

Shuttle-Craft Bulletins: Weaving Curtains and Drapes

In the May 1932 and March 1933 Shuttlecraft Bulletins, Mary Meigs Atwater wrote about weaving curtains and drapes. Amanda Cutler called them “Fabrics of Light” in her 2014 *Handwoven* article on making handwoven curtains. Mary said that they are to soften the harsh lines of a window opening and

“We can have new dresses for every window in the house if we like, at the cost of a little thread and some expenditure of thought and energy.”

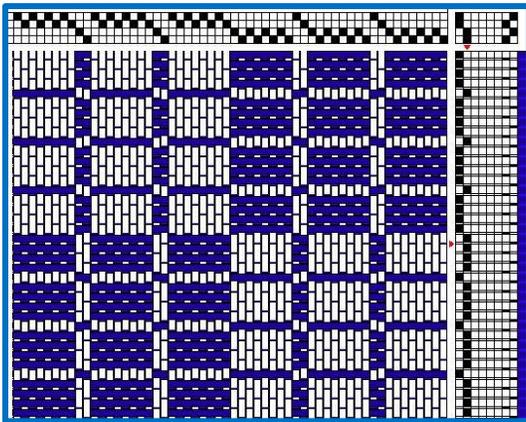
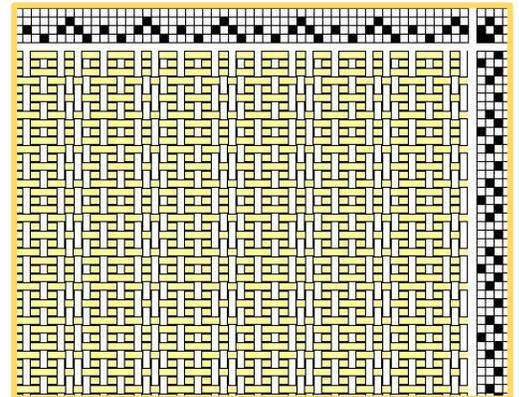
to give a room privacy and an effect of “indoorsness” a word she coined. Mary wrote that in the spring we want to dress our windows in something fresh.

The size of the room and the windows dictates the curtain design. A small room in the house that Mary lived in was predominantly brown, with brown stained oak furniture

upholstered in brown leather, a plain brown rug and tan walls. She hung drapes on the tall narrow windows at the side of the windows and a valance along the top in a very bold modernistic designed

fabric in strong colors with a touch of brown. She described when to use drapes at the side, when to add a valance over the top and how to bring several smaller windows together with drape design.

For windows on the street, there is a need for what she called a glass curtain, for privacy. Mary provided a 3 harness draft for an open mesh in the small Swedish threading, or Swedish lace, beat lightly for an open weave.



She listed Monk’s belt as a good curtain fabric weave, and provided a draft she named “brick-work”, see the figure left. She also liked summer and winter, crackle weave, and plain weave with a lace border. She mentioned overshot as a possible weave structure for curtains, but advised not to use a typical Colonial coverlet pattern, or it will look a coverlet was hung at the window.

For yarns, Mary suggested silk or rayon for formal rooms, linen for other rooms and cotton for bedrooms, bathrooms, morning rooms for those that have them, or generally informal rooms.

She wrote more on cotton curtains in 1933, and mentioned a sample sent in from a Guild member done in cotton carpet warp. Mary warned that the materials used should be colorfast, as curtains are directly exposed to sunlight and more apt to fade. For design, Mary preferred vertical stripes for standard sized windows, while horizontal stripes may be more appropriate for a long narrow window.

She repeated the drafts from 1932 and added basket weave and waffle weave as options. She provided 4 drafts, and recommended a design for windows with an open weave at the top to let in light and an opaque structure at the bottom for privacy. There is a sketch in the Bulletin for such a layout, in Bronson and Lace Weave to achieve the effect. Another possible weave structure mentioned is the 3 harness weave, or Krokbrad, as we know it, done in rayon. That sounds unusual.