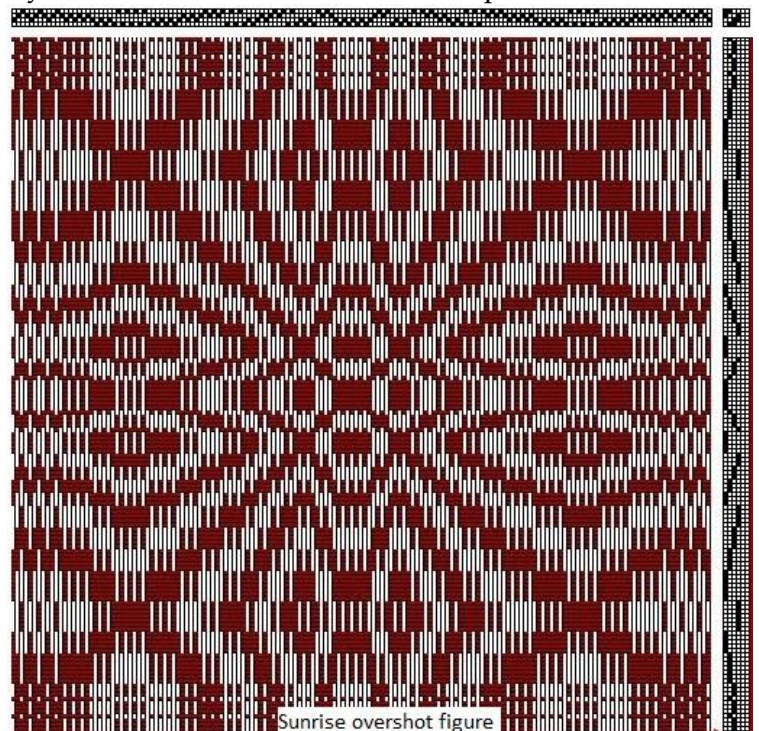


Shuttlecraft Bulletins: Overshot Patterns, the Beginning

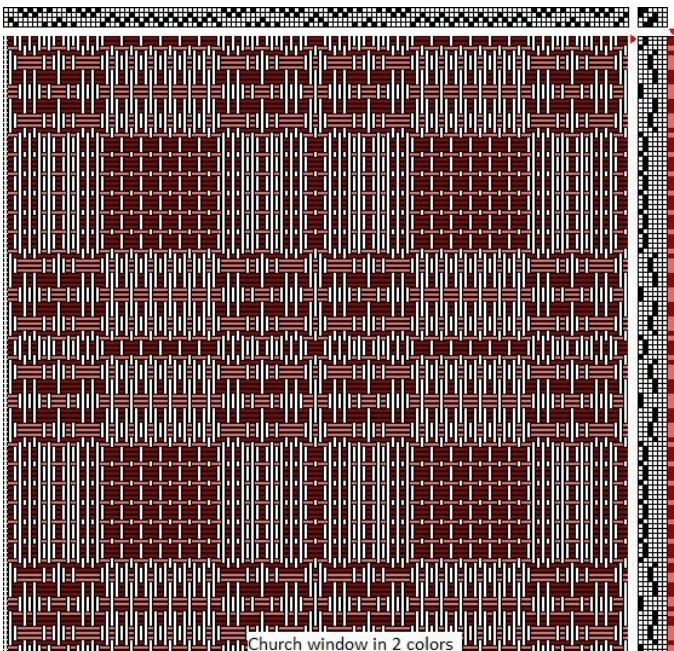
The patterns in the next three 1927 bulletins covered--June, July and November are overshot. This is just the beginning of a long list of them that Mary Meigs Atwater included in her writings. Mary, in her Shuttlecraft Book Of American Hand-weaving identified overshot as part of our American weaving tradition; handsome and effective, with extremely varied pattern possibilities, and simple and easy to weave. In fact, Mary thought that a beginner's first weaving should be overshot.

In overshot, the pattern is produced in an arrangement of floats, usually in a fairly colored, heavy material, of wool, over a foundation tabby fabric in a material finer than the pattern weft.

The bulk of the patterns known are for 4 shaft and wove as drawn in, so the patterns are easily transcribed. The shafts are lifted, or lowered, in pairs; 2 up and 2 down. For 4 shafts, there are 6 pairs: 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 1-4, 2-4 and 3-1. Two of these, 1-3 and 2-4, are reserved for the tabby foundation weave. The pattern floats result from treading the remaining pairs that form the four blocks of the pattern. The resulting figure depends on the arrangement and different widths of these four blocks, and there appears to be no limit to the possibilities of these. Mary's



Sunrise overshot figure



Church window in 2 colors

book gives a very good overview of several examples in series, grouping the patterns by the dominant form, starting with a basic diamond and cross form and moving through a star and rose combination, star and rose with a table – a square block of color, clusters of star and wheel with a table, radiating patterns and on and on and on. The sunrise pattern, shown here in brown, is a radiating pattern, taken from an old coverlet in a Boston museum. Mary calls it the

most ancient of American patterns. This threading may be found in No. 102 of the Shuttlecraft book on page 178 of the 1973 printing.

Another, shown in 2 colors, brown and rose, is one form of “church windows” also known as single or double “chariot wheels”, depending on the version. This is one of the most famous of the ancient wheel patterns, and was often seen in red and blue.

Mary recommends using the other color for the tabby, to avoid an “ugly stripey effect”. That is, when weaving overshot pattern in red, use a blue tabby yarn, when weaving pattern in blue, use a red tabby. This will give a half tone areas the same effect throughout the piece. A sample would definitely be helpful to illustrate this recommendation.

Another wheel pattern provided is called the “Wheel of Fortune” also known as “Cup and Saucer”, “Iron Wheel” etc. The names for the patterns are charming to say the least and depending on where the pattern was popular, in New England or the South, they would have a different name.

And then there is the very popular radiating pattern known as Double Bow-Knot, Maple-Leaf and in some places “Double Muscadine Halls”. Also called by Mary as one of the “most famous” of the old patterns and only found in the US and probably from the South.



Overshot is most used for coverlets, but can be used for drapes, upholstery (with short floats), table runners, pillow covers, bags, screens, scarf and towel borders and for some patterns, rugs.

Drafts for these patterns are found in the *Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*, found in the Guild library. Many more can be found in Marguerite Porter Davison’s *A Handweavers Pattern Book* and in *Weaving Designs by Bertha Gray Hayes: Miniature Overshot Patterns*

by Norma Smayda, Gretchen White, Jody Brown, & Katharine Schelleng. The last two sources contain more illustrations of fabric woven in the patterns with the Bertha Gray Hayes collection in color. And of course, you can always do an online search under a specific pattern name. This is just a taste of overshot patterns and the weave. There is certainly more to come in later articles.

Other items of discussion in the three bulletins include detailed instructions on how to convert a counterbalance loom to a jack loom, the weave structures of several textiles, upholstery, drapes, etc., displayed in a recent article in the Ladies Home Journal, and whether the bulletin should be distributed to non-Guild members. It was decided not to, but Mary believed that a weaver’s magazine for more general circulation would be an advantage, as a wider distribution to patterns and information about weaving could only support the craft.