

# practical weaving suggestions

VOL. 4-64



**FROM  
YESTERDAY'S DRAFTS  
TOMORROW'S HEIRLOOMS**

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How lucky the weaver who is able to attend Guild meetings, or lives close enough to other weavers to enjoy exchanges of ideas. Once when I had the privilege of visiting a distant Guild they had a most interesting program about old weaving drafts. The main speaker told how she had recently inherited some wonderful ancestral drafts. As she talked we were able to examine the fragile brown paper drafts and some pieces of the original weaving. The notations, characteristic of a bygone era, had been made on both sides of what we would consider scraps of paper, but remember all paper was scarce in those days. When these drafts were not in use they had been kept tightly rolled and tied with a bit of yarn. Time and wear had caused the paper to crumble and the markings to fade, consequently, the new owner of these old drafts had preserved them between sheets of clear film.

This introduction to old drafts was so fascinating that I began a search for them in the mountain area where we spend our summers. While I did not get permanent possession of any of these early drafts I saw many and was given a number to study. For weeks I poured over them and finally was able to interpret those that I wanted to try. For those weavers who have not seen such drafts we hope the pictures of several shown here will give you an idea of their faded and crumpled condition today and the interesting notations that were used. These notations did not follow any set form so each became a new problem.



# COVERLET FROM ANCIENT DRAFT

(Shown on back cover)

## MATERIALS:

**WARP:** Lily Art. 314, Unmercerized Cotton Warp, size 24/3, Egyptian

**TABBY:** Same as warp

**PATTERN WEFT:** Lily Art. 110 Weaving Wool was used, but for the sample pieces the Lily yarns listed below were used.

Approximately two pounds and six ounces of Art. 314 for warp and tabby, and twenty-two ounces of Art. 110 for pattern weft were used in making the coverlet.

## PATTERN WEFT FOR SAMPLE LENGTHS:

Lily Art. 110, Weaving Wool  
Lily Art. 120, Sports Yarn  
Lily Art. 130, Knitting Worsted  
Lily Art. 106, Cotton Chenille  
Lily Art. 108, Soft Twist

Lily Art. 114, Mercerized Floss  
Lily Art. 114, Mercerized Pearl 3  
Lily Art. 907, Soft Spun  
Lily Art. 1014, Four Strand Filler  
Lily Art. 1214, Heavy Carpet Warp  
Lily Art. 414, Carpet Warp

**SLEY:** 30 ends to inch

**THREADING PLAN:** Shown on opposite page

One coverlet draft, dated 1841, was worked out so that a project warp could be threaded, and sample lengths woven using Lily Yarns in various weights, colors and combinations. The weavers of today have such a wonderful selection of fibers and colors to choose from in Lily Yarns . . . yarns that can either reproduce the heirlooms of yesterday or produce the heirlooms for tomorrow.

No title was on this particular old draft but when woven it was found to be somewhat like one pictured in Mary Meigs Atwater's Shuttle Craft Book of American Hand-weaving under three names; "Governor's Garden," "Mountain Cucumber," and "St. Anne's Robe." After working with these strange notations, it was easy to understand how two weavers threading from the same draft might arrive at quite different results. To avoid errors in threading our first step was to make a translation from the ancient draft on brown paper to a modern draft on 10 x 10 cross section paper. To help keep the place while threading this long draft it was divided into four quite obvious units; marked A to B, B to C, C to D, and D to E. You will note that each of these units balances both ways from the center, which has been marked  $\phi$

If because of loom width only one pattern repeat is to be used thread the right hand selvage, then A to E and left hand selvage for a total of 674 ends of 22½ inches in the reed. However, if a full coverlet is to be woven in two widths the threading will be — right selvage, then A to \*, A to E, and left selvage for a total of 1324 warp ends, or 44 inches in the reed.

The early weavers did not bother with a tie-up on their drafts but you will find the one given on the modern draft very convenient for weaving this pattern. If you wish to use a tie-up that is more familiar to you note that the tabby is made with frames 1 and 2 on one treadle and 3 and 4 on the other.

Of course, no treading directions could mean but one thing; "Tromp as Writ" which once learned, is much easier than following written instructions. To get started weave enough tabby for a turn under or hem, leaving the shuttle on the right. Now try the pattern treadles to find which one gives an open space on the right side of the warp. Start your pattern weft in this shed and weave enough pattern picks to square this block, of course, with a tabby after each pattern



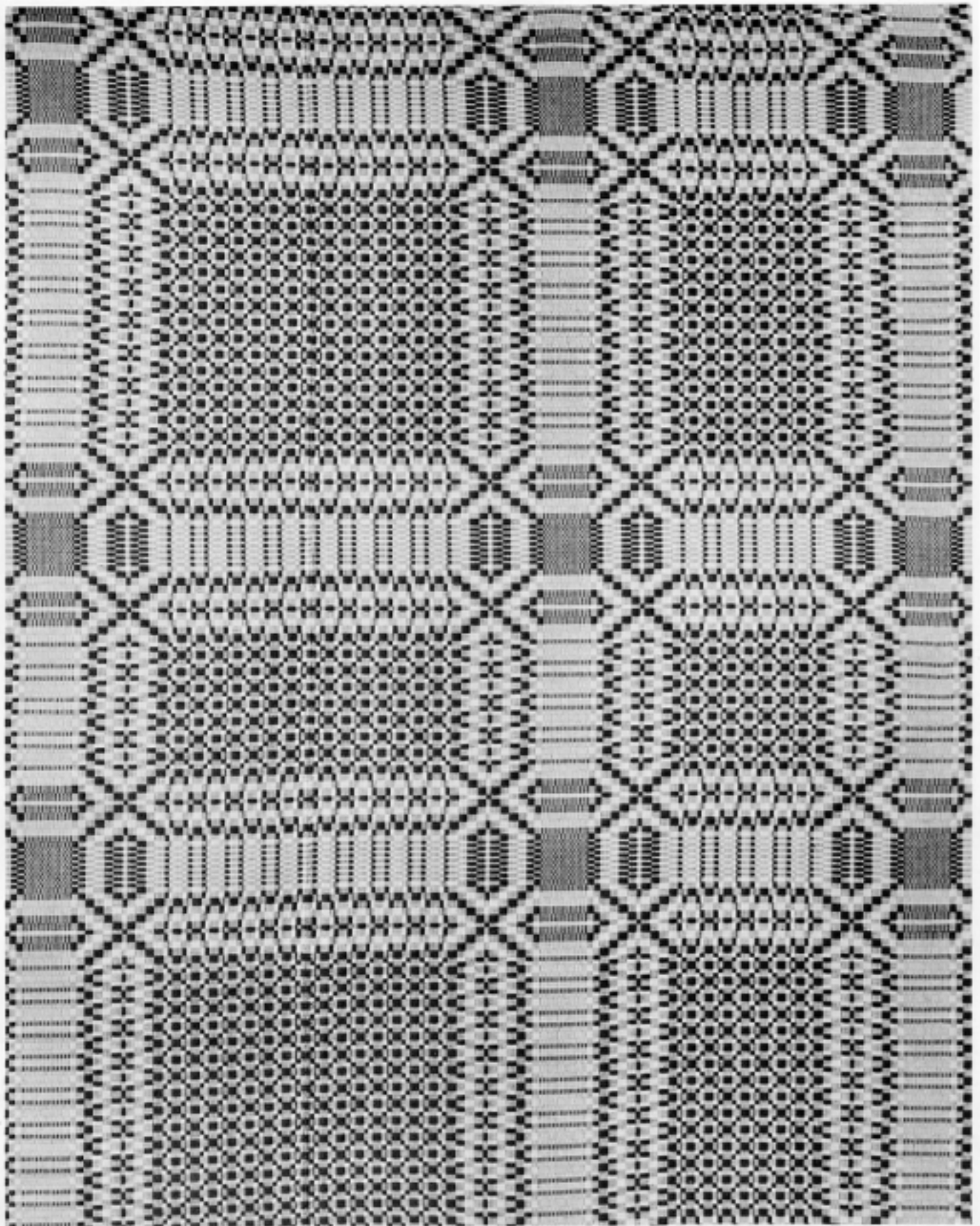
pick. Then proceed to the next block above and to the left of the previous pattern block, and square it. These squared blocks from lower right point to upper left will make a 45° angle guide line across the weaving as it progresses. If all the pattern blocks on this diagonal have been squared, no matter how large or small, a complete pattern square will have been finished when you reach the left selvage. You then start again at the right selvage. One word of caution — the warp will be under tension when you weave so make your pattern blocks a little longer than wide. Determine how much longer when you square the first block by releasing the warp tension and leaving the loom for a short time. Then check the warp-wise measurement again.

Old coverlets were usually made in two 45 inch widths but may also be woven in four widths if your loom will not take a 45 inch warp. Whether two or four lengths are to be woven it is most important to maintain a uniform beat and block size so that pattern units will match correctly when the strips are put together.

In addition to the coverlet described and illustrated here we wove sample material on this

threading using the same warp and tabby but a variety of Lily Yarns for pattern weft. Such experimental weaving is always rewarding but this seemed especially so as each yarn added its personality and character to the old draft. Lily Art. 110 Weaving wool gave that authentic look of old coverlets in a light weight material, while Lily Art. 120 Sports Yarn, and Lily Art. 130 Knitting Worsted gave the same effect but added warmth and thickness with their weight. For the heirlooms of tomorrow, Lily Art. 106 Cotton Chenille gave a deep pile with only a hint of the traditional pattern. Lily Art. 108 Soft Twist and Lily Art. 114 Floss lay quite flat, the latter with a wonderful sheen. Lily Art. 114 Perle 3 and Lily Art. 907 Soft Spun gave a sculptured touch. The combination of Lily Art. 114 Floss and Lily Art. 1214 Carpet Warp gave a shadowy effect with an interplay of luster and dullness. This was accomplished by alternating the two yarns when squaring the blocks. Unusual yarns for coverlets, perhaps, are Lily Art. 1014 Four Strand Filler, Lily Art. 1214 Heavy Carpet Warp, and Lily 414 Carpet Warp, but they each make materials of good appearance and everlasting quality — for tomorrow's heirlooms.





Enlargement of Coverlet Design



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