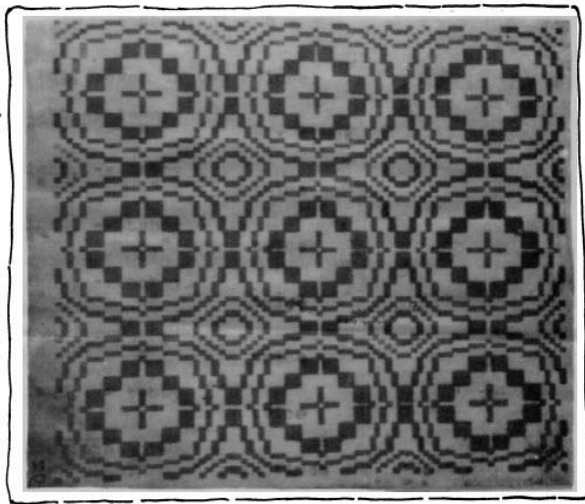


Shuttle-Craft Bulletins: Coverlets from the Speck Book

Mary Meigs Atwater spent time in the Philadelphia Museum of Art collections and library studying woven pieces and drawings of patterns to provide this information to the Shuttlecraft Guild members. She published drafts for members from the pattern books in the Bulletin so that they might be woven. These sources included the Landes drawings from the late 18th century, published by Mary as a book titled *A Book of Patterns for Hand-Weaving*, and an older publication, simply called the Speck Book on weaving published in 1723. The predominance of these patterns were for coverlets.

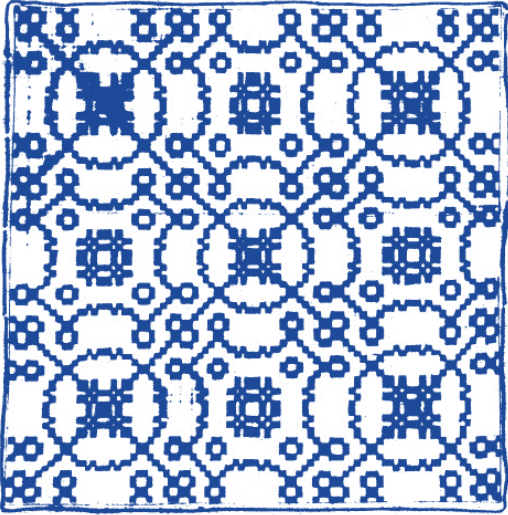


The Speck Book contained 84 drawings of patterns, many of which were described by Mary as of minor interest to the modern weaver. However, she wrote, that many are also beautiful and should be enjoyed. The Speck Book included a number of 3 block patterns, many shown in 2 colors like the one shown here, although in black and white.

Mary wrote that a 3 block pattern often gives a particularly rich effect as the proportion of the background to figure is less than in a 4 block pattern. Mary provides a 4-shaft overshot

weave draft, a 5 shaft Summer and Winter draft as well as an 8 harness Summer and Winter draft in 2 colors for this pattern in the September 1931 bulletin. Mary was working on Section III of the Recipe book during this time and included two designs from the Speck Book for fingertip towels, a seamless bag, a luncheon “set” and a new scarf.

Mary dedicated the January Bulletin issue from 1928 through 1948 to weaving coverlets. She considered midwinter an excellent time to make one. In 1933, she wrote that in planning of a coverlet, the weaver chooses the weave, materials, colors, and pattern. Mary preferred overshot or Summer and Winter weaves over double weave. For overshot, she recommended a warp of Egyptian cotton 24/3 set at 30 epi, with Shetland wool for pattern. For Summer and Winter, she recommended a finer pattern yarn with the same 24/3 cotton warp. For color, if a weaver was going for a colonial effect, the warp would be white or natural and the pattern yarns dark indigo blue. This gives a rather somber effect. Modern weavers might prefer a more medium blue color, or 2 shades of blue, madder red and dark blue or a combination of walnut brown and golden tan. Greens and yellows might also be used for a different look. Mary wrote that “tradition need not rule. We are weaving for the present and the future rather than for the past, and if we like we can express ourselves in all the shades of modern dyeing....”



The choice of pattern is wide, there are many beautiful options. She included the one shown here in the 1933 Bulletin, again from the Speck book. It is a 4-harness overshot pattern, with instructions for different sizes as well as drafts in Summer and Winter, double weave, and an 8-shaft overshot. The pattern is woven as drawn in and is based on the materials listed above.

The Philadelphia Museum continues to hold a coverlet collection which may be seen online (<http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/>) as well as the library holdings. Here is a photo of a double weave by a Pennsylvania German weaver.

Look for more coverlet weaving information in the next newsletter-there is a lot more to come.

