

SWATCH PAGE

TRICKS OF THE TRADE—WORKING WITH LINEN

I love to read about weaving! Besides being fun and yielding inspiration for weaving projects, so many tricks may be learned by delving into the literature. I'd like to share with you some linen weaving hints I've discovered. They were gleaned from the following articles: "Singles Linen" by S. A. Zielinski, *Modern Weaver*, October, 1954; Harriet Tidball, *Shuttle Craft Guild Bulletin*, April, 1966. May 1956, December 1956.

Zielinski's article is chock-full of hints on weaving linen, many of which are applicable to all weaving. The main rule is to avoid tension and friction.

Warp preparation

When warping, let the yarn slide through your fingers. (Make sure they are dry. If necessary, wear smooth leather gloves.) Problems will occur when 2 strands of warp are piled on top of each other on the warping frame. One will be longer than the other and the warp will not have a uniform tension. Wool is elastic enough so this isn't a problem as with inelastic fibers like linen, but I do not pile up threads in any case. Care at every step of the dressing of the loom and weaving process avoids so many problems. Zielinski suggested not to chain the warp. When beaming, insert sheets of heavy paper between the layers. I think that the back raddle method of warping would avoid the most friction and that one should have two crosses—one at the beginning end and one at the opposite end. Use one cross end to put the warp on the back beam stick, to spread in the raddle and roll on the warp beam, and the other cross for threading and slewing. One should keep the warp tension loose but even during beaming. Watch for twisted ends and bent lease rod which indicate that a warp thread will break soon. Zielinski suggested keeping the rods thin and pliable for this purpose.

We have also found in our classes, that if one steps back as far as possible—holding the warp as it is being rolled onto the beam and shaking it when tangles appear—as one would shake the reins of a horse, the tangles—as if by magic—disappear. Other weavers use a widely spaced comb to comb out the tangles—combing in one long stroke rather than repeated short strokes which wear out the yarn. My feeling is that one should use any method that works!

In working with linen, leave the lease rods in place about 6 to 8 inches back from the harnesses—making both the front and back sheds the same size and yielding a minimum of friction between the heddles and the warp.

Weaving

When weaving, the tension must be as loose as possible and still give a clear shed. This tension must always be the same, thus one must keep adjusting the tension forward every inch or so, as weaving takes up some of the warp length and thus changes the tension.

The fell (last pick of weft) should never be further from the beater when pushed back than 8 inches, or nearer than 6 inches. Thus, one should weave no more than 2 inches before advancing the warp. In beating linen, beat once—but very hard and quickly (Peter Collingwood suggests beating with the whole arm). When beginning to beat, begin to close the shed. When the beater touches the cloth, the shed should be closed. And the beater returns to its original position, the next shed should be open.

Even though the warp has been prepared and beamed correctly, two problems still occur frequently in the weaving of linen—broken warp ends and uneven selvage edges.

Broken warp ends

Before breaking, the edge threads look worn and fuzzy. Do not beat until the hand moving the shuttle away from the reed has stopped, thus releasing tension on the weft. If possible, decrease the tension of the warp.

Harriet Tidball had much to say about broken warp ends in the SCGB of December 1956. The major cause of warp breakage according to her, is jerky rather than perfectly rhythmic weaving. The next most frequent cause is incorrect shuttle throwing—throwing a shuttle so that it touches a warp end. When the weaving is progressing rapidly on a highly tensioned warp, a thread will snap if hit by a fast travelling shuttle. A poorly wound bobbin which causes a drag at the selvage cause the edge warps to snap. A warp which is too heavily tensioned may cause broken ends, but so can a too loosely tensioned warp also cause broken ends if it permits certain threads to lie slightly out of line in the shed where they may be hit by a shuttle.

Uneven edges

Zielinski attributed the problem of notched selvages to the shuttle bobbin, or the way that it was wound. If wound improperly, the weft gets caught in the shuttle and should be rewound. Small regular loops on the selvages can be avoided by beating a little earlier while the hand carrying the shuttle is still moving.

According to Tidball, narrowing or draw-in at the edges will break edge threads, as every time the beater is brought down sharply, it will cut the threads which are out of position.

Warp ends can break within the fabric as a result of any roughness in the shuttle. So perhaps one can use the finest grade of steel wool to smooth a shuttle when weaving a fragile fiber—especially after a shuttle is dropped on the floor.

Unweaving

Unweaving is hard on linens and leaves a mark on the fabric. Zielinski said "It is advisable not to make mistakes"!!!! We wouldn't ever challenge him on that thought. If necessary, one inch is about the limit of unweaving for fine threads.

Sizing

Sizing is sometimes necessary to make a warp stronger. In the case of a weave that draws in at the edges and may result in broken warp ends, Zielinski used pure paraffin wax rubbed into the edges right on the loom. The wax increases a threads resistance to friction nearly 10 times, while water merely doubles its resistance.

Harriet Tidball, in SCGB May 1956 said that she sponged her linen warp with a thin solution of starch in back of the harnesses and between the back beam and the warp beam as a sizing to strengthen her warp. She then wove it wet or dry.

Finishing

In the SCGB of April 1956, Tidball described a method she used for ironing linens before spray starch came into being and which I suspect may soon come back into use. She used old-fashioned boiled starch and added a little piece of paraffin to it, which gives a beautiful finish to linens and makes them easy to iron. (I, for one, still use linen tablecloths.)

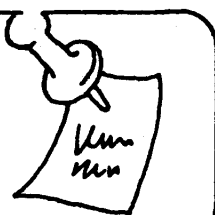
Zielinski, in a later article, June 1955, applied many of these hints to weaving in general and suggested that for the most efficiency and quality in weaving; one should weave continuously for a few hours. He said that it took him about half an hour to reach top speed and to fall into the rhythm. It can be maintained easily for quite a long time.

When I first read all this, when I first began weaving, I was utterly dismayed. However, it ultimately has helped me so much.

Happy Sampling and Experimenting

Joy Rosner

BULLETIN BOARD



Do you still need a ride to the Midwest Weavers Conference? Call the Guild and ask about the Greyhound chartered bus.

Do you want to exhibit/sell/demonstrate your weaving or spinning? There is to be a large arts and crafts day on Main Street in Mpls. on Saturday, July 10 from noon to dusk. You would have a space of 20 feet wide by ?? deep in which to set up your weavings and demonstrate. Bring your own props. Entry donation of one piece (valued at approx. \$15.00) which will be auctioned off. This day is sponsored by the Bicentennial and Aquatennial Commission. Call Margaret at the Guild office if you are interested.

DEMONSTRATOR WANTED

For July 9 and/or 10 in Lakeville, Minnesota. Possibility of small space to sell. Contact Peggy Mound, 8433 208th Street West, Lakeville, Minn. 55044; phone 469-3196.

DEMONSTRATORS WANTED

Brooklyn Center Bicentennial Commission needs demonstrators for its Pioneer Festival August 15 from noon to 6 p.m. at the Earle Brown Farm. Demonstrators may sell their work. No entry fee. Call Jan Higgins, 561-7879 or Sue Heisler, 535-6849 if you can help.

EXHIBITORS WANTED

People to exhibit and/or sell their craftwork in the New Prague Bicentennial Festival July 3-5, in the New Prague Memorial Park. Artists are asked to be set up from noon to dusk and to provide their own racks, tables and chairs. A \$10.00 grounds fee is being asked to help cover operating and advertising costs. Space will be available for artists to set up tents behind their display area. Overnight camping in the park will be permitted. Other features of the festival will be a parade and horse show, huge fireworks display, bands, children's activities, food booths Czech and German dancing and singing. Hope you can help us celebrate! Contact Paulette Cervenka at (612) 758-3986 or write c/o 301 E. Main St., New Prague, Minn. 56071.

WANTED TO BUY

Floorloom 4 or 8 harness. Julie A. Magnuson, 3509 13th Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minn. 55407, phone 722-6253.

FOR SALE

Walking Wheel in good condition \$190. Ann Basquin 484-3451

KANGAROO MAKER, PLEASE COME FORWARD

Who made the knit kangaroo for the Mpls. Institute of Arts Christmas Tree? (It's hanging in the office waiting to be claimed.) I would like the pattern if there is one, for a friend of mine - Connie Magoffin.

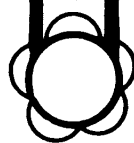
WANTED

A 4 harness, jack-type floorloom, at least 30" wide. If you have one to sell, please contact Mary Lundeen, Rt. 3, Fergus Falls, Minn. 56537, phone (218) 736-5312.

DEMONSTRATOR WANTED

Weaving demonstrators are wanted for the YWCA Bicentennial Celebration in downtown St. Paul on Saturday and Sunday, July 3 & 4, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. If interested, call Elaine Jones, 222-3741 or 488-5850.

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