
A HANDWEAVER'S HOBBY

Robert F. Hartz of Epping, New Hampshire, began his career as a weaver in New England textile mills and it was then that he began to build his own looms and do handweaving as a hobby. He always had been interested in cloth and both his grandmothers were weavers, although he never saw them weave and never had seen a loom until he got his first job in a mill after finishing high school. He remembers, however, going to a spinning bee with his Canadian grandmother, where the neighbors brought their wheels and spent the day.

In the mills he worked in the spinning and weave rooms, learned power loom operation, loom fixing, jacquard and dobby loomweaving, and design. As a hobbyist he sold some of his work which attracted attention. Then followed work in King's Park State Hospital in New York where he took charge of 26 looms and the patients who worked on them. He remained in occupational therapy about nine years, serving on the staffs of four hospitals.

When he became a professional handweaver, he adopted another hobby, collecting textiles and books on weaving. New York, in the beginning, was a happy hunting ground, although his books have come from many sections of

the country.

"The nice thing about a collecting hobby," Mr. Hartz says, "is that you are never actually on the hunt but by being conscious of it all the time you are always alert and find nice items in unexpected places. After I had picked up a rare book on Roumanian Peasant Crafts I went to a neighboring farm to buy an old stove to use in a workshop, and there was a lovely Oltinean carpet from Bessarabia covering up the stove we were looking for. I bought the stove for fifty cents and the carpet for \$2.00. It is a very choice piece. The old farmer could tell me nothing of it nor how he happened to have it covering his stove.

"Another time I had just been reading in 'Indian Blankets and Their Makers' by George Wharton James. On a visit to a second hand store with a friend looking for tools I found in a pile of rags that were used for packing in moving furniture what I believe to be a 'Bayeta' or Chief's Saddle Blanket. The reds in it are said to come from the red flannel worn by the slain Spanish soldiers, taken after a battle when the Indians were busy scalping the kill. The flannel was raveled and rewoven for the chief's use. Whether it is genuine or a copy I am not expert enough to tell and

do not care. I bargained and got it for forty-five cents and do not feel that I was gypped."

He picked up his copy of "Dyes and Dyeing" by Charles E. Pellew, the large edition, for twenty-five cents in a Salvation Army store. It recently was quoted at \$10 and is hard to find.

A friend of his picked up Murphy's "Art of Weaving," 1830, for fifteen cents at a time when he was being quoted six pounds from England. He tried to talk his friend out of her copy without success. She did not know its value and when she passed away it was given to the scrap drive.

His English copy of "Swedish Textiles" cost \$7.75 while a friend had just paid \$19 for it. The quote on it was \$29.50. He saw a copy recently in New York at \$50.00 and was assured that it was a good buy at that price.

Because so many of his books that he had loaned over the years mysteriously disappeared, sometimes turning up just as mysteriously, he decided he might as well start a lending library. Then he will know where they are. "Indian Blankets and Their Makers" was returned after a long time by a woman he had never heard of and he never discovered how the book came into her hands. • • •