

Shuttle-Craft Bulletins: Weaving Linens with Linen

Mary Meigs Atwater has written about weaving with linen before, and in the 2 issues of the Bulletin, April 1932 and April 1934, she followed a similar format. She stated in 1932 that the most important matter in making of linen pieces are texture and design. She reviewed weaving yarns, suggesting number 18 linen.

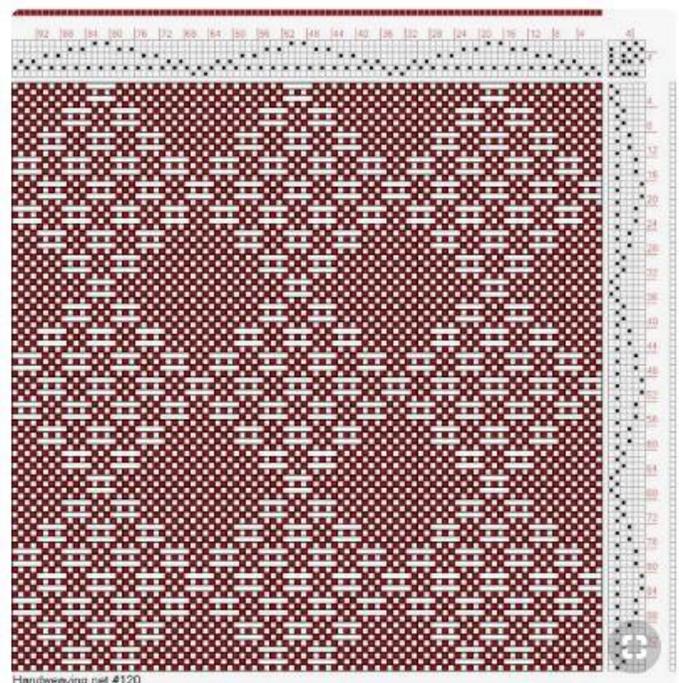
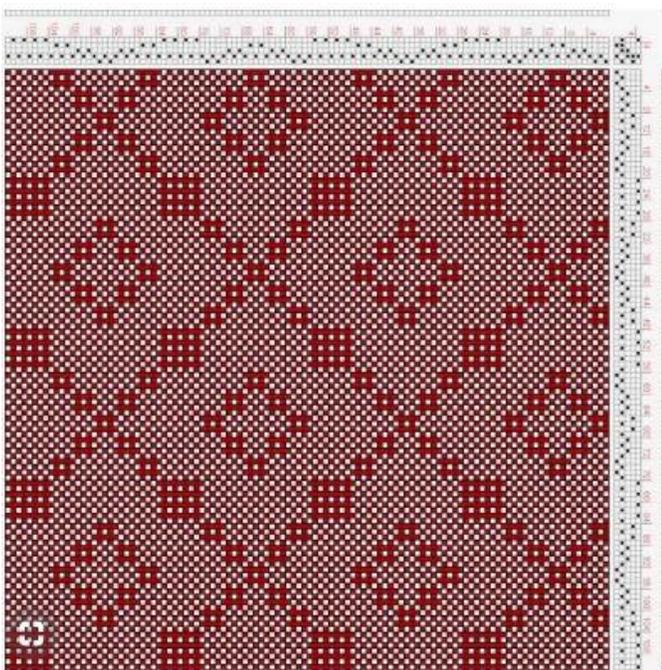
The standard measure of linen yarn is the lea. A yarn having a size of 1 lea, or a number 1 linen will give 300 yards per pound. As with other yarns, the higher the number, the finer the yarn. The fine yarns used in handkerchiefs, etc. might be 40 lea, and give $40 \times 300 = 12000$ yards per pound. The longest finest fibers are reserved for the best quality called "line" linen. Shorter lengths are spun into yarn usually referred to as "tow." Line linen yarn is very strong and lustrous. Tow yarn is generally weaker and hairy. Tow is often used as weft in textiles such as towels.

From a 1997 *Handwoven* article: *The Measure of Linen Yarns*, line and tow linens are defined, and a list of linen yarn sizes are provided with recommended setts in ends per inch. The closest size to a number 18 line linen is either a 16/1 linen with a sett of 26-30, or a 20/1 linen with a recommended sett of 32-36 epi.

On the Lone Star Loom Room web site, the following information is provided on linen yarns: "Bockens 16/1 linen is a wet-spun linen that is dyed in 68 beautiful colors plus half-bleached, bleached white and unbleached/natural. 16/1 works well as a warp and weft for a fine linen fabric or use it as a weft with cottolin, 8/2, 16/2, 24/2 and 30/2 Egyptian cottons as well as 16/2, 28/2 and 35/2 linens. The Swedes frequently use 16 singles to add color to fine warps that are bleached or unbleached."

Mary recommended the Bronson Spot Weave for the finer linen yarns (eg., 16/1 or 20/1) and gave an attractive point pattern draft for 8 shafts with several treadlings, as well as five 4-shaft drafts.

Here are two examples of Bronson weave drafts from the Handweaving.net website:



Mary recommended Ms and Os weaving patterns for heavier towels, calling for a number 10 linen yarn for warp, set at 15 epi with what she calls a heavy linen floss for weft. I found Bernat Linen floss at 200 yards for 2 ounces, or 1600 ypp. An equivalent yarn would be a 10/2 linen. She also recommended huck, goose-eye and bird's eye twill for these heavier towels, calling them among the handsomest things we make on our looms.

She reviewed hemming and wet finishing of the linen pieces, writing that they be soaked in warm water for several hours, hand washed in warm soap suds, rinsed and ironed while still quite wet, passing the iron over the fabric until it is dry to bring out the luster of the material.

In 1934, Mary reviewed what she called the "Spanish Weave", that is Spanish lace, offering several patterns. She described the Spanish weave as an ancient design, to be adapted to modern ones, stating that weaving is a living art, not a dead thing and she offered the modern designs with an entirely clear conscience.

She recommended a round linen yarn for this weave, that is a 2-strand yarn rather than a single to best show the design. She also wrote that the fabric should be firmly beaten, keeping both the warp and weft damp to allow a firm beat.

If you are thinking of weaving with linen and want more guidance, this article was published on the Interweave site: *The Joy of Linen with Tom Knisely* and may be viewed at this link: https://www.interweave.com/article/weaving/the-joy-of-linen-tom-knisely/?k=bTjPbnY8NpPZm%2B%2Fyd2wJXFNg3nyWo1CCXYMRQDsMQkk%3D&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=wt-tsa-nl-190125&cid=DM99141&bid=989383626 . Tom is offering an online workshop on linen, including the fiber preparation and spinning it. It promises to be a good one.

