

Shuttle-Craft Bulletin: On Weaving Equipment

The December 1933 and 1942 issues of the Bulletin address the weaver's equipment. Mary designated the December issue the "equipment" Bulletin and reviewed the main pieces of equipment in the weaver's tool kit.

Reeds—The reed (also called a "sley", according to the 1933 Bulletin) takes its name from the material used to make them originally: slips of bamboo. But she wrote that many prefer the modern standard metal. She gave advice on treating rusted metal reeds and noted that the reed rarely rusts on a loom in regular use. She recommended having several, but wrote in 1942 "that if the war lasts long enough we may not be able to buy either reeds or heddles."

Heddles-Mary preferred metal heddles over string, though admitted that string heddles made a more picturesque loom. She suggested that string heddles may be starched or dipped in shellac to make them easier to handle and keep the knots from slipping. She included a guide for tying your own.

Shuttles—Shuttles described by Mary were pretty much as we see today: Stick shuttles, rug shuttles and throw or boat shuttles. Not included were end feed that many weavers use now. She described the appropriate use for each and noted that weavers should have many to avoid rewinding colors.

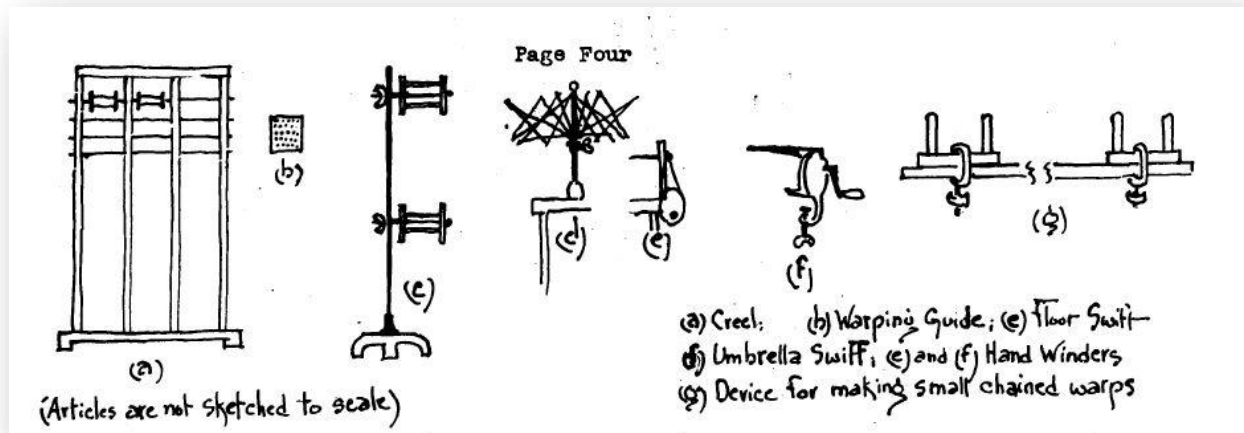
Looms--In 1941 the Gilmore "American" Inkle loom was introduced. The model, she wrote had many improvements over the "old English" model; a nice, sturdy little loom. She wrote of a flyshuttle loom that was also a new type.

Mary's main issue on the topic of looms is that they be in good working order. She wrote that as she traveled to different weaving centers, she observed weavers struggling to weave with looms out of true, or providing an inadequate shed. She stressed the need to go over one's loom and make repairs if possible.

Treadles--Mary preferred the attachment to the loom at the back for better leverage, especially with larger looms. On an 8-harness loom, she recommended 12 treadles at a minimum, which would need to be narrow and set close together. This would be better facilitated with a rear attachment.

Warp winding equipment—As mentioned last month, Mary liked sectional warping. She wrote that she could put on a warp sectionally in an hour, where it would take her ten to warp using a warping board. To warp sectionally, she listed the spool rack or "creel" with a capacity of at least 60 spools. One would use a warping guide, a metal plate punched with as many or more holes, used to space the threads and keep them from snarling. Threads are taken off the creel from the bottom and should not cross. These pieces and winding equipment such as swifts and hand winders are shown in Mary's sketch below.

"I should like to ask each member of the Guild to take time out this month to go over his or her own weaving equipment.....If you find a fault, do something about it."
Mary M. Atwater



A couple of current resources on weaving equipment and their care are: *Weaver's Companion* presented by *Handwoven Magazine*. Interweave Press. See pages 6-22 and beyond.

Handwoven online workshop: The Loom Owner's Companion with Tom Knisely:

<https://learn.longthreadmedia.com/courses/the-loom-owner-s-companion-with-tom-knisley>

Information in this workshop includes:

- The tools that every weaver should have
- Easy steps to keep your loom and other weaving tools in top working order

Also included in the 1942 issue is the topic of developing a draft from a small fabric sample. She recommended designating which are the warp and weft threads, then taking a large needle, separate the threads and layout the plan of the interlacing on graph paper (10 squares per inch was recommended) as shown in the example. It may be drawn as in a) or b). A magnifying glass would be helpful. Mark off the repeat of the weave in both warp and weft.

Lastly, she wrote about signing your work. In an earlier bulletin she recommended it. In 1941, she wrote that a signature on a work should be inconspicuous and modest or it may detract from the work. If a signature is wanted, she wrote that it might be appropriate that a small symbol of some kind be used, like a series of dots woven into a header. Otherwise, she wrote that unless the signature adds interest and value, let it be nameless.

