

Shuttle-Craft Bulletins on the Crackle Weave

Crackle weave is a twill-based block weave. It is one of the weaves that Mary Meigs Atwater developed for the American hand-weaver. She first introduced the weave structure in 1926 and wrote about it frequently during the 1920s and 30s. The article in last months' Guild newsletter contained several crackle weave drafts for gift weaving.

Crackle is a very versatile weave structure, displaying a wide variety of textures and colors. I am so glad that this year's Guild challenge is a crackle weave sample exchange, and it appears to have broad appeal as we now have 17 weavers participating.

This article is based on drafts published in the November 1928, May and June 1930 Bulletins. Many more bulletins include the weave structure. While the November issue is on color, it includes two 4 shaft crackle weave drafts: a small pattern, described as attractive for upholstery and bags, linens or towels; and three flowers, a larger pattern good for pillow tops or linens. She called the weave the "Swedish technique" and reported that many guild members were using it with pleasure. She gave it the name "crackle" as it reminded her of the crackle in pottery or batik and thought that the Swedish name "Jämtlandsväv" was not a realistic working name for American hand-weavers. Recommended color combinations and one treadling are given for the patterns, but it is noted that several different treadlings are possible. Susan Wilson's book: *Weave Classic Crackle & More*, Schiffer Press, gives a variety of crackle weave tie-ups and treadlings.

Mary called the crackle weave something different than anything we have had before, with a style all its own that will go well for modern things. The May 1930 Bulletin includes a crackle weave draft that Mary called "The Garden Wall", see a drawdown of it here. It is made up of 2 similar figures of alternating blocks on opposites (just one of the treadlings available), separated by twill figures. She described the order as having a log cabin effect. These are woven with a tabby, usually the same yarn as the weft and a thicker pattern weft. She gave 4 variations of the draft, both in threading and treadling. A 5th draft, E, is Pattern Number 132, Doors and Windows, from her book: *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*, is an overshot pattern drafted for weaving as crackle weave, yet another way to approach this weave.



In June 1930 Mary reported that the more she experimented with the crackle weave, the more interesting it appeared to her. Most of the patterns that the guild members have been weaving have been based on the plain twill. Three examples were discussed: three twills, wild waves and drifting shadows, all variations of the first draft displayed. Five drafts are given, including a large figure of 560 warp ends, based on the Davis coverlet: Star and Rose, draft 201 of the Shuttlecraft Book of American Hand-weaving (p. 227 of the 1973 printing). Overall, there are 11 different drafts given in the 3 Bulletins discussed. This is a popular weave structure for the Shuttlecraft Guild. From Deanna Baugh's Index of the Bulletins, 11 Bulletins from 1930 to 1949 include crackle weave drafts and 6 more address the crackle weave. Check them out.



There are many sites online that show beautiful examples of crackle weave. One that caught my eye is the Northeast Iowa Spinners and Weavers Guild article on what makes crackle pop, see it at this link:

<https://neiwsguild.wordpress.com/2015/02/15/february-14-2014-meeting-what-makes-crackle-pop/comment-page-1/>

Here is one example from that website of the beautiful weave structure, showing the variety of color that may be achieved.