



warp and weft

Vol. XIII, No. 9

November, 1960

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Published monthly (except July and August) by Robin & Russ Handweavers, 632 Santa Barbara St., Santa Barbara, Calif.

Subscription: \$3.00 per year.

Back Issues: 30c each, plus 3c postage.

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A Word from the Editor

It is becoming extremely hard for us to obtain articles about the weavers who are well known for their work and craftsmanship or the weaving shops throughout the country, so we would appreciate any suggestions that you, our subscribers, might have to offer, as to persons, places or shops that you might like to see written up in Warp and Weft. We have made many friends and weaving acquaintances through it, and we hope that you have enjoyed it also.

Once again another busy month has quickly passed. We've started on another 200 yards of the jute for the leather and jute hand-bags as one of the many projects here in the shop. Also, while I'm writing this, I'm still working on the sample that will go in this issue of Warp and Weft.

We also have started another interesting project, a huck variation weave, using ramie and metallic for place-mats, and it will be a future sample in Warp and Weft. During this past month, we have also worked out samples for two other future projects for Warp and Weft. One will be a very in-

teresting, open, lacy, baby blanket, and the other will be an upholstery material in an unusual overshot technique from one of the English books that we import from England.

At present, we've been stymied on our multiple harness projects, so we don't have anything to tell you about them.

We're still working on the card-weaving project, and we now have more than 50 woven pieces, and so the book is in the final stages of preparation, preparatory to being published. I surely do hope that I can finish everything connected with this within another month, that we might have this available as of the first of the year.

As usual, we've had other visits this past month. A 10-day siege with the flu seems to be my fate, and a yearly occurrence. We also were very pleased to have my parents visit us for a 2-week period, and still another event was a visit with the Valley Handweavers Guild in Kaweah, California, where I presented a program on Card-Weaving and on Ramie to their guild. Well enough of this month, and so on to the rest of Warp and Weft.

RUSSELL E. GROFF, *Editor*

This Month's Cover

An interesting wall hanging is shown on this month's cover. It features as warp a linen thread, and linen and chenille were used in the weft, along with small dowel sticks. Quite interesting, the black areas do not show up too well in the photograph, but if you will look closely, you will see them.

This was woven by Beryl Ferguson of Long Beach, California. This was one of the pieces exhibited at the last Southern California Handweavers Conference in Long Beach, Calif.

LINEN OR FLAX (this is the third article we have had on linen or flax, and we hope to have one more at a future date.

FLAX or LINEN, spun and woven today, is almost identical to that which was spun and woven in Egypt almost 5,000 years ago. It has greater enduring qualities than any natural fiber except for Ramie.

A field of flax, in full bloom, is a most beautiful sight to see, as it has a bright beautiful blue flower. We ourselves were privileged to see this in Denmark about 10 years ago, and we still vividly remember it.

However, it is the fiber, obtained from the stem of the flax plant, which is used for spinning. Many people do not know it, but this can vary greatly in color and quality, depending upon the soil and climatic conditions of the country.

In appearance, the fiber is often quite long, fine in appearance, and is a light buff color. However, the system for retting will cause the color to vary a great deal, and this is particularly so of the flax from Canada and Russia, where the short growing seasons and difference in soil tend to produce a much darker grey fiber rather than the buff of the warmer climates.

To prepare flax for spinning, you have to cut it. Actually for the longer fibers, it would be better if you pull it, as the root tends to grow straight down, and much longer fibers can be obtained by using part of the root to obtain these longer fibers. In Denmark, Sweden, Russia and other countries, much of this is pulled by hand, but in the U.S.A., the flax is cut by machine. This is because of the high cost of labor in the United States that we cut the flax. Thus the length of the fiber of the linen in the U.S. is not as long as that from other countries, and so you can also say that the quality is not as good for this same reason.

After the flax is pulled, the next step is Rippling. This is actually the removing of

the seeds by pulling off the heads of the plants. When you do this by hand, this is done by dragging the flax stems or stalks through a row of what looks like sharpened nails. In the U.S., once again, we think of economy and cut these off by machine, thus shortening the length of the fiber again. Also, in the U.S., flax is often harvested before it normally should be, so that we can use the seeds for flax-seed oil, and for cattle feed, while in other countries, it is allowed to grow and dry out a little longer, and the seeds are primarily used for re-seeding only.

Then comes one of the most important stages of flax preparation for spinning. It is the Retting, or actually the rotting off of the outside covering of the stem to get at the fibers themselves. This Retting (as it is normally called) also helps to separate the fibers from the woody central portion of the stem.

Bundles of flax are usually put in crates, covered with straw and immersed in water, and preferably in soft water if it is available. Retting in the river with flowing water takes longer than in a pond or stagnant water, and of course the slowest retting process of all is dew retting. This is putting the flax plants in sheaves allowing them to stand in the fields where they grew, and allowing the dew to rot off the outside and inner core. Retting takes about 10 days to three weeks, according to the quality of the flax, and the temperature of the water it is in. Dew retting takes as long as 6 weeks, and you have to make sure the flax does not dry out, as if this did happen, the rotting would stop.

When ready, the flax bundles are taken from the crates and they are quite soft, and the fibrous sheath should easily separate from the central woody portion of the flax stem. You then remove the flax from the crates, open the bundles up, spread out in

(Continued on Page 7, Col. 1)

A MINIATURE WHIG ROSE

This is a multiple use fabric. We originally planned it that we might make a jumper for Robin and Janice, but so many persons have commented on what a beautiful bed spread it would make that we are going to suggest it for that, and for drapes.

THREADING DRAFT:

4		X			X	X	X	X	X		X
3		X	X			X			X	X	X
2	X	X								X	X
1	X					X	X				
	1	2	3	4	5	6					

TIE-UP DRAFT:

4			X	X		X
3		X	X		X	
2	X	X				X
1	X			X	X	
	1	2	3	4	5	6

WARP USED:

The warp used was the 20/2 Egyptian cotton in a Chicory Blue Color. It has 8,400 yards per lb. comes on 1/2 lb. cones, and is \$5.00 per lb.

WEFT USED:

Two weft threads were used, one for the tabby, and one for the pattern thread.

A. PATTERN THREAD was a 18/2 worsted yarn. FABRI, with 4,800 yards per lb., \$6.80 per lb. or \$1.00 per 2 oz. skein or spool if less than 1 lb. of a color is purchased. Color was WHITE.

B. TABBY OR BINDER THREAD was a fine yarn of Bernats, WEAVING AF-GHAN. It has 7,600 yards per lb., and is \$8.40 per lb., or in less than 1 lb. of a color \$1.25 per each 2 oz. skein or spool. There are 950 yards per skein. The color of the tabby or binder thread was a dark green called SEA MOSS.

REED USED:

A 15 dent reed was used, and it was sleyed 2 ends per dent, or a total of 30 threads per inch. We set up our loom 40" wide, so that two pieces sewn down the center will make a very nice bed-spread.

SAMPLE:



More About the Sample

The miniature patterns are a particularly enjoyable phase of hand-weaving. It is always a pleasure to weave these, and even though slow weaving, there are many striking and pleasing patterns available. This miniature is called MINIATURE WHIG ROSE, and is one of those patterns reduced to this size and published by Josephine E. Estes. There are 24 miniatures in each of these volumes and there are two volumes available. They are both \$3.50 each.

While telling you about this, I might mention that we have a collection of over 100 miniatures, and we hope to try and present one of these each year, or perhaps sometimes 2 a year.

The pattern in this month's issue has some 64 threads in each pattern repeat, 32 of pattern, and 32 of tabby or binder thread. After weaving a few yards, I found myself, that I could weave the complete pattern with out once referring to the treadling draft, to check and see if correct. I was surprised that I could remember a pattern this long, but by establishing a definite beginning and ending point, it really is quite easy.

We normally do not use a cotton warp and a wool weft, but we found that it made our pattern much more pleasing in this particular sample. We found that using a wool tabby and a wool pattern thread would beat and pack together tighter, thus making the pattern smaller and more concise, and giving us the almost perfect circle we were striving for in the pattern. We tried a cotton tabby, and a wool pattern thread, and found that this was not as satisfactory as when both weft threads were wool.

However, having both weft threads of wool leads to another complication, and a solving of this complication. Over the past 7 or 8 years, we have sold many temples or stretchers, for use to control the width of your woven material, but this is actually the first time that we have used one of these continuously in the weaving of such a fabric.

We had our warp, 40 inches wide on the loom. With the elasticity of the afghan and fabri used in the weft, we found that our material was weaving too narrow, and was only about 36" wide, which was we felt much too narrow for a warp which was originally 40" wide. So, we took a stretcher or temple as they are sometimes called, set it for 40" width material, and then used it in the weaving of this sample. It took a while to get used to it, but it eliminated about 99½% of the broken selvage threads we were having when we were not using it. The wool weft was so elastic it was pulling in to only 36", and thus causing the edge

warp threads to fray and break. After using the temple, we found that this was no longer a problem. Of course, we had an occasional broken selvage thread (because of fraying) but we would weave past it, and then put it back in without tying a knot in the warp, and we found that this was the most satisfactory method of handling the occasional broken edge thread. When I'm writing this, I've finished weaving approximately 10 yards of a 20 yard warp in this pattern, and I honestly think that I would have given up if it hadn't been for the temple or stretcher that I used. In other words, I'm sold on the use of a temple or stretcher on some projects. Most of these come so that they are adjustable to different widths. We sell three different sizes, A which is adjustable from 15 to 24 inches, B, which is adjustable from 25 to 44" and C, which is adjustable from 30 to 54" width material. It was the B stretcher that we used, and these cost \$4.50 each.

Another thing about this sample that I want to mention is the use of the dark green afghan as tabby on the medium blue Egyptian cotton warp. We found that this enhanced the material giving it an overall appearance that the background is blue-green, with a white pattern. Many weavers who have visited the shop while this project is on the loom have commented on how much nicer this is than if I had used the same color for tabby that I did for warp. You might keep this in mind for a future project, and remember to use a medium value color for warp, and a dark color value for tabby or plain weave on an overshot pattern.

It is amazing to me that after 5 years of Warp and Weft, and 10 years of weaving, that I find that I am learning more and more on the various projects we do now, than I ever did in the first 5 years of weaving.

Cost of the Fabric

I've spent the last hour checking and double checking these figures, and so here it is. Enough material for 6 yards for a bed-spread comes to approximately \$22.50. This would give you a bed-spread of about 76 to 78 inches wide, and about 115 inches long. This would allow enough for hems on each end of your bed spread, and give you the conventional size of a double bed bed-spread of 72 by 108 inches.

The actual cost per yard came to \$3.70 per yard, the warp coming to 75c per yard, the balance of the cost in the 2 wool yarns used.

More About the Fabric

Another reason why I'm sold on this material as a bed-spread, or as drapes is because the wool yarn has been moth-proofed, and so you would not have the problems that beset you when you have a wool bed-spread or wool drapes.

Also, the other reason why I'm sold on this material as drapes, is because I have found both the Egyptian cotton and particularly the Bernat wool yarns for hand-weaving, to be as sun-fast and wash-fast as any yarns that can be had on the market today. We wove a suit for Robin almost 10 years ago, and she is still wearing it, and about 3 or 4 months ago, we compared the colors in her suit of 10 years age, to the colors on the Bernat Color Card. We found that in this 10 year period, that as far as we could see, there had been almost no fading whatsoever. We have color cards of the 44 colors in fabri that are available and the 16 colors in afghan, and a set of these costs us 30c from the manufacturers, and you can have them at this cost if you do not already have samples of the colors available.

Book Review

A new book has just been published for those weavers who are interested in the use of vegetable dyes and natural dyes for the coloring of their yarns rather than chemical dyes.

This new book is entitled "LICHENS FOR VEGETABLE DYEING," and it was written by Eileen M. Bolton.

The book is primarily written with the idea of helping handweavers to find and identify the dye lichens more easily, and to assist in the making of red and purple dyes from these plants.

There are five beautiful color plates especially prepared so that you can see their natural surroundings, and so that you can compare their relative size, color and textures.

Not only does the book tell you where to find Lichens, but there is much other interesting and worth-while information; as to how to extract the dye from the plants, actually what Lichen is, and much other related information.

The book seems primarily concerned with those lichens which produce red and purple dyes.

There is a chapter devoted to the methods used to extract the dyes from these plants; another chapter also devoted to extracting the dyes from the plants using the boiling water method; and still a third chapter giving all the possible information about the Lichen Plant, and where and when to gather these plants. If you are interested in dyeing yarns from natural plants, I'm sure that you will find this book an exceptional bargain.

TITLE: LICHENS FOR VEGETABLE DYEING.

AUTHOR: Eileen M. Bolton.

PUBLISHER: Charles T. Branford Co.

AVAILABLE: From Charles T. Branford Co., or Robin & Russ Handweavers.

PRICE: \$3.50 plus 14c postage.

LINEN OR FLAX—Cont'd.

the grass or field, and allow to dry in the sun and air.

The next process in preparing flax for spinning is Scutching. Handfuls of the flax are beaten with a broad wooden blade to remove the woody matter from the fiber. The waste from this process is called "Scutching-Tow," and in recent years, methods have been developed of spinning this waste, so that actually most of the flax stem is used. Scutching Tow is considered the poorest quality of linen available.

Next comes the Hackling or heckling process. This is the process of drawing a bundle of flax through iron combs or heckles. Heckles are made of blocks of wood with long iron teeth. You find these of various sizes and are upright. The flax is normally first drawn through a coarse Heckle and then a finer one. By doing this, you clear the fibers still further of the woody particles, and thus you make the fibers ready for spinning.

Actually for the linens of sizes 40/2 and finer, most of the flax has to be hand-hackled, while the heavier sizes are machine hackled. This accounts for the increased cost in the finer sizes, and we were lucky in that we were able to see the hand-hackling being done both in Denmark, and then in the U.S. in Oregon, where much of the flax grown in the U.S. is produced.

The longer, even fibers of flax are called line, and the shorter fibers are called tow, and the very shortest as we have already mentioned are called "scutching tow."

Flax line, when ready to be spun, is very silky in appearance, it is soft, and usually is a pale yellowish natural or buff color. Boiling of the fibers will make them still lighter in color.

As we mentioned earlier, the flax from Russia and Canada is usually much greyer than that we have here. This is due in part to the soil, in part to the climatic conditions, and also in part due to the water in which it was retted.

The Weaver's Marketplace

ATTENTION WEAVERS: We are pleased to announce that starting with September, the *Shuttle Craft Bulletin* is once again being edited and published by Harriet Tidball, the former owner and publisher before it was purchased by Mary Black. For further information and subscription rates, write to Harriet Tidball, The Shuttle-Craft Guild Bulletin, Route 1, Box 204-B, Lansing Michigan.

REEDS OF ALL SIZES are available from Robin & Russ, 632 Santa Barbara St., Santa Barbara, Calif. We have available 4½" outside width reeds in 6, 8, 10, 12, 15 and 18 dents per inch. In the 5" and 6" outside width, we have 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, and 20 dent reeds in any length up to 72". Write for exact prices.

BAMBOO RINGS FOR BAG HANDLES OR TOPS are once again available. 6" in diameter, in natural colors, these are 60c each, or \$1.15 per pair. Robin & Russ, 632 Santa Barbara St., Santa Barbara, California.

KNITTING BAG HANDLES, 13" long, for 12" wide openings for bags. These are carved handles, and are also beautifully varnished and have a nice glossy finish. Made of hard wood, these are \$1.25 per pair. Available in unfinished or natural wood colors at 90c per pair. Robin & Russ, 632 Santa Barbara St., Santa Barbara, California.

DRAFTING PAPER: For the serious hand-weaver, an excellent drafting paper with 10 square per inch, heavy squares imprinted in each inch, and it is printed on both sides of the paper, so there is no waste. \$1.35 per package of 100 sheets, or \$.75 per package of 50 sheets. Postage on both 10c extra. Size of paper is 8½x11½, exactly the same size as the paper your Drafts & Designs is printed on.

SPEE-DEE CEMENT. An excellent material for the handweaver is this cement, as you can glue together a broken warp thread in the space of 1 minute and have a strong thread again. Small bottles 50c each, plus 10c per bottle shipping if just one or two bottles are ordered. Can be used for many other items around the house, as well as on warp threads.

BROMA—A large can of clear plastic spray excellent for use on your reeds, heddles, and other metal loom parts to prevent them from rusting. An excellent material that can be used for many other uses. Giant, ½ quart size only \$1.95 per can.

The Weaver's Marketplace

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