

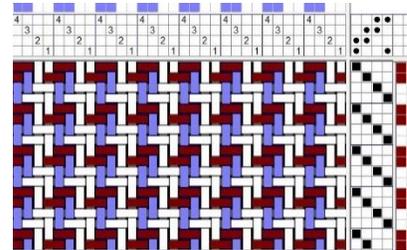
Shuttle-Craft Bulletins: Weaving Dress Fabrics

In 1931 (March Issue) and 1937 (April), Mary Meigs Atwater wrote on weaving dress fabrics. She stated that dress fabrics are not difficult to weave, and should rely on color and texture more than pattern. In 1931, she recommended that they be woven in plain or twill weave structures. In terms of materials, a combination of linen warp and wool weft, known as linsey-woolsey or all wool yarns should be used. These yarns are called for fabrics for dresses, coats, light suiting, scarves, and even summer dresses. She wrote that a weaver should have a flair for style, a good color-sense and a partnership with a skilled seamstress. She advised that the weaver should not be timid with color and experiment. For plain weave, one color is recommended for warp, and a different color or shade of the same color for weft to give the best effect. Stripes of different colors in the warp, or plaids were also given as an option. Ten drafts are shown at the end of the 1931 issue that include twills, open work and Bronson weave dots. These are described in detail in the issue. You can see a 1931 dress pattern here for the style of the day.



In 1937, Mary stated that plaids, stripes and bordered fabrics were the newest thing for dress fabrics. Scotch tartan plaids were described as perennials woven in twill or plain weave for a lighter weight fabric. In terms of color, grey was to be used, in all shades from a rose taupe to a cold bluish shade.

Here is a 2/2 twill draft for one of the samples she described in the issue:



In 1937, Mary has moved away from the linen wool combination and used either an all wool or all cotton fabric. For weave structure, she again recommended plain weave, twill, Bronson weave, leno with plain weave, basket weave or crackle. Warp and weft yarns should be the same or at least similar in kind and grist. Here is another example of a dress pattern of that time.

While looking for examples of dress design of the 1930s, I found a couple of vintage clothing blogs that may be of interest. Check them out at these links: <http://blog.royalvintageshoes.com/> and <https://witness2fashion.wordpress.com/>

The whole topic of weaving dress-fabrics brought to my mind that many of us no longer wear dresses regularly. While searching online, I found this book on that topic, which looked interesting: *The Lost Art of Dress: The Women Who Once Made America Stylish*, 2014 By Linda Przybyszewski. Professor Pski, as she is also known, is a University of Notre Dame Professor of history who practices the crafts of dressmaking and millinery, both vintage and modern.

From the publisher on the book: “In the first half of the twentieth century, a remarkable group of women--the so-called Dress Doctors--taught American women that knowledge, not money, was key to a beautiful wardrobe. They empowered women to design, make, and choose clothing for both the workplace and the home. Armed with the Dress Doctors' simple design principles--harmony, proportion, balance, rhythm, emphasis--modern American women from all classes learned to dress for all occasions in ways that made them confident, engaged members of society.”

Her blog on the topic may be found here: <http://professorpski.tumblr.com/> and more about her and her thoughts on modern dress may be found here: <http://www.professorpski.com/awards--html>

One last note: In the 1931 Bulletin, Mary introduced the *Recipe Book*, with description of the sections and the materials to be covered in each.

