

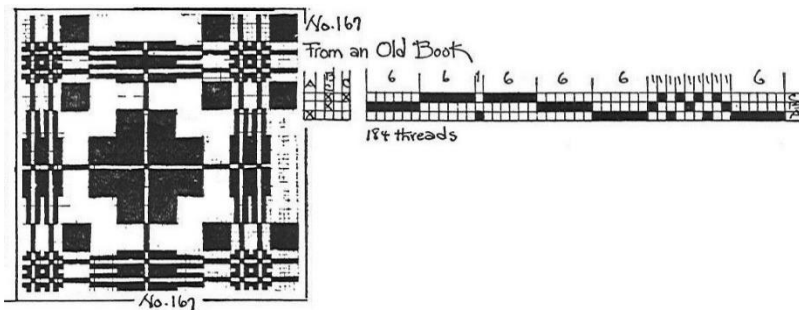
Shuttle-Craft Bulletins: Coverlet weaving

Mary Meigs Atwater established January as "coverlet" month in her January 1928 and 1929 Bulletins. She wrote, now that the busy holidays are over, what better time to weave something big. And what better than a coverlet—a *magnum opus* as she called it, a big work. A coverlet is a bed cover, bedspread if you like, woven out of a linen or cotton warp with the same as a background weft, and wool typically, as the pattern weft in overshot, a traditional Colonial pattern, or in Summer and Winter. Then there is patterned doubleweave and other options, such as twill. For a good summary, with color photographs, see the *Coverlet Book*, a 2 Volume set by Helene Bress (it is in the Guild Library) or the coverlet weaver website: <http://www.coverletweaver.com/>.

Mary said that completing a coverlet is a fair week's work for an average weaver, or full time weaver, it appears, with 44 hours of actual weaving (not to include the planning). For weavers with a day job, weaving an hour a day will take a full two months to complete a coverlet. They are typically woven in 2 pieces with a center seam or in 3 sections, with 2 off center seams.

Mary covered the planning for such a project, considering pattern, color and materials, just as you might for any weaving. For the pattern, she recommended considering the room in which the coverlet will be used, whether it is a traditional colonial design, for a girl's bedroom, guest room or otherwise and the size bed it will be used on.

For what she calls a traditional room, or a guest room, she recommended using a pattern of the colonial tradition: large, serious and elaborate. Such as the sunrise overshot pattern (see the article from last month's bulletin). Consider what to use in the border of the coverlet, such as a diamond pattern. The width of the border depends on the height of the bed, but should not be more than 8" or it will be too monotonous.



Handweaving- a geometric pattern.

Many overshot pattern recommendations were listed.

For colors, it depends. There are traditional colors typically used for the Colonial style overshot, such as dark blue and reds, given the materials were probably dyed with indigo or woad and madder during that period. Softer colors are typically used for more modernistic patterns.

In a colonial design, one could use a nut brown and golden tan pattern yarn color combination with an oyster gray or cream warp.

She recommended the Summer and Winter pattern No. 167 from her Book on American



For weft in a colonial design, dark navy blue, greyish blue, or a medium shade, a combination of blue and brownish rose, rose alone, reddish brown alone or in combination with golden tan have been used.

For a more modern design, a free range among all of the colors is available.

For materials, Mary said that there are no rules, and to get the effect one may have in mind, sampling is needed. But, she did have some suggestions: For a warm fluffy coverlet in overshoot: use a fine warp such as Egyptian cotton (24/3, which, I believe is no longer available in large quantities, probably the best available substitute is a 20/2 or 16/2 cotton) with a 30 ends/in sett and a pattern yarn of a 4 ply worsted weight wool. For a more conventional coverlet: use a Shetland yarn for the pattern weft. In Summer and Winter: use a looser set with the fine cotton: 24 epi and a pattern weft of handspun or Shetland yarns.

For a modern effect use a silk or rayon pattern yarn with a natural linen tabby yarn and warp set at 32 epi. Here is an unusual modernistic combination that Mary wove up: Purple and turkey red with a tabby in an orange yellow. She called the effect beautiful but dangerous and recommended trying it first.

Planning for quantities of materials presents a challenge. Calculating the warp needed is pretty straightforward, done as one would for most weaving. The amount of weft yarn, especially done with several colors may be tricky. Counting weft threads in a similar fabric may help, but always allow for waste and shrinkage and err on the side of too much rather than too little. Mary stated in 1928 that 2 pounds of fine cotton is adequate for a coverlet warp and tabby.

She gave details on using a fringe as a finish, including a fringe on all edges. The Bulletin has a figure shown here with a fringe and with leno work and a fringe made up of Solomon's knot.

A coverlet is a large work, an investment that pays off in a great joy of accomplishment, as Mary said. One that I hope to weave..... someday.

