom and wheels. Later, as the house was enlarged, the big loom was moved to another room.

In New England, according to Mrs. Rawson, the loom room appears to have been in the garret or wherever in the house there was free space in which the clatter of the loom would not disturb the household. Mrs. Rawson describes such a room in a New Hampshire garret. The big loom of the 1700's stands in deep shadow with the weaver's bench placed near the one small window in the end peak. On the wall nearby hangs a wedge-shaped bobbin basket into which the empty bobbins were tossed. Spool-rack, spinning wheel, quill wheels, swingling knife, old pulleys and worn harnesses complete the picture. Mrs. Rawson considers that the loom room as set up at Wiggin's Old Tavern in Northampton, Massachusetts, is the nearest approach to an actual one that can be seen hereabouts.

Miss Lou Tate refers to the "common room" of very early homes where all the spinning and weaving for the household was done. Later, in the South and Middle West, this work was shifted either to a separate room or to the loom house. Families who did a good part of their own weaving had fully equipped loom houses. The loom house at Mount Vernon is, of course, still intact and we are told that most of George Washington's clothing was woven there. As is the case at Mount Vernon, the loom house, tool house, barns and other buildings, were back of the main house. Here, too, would be found the "old kitchen" which served some families as a weaving room. Miss Tate writes that loom houses have almost disappeared for, with the decline of weaving, they have been relegated to the chickens or else torn down.

It is interesting that the Society for the Preservation of New Eng-

land Antiquities has no record of loom houses in New England.

Mrs. Rabb tells of a loom house still in existence near Perrysville, Indiana. Another near Columbia, South Carolina, is a type of construction known as picé—that is, clay or dirt faced with lime mortar.



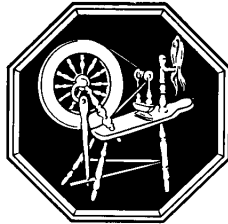
Loom house of picé near Columbia, South Carolina
Courtesy of Mrs. Kate Milner Rabb

“This is probably one of the oldest loom houses in the United States,” writes Mrs. Rabb. She adds that loom houses appear to have been common in Kentucky and Indiana and that they had fireplaces since they were used at all times of year.

Weaving was done not only by members of a household, including the slaves, but also by professional weavers who journeyed from place to place. “These vagabond weavers provided themselves with linen warp and raw cotton. Any surplus of cloth over that which the family required, was taken to the nearest town and sold or bartered. By 1740 merchants began sending agents through the country districts, supplying the weavers with the thread and raw cotton, and receiving cloth in exchange . . . These weavers averaged 12 pence a yard.

“Like other itinerant workmen of the day, the wandering weaver was welcomed by the isolated family, for he carried the tattle of the countryside, and the early weaver soon acquired a towering reputation as a gossip. . . .

“There were loom repairers as well, who travelled about the country, and, in flax districts, flax hecklers. Most of the latter were Scotch-Irish. These estimable people introduced linen manufacture to New England. No less than 10,000 Scotch-Irish weavers, thrown out of work by the decadence of the linen manufacture in Ireland, came to this country between 1771 and 1774.” Wright *Hawkers & Walkers in Early America* pp. 104-5



OVERSHOT WEAVE

“The earliest weaving appears to have been limited to the capacity of the simple four-harness loom. Several weaves are possible on this loom, but the one that admits of the widest variations is the so-called ‘four harness overshot weave,’—and this is the foremost of the colonial weaves. The pattern in this weave consists of ‘skips’ or ‘floats’ of weft material woven over a tabby foundation.” Atwater* p. 47

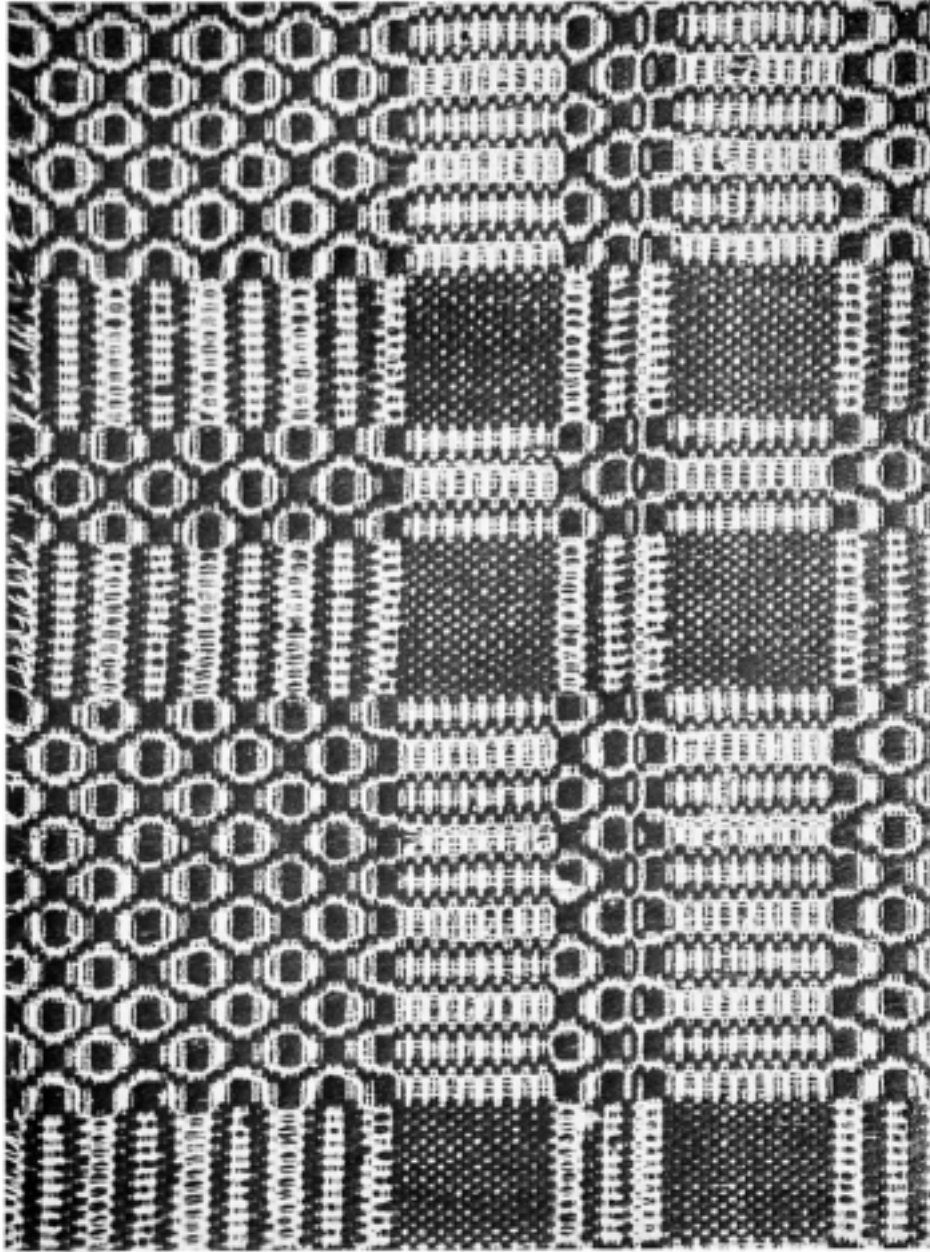
“Coverlets woven by hand if of full width—two yards or more—are always woven in two or more strips and seamed. A coverlet woven full width is not hand-weaving.” Atwater* p. 52. Usually the seam shows so little in the overshot weave that it can hardly be detected. However, this is not always true as notes on our “Rose of Sharon” from the south will indicate

PATTERNS IN OVERSHOT WEAVE

1. Bonaparte’s March
2. Dog Tracks—also called Dogwood Blossoms
3. Double Bow-Knot—also called Double Muscadine Hulls, etc.
4. Fox’s Chase
5. Lover’s Knot—also called Flower Pot, Philadelphia Pavement
6. Plaid—two colors
7. Plaid—five colors
- 8–9. Rose of Sharon—also called Indian War
10. Stars with a Table
11. Sunrise
12. Unidentified—similar to American Beauty
13. Unidentified—snowflake or star
- 14–15. Whig Rose

* *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. By permission of the Macmillan Co., publishers.

BONAPARTE'S MARCH



1. BONAPARTE'S MARCH

Fragment of a coverlet made by Rhoda Alling of Hampton, Connecticut about 1780. Mrs. Atwater gives the additional names "Lily of the Valley" and "Rose in the Wilderness"

Since Napoleon was only eleven years old at the time this coverlet was woven, it would seem that the pattern was earlier than the name. No doubt Rhoda Alling referred to her pattern as a rose or lily.

In the days when this coverlet was made, most households had to produce not only their own bedding and clothes but also to raise the flocks of sheep and cultivate the flax required for fabrics of every kind.

To us, the cleaning, dyeing and carding of wool would seem laborious processes, let alone the spinning and winding of the wool yarn. All this was woman's work.

Flax seed was sown in May, as we sow grass seed, and the young plants were carefully tended by women and children. By early July the plants were ready to be pulled and men did the heavy work of breaking the flax, of swingling and hetcheling. Patient hours were then spent by the women of the household to bleach the skeins of thread after the spinning was done.

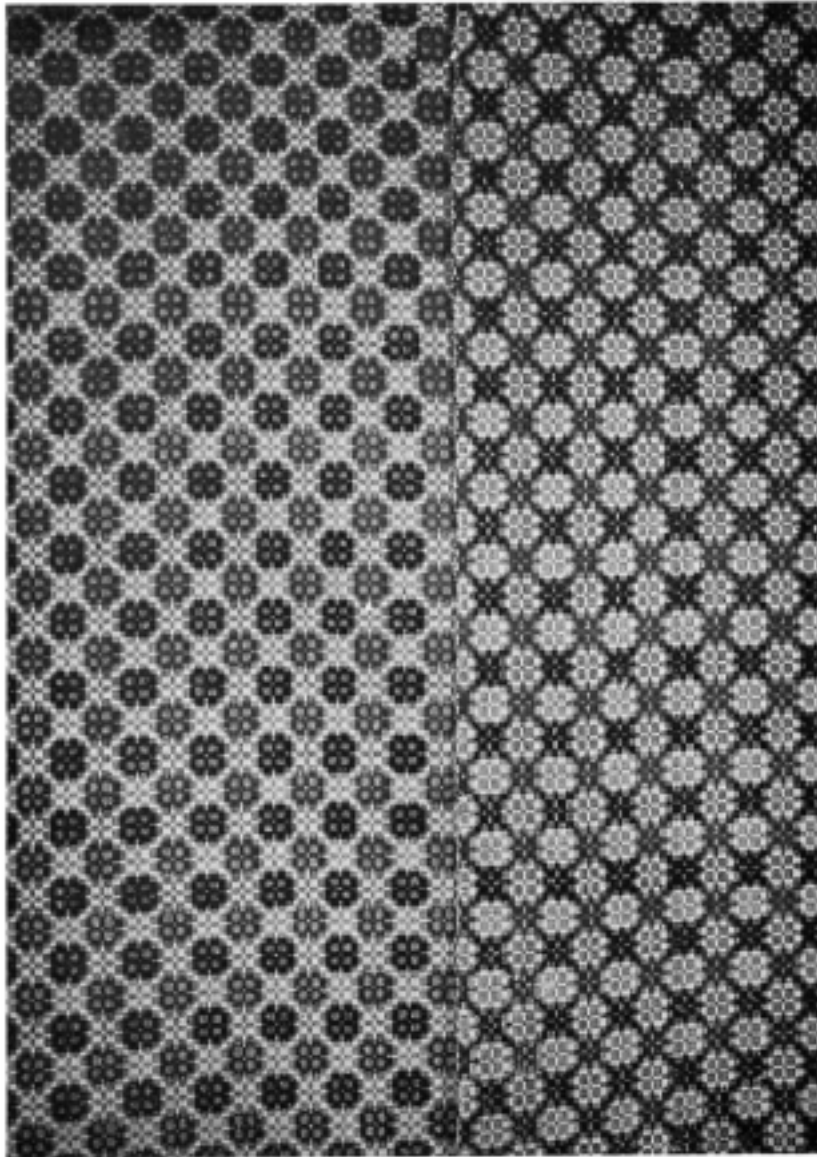
All this preparation and more, was required before one could begin to weave a coverlet

For pattern draft and illustration, see Atwater p. 161 #20; p. 162

Blue and white, 15" x 20½"
Gift of Madison Alling

Acc. no. 23.1912
Photo. no. 8837

DOG TRACKS OR DOGWOOD BLOSSOMS



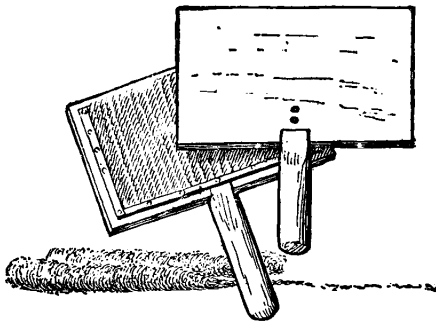
2. DOG TRACKS

Originally belonged to the Shumway family of New Jersey, and passed from them to the Sheldon family of Rutland, Vermont. The coverlet is seamed through the middle and is hemmed across the top on the wrong side. There is a short fringe at the opposite end. "Dogwood Blossoms" may be a happier name for this pattern. Occasionally the name of a coverlet is descriptive of its design, more often it is purely fanciful. Using the imagination one may recognize a sunrise or lilies of the valley, but such names as "Maid of Orleans" or "Missouri Trouble" give no clue as to pattern.

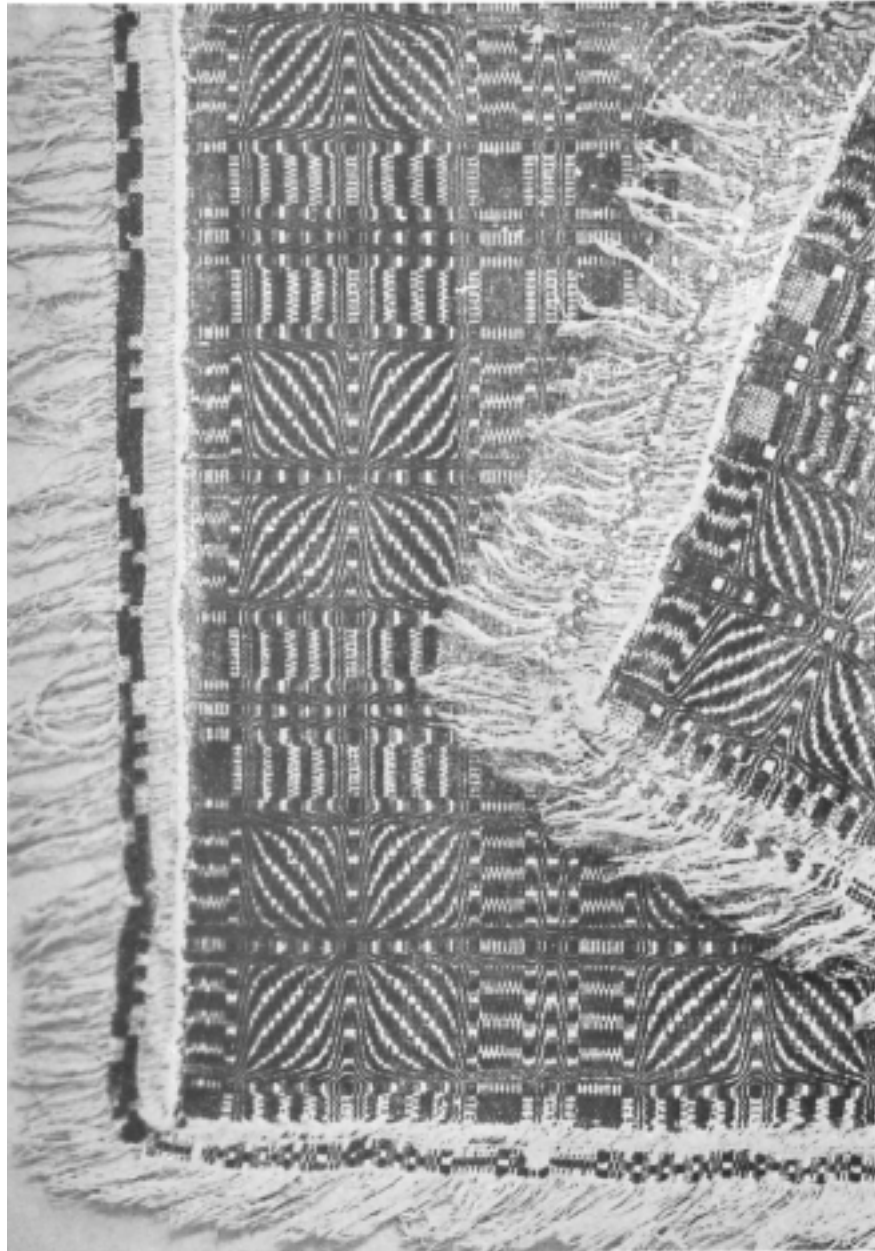
For a variation of the pattern and threading draft, see Atwater p. 167 # 37

Red, blue and white, 74" x 83"
Purchase

Acc. no. 16.473
Photo. no. 9574



DOUBLE BOW-KNOT



3. DOUBLE BOW-KNOT

Made in Vermont. The fringe on one side is woven in summer and winter weave. It is probably of later date than the fringes on the other two sides which appear to have been woven on the same threading as the coverlet.

This pattern goes by various names. Eaton claims it has no less than fifteen. Among them are "Hickory Leaf" in North Carolina; "Double Muscadine Hulls" in Georgia and Mississippi; "Double Bow-Knot" in Kentucky and Rhode Island; "Maple Leaf", "Reed Leaf". Perhaps to the Vermont weaver the pattern was known as "Maple Leaf"?

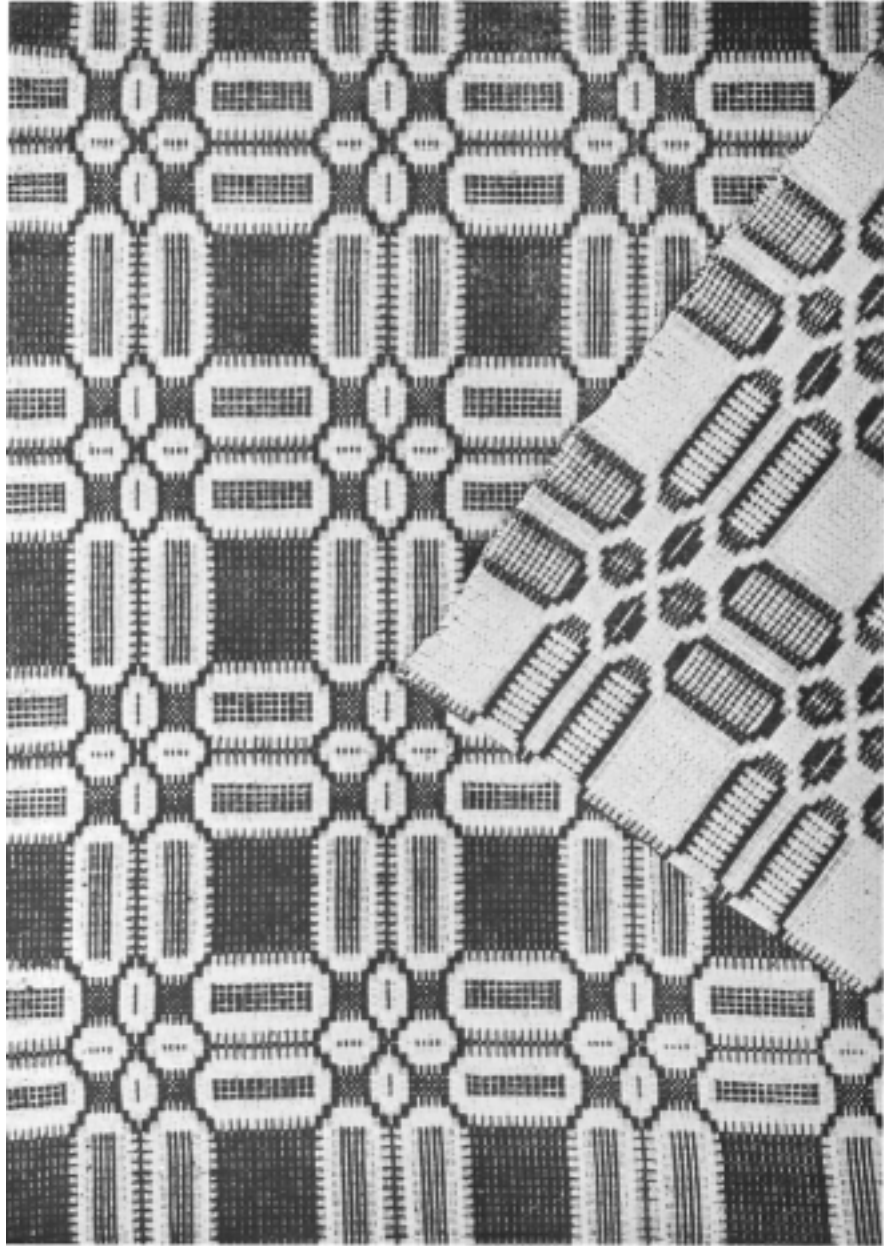
Why Muscadine Hulls? The muscadine is a wild grape found in the South wherever the soil is deep and rich. Because of their delicious flavor muscadine hulls are regarded as the best part of the fruit. Conserve made from the grape skins is a delicacy and is considered a worthy gift. With imagination one may see the double pair of hulls in the design

For a variation of the pattern and threading draft, see Atwater p. 106; p. 191 #115

Blue and white, 84½" square
Purchase

Acc. no. 25.397
Photo. no. 5898

FOX'S CHASE



4. FOX'S CHASE

Perhaps this pattern is so-called because it suggests the imprints of a fox. Mrs. Atwater does not list it. Eliza Calvert Hall mentions a pattern "Fox Trail" and associates the name with North Carolina. We have been told that the pattern called "Fox's Chase" is found in Kentucky.

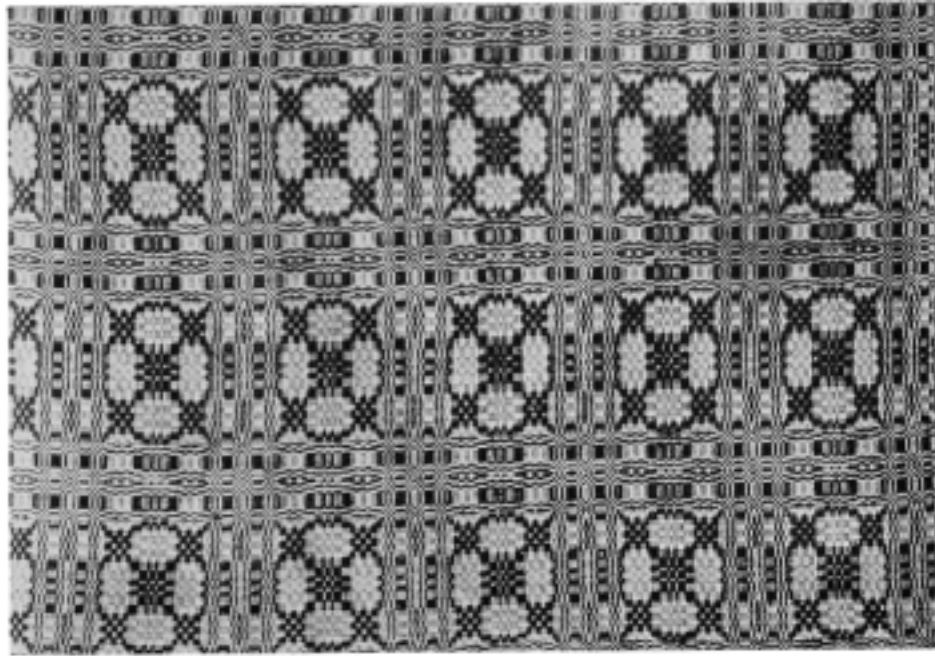
The coverlet is seamed through the center and hemmed at top and bottom.

As may be seen from the examples in this catalogue, coverlets were not the specialty of any one area, but were woven from Vermont and New Hampshire to Georgia and Mississippi. Moreover, while some patterns appear to have been known only in one region—as may be the case with "Fox's Chase"—many were common property throughout the Colonies, exchanged among neighbors and handed down from generation to generation

Blue and white, 69" x 84"
Purchase

Acc. no. 21.180
Photo. no. 5899

LOVER'S KNOT



5. LOVER'S KNOT

"The names of old patterns are quaint and interesting but quite a puzzle, as the same pattern sometimes had half a dozen different names in different parts of the country, and sometimes a name was used in different places for entirely different patterns. Weavers often made slight variations of a traditional pattern and gave the result a new name, and sometimes the same threading had different names according to the manner of threadling—as, for instance, 'Whig Rose' and 'Lover's Knot' which are woven on the same draft." This was Mrs. Atwater's comment on our coverlet.

Turning to Hall's *Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets*, p. 88, we find this referred to as a modification of a Scandanavian pattern—" 'Lover's Knot' in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, and 'Flower Pot' and 'Philadelphia Pavement' in New York."

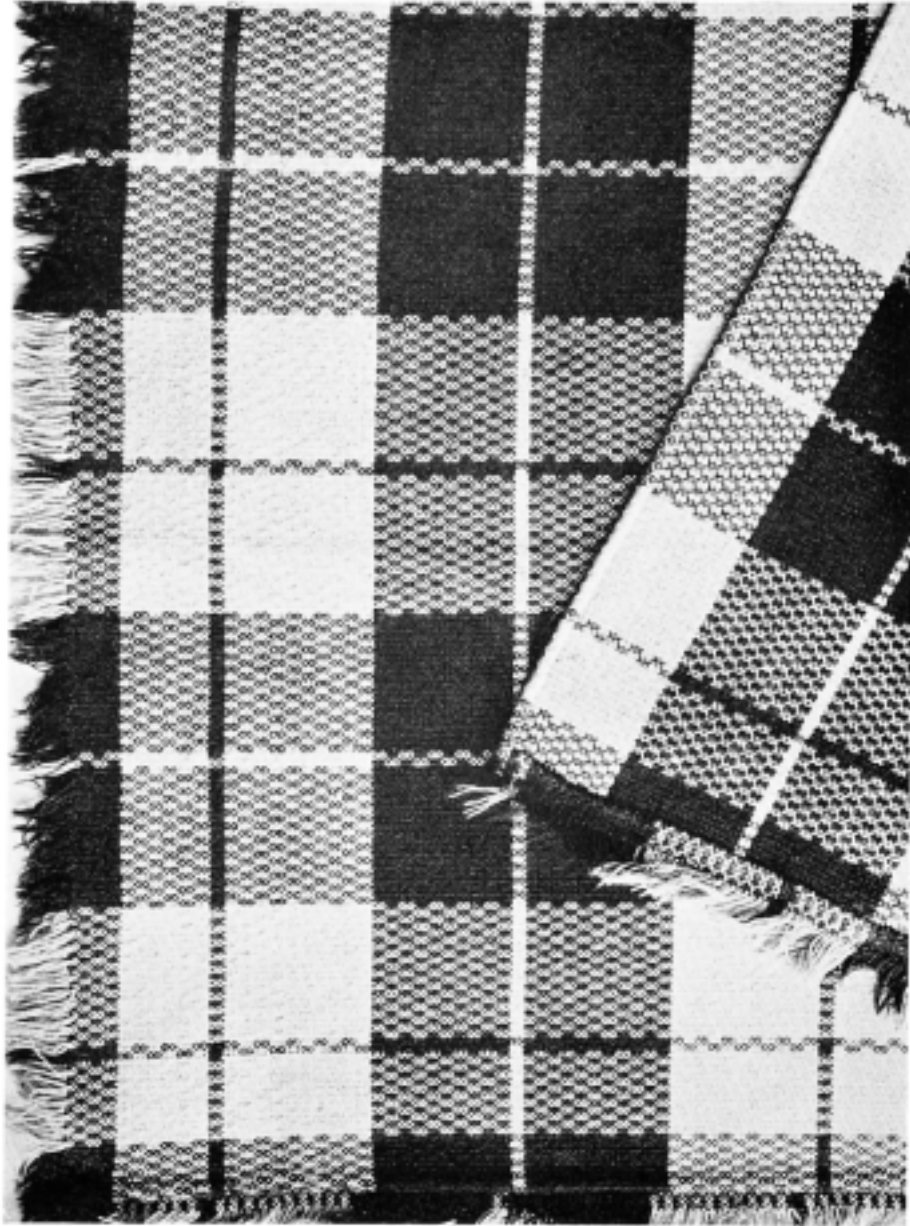
Compare this pattern with the "Whig Rose" in overshot weave, # 14, and with the "Lover's Knot" in double weave woven with roses, # 18. The two lower corners of the coverlet have been cut out and the three sides bound with white linen tape

Reproduced in Atwater p. 176

Blue and white, 84" x 95"
Purchase

Acc. no. 16.667
Photo. no. 4065

PLAID—BROWN AND TAN



6. PLAID

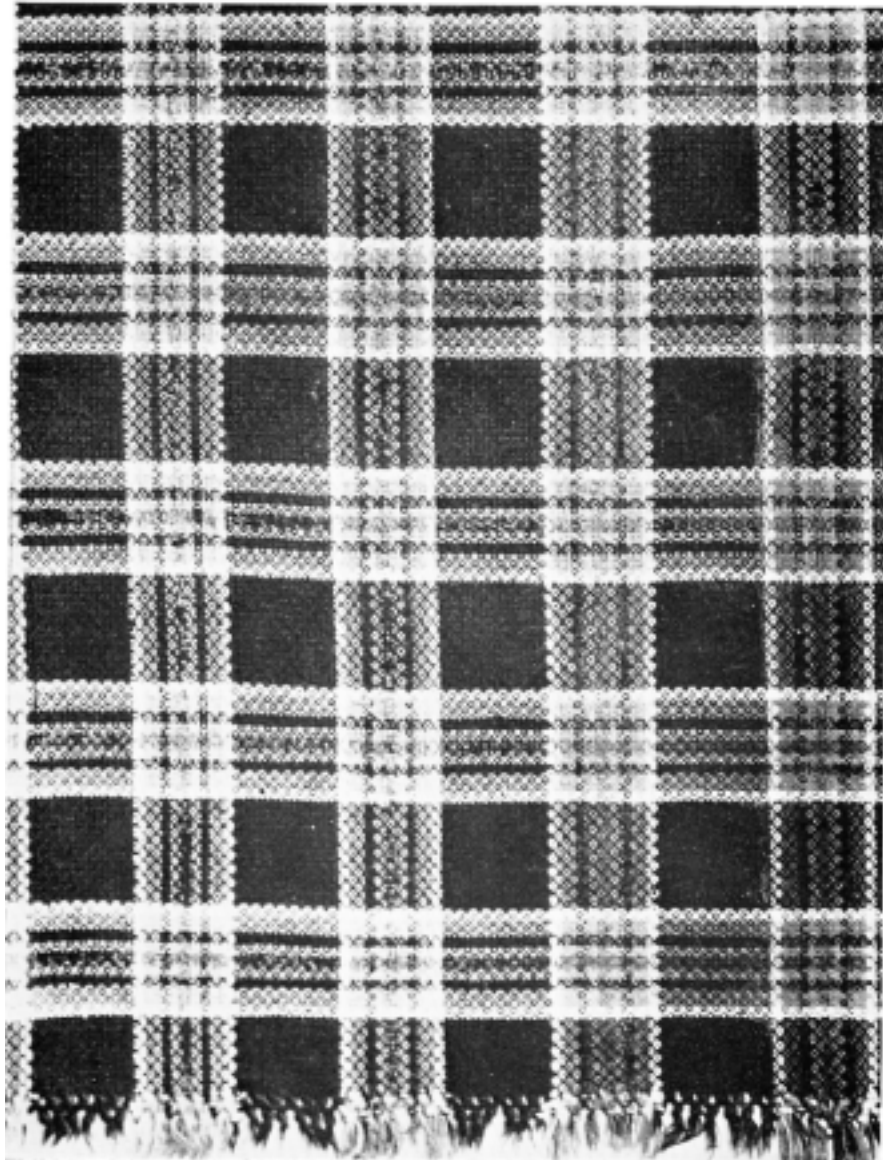
Believed to have been made by Emily Burnham Rice of Hartland, Vermont, 1790-1800. The two strips are so neatly joined by darning stitches that the seam is unnoticeable. The coverlet is finished on three sides with woven fringe.

Black walnut bark and hulls may have produced the dark brown dye, while the tan may have come from the bark of the Norway maple or the northern red oak. According to Earle *Home Life in Colonial Days* p. 193, the bark of the red oak or hickory made very pleasing shades of brown and yellow

Dark brown and tan, the latter uneven in tone
85" x 96" including fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 15.1015
Photo. no. 5900

PLAID—FIVE COLORS



7. PLAID

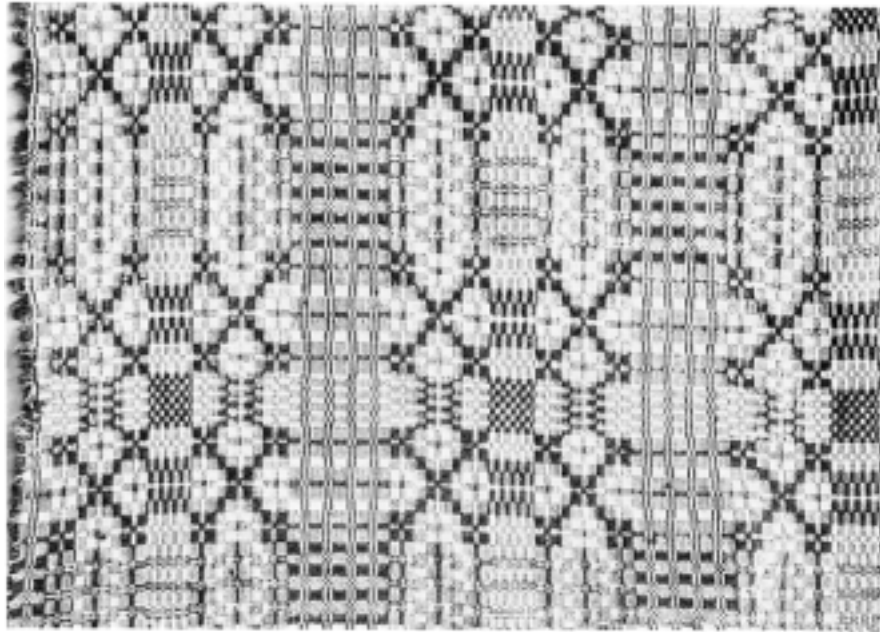
Center seam almost invisible, knotted fringe at one end. How were the soft, lovely colors obtained? The blue is particularly lovely and unusual. Did the dyer use ordinary indigo? Or was this bright shade extracted from such flowers as the gentian, larkspur, or garden purslane—used as an herb in cooking? The brownish rose may have been obtained from the madder plant whose colors range from brown, through yellow, rose and red, to deep purple. The yellow also may have come from madder roots, but there were many ways of obtaining a good yellow. One might use peach leaves, sumac stalks, goldenrod, black-eyed susans, mullein, burdock or the common nettle, fresh wild parsley, laurel or bayberry leaves, or the bark of alder, apple, birch, walnut, hickory, sassafras, yellow oak, or Lombardy poplar.

The sources for brown dyes were almost as numerous. Good browns were obtained from walnut shells, from butternut, hemlock, hickory, maple, or white walnut bark. Mrs. Hall quotes a Kentucky mountain woman: "Chestnut bark makes awful pretty brown and hit never fades, but spruce pine will fade." If you use walnut roots and sprouts "git 'em on the new moon in June. Skin 'em from the root up." Hall *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* pp. 145, 146

Dark brown, rose, blue, yellow and white
85½" x 98"
Purchase

Acc. no. 18.638
Photo. no. 4066

ROSE OF SHARON (?)



8. ROSE OF SHARON (?)

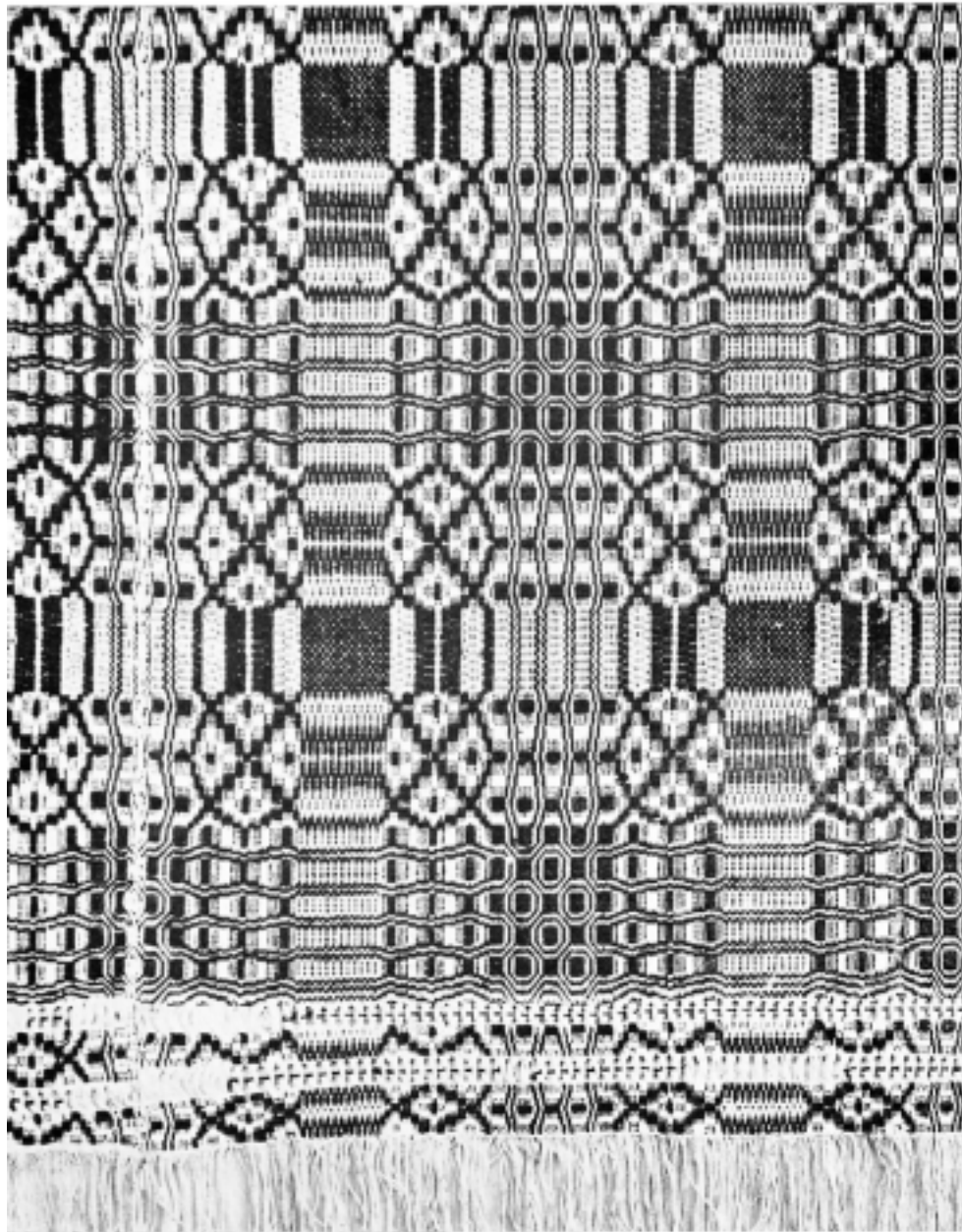
Probably woven in the South. Commenting on this coverlet Mrs. Atwater said: "One can tell a coverlet made in New England from one woven in the South by a peculiarity of technique. The New England weavers wrote their drafts in a different form from that used by the Southern weavers and took pains to make their patterns strictly symmetrical. The method used in the South has the result of making the blocks on one side of a center two threads larger or two threads smaller than the corresponding block on the other side." This oddity is quite apparent here

Reproduced in Atwater p. 129

Blue and white, 83" x 77"
Purchase

Acc. no. 17.477
Photo. no. 4065

ROSE OF SHARON



9. ROSE OF SHARON

Originally this coverlet belonged to Rebecca Pierce Paige Deming of West Berkshire, Vermont. The pattern and border resemble those illustrated in Atwater, p. 44. Often, the same name would be used in different regions for patterns which were quite unlike. It is interesting to compare this pattern with the one on the preceding page or with "Indian War," Atwater, p. 164, which is woven on the same draft.

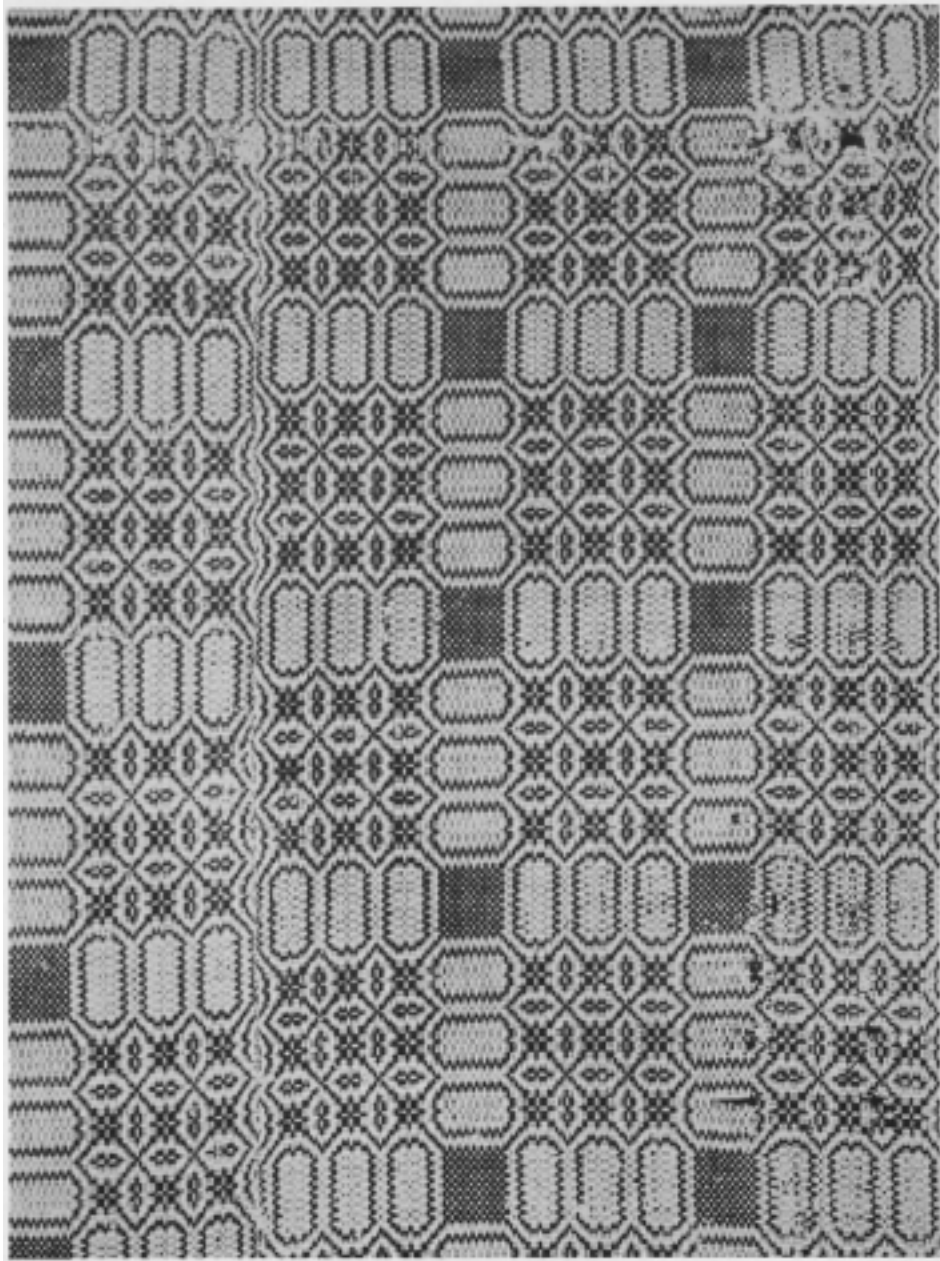
Similar drafts are "Governor's Garden" and "Everybody's Beauty"

For pattern draft, see Atwater p. 163 #22

Blue and white, 90" x 98" including fringe
Gift of Mrs. Gustavus D. Pope

Acc. no. 46.128
Photo. no. 10802

STARS WITH A TABLE



10. STARS WITH A TABLE

The two parts of this coverlet are not the same width, one half being an inch and a half wider than the other. The full width of a finished coverlet averages eighty-four to eighty-eight inches, but it may be noticed that several of the Museum's coverlets are considerably narrower.

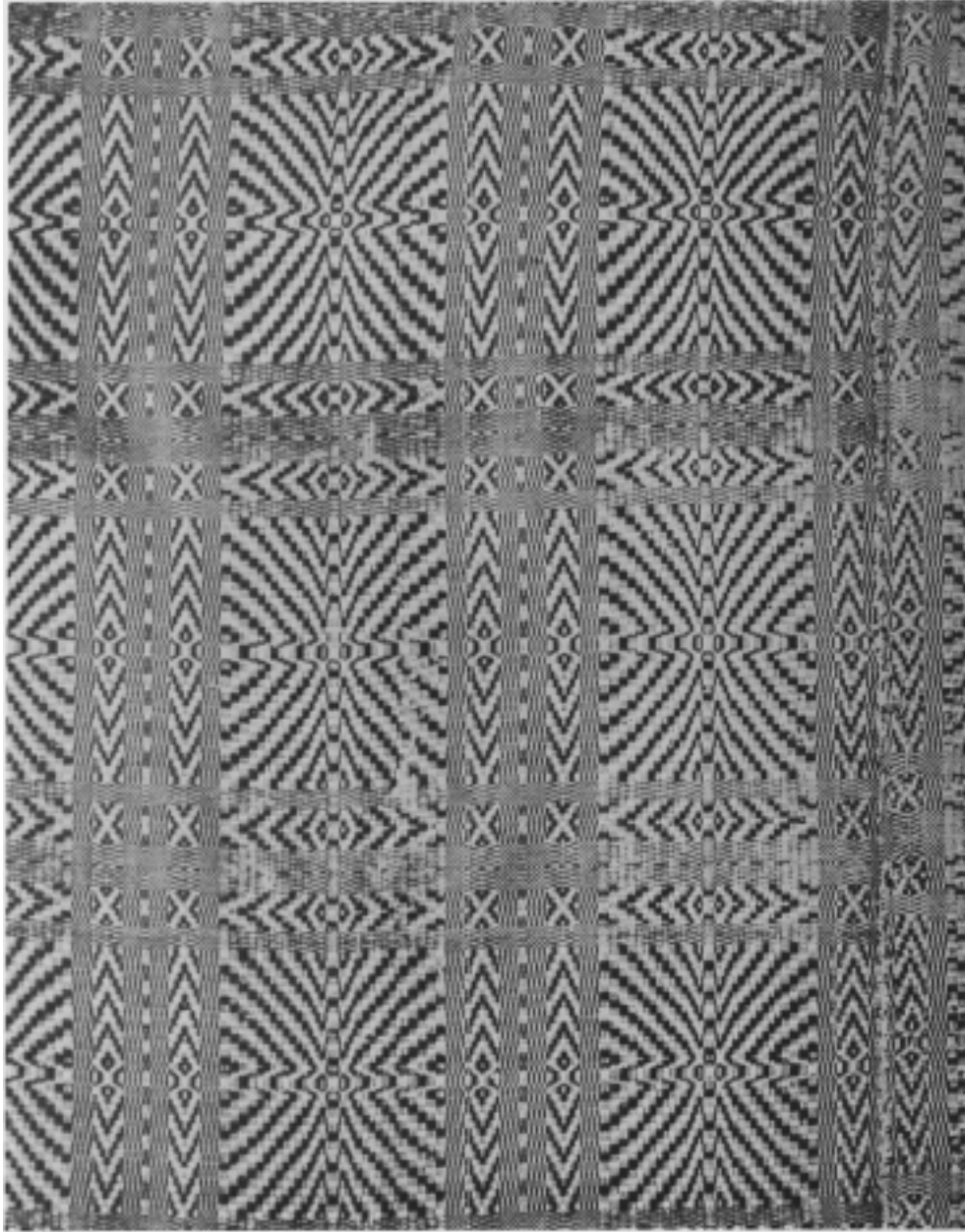
Like No. 8, this coverlet may have been woven in the South. If one examines the middle seam the lack of symmetry is very evident. At one end, both parts of the coverlet match so that the joining is unnoticeable. From there on, however, the details of the pattern become increasingly divergent so that where the two parts are joined the blocks overlap

For illustration and threading draft, see Atwater p. 110; p. 225 #191

Blue and white, 69½" x 101"
Gift of Mrs. Daniel Z. Noorian

Acc. no. 20.67
Photo. no. 5843

SUNRISE



11. SUNRISE

Mrs. Atwater thinks this coverlet probably came from New England, because of its symmetrical pattern. See comment on #8. A Kentucky coverlet of this design is shown in Hall's *Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* pl. facing p. 32. There are several variations in the "Sunrise" pattern. The edges of the coverlet are hemmed.

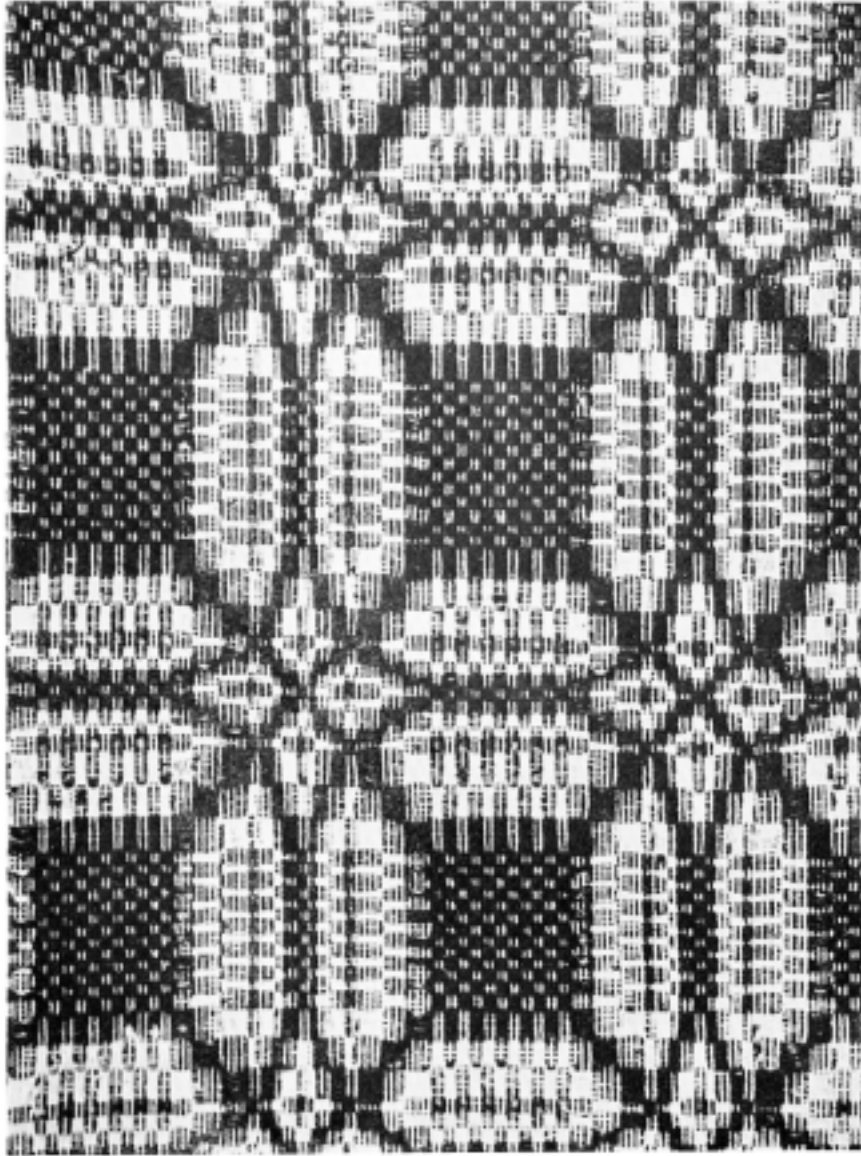
The sharp contrast of indigo and white makes this pattern highly effective. Indigo is one of the oldest dye-stuffs known to man. When it was first introduced into Europe, during the sixteenth century, it met with considerable opposition from people who cultivated the woad plant. Eight ounces of finely powdered indigo were required for every pound of wool

For illustration and threading draft, see Atwater p. 112; p. 188 #105

Blue and white, 75" x 84½"
Purchase

Acc. no. 20.753
Photo. no. 4065

UNIDENTIFIED



12. UNIDENTIFIED PATTERN

Fragment from Vermont, about 1790. The pattern is very similar to "Sun, Moon and Stars" as illustrated in Atwater p. 177 #74. Mrs. Atwater says it is the same draft as #73, "an extremely simple pattern," similar to "American Beauty."

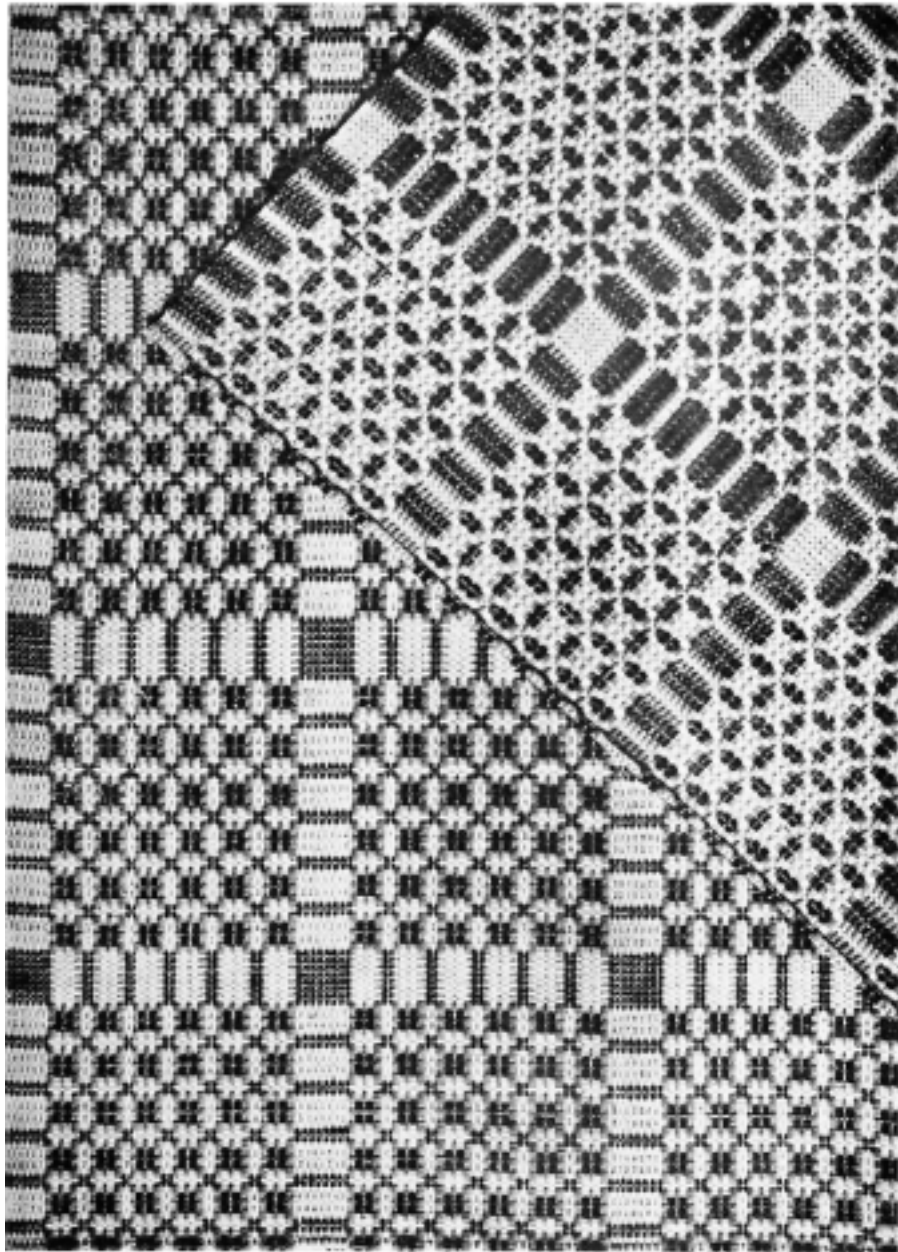
In the names given to quilts and coverlets astronomy played an important part. For the earlier settlers in this country, sun, moon and stars determined the beginning and ending of a day's work, gave the points of the compass, and lighted one's way. Small wonder that they were deemed worthy as names for a coverlet pattern

In Vermont and New Hampshire and in the Great Smokies coverlets are still produced in the old patterns, sometimes with vegetable-dyed yarns

Blue and white, 20½" x 26"
Gift of Mrs. Blanche M. F. Abbott

Acc. no. 37.438
Photo. no. 8837

UNIDENTIFIED—SNOWFLAKE



13. UNIDENTIFIED PATTERN

The star in this design is sometimes termed a snowflake. Mrs. Atwater says the draft is similar to "Forty-Nine Snowballs" but woven "as drawn in instead of rose-fashion." She suggests that "Thirty-Six Snowflakes" would be an appropriate name for the pattern.

Is this a Southern coverlet? New England weavers rarely used black or reds other than madder. The magenta in this coverlet was probably obtained from cochineal.

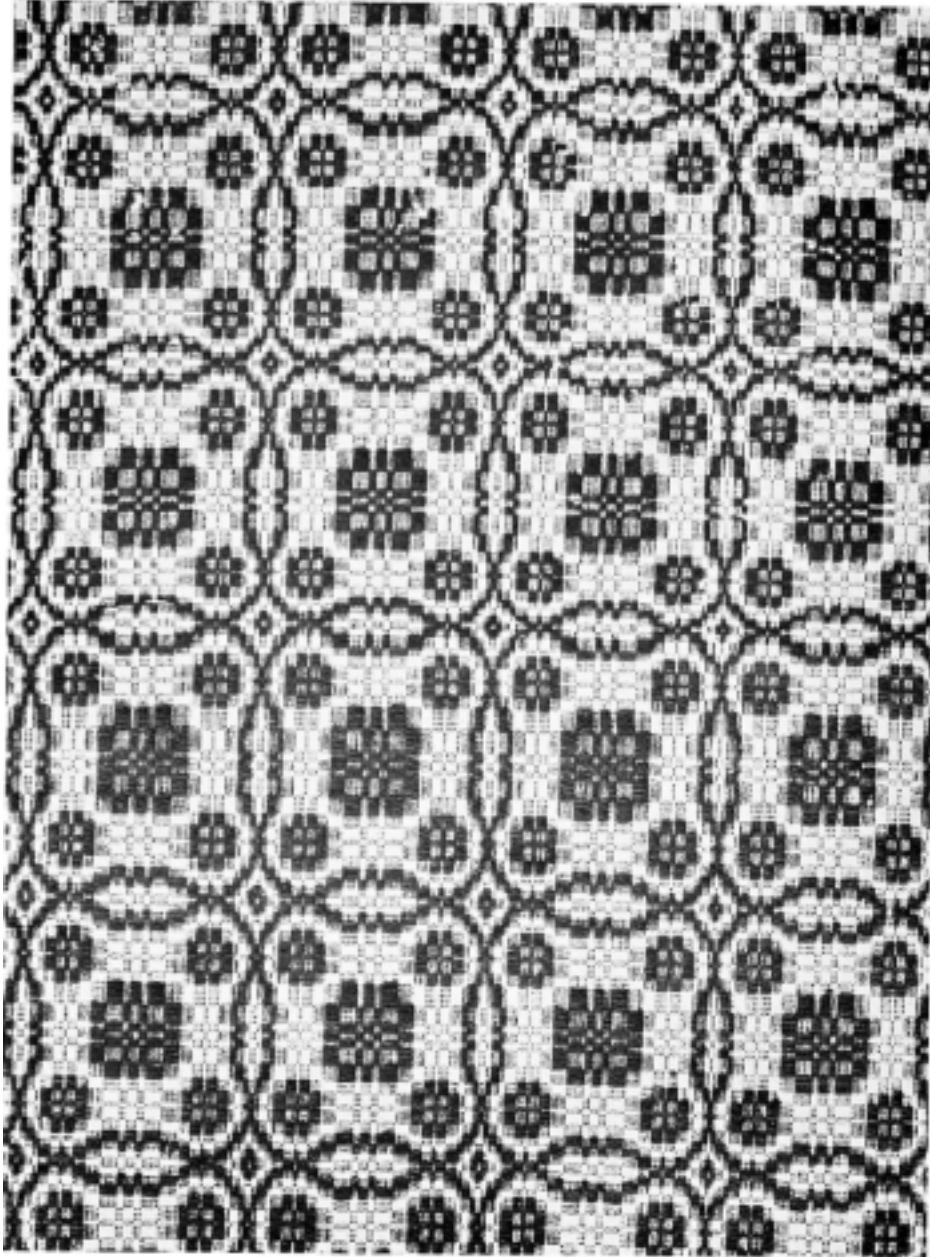
There were a number of sources for black dye, such as gallnuts, logwood chips, willow, maple or walnut bark. Or the dried leaves of the tallow which were brought by sailing ship from China and India where the tree was cultivated.

A Kentucky recipe states that having made a brown dye with walnut bark it can be changed to black as follows, "when you take out your walnut put in a big tablespoonful of copperas. A handful of shumake [sumac] berries makes it glisterin' black." Hall *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* p. 142

Magenta, black and white, 78" x 95"
Purchase

Acc. no. 21.181
Photo. no. 5902

WHIG ROSE



14. WHIG ROSE

Called "Whig Rose" in the North, the same pattern in the South is known as "Methodist Wheel or Ring." This "is one of the oldest, best-known and best-loved of the old patterns. It appears in innumerable slight variations. A simple 'Lover's Knot' pattern results from weaving this threading as drawn in." Atwater* p. 180

"Whig Rose" is also known in Europe and is sometimes classed as an English pattern. Eliza Calvert Hall thinks it a modification of a Scandinavian design though she suggests that the name probably commemorates the formation of the Whig party in Andrew Jackson's administration. As this was not until about 1830, may we not suppose that the name, and the pattern, were brought from England by our forebears to whom Whig and Tory were familiar terms?

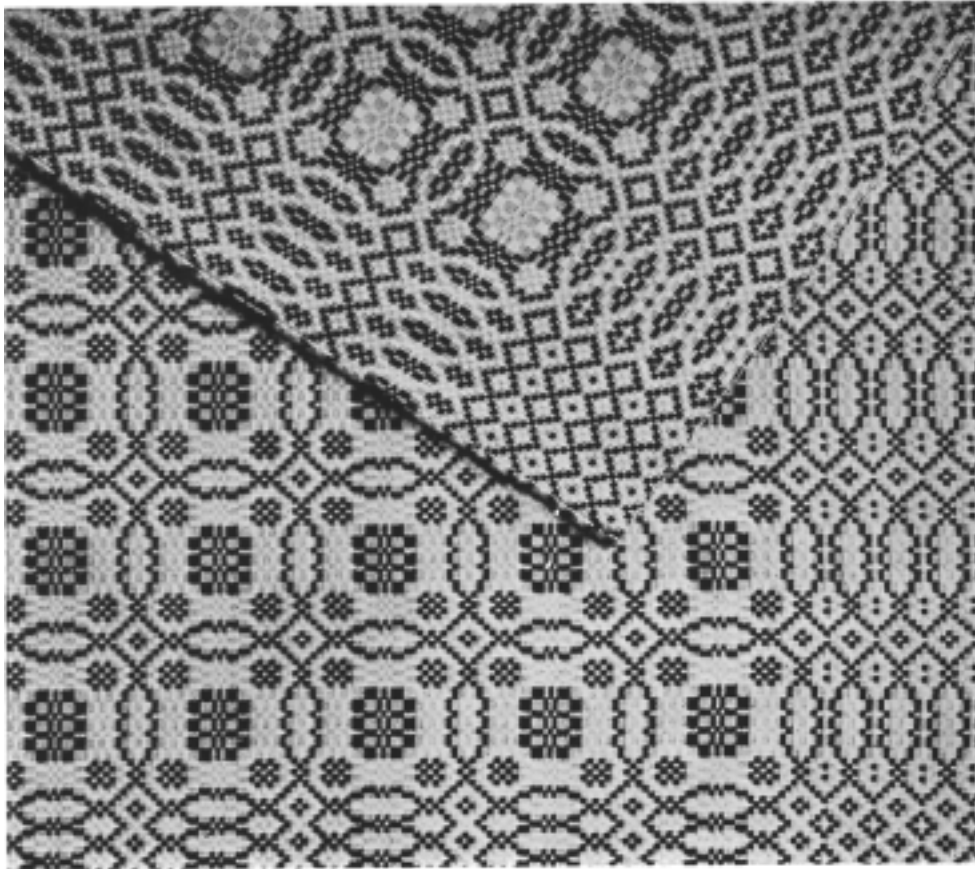
For threading draft and instructions, see Atwater p. 182 #91; p. 183. Worst p. 102 fig. 179; p. 103 fig. 180; p. 105

Blue and white
101 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 95", 3 pcs. measuring 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ " and 32" wide
Purchase

Acc. no. 21.179
Photo. no. 4078

* *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. By permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers.

WHIG ROSE



15. WHIG ROSE

This machine-made coverlet was woven by the Vermont Natives Industries of Bridgewater, about 1927. To some, the precise outline of the design lacks the charm of a hand-woven coverlet, as may be seen by comparing the workmanship with the hand-weaving illustrated on the preceding page. It is woven full width.

Like the women of colonial days, these modern weavers also produce linsey-woolsey for dresses and coats. This strong homespun, woven with linen warp and wool weft, was worn by all country folk for everyday. Though crude, the material is attractive, especially when woven in stripes. City-bred ladies when travelling through rural districts in colonial days were wont to comment derisively on the striped petticoats worn by women working in the fields

Blue and white, 83" x 97½"
Purchase

Acc. no. 27.756
Photo. no. 5910

DOUBLE WEAVE

“What may be called the middle period of American weaving, the century from 1725 to 1825, produced coverlets in the celebrated ‘double’ weave and in ‘double-face’ or ‘summer and winter’ weave. These were woven on a much more elaborate loom than the simple cottage loom of the earlier day, but the patterns of the simpler weaving were—many of them—carried over into the more complicated technique. American double weaving was probably in great measure due to the work of skilled weavers among the Pennsylvania Mennonite settlers, and no doubt the German weaving book brought over by Conrad Shurtz and others had a good deal to do with its introduction. Certainly the most numerous and the finest examples of this weave are to be found in Pennsylvania.” Atwater* p. 48

“To produce the double weave one must have a loom of at least eight harnesses,—and on such a loom only the simplest patterns can be woven. The loom should be equipped with two warp-beams, one for the white cotton warp of the ground fabric and one for the wool warp of the pattern web.

“For a pattern of a great many blocks a very large number of harnesses and treadles is required. This means a loom a good deal more elaborate than amateur weavers ordinarily use.” Atwater* p. 213

“The double weave, two webs joined together, while not so common in the southernmost states of the Highlands, was done quite extensively in parts of Virginia and West Virginia, where undoubtedly the migrating Pennsylvania Germans influenced this weave considerably.” Eaton *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* p. 113

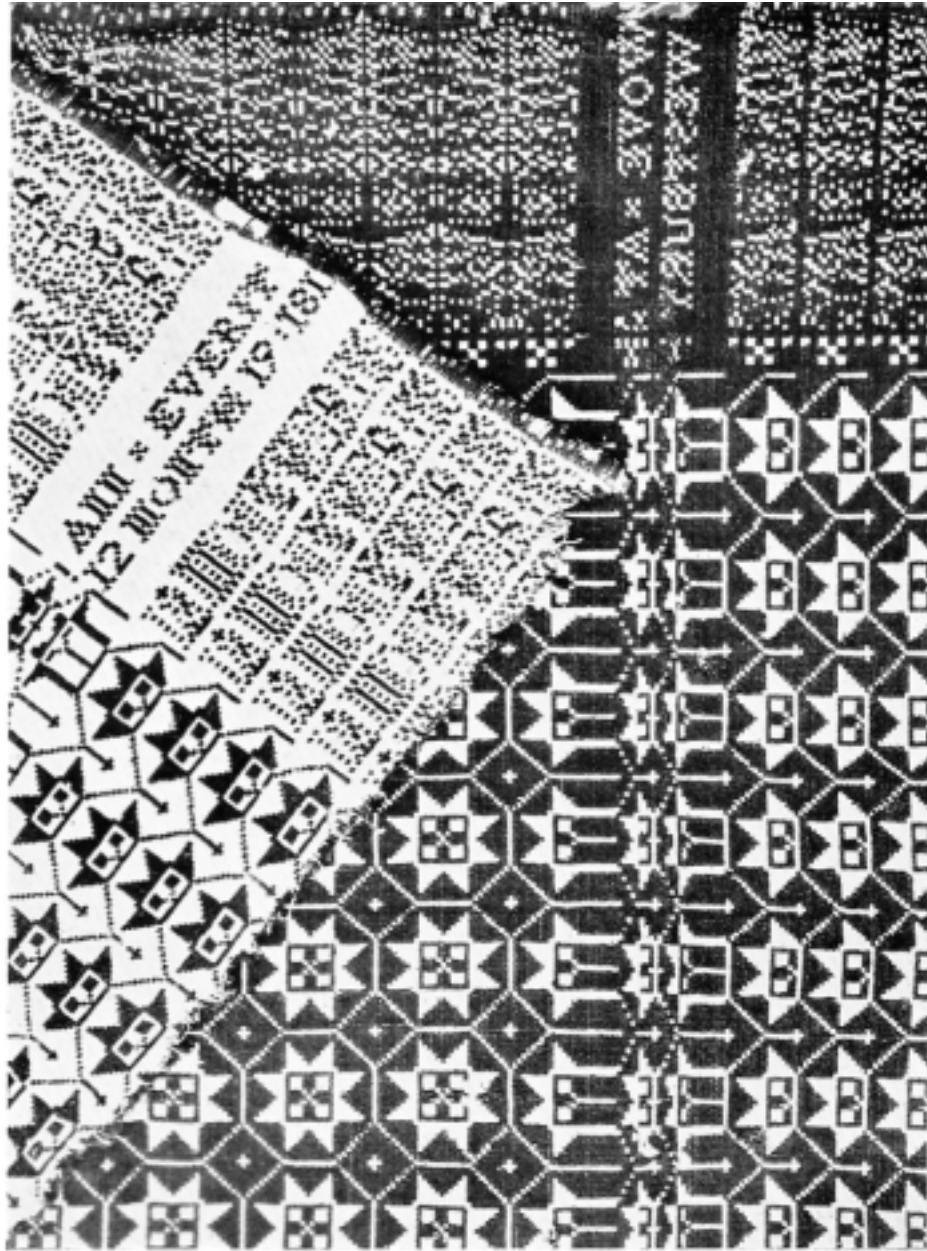
* *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. By permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers.

PATTERNS IN DOUBLE WEAVE

16. Eight-pointed Star
17. Lisbon Star—also called Puritan Maiden, Flower Pot
18. Lover's Knot
19. Single Snow-Ball
20. Single Snow-Ball with Pine-Tree border
21. Unidentified pattern with Pine-Tree border
22. Unidentified Pattern
23. Wheel and Star
24. Wheel pattern, unidentified
25. Wheel of Fortune



EIGHT-POINTED STAR



16. EIGHT-POINTED STAR

Woven into the border at one end of this coverlet are the words "Wove at Westbury [for] Ann Everit 12 month 19: 1817." The type of loom used has puzzled expert weavers. It has been suggested that it was woven on a drawboy loom, on an early type of Jacquard loom, that it was woven in Ireland rather than in the United States. Mr. S. W. Holloway of The Edison Institute, Michigan, considers that this double coverlet was woven with a 10-block draft, using 4 harnesses for each block or 40 harnesses in all. The name and date in the border would have been woven with only 7 of the 10 blocks thus accounting for the "hit and miss" effect in the pattern.

Whoever did the coverlet not only was a professional weaver but also knew how to form blocks and combine them. It is woven in two pieces

Blue with greenish cast and white, 83" x 93"
Gift of Mrs. D. L. Miller

Acc. no. 17.71
Photo. no. 5769

LIBSON STAR



17. LISBON STAR

This design is also called "Puritan Maiden" and "Flower Pot." A similar one is "Washington Beauty." It is an old Germanic or Scandinavian pattern.

The coverlet is woven in two pieces overcast together. It has a border on all sides. One end is hemmed, the other has a two inch fringe.

The blue of the wool is dark and rich, perhaps obtained by adding madder to the indigo. As may be seen by the photograph, the pattern stands out with striking distinctness. This is characteristic of patterns in double weave coverlets. "The web in this weave consists of two fabrics, one overlaying the other, and the pattern is produced by crossing the webs, which interlace only along the outlines of the figures. In the old examples the two webs were usually one of white cotton and one of dark blue wool, the pattern showing in white against a dark background on one side of the coverlet and in blue on a white ground on the reverse. Patterns woven in this way stand out with sharp definition." Atwater* p. 48

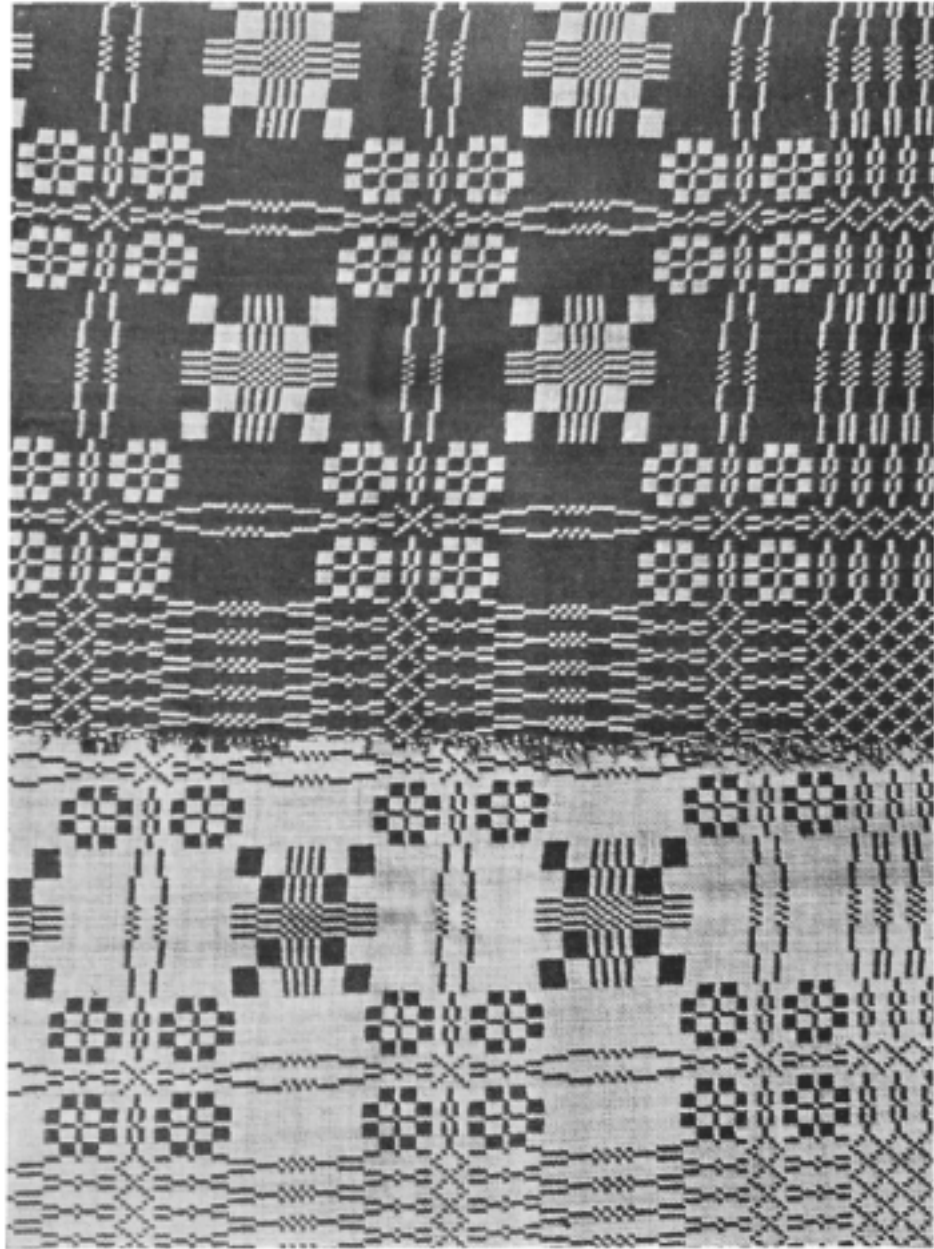
For illustration and threading draft, see Atwater p. 105; p. 241 #238

Blue and white, 72" x 89" including fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 36.27
Photo. no. 8836

* *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. By permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers.

LOVER'S KNOT



18. LOVER'S KNOT

This coverlet of wool warp and weft is from Bergen County, New Jersey. It is woven with roses in place of stars. Mrs. Atwater says "there may be a special name for the pattern when woven in this manner, but if so I do not know it."

It is thought that the coverlet was originally indigo and white and that it has since been dyed in the piece.

The coverlet is joined through the center and has a border around three sides with a short knotted fringe at one end.

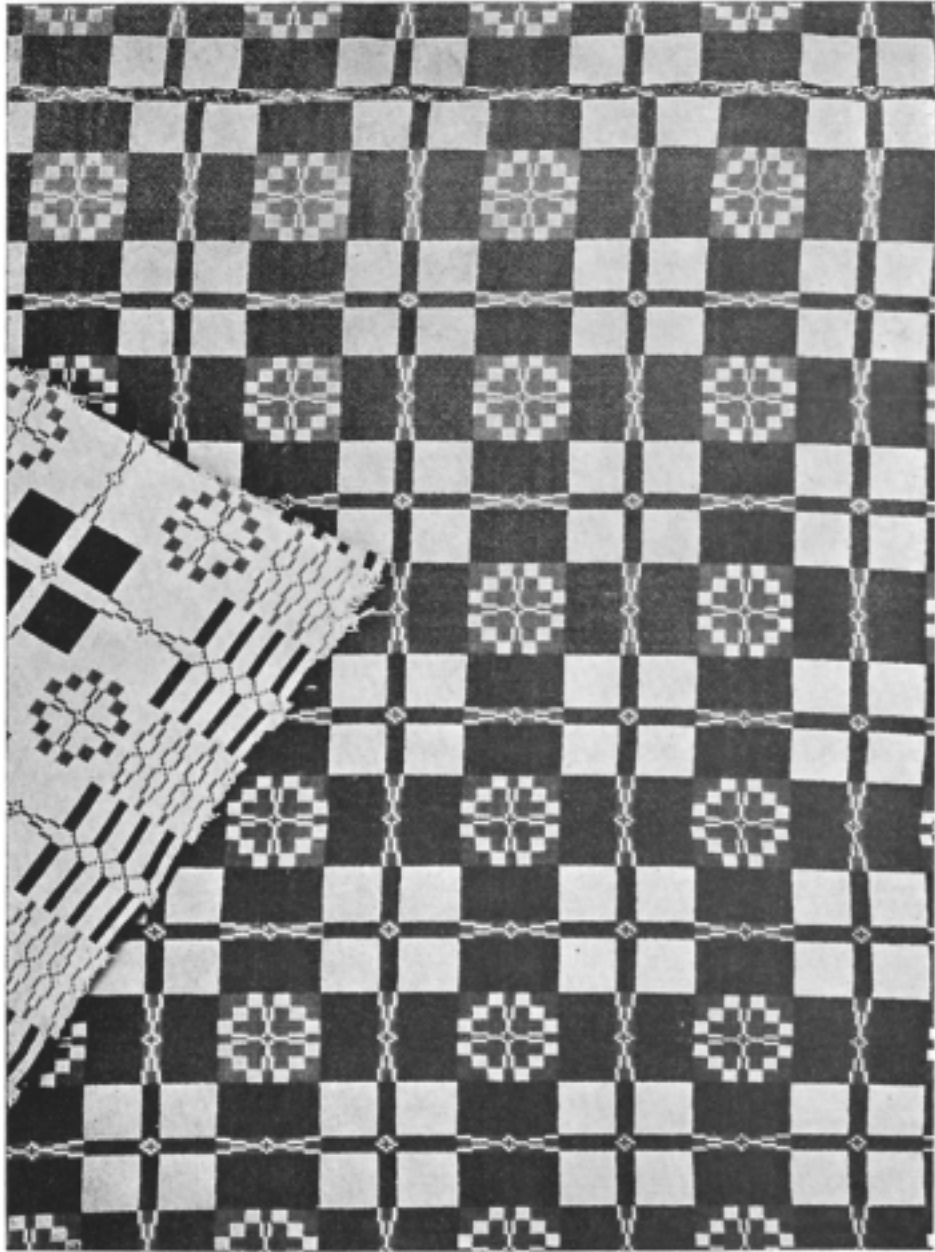
Compare this pattern with the "Lover's Knot" in overshot weave, #5, also with the German reversible hangings illustrated in Fleming *An Encyclopaedia of Textiles* p. 153. Another variation is shown in Hall *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* pl. facing p. 172

For threading draft, illustration, see Worst pp. 210-11

Two shades of blue, 68" x 75" including fringe
Gift of Miss Jennie Van Houten

Acc. no. 33.15
Photo. no. 8835

SINGLE SNOW-BALL



19. SINGLE SNOW-BALL

Thought to have been made in Revolutionary days, this coverlet has been in the Sharp family of Hackettstown, New Jersey, for four generations. The charm of the coverlet lies in the combination of colors. The madder rose, which is particularly rich and mellow, is in sharp contrast to the white and deep indigo. Compare the simplicity of this design with the blue and white coverlet in "Single Snow-Ball and Pine-Tree" pattern, #20.

There is a three-inch border around three sides with a short knotted fringe in rose, white and blue, across one end.

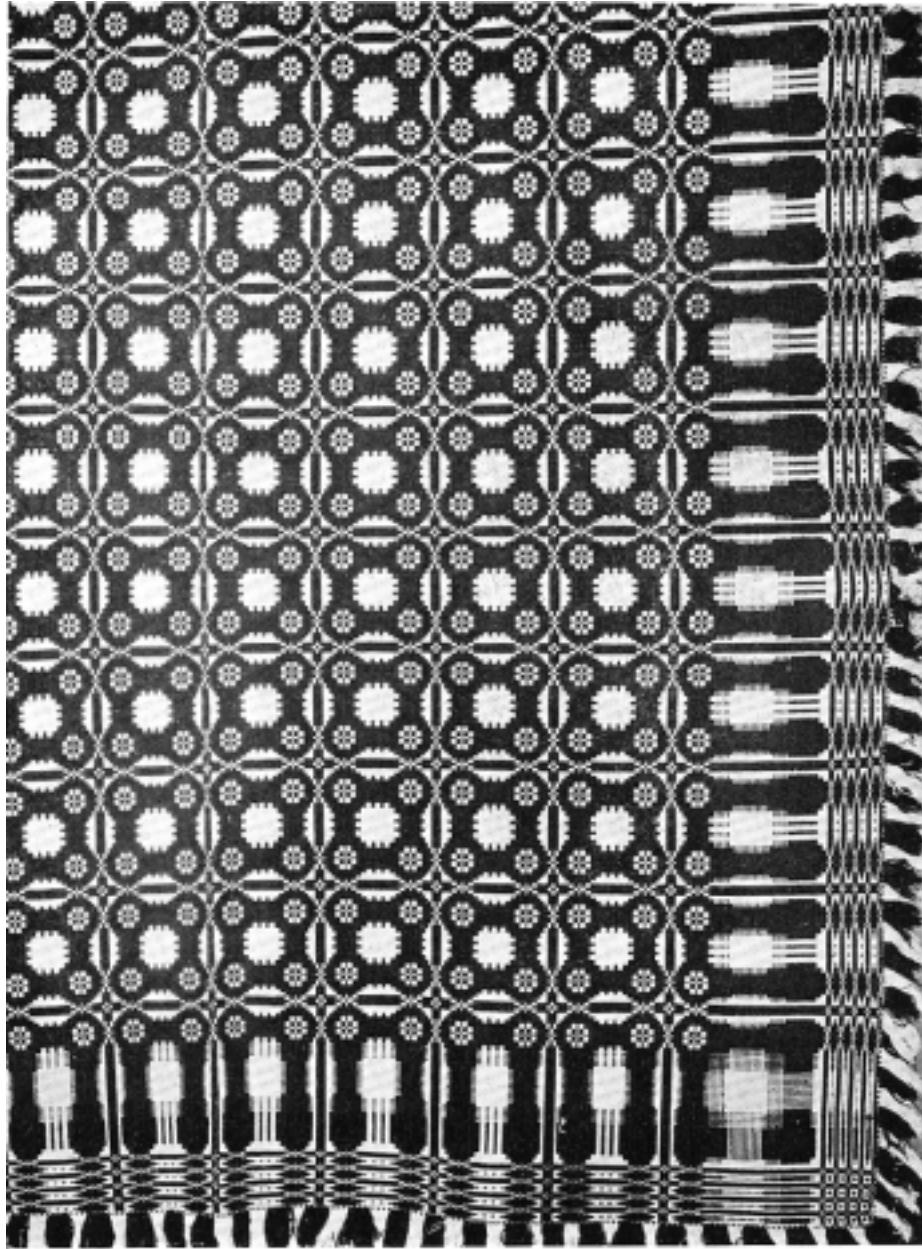
The arrival of an itinerant weaver and his pattern book, in which the drafts were carefully drawn, presented a novelty in any household. To select a design for a new coverlet must have been as engrossing as when the modern family selects a new wall paper for the living room.

Long established custom dictated the number of quilts and coverlets allotted to each marriageable son and daughter. Therefore, in ordering a new coverlet to be woven a housewife had not only to think of her present needs but of future requirements as well

Rose, indigo and white, 77" x 87" including fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 27.1267
Photo. no. 5201

SINGLE SNOW-BALL WITH PINE-TREE BORDER



20. SINGLE SNOW-BALL WITH PINE-TREE BORDER

This coverlet, dating from the 1840's, belonged to Mrs. Sarah Ten Eyck Van Derveer of Hunterdon County, New Jersey. The wool and flax were spun in her home. The weaving was probably done at Millstone, New Jersey.

The coverlet is seamed through the center and the two ends are hemmed. A heavy fringe, from two to two and a half inches long, is attached to the sides and one end by overcast stitches.

"The 'Snow-Ball' patterns are very many and very various—so many that it is impossible to show more than a small percentage of the number . . .

"The snow-ball figure as usually woven is a solid figure more or less round in form, and composed of three or more blocks. With any of these the famous 'Pine-Tree' border may be woven." Atwater* p. 227.

The form of the tree will vary with the figure. With some patterns the pine tree will have three trunks, with others it will appear as a group of six trees.

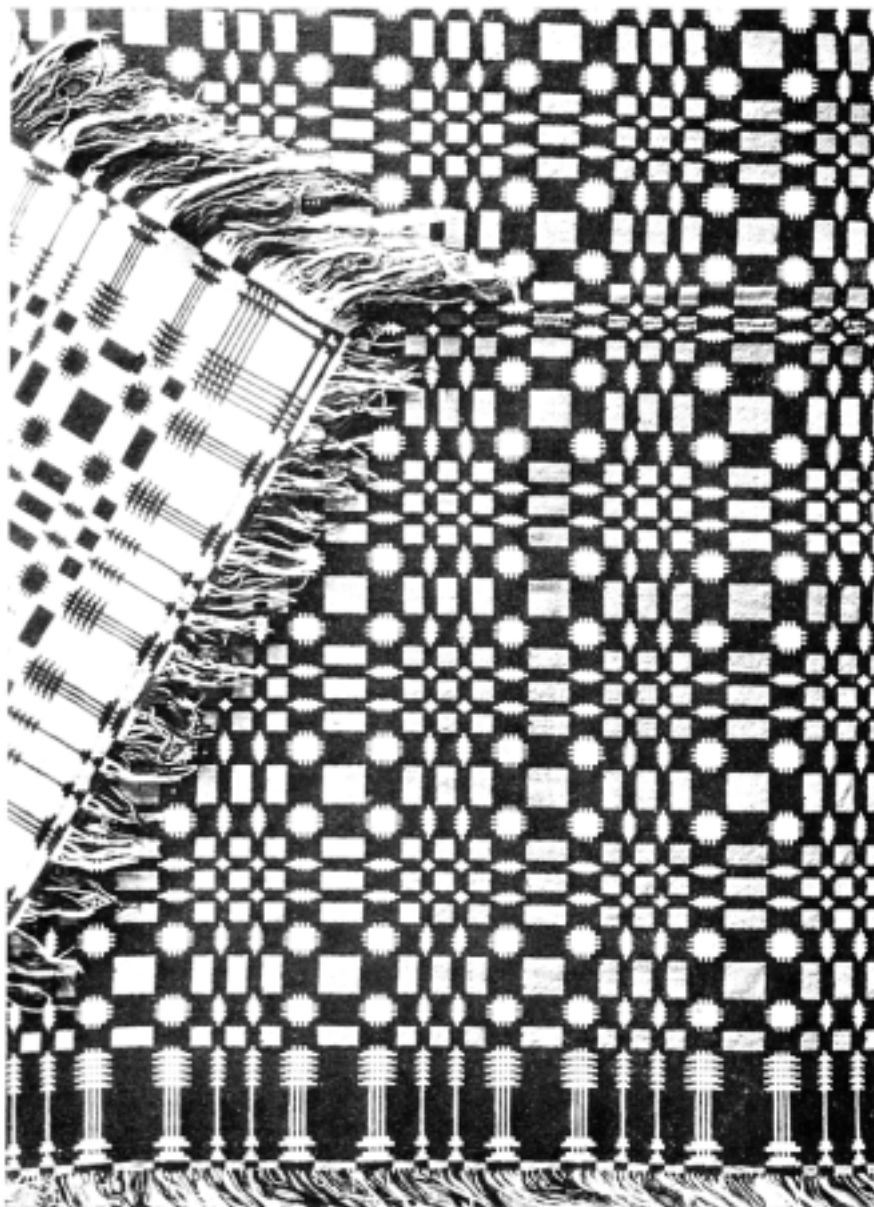
For illustration and threading drafts, see Atwater pp. 80, 229, 234, 237

Blue and white, 78" x 89" not including fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 16.659
Photo. no. 675

* *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. By permission of the Macmillan Co., publishers.

UNIDENTIFIED PATTERN WITH PINE-TREE BORDER



21. UNIDENTIFIED PATTERN WITH PINE-TREE BORDER

On one side the mosaics and trees are white on a rich blue ground, with squares and rectangles in rust-red. On the reverse the trees and mosaics are blue on a white ground, while the geometric figures are blue on a mixed ground of red and white. Three sides are finished with a five inch pine-tree border and a six inch fringe in red, white and blue. The fourth side is hemmed.

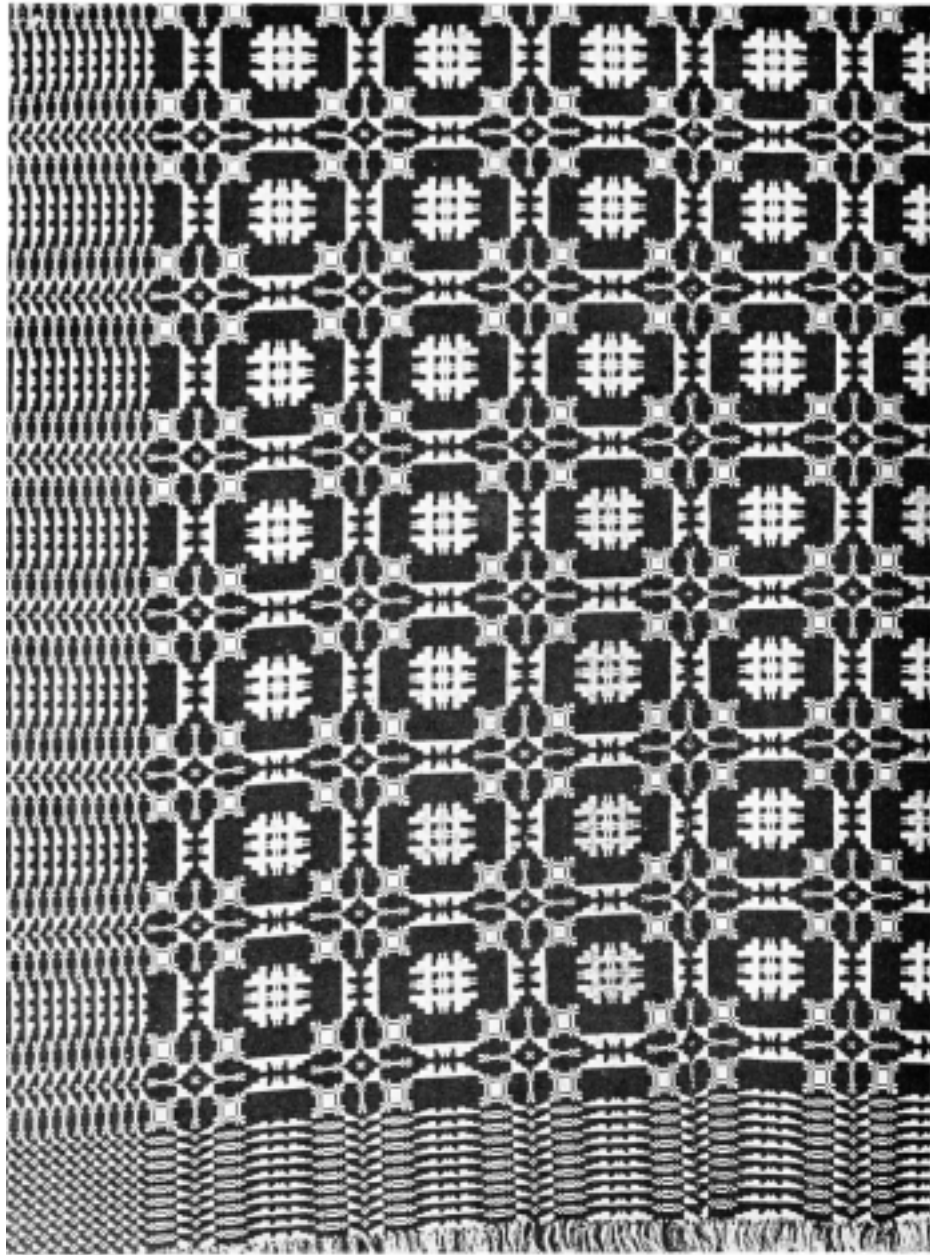
Pennsylvania is particularly famous for its double-woven coverlets in snow-ball and pine-tree pattern, which required considerable skill in weaving.

Even though a coverlet in double weave may seem heavy to us there was a logical reason for its weight. A large four-post bed with an unwieldy mound of feather mattress required a cover which had some weight to hold the mattress in place and give a smooth, neat appearance to the bed

Rust-red, indigo and white 70" x 90½" not including fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 27.241
Photo. no. 5844

UNIDENTIFIED, MADE ABOUT 1825



22. UNIDENTIFIED PATTERN

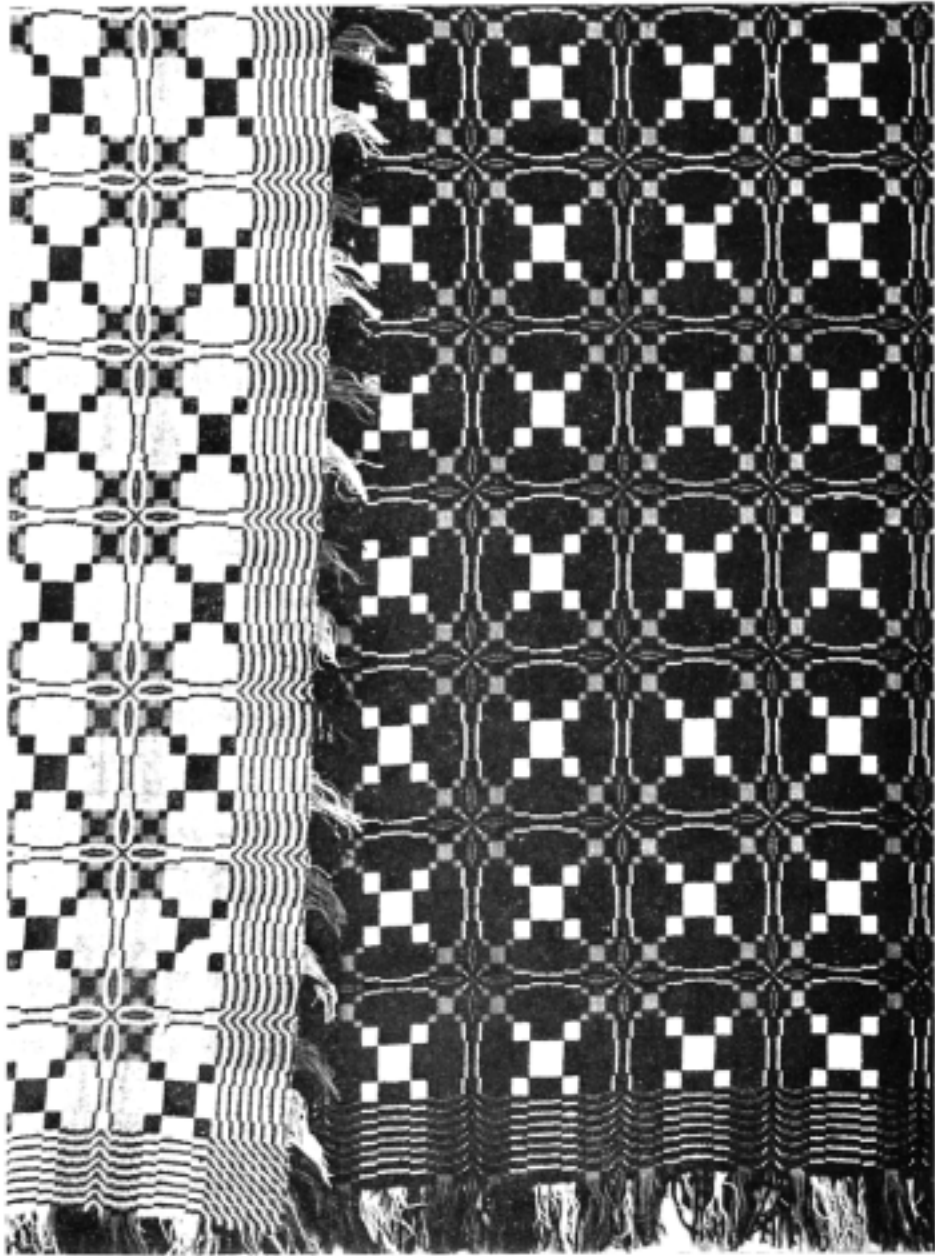
Made by Mrs. Demarest, great-grandmother of the donor, about 1825. Mrs. Demarest's husband was minister of the Dutch Reformed Church at English Neighborhood, New Jersey. In 1664, a group of English colonists established farms in an area along the Palisades from Englewood to Ridgefield which they called English Neighborhood. The names of these early settlers are familiar ones in Bergen County—Cooper, Demarest, Voorhees, Zabriskie.

This double-woven coverlet is seamed through the center. It has a seven-inch border on four sides. One end is hemmed, the opposite end has a two-inch fringe

Indigo and white, 72" x 93" including fringe
Gift of Miss Eva Rappleye

Acc. no. 40.236
Photo. no. 10848

WHEEL AND STAR



23. WHEEL AND STAR

The design is not unlike one used in a German reversible hanging of the 17th or 18th century, illustrated on p. 153 of *An Encyclopaedia of Textiles*. In his introduction to the volume Ernst Flemming says, p. XXXIV: "A special type of German textiles is represented by the coloured curtains used to close sleeping alcoves in Lower Germany and in the ancient duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. They are called reversible fabrics and were made of linen and wool. The patterns are partly geometrical, partly figures."

It is quite probable that such patterns as "Wheel and Star" were brought from Germany by the Mennonite settlers of Pennsylvania, among whom were skilled weavers.

This particular coverlet is a lovely and rare piece, much admired by expert weavers who have studied it. Whoever made it was unquestionably a professional weaver

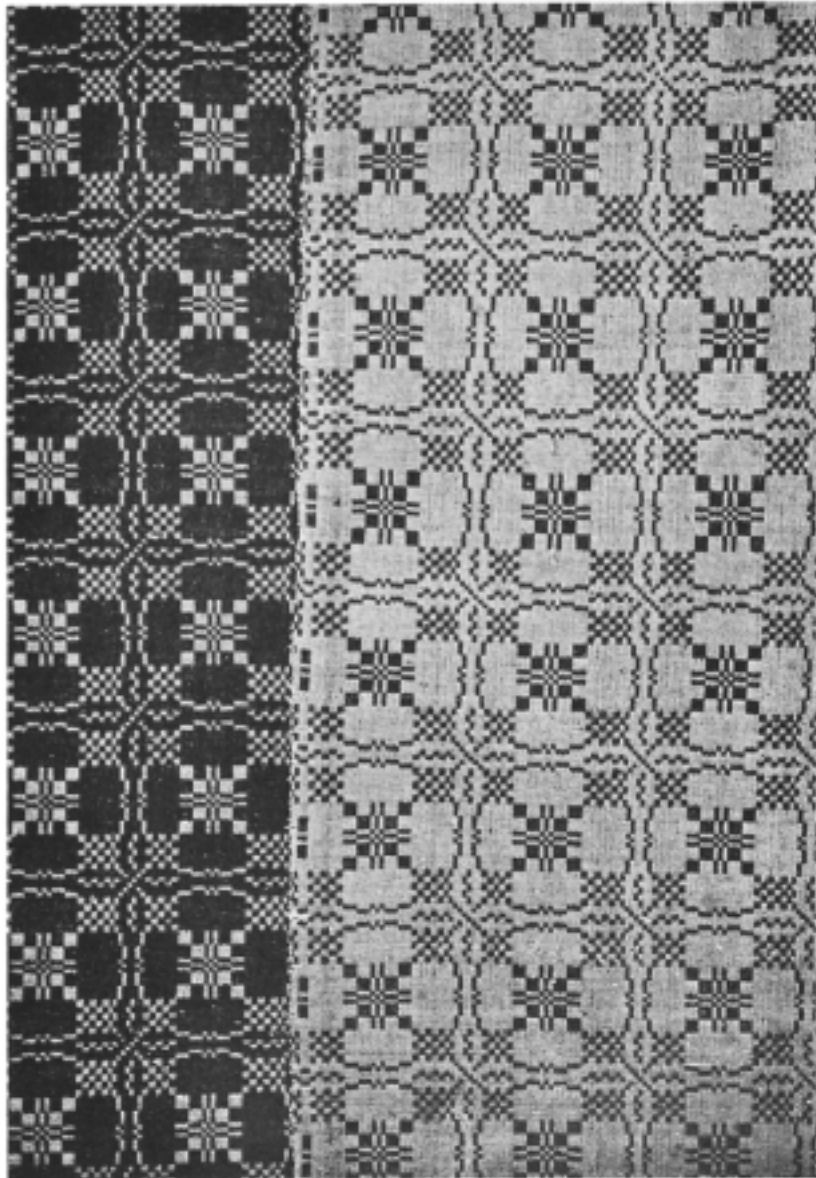
Reproduced in Atwater p. 41

For pattern draft, see Atwater p. 225 #195

Terra cotta, indigo and white, 80" x 82½" including 2" fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 16.433
Photo. no. 4066

SUMMER AND WINTER WEAVE



24. UNIDENTIFIED WHEEL PATTERN—DOUBLE-FACE OR SUMMER AND WINTER WEAVE

Spun and woven by the donor's great-grandmother Emily Burnham Purdy of Rome, New York, before 1815. There are delightful irregularities both in the blue dye and in the weave. Sally appears to have had her troubles, and one can but admire her persistence. It was probably her first attempt at double-face weaving. The double-face weave, so named because of the contrasting sides, is not woven with two webs and, therefore, not to be confused with the double woven coverlets already described. It did not require a professional weaver. In fact, as Mrs. Atwater says, "the work was probably rarely professional, but on account of slightly greater elaboration must have been limited to the better weavers.

"The effect of a pattern in summer and winter weave is a softened and subdued effect because of the interweaving of the pattern thread with the whole of the ground. There is no sharp contrast between ground and figure." Atwater* p. 205.

"In structure a summer and winter fabric consists of a plain tabby foundation overlaid and underlaid by a pattern weft that is bound into the fabric by every fourth warp-thread. For the pattern blocks the weft passes over three threads and under the fourth, while across the spaces of the ground it passes under three threads and over the fourth . . . The weave is beautifully logical and is far easier to thread and weave than ordinary overshot work." Atwater* p. 207

Blue and white, 76" x 92"
Anonymous gift

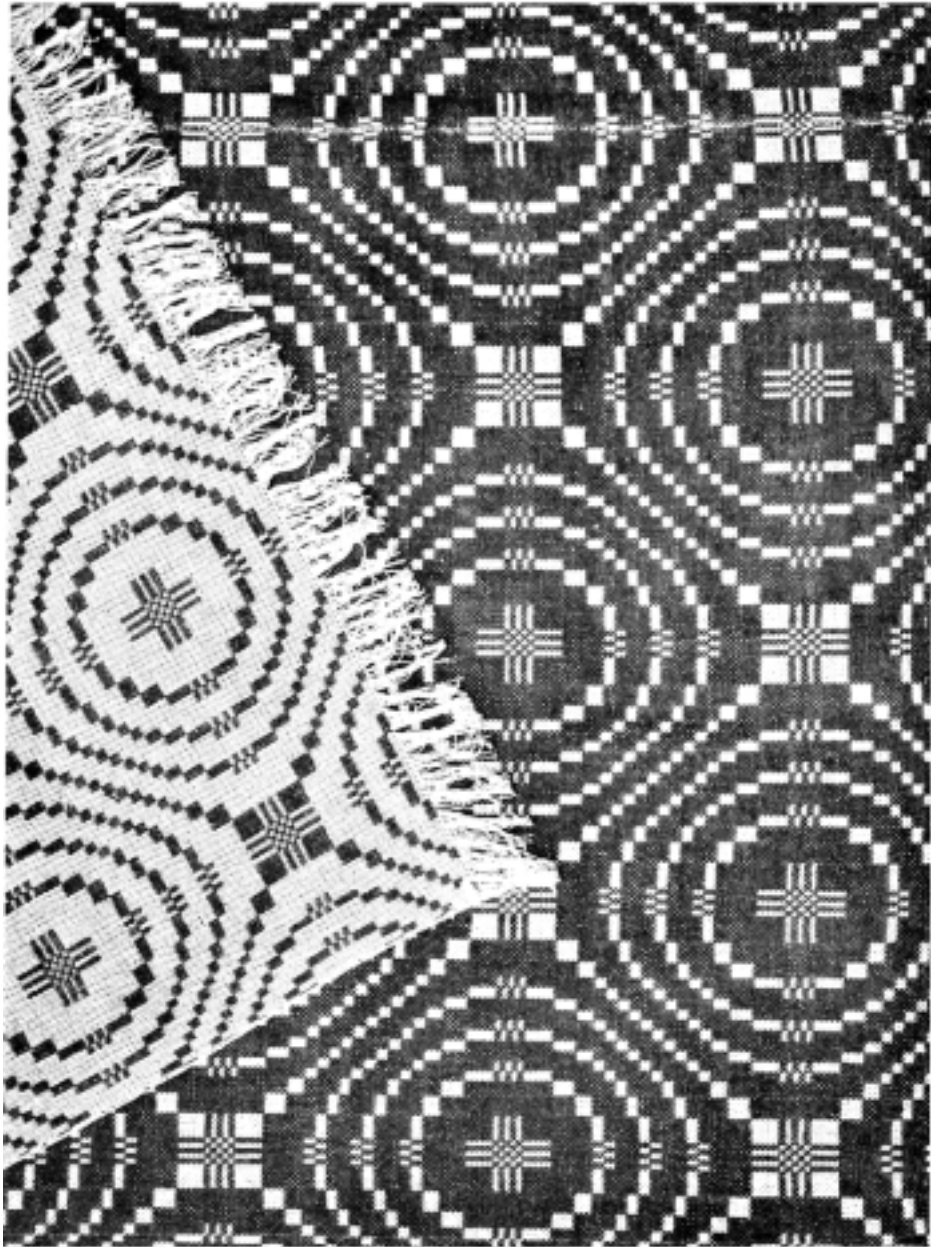
Acc. no. 41.111
Photo. no. 9575

ERRATA

Read above Sally Burrows Purdy instead of Emily Burnham Purdy

* *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. By permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers.

WHEEL OF FORTUNE



25. WHEEL OF FORTUNE—DOUBLE-FACE OR SUMMER AND WINTER WEAVE

Spun and woven by Lillice Stetson Perkins of South Woodstock, Vermont, about 1800. The thread is light in weight. This example is not entirely characteristic of summer and winter weave as none of the blocks are woven to overlap. Some 20 heddles were required to produce the design.

“The so-called ‘summer and winter’ weave appears to be wholly of American invention. It is not shown in European books or textiles. Who invented it, or where it was first used we do not know . . . It is comparatively rare in southern coverlets or those from New England and most of the old specimens appear to come from Pennsylvania.” Atwater* p. 48

“The web in this weave consists of a tabby foundation in linen or cotton woven with a pattern of wool as in ‘overshot’ weaving, but instead of making long skips as in that weave the pattern thread in ‘summer and winter’ weaving is closely interwoven with the ground. As in double weaving the pattern appears on one side of the fabric in color on a white ground and on the other in white on a colored ground. The same patterns may be used for double-face as for double weaving.” Atwater* p. 50

According to Eaton, coverlets in summer and winter weave are still being made in the great Smoky Mountains as well as those in simple overshot and in double weave

Reproduced in Atwater p. 224

For pattern draft, see Atwater p. 225 #194

Blue and white, 82¼" x 97¾" not including 3" fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 15.1016
Photo. no. 5768

* *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. By permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers.

JACQUARD WEAVE

The Jacquard loom was invented by Jean Marie Jacquard, 1752-1834, who from early childhood had been acquainted with the drawloom. Operating the shedding-harness was a task assigned only to young boys and, no doubt, Jacquard had experienced the arduous work of the drawboy. In 1801 he created a sensation at the Paris Industrial Exhibition by demonstrating an improved drawloom. Four years later Jacquard was able to present to the public the invention which made him famous.

The first Jacquard loom to be brought to this country was set up in Philadelphia, 1826. Rightly speaking, this so-called loom was a small apparatus which could be mounted on any hand loom. During the 19th century the Jacquard machine was constantly improved upon until it was developed into the modern power loom.

"In color and texture many of the ancient pieces of Jacquard weaving are charming, thanks to the madder and indigo of the home dye-pot and to the fineness and softness of the hand-spun yarns. Sometimes, too . . . the patterns are graceful and lovely, but more often, alas, they are hideous, grotesque, and altogether regrettable.

"The Jacquard loom, though it killed for a time our American art of weaving, is a very wonderful machine . . . By means of the Jacquard machine it is possible to govern separately each of the thousands of threads in a wide warp, and the pattern possibilities are practically limitless . . . As appears to be usually the case, the inventor reaped little profit from his invention, and Jacquard . . . might have suffered want if Napoleon Bonaparte had not awarded him a state allowance—on condition that his patents revert to the city of Lyons . . .

"Jacquard weaving, it is safe to say, was always professional weaving. Coverlets of the Jacquard type that show a seam up the middle were woven by hand. These are rare. Most are woven full width, which indicates fly-shuttle or mechanical weaving." Atwater* p. 15.

Many of the patterns have a distinctly French flavor and it is thought that they were shipped from France with the machines.

* *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. By permission of The Macmillan Co., publishers.

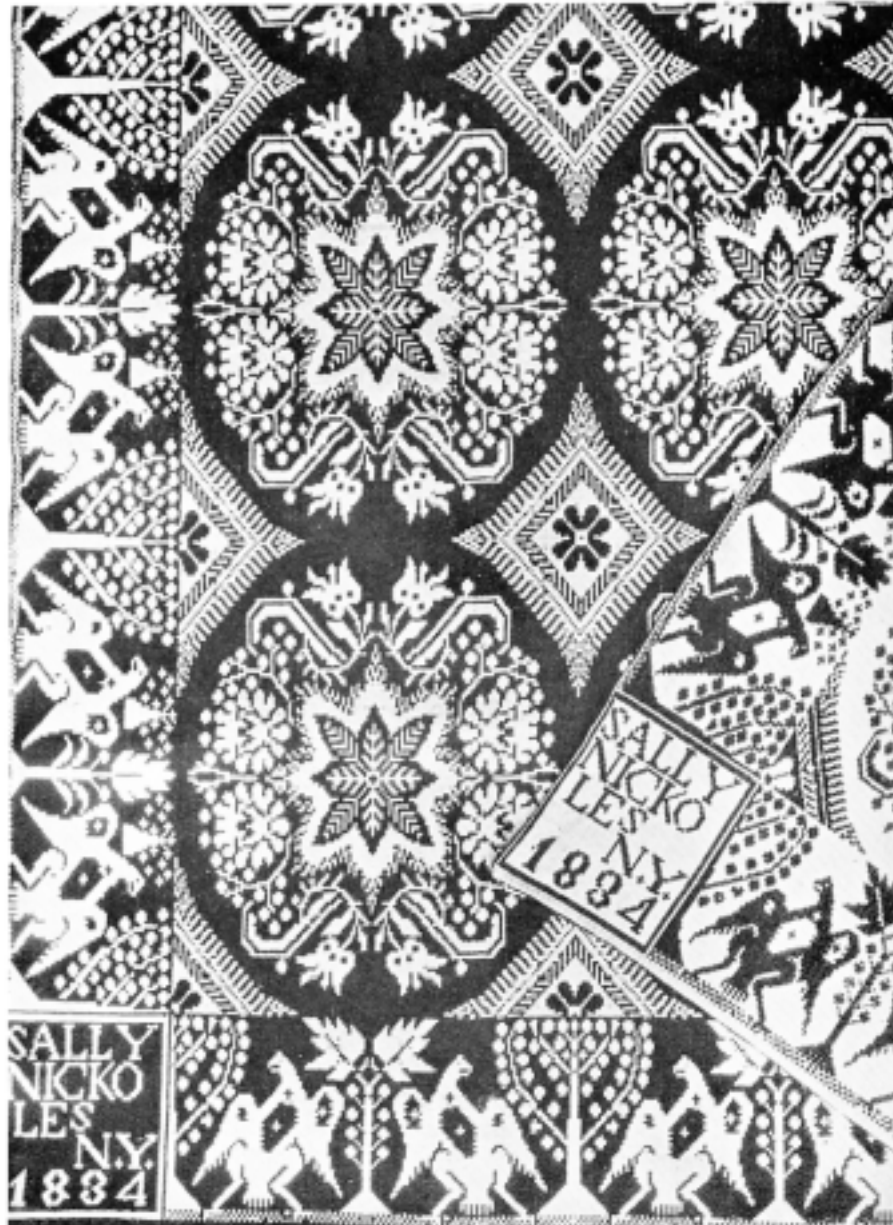
Among the professional weavers were a few women, notably Sarah La Tourrette. Her father, John La Tourrette, of an old French Huguenot family, "established himself in Indiana in the neighborhood of Covington and set up a factory with four large looms. Before the Civil War laid a paralyzing hand on all industry a thousand double-woven coverlets were sent out from this factory, and most of these were woven by Sarah La Tourrette . . .

"She used to weave on an average three coverlets a week, and if a customer was impatient for his order to be filled she could make one a day. (The price for a double-woven coverlet, by the way, was ten or twelve dollars.) Forty pounds of homespun linen thread were required to string the loom . . . Two thousand threads came down from the crosspiece of the loom, and when Sarah was working she could hardly be seen by a person coming in at the other end of the building." Hall *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* pp. 205-7.

Mrs. Hall goes on to say that the Jacquard patterns used by Sarah "consisted of heavy card-board, about six inches by two feet, and punched full of holes, the size of a lead pencil, and one hundred and eighty of them joined together like the straw-carrier of a threshing machine, or moved on the principle that the bundles of grain are fed into the modern threshing machine."



DATED NEW YORK, 1834



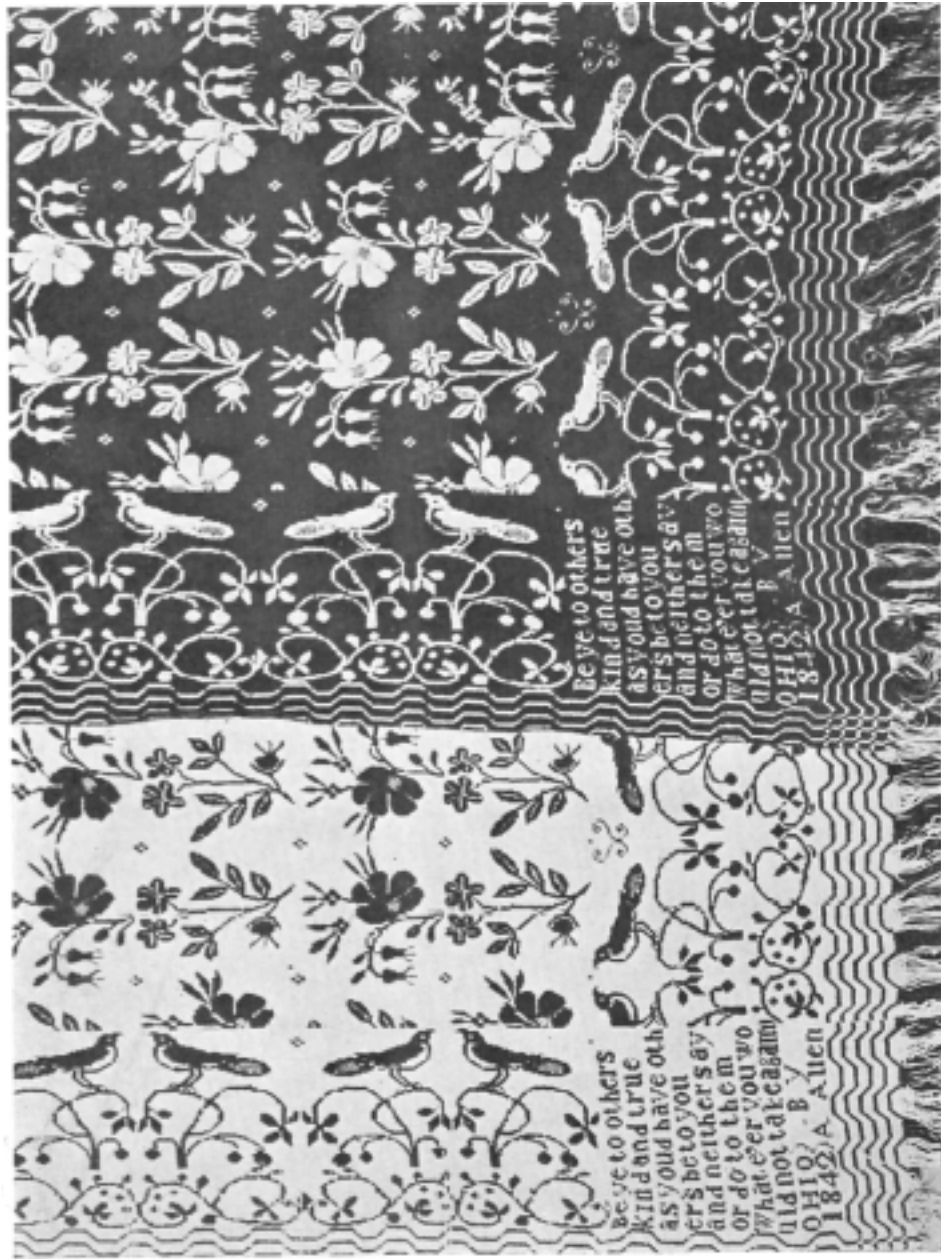
26. This coverlet was hand woven in 1834, presumably for Sally Nickoles of New York rather than by her. Perhaps Mistress Sally spun and dyed the yarns that went into the weaving. The coverlet is a double weave and is made in two pieces. Very likely the pattern was imported along with the loom, but the border with its patriotic touch was surely of home design.

With the appearance of the Jacquard loom, coverlet patterns underwent a radical change. As Mrs. Hall says, "In your grandmother's time the advent of a professional weaver, in any community, must have produced the same excitement that a new fashion from Paris . . . produces today. There were home-woven coverlets on every bed, but a great discontent and longing filled the heart of the housewife as she listened to some gossip's tale of those foreign weavers who were making double-woven coverlets . . . and who used designs that made 'Governor's Garden,' 'Sunrise,' and all the other familiar figures seem plain and commonplace." Hall *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* pp. 173-4

Indigo and white, 77½" x 87"
Purchase

Acc. no. 27.564
Photo. no. 5842

WOVEN IN OHIO, 1842



27. A. Allen of Ohio was the mother-in-law of the donor. Unquestionably the coverlet was made for her by a professional weaver, although she may have dyed the wool and spun the thread. No doubt she selected the graceful pattern and the verse woven into the corners, which reads

“Be ye to others kind and true
as you have others be to you
and neither say or do to them
What e'er you would not take again”

The coverlet is made in one piece, of white cotton and wool of a deep rich blue. The upper edge is hemmed, the lower has a 3½” fringe.

“We cannot look at the coverlets of these old weavers without wondering what manner of men these were who could make from such simple materials as homespun threads of cotton and wool a perfect image of flower and leaf, bird and beast, as delicately outlined as if an artist had drawn it with a pencil.” Hall *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* p. 175.

It is tantalizing to know that this skilled craftsman was in Ohio in 1842 and yet have no idea of his name. He would have been justified in signing his name to this coverlet as an artist signs any work of art

Indigo and white, 81” x 94”
Gift of Mrs. Samuel George Webb

Acc. no. 33.140
Photo. no. 8834

WOVEN BY JAMES WEST, 1848



28. James West of Ohio made this coverlet about 1848. West began weaving in 1837. His father was a weaver in England and the family came direct from there to Ohio. The house in which this coverlet was made had such low ceilings that West had to raise the roof in order to gain sufficient height for his loom.

The coverlet is hand woven in two pieces, with a short fringe on three sides. In spite of its highly stylized design there is a charming mellowness about the coverlet with its ivory white pattern on a ground of soft old blue

Blue and white, 78" x 82"
Purchase

Acc. no. 23.174
Photo. no. 5901

WOVEN BY ABRAHAM ARTMAN



29. Abraham Artman is said to have worked in Dansville, New York. Just when he made this coverlet is not known. It is thought to be an early example of Jacquard weaving, which would date it shortly after 1826.

It is in two pieces and so neatly joined that the seam is hardly noticeable. The weaver probably made one long strip with an identical border at either end. Cutting this strip in the middle, the halves could be joined to make a perfectly symmetrical coverlet. The upper edge is hemmed. The sides are finished with a ten inch border. Across the lower end is a twelve inch border with a fringe of cotton and wool, the cotton threads being an inch and a half longer than the woolen ones

Indigo and white, 74" x 84½" not including 3½" fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 23.176
Photo. no. 5903

HISTORY UNKNOWN



30. Nothing is known as to the history of this coverlet. It is an early example of Jacquard weaving with a seam through the center. The two webs are closely inter-woven. Some of the roses are a beautiful shade of terra cotta, others are a rich blue, while some are a mixture of the two colors. In the same way, the colors are blended with the natural linen threads to form an effectively shaded background. On the reverse the flowers, buds and leaves appear in cream tones against a colored ground. In places the threads are badly broken, thus providing an interesting opportunity to study the technique. One edge is hemmed, the other three are finished with a short fringe

Terra cotta, blue and white, 82" x 87½" including fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 20.519
Photo. no. 5904

FOUND IN VERMONT



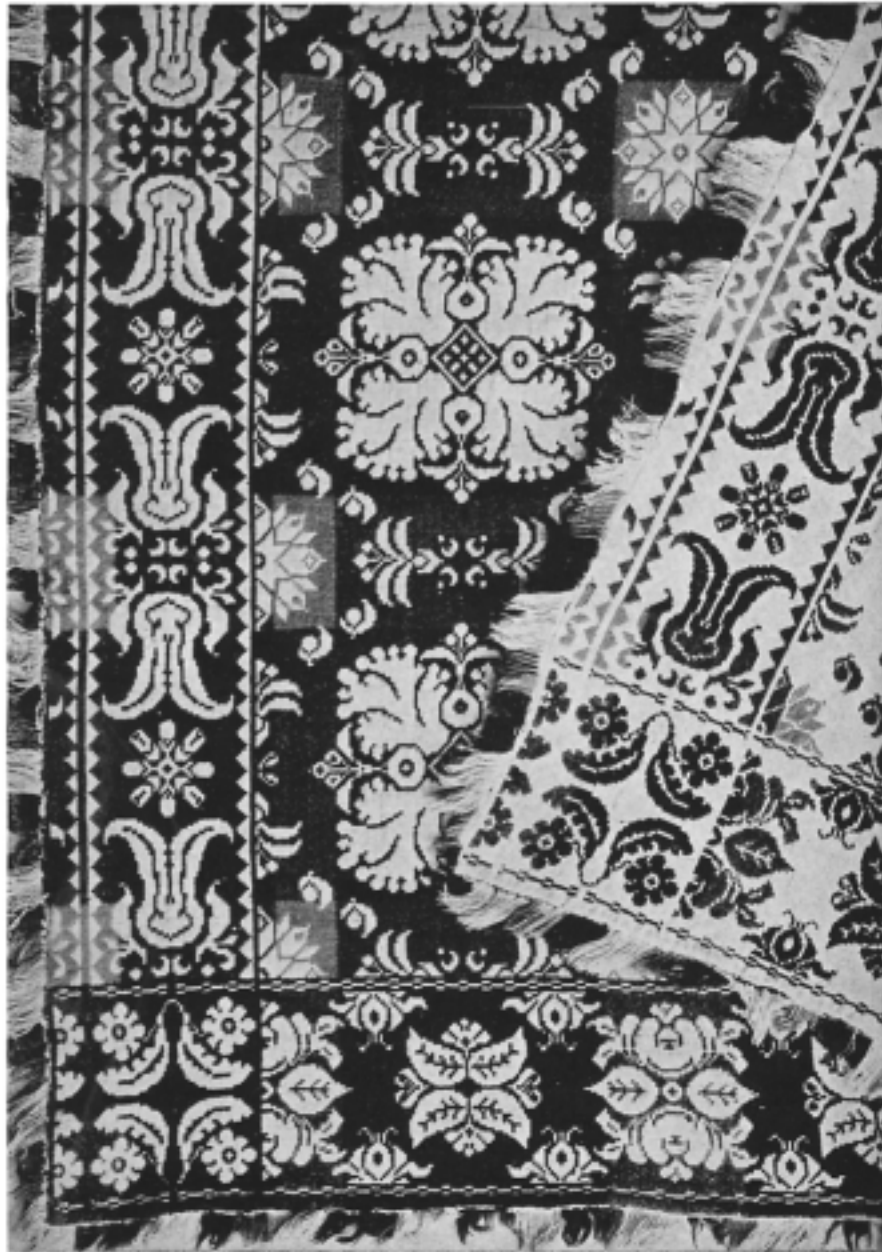
31. Like the coverlet just described, this one has no history. Its charm is in the undulating pattern, which sweeps diagonally across the coverlet, and in the handling of the colors—indigo, terra cotta and creamy white. The coverlet is woven in one piece with a short fringe on three sides.

It was found in Vermont. Was it made by a New England weaver, or did it find its way there from some other state? Mrs. Hall says she has come across these "masterpieces of weaving"—made during the second quarter of the 19th century—in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky. Very few of these Jacquard weavers are known to us, their names have long been forgotten. Mrs. Hall lists a few who were known to have worked in the different states above mentioned. No doubt these men and women, skilled weavers though they were, would be amazed to find their handiwork preserved for posterity

Terra cotta, indigo and white, 77" x 89½" including fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 24.859
Photo. no. 5845

A FORMAL DESIGN



32. Probably this formal design came from France, together with the Jacquard loom. The coverlet is made in two pieces, the pattern matching perfectly along the seam. The colors are a rust-red, a blue with a slightly greenish tinge, and white. Perhaps it was not the weaver's fault that the colors and pattern are inharmonious. He had to use the materials given him and he may have had a limited choice of designs from which to select. Was he a European weaver familiar with the possibilities of the textile arts, or was he a young American who had learned the craft from an older professional? Mrs. Hall tells the story as follows: "These skilled weavers came originally from European countries in which textile art had reached a high degree of perfection. They plied their profession, they taught the secrets of their art to younger men or hired apprentices, and as the population of America increased and the people drifted westward, the weaver, also, moved westward. In all of the older states we find his gorgeous, florid creations, and by the removal of families these are scattered far and wide." Hall *A Book of Hand-Woven Coverlets* p. 172

Rust-red, blue and white, 80" x 93" including fringe
Purchase

Acc. no. 24.109
Photo. no. 5905

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