

A COLLECTION OF COVERLETS AND DRAFTS

By MARIANNA MERRIT HORNOR



Figure 1

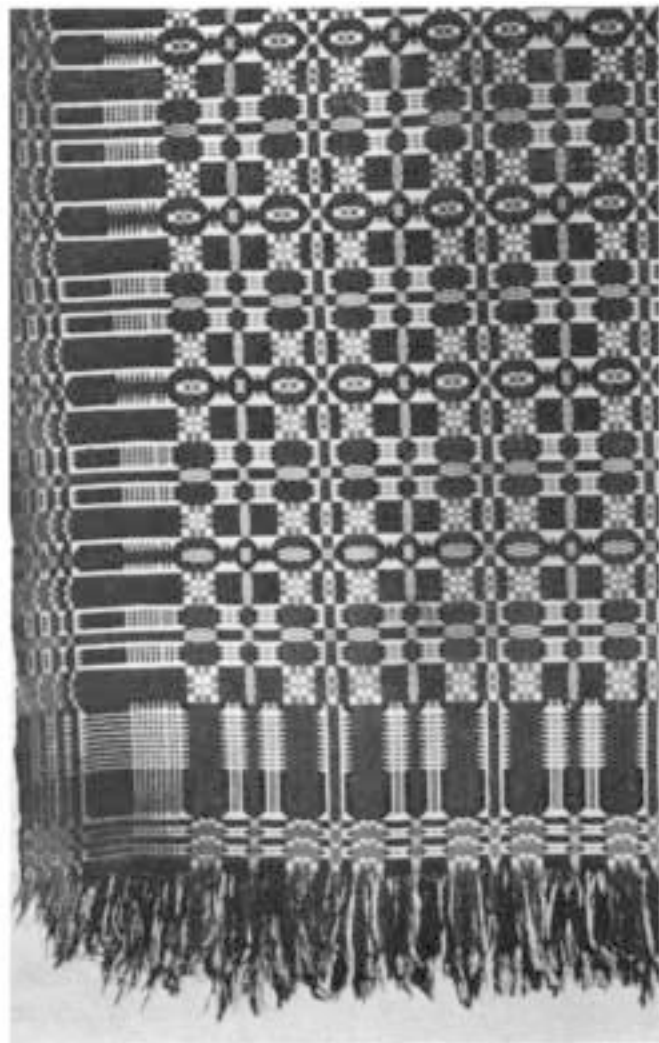


Figure 2

Of interest to all handweavers is the fact that the major pieces of an outstanding collection of American coverlets mentioned by Mrs. Mary Meigs Atwater in her book "The Shuttlecraft Book of American Handweaving", and owned by the Philadelphia Museum of Art will be placed on display at the Museum in the fall. This collection which contains examples of most of the representative patterns and weaves known in American coverlets came to the Museum from various sources. Some were donated by Mrs. William D. Frishmuth, another group was purchased by the Museum a number of years ago, and still others were given by various private donors.

It has been thought wise in order to avoid dispute not to attempt to name the coverlets in this collection, as it is

known that pattern names vary depending upon the locale from which a certain piece may have come.

A double cloth coverlet of unusual design is illustrated in Fig. 1 and is known to have been the property of the wife of John Morton a signer of the Declaration of Independence for Pennsylvania. As John Morton was a native Pennsylvanian it seems safe to assume that this coverlet is of Pennsylvania manufacture dating from the late eighteenth century. It was given by the wife of the signer's great-grandson. The weave is as follows: warp, (1) white cotton, (2) in stripes, red and blue wool; weft, (1) white cotton, (2) in bars, red and blue wool. Unfortunately there is not data available as to who the weaver was.



Figure 3

Another double cloth Pennsylvania coverlet dating from the early nineteenth century however, is shown in Fig. 2. This piece was made by Mrs. Rosanna Horner a native Pennsylvanian and was given to the Museum by her daughter. The weave is as follows: warp, (1) white cotton, (2) in stripes, blue and red wool; weft, (1) white cotton, (2) in bars, blue and red wool. Both of these coverlets illustrate a type of design which was used extensively by the Pennsylvania German weavers, and which was quite popular in Pennsylvania for a number of years.

In marked contrast to these two coverlets is one (Fig. 3) of New York origin dating from the early nineteenth century. Totally different in weave and design, this coverlet shows Swedish influence, its pattern differing greatly from the two previous pieces which are definitely German. This coverlet was woven by Mrs. Mary Ann Ostrander a native of New York, and was donated by her grand-daughter. Although it is now in poor condition it is of interest in affording means of comparison in contemporary types of



Figure 4

design and weave popular in neighboring states. It is a plain compound cloth weave which is as follows: warp, white cotton; weft, (1) white cotton, (2) blue wool.

Designs which might conceivably be woven today are illustrated in Figs. 4 and 5. These coverlets are also plain compound cloth weave having geometric designs that could be nicely adapted to linens, and are of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Unfortunately their provenience is unknown. The weave of Fig. 4 is as follows: warp, white cotton; weft, (1) white cotton (2) blue wool. The weave of Fig. 5 is as follows: warp, light blue cotton; weft, (1) light blue cotton, (2) in bars, blue and magenta wool. The color combination of the coverlet shown in Fig. 5 is unusual as evidently the weaver thought that the regular white cotton warp and weft would be too strong a color contrast with the magenta and blue weft, and he therefore used a light blue cotton instead, giving the coverlet a very European peasant appearance.



Figure 5



Figure 6

An eighteenth century coverlet of still another type is illustrated in Fig. 6. This is a coverlet of a fancy twill weave which was a popular one for blankets because of its soft and delightful texture. The weave is as follows: warp, white cotton; weft, blue wool.

In addition to the above, there will be on exhibition other coverlets and numerous photostat copies of weaving drafts from the Museum library. These consist of the book of drafts which belonged to John Landes a Pennsylvania German, who worked in the late eighteenth century. Others are

the Johann Ludwig Speck book, compiled in Lasphe, February 3, 1723, the drafts of William Hutchison of Plainfield, New Jersey with dates 1816 to 1823, and the book of drafts dated 1820 of Conrad Schleelein who is thought to have lived in Windsheim in the Electorate of Franconia during the latter part of the eighteenth century.

The foregoing and other items of this exhibition make available a wealth of material of exceptional interest to those in any way interested in the art of handweaving.