

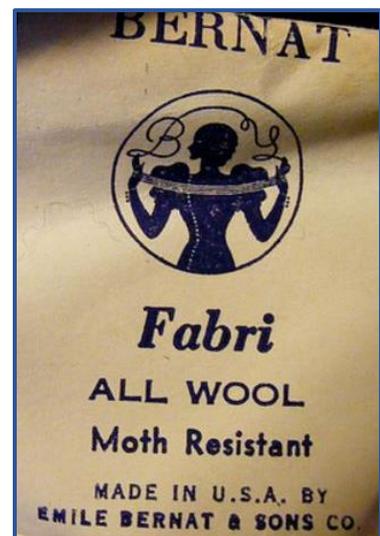
Shuttle-Craft Bulletins on Weaving for Clothing

This article reviews two Shuttle-Craft Bulletin issues, March 1929 and August 1939, by Mary Meigs Atwater and her daughter, Betty Atwater Biehl on weaving for clothing. In 1929, Mary gave the following advice:

“The weaver should consider color and texture for the fabric; pattern is not so important.” Unless you are a seamstress, hire a professional who can work with the handwoven fabric, since poor execution in sewing the clothing will result in a “dowdy final product”, no matter how well it is woven. A seamstress or tailor can advise on the yardage needed. But she advised not to forget to allow for shrinkage, the fabric should be wet finished before it is used.

In terms of color, that depends on personal taste and the style of the moment. Mary recommended safer colors, pastels or neutral shades and to avoid anything too “flashy”. For texture, she recommended plain weave, using a soft, fine yarn in the fashion of the day, woven evenly and lightly. Twills produce a thicker fabric and are more suitable for coats, or outerwear. She included examples of more fancy weaves: Leno for blouse fabric, Ms and Os, Bronson or even Crackle weave. Simpler and more classic is better for clothing fabric.

For materials, she tended toward fine wool yarns. Bernat produced a yarn then known as “Fabri”, which she favored, reporting that it gives a fabric with a good deal of body. This yarn is no longer available but has been identified by Harriet C. Douglas, 1949 in *Scotch Tartan Setts, a Shuttle-Craft Guild Guide for weaving 132 Traditional Plaids*, as an 18/2 wool, with 4800 yards per pound. You can see a few skeins stashed on Ravelry, a social media site for fiber enthusiasts (www.Ravelry.com). A viable substitution may be JaggerSpun superfine Merino 2/18s Lace Yarn sold by Halcyon Yarn and the Yarn Barn of Kansas, among others. This yarn is made in Maine of Australian superfine merino wool and comes in 45 shades, with a recommended sett of 22-28 epi for plain weave.



She recommended trying two shades, one for the warp and another for the weft. I have used two very closely related shades of one color this way and found it to produce an interesting fabric, color wise.

She included a few drafts and treadlings: one for an 8-shaft twill, one in Ms and Os, Summer and Winter, and a reference to a previous issue Crackle draft. She recommended color combinations for these, but referred to the several Fabri colors by number, sadly and these are now lost as a reference.

She highly recommended sampling, including wet finishing to determine if the fabric will work for the intended garment. She also reviewed the “linsey-woolsey” fabric, popular at the time, with a fine linen or cotton warp and wool weft, as a possibility for dress fabric.

In the 1939 Bulletin, Betty Beihle, made some of the same recommendations, including using a professional seamstress and Fabri yarns. She addressed more of the dress styles and seaming in skirts to

offset any bagging of the handwoven fabric. She also preferred plain weave and recommended the same yarns for warp and weft, saying that combining different yarns is not always successful. In terms of cutting the fabric, something many weavers avoid, she recommended weaving the exact width needed, which would take some extra planning and analysis, or chalking the pattern outline and stay-stitching the cutting line to avoid raveling of the fabric.

She addressed sleeve styles, avoiding set-in sleeves, preferring those that work better with a more open weave material, which handwoven fabric tends to be. See the drawing from the Bulletin:

The clothing styles recommended are generally classic and simple. A hand-woven garment is meant to last a long time, so classic styles are preferred, and faddish ones avoided. Betty wove extra yardage for future makeovers.

As a well-fitted garment is important, Betty recommended the use of a dress model. The weaving instructor, Daryl Lancaster, known for weaving fabric for garments also recommends this.

Daryl has written a 3-part document called *The Weaver Sews*, published by *WeaveZine* online in 2010. Here is the link: <http://www.weavezine.com/columns/weaver-sews-0.html>.

I recommend reviewing them if you are considering weaving fabric for clothing. Daryl also provides links to several pre-recorded seminars on garment construction on her blog, www.Weaversew.com. Check the schedule link.

Betty Beihle recommended double sewn seams and taped raw edges for a more secure finish. She included some trimming suggestions, such as card woven bands for collars, cuffs or belts to get an unusual and pleasing effect. She finished by stating that all these details may make the construction of a handwoven dress seem difficult but assures that that is not the case. She recommended several commercially available sewing patterns of the day. There are weavers online and, in the Guild, who have their favorite patterns that work well with handwoven fabric. I am sure that an online search will yield many options.

