

## Shuttle-Craft Bulletin: Christmas Weaving; Tartans

It is October 1935; the Shuttlecraft Guild is starting its twelfth year and it is the Christmas weaving issue once again. Mary Meigs Atwater repeated the idea of handwoven gifts as personal and charming. She recommended, as they were popular then, weaving the ascot tie scarf in a tartan pattern, also in vogue. An ascot tie, or ascot or hanker-tie, according to Wikipedia, is a neckband with wide pointed wings, traditionally made of pale grey patterned silk. This wide tie is usually patterned, folded over, and fastened with a tie pin or tie clip.

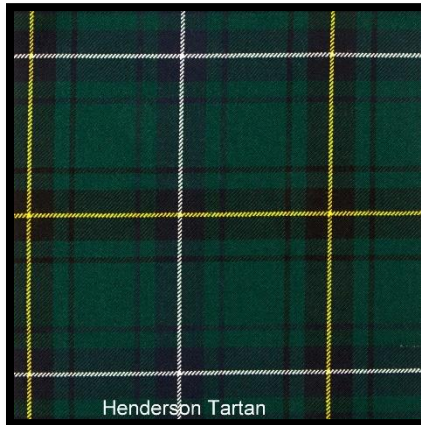


She included the drafts for the Skene, Henderson and Cameron of Lochiel tartans as possible options, pictured below. There are many others, so many in fact that it would be hard to choose one.

Mary also referenced the tartans included in the Recipe Book, Series IV, No. 6. She recommended that



Skene Tartan



Henderson Tartan



Cameron of Lochiel Tartan

scarves be woven in a fine wool at a 24-epi sett, or in silk.

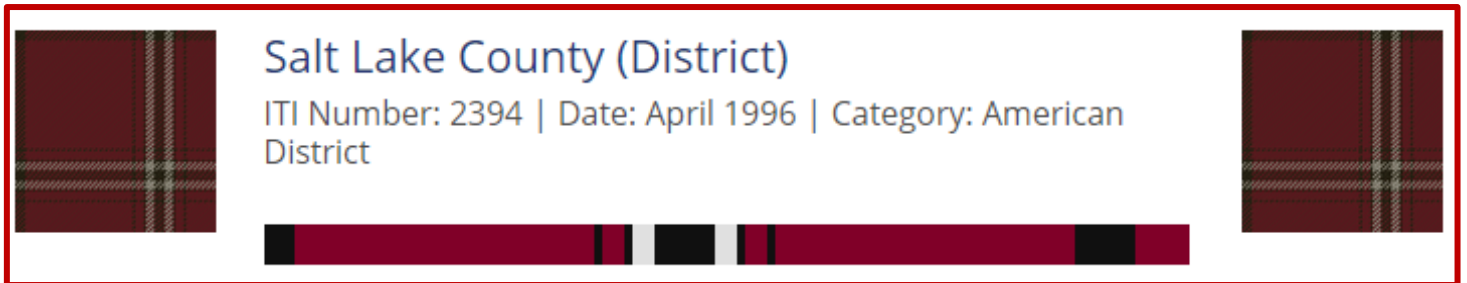
Tartans are traditionally woven in wool, using a 2/2 twill as a balanced weave to make the figures square. However, Mary recommends a fine cotton for yardage for clothing and has recommended a plain weave for finer scarves.

The best source of many tartan patterns available now is the three-volume set: *Tartans* by William H. Johnston & Phillip D. Smith Jr., a Schiffer Design Book, published 1999. With about 400 patterns per volume, it contains around 1200 tartans and the authors stated that they could not include all the patterns! The Guild Library contains monographs on weaving tartans by Mary Black: *The Sett and Weaving of Tartans* and by Harriet Tidball: *The Weaver's Book of Scottish Tartans*. One can also search for a tartan online at the Scottish Tartan Authority: <http://www.tartansauthority.com/>

Mary wrote about weaving tartans again in March 1946. In that Bulletin issue, she provided 10 tartan patterns that had not been published before in the Bulletin or Recipe Book. She called the patterns handsome and always in fashion. The tartan pattern is known as a "sett" and according to Mary, in ancient times they were recorded and handed down by means of colored threads in the correct number and sequentially wound around a stick.

She discussed the uses of tartan fabrics in clothing and blankets, but she deplored the use of them for upholstery and hangings. She described the patterns as consisting of 2 figures, and that they have all been written beginning with the center stripe of one. The Johnston and Smith publication defines the pivot points of the patterns where they are to be turned to repeat them.

Weaving tartans are good for learning to work with color proportions and to develop a consistent beat. There are so many to work with, or you could design your own. Did you know that there is a Salt Lake County tartan? See the figure below:



Whether you want to weave tartans or not, if you are planning to give handwoven gifts this holiday season, now is a good time to start!