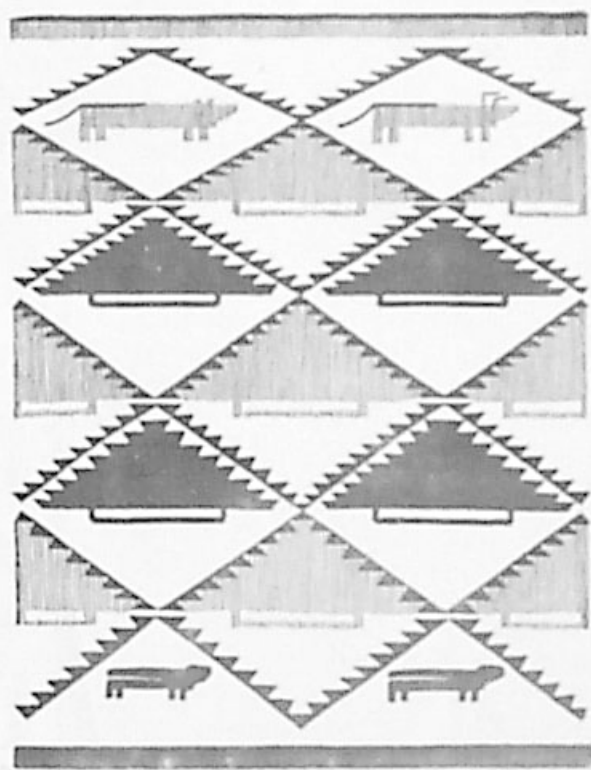


FOLIO 14

NAVAJO RUG FOLIO



OLD NAVAJO BLANKET

*Grant*  
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*Provo, Utah*

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## NAVAJO RUG WEAVING METHODS

A Navajo rug or blanket is one of those few articles which are proof of the perfect self reliance of the individual weaver. The American Indian not only performs all the processes incident to weaving the rug or blanket but prepares the raw material and often makes his own loom. These processes include growing the sheep that provide the wool, carding, spinning, and dyeing the wool, and finally weaving it.

The weaving of Navajo rugs is really a cult with this tribe which has been one of the peaceful groups staying at home to raise sheep, cultivate their crops and weave. The handling of the raw materials used for weaving the rugs forms a background for their intelligent use.

Although the Navajo loom is the simplest combination of sticks generally cut from the woods near the Indian's home it lacks nothing that is essential. It matters not that it is smaller than a floor loom that it is hand operated. The fundamentals are a means for shedding, for laying in weft, for beating it, for holding and tightening the warp, and a means of removing the finished part of the cloth. These are all present in a Navajo self-made loom. In the *Joy of Handweaving* available in this office there is a chapter on Navajo Rug weaving with easy to make diagrams of a Navajo loom.

The typical designs used in Navajo rug weaving are an expression of the simplicity and strength of the Indian creative mind - many of them evolving from combinations of lines and angles. Tribal motifs are sometimes employed. The weaving of a rug is a slow and painstaking process as the Indian does it and the beauty of the finished article bespeaks the sincerity of the workmanship and the conscientious effort to use the raw materials to the best advantage. The modern weaver with better equipment can weave a Navajo rug if he or she chooses similar well spun wools and makes an effort to duplicate the careful workmanship of the Indian weaver.

In typical Navajo rugs the colors most often used were gray, red, black and white. The dyes are most carefully prepared from native materials and the resulting colors are delicately toned for blending. Study these blends. Try to find similar colors.

In Navajo rugs of recent years one finds other colors dyed with native dyes in the more genuine of these rugs. A touch of blue is sometimes introduced and one finds some brighter colors - orange and green. And in the commercialized rugs promoted by traders and commercial set ups there are present regular American boiled dyes. These are of course more harsh than the soft vegetable dyes produced by the Indian. The true traditional Navajo rug has for a background the favorite soft gray of the Indian with designs in red, white and black. These older rugs made entirely by the hand processes even to the dyeing from vegetable dyes are by far lovelier and much more valuable.

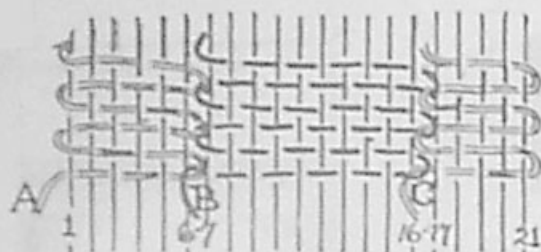
There are two characteristic types of Indian blankets and rugs: first those made by the Indian Saddle Blanket Weave method in which the colors form an all-over pattern effect as the weave is repeated - a pattern of diagonal lines resulting from a Twill or Herringbone threading; second the tapestry technique in which a planned design is woven in against a plain background with contrasting colors used to bring out the design which is often emblematic. In this folder the second type only is explained. The first type or the Indian Saddle Blanket Weave is explained in the following leaflets available at this office:

Indian Saddle Blanket Weave - 595-1

Indian Saddle Blanket Variations - 595-2

In imitating Navajo rugs or in creating new rugs of your own using this technique, study the Indian tribal emblems and introduce them simply into your design. In museums you will find beautiful examples and in libraries books on the Navajo Indian. A wonderful book on this subject is the "Spider Woman" by Gladys Reichard and a sequel "Navajo Shepherd and Weaver" by the same author tells the story of Navajo life in its relationship to their weaving.

The study of Navajo rugs fills one with profound respect for the cult of the Indian rug-maker and craftsman. The Navajo word for "teach" is to "show" and for centuries they have shown their art to their children; it is universally admired.



In this method, two adjacent weft colors interlock each other between the same warp threads.

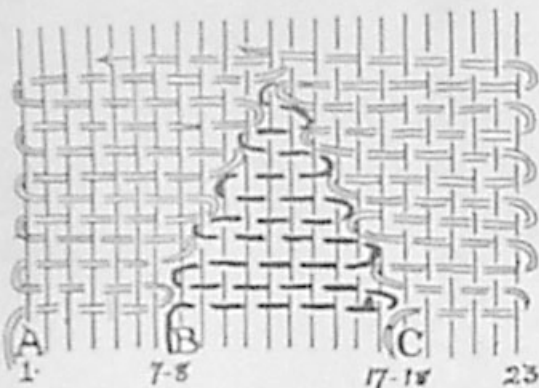
First Row: Make 1st shed with odd threads up, 1,3,5, etc. Weave from left to right in the order, A,B,C. Weave thread A to space between any two warp thds. such as nos.6 & 7; interlock with next thd., B. Weave B desired distance to space between two warp thds. such as nos. 16 & 17; interlock with next thd., C. Weave C desired distance to next color or edge of warp, such as 21st thd.

Second Row: Make 2d shed with even threads up, 2,4,6, etc. Weave from right to left in the order, C,B,A. Bring weft threads back to warp threads they started from. C comes back across 17th thd; B across 7th thd; A across 1st thd.

Third Row: Make 1st shed with odd threads up, 1,3,5, etc. Weave from left to right in the order A,B,C. Reverse A around 1st warp thd., weave to between 6 & 7, interlock with B. Weave B to between 16 & 17, interlock with C. Weave C to edge of warp, 21st thd. Continue Weaving, repeating the second row and the third row in succession.

III. ANGLES OF VARYING DEGREES.

a. WEAVING DIAGONAL LINES. A TRIANGLE, 40°



In this method, one weft color keeps adding to the number of warp threads crossed, while a second weft color keeps subtracting. Starting with the base of a triangle, as shown here, we may decrease it to a point; or starting with a point we may increase it to a wide triangle. Two diagonals going in the same direction will make a four-sided figure or a band, as shown in the sketch at .

First Row: Make 1st shed with odd threads up, 1,3,5, etc. Weave from left to right in the order, A,B,C. Weave A under and over several warp threads to desired point, such as between 7 & 8. Start B under last thread A went under, weave to a point, such as

between 17 & 18. Start C between these threads and weave to edge, such as 23rd thread.

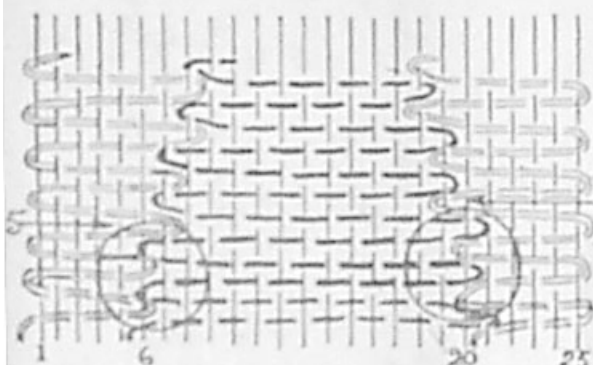
Second Row: Make 2d shed with even threads up, 2,4,6, etc. Weave in the order A,B,C.

Reverse A, weave from right to left back to edge. Reverse B, weave from right to left, stop short of one warp thread. Reverse C, weave from right to left, add one warp thread.

Third Row: Make 1st shed with odd threads up, 1,3,5, etc. Weave in the order C,B,A.

Reverse C, weave from left to right to outside edge. Reverse B, weave from left to right, stop short of one warp thread. Reverse A, weave from left to right, add one warp thread. Continue Weaving, repeating the second and third rows in succession.

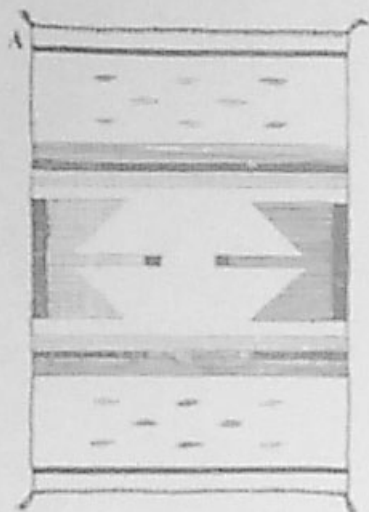
b. WEAVING A MORE ABRUPT TRIANGLE, 52°



In this method, each weft color goes over the same warp thread twice before adding or subtracting another warp thread.

Start weaving on the first shed with the odd threads up. Weave four rows with the adjacent colors lapping over the warp thread that is common to both. On the fifth row add a warp thread to one color, as at arrow 5; follow this in sixth row by adding a warp thread at opposite side, as at arrow 6. The center color now drops a warp thread at each side. Now weave around the two newly established warp threads for four rows. Continue weaving in this manner. See four woven rows in circles.

PAGE OF NAVAJO RUG DESIGNS

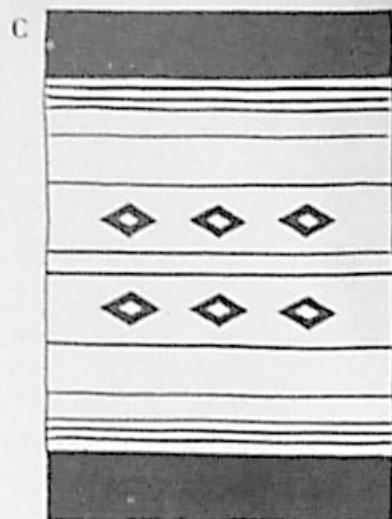


A. Indian Rug or Blanket design; specks made by weaving several rows of bright colors. Center, simple tapestry.

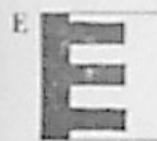


B. Zig-zag design for the center of a rug or for an entire rug. Sawtooth edges are characteristic of Navajo designs.

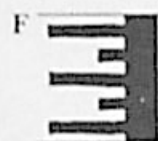
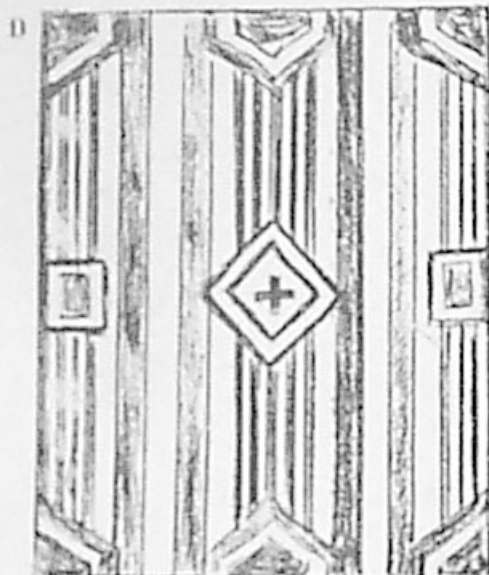
D. Vertical rug or blanket designs were traditionally for the chieftains only. Symbols were added at center.



C. A rug in black, white, red and grey. Ends in black; stripes grey with white accents; diamonds red & black.



E. A simple serrated design used for side-edges of Navajo rugs.



F. A more detailed border design. For the edge color choose a bright color or black.



G. Lovely rug design in three colors, or shades of colors.

H. End borders with small crosses, and design changes accented by serrated edges.

I. Design for a rug or a rug center.

