

Camp Girls Response to Card Weaving

BY GRACE WHITTIER FERRIS

OUR camp this past summer, as always, aimed to prepare girls for an art course, and the majority registered had either been accepted in well-known art schools or were expecting, while in college, to major in art.

They were a live-wire set and, having a special objective, they were particularly enthusiastic over those subjects which are required in art schools, drawing design and color. A previous year they had responded gleefully in my craft classes to block printing and tied and dyed work. Here both subjects called for the practical application of design and color theory in well worked-out drawings and in the actual mixing and making of color. This experience was profitable to them in future school work, and also there were the thrills in the surprises and quick results of the tying and dyeing.

Last spring I asked myself if I should be able to hold the girls' interest and enthusiasm if I should introduce a third subject during the coming summer, i.e., weaving. "Will this charming craft be well received by them? To be sure, design and color are part of it, but it is further from graphic art and then, too, the process is slow and the results less gaily striking."

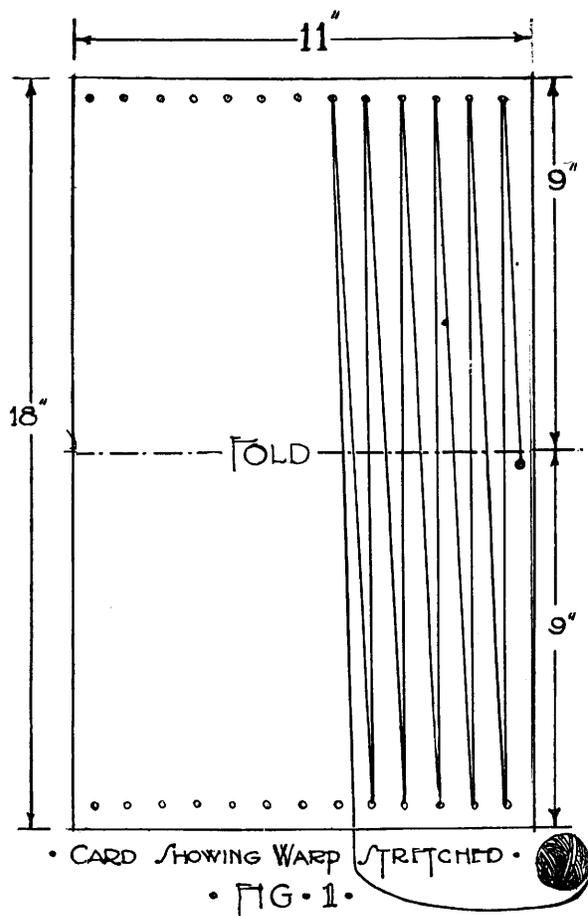
We had no looms, therefore I decided that the weaving must be done on cardboard or on the loose-

warp loom. For this latter method I refer you to "Weaving for the Cottage Porch and Summer Camp," in the *HANDICRAFTER*, June and July issue, 1929. I chose the former method, knowing that I

could expedite the work by using a very heavy wool. Looking over my collection of sample cards, always a pleasant and interesting task, I selected the one showing Rug Wools, and was delighted with the beauty and variety of the scales of color. "For rug weaving the material may be," I thought, "but wool of such soft, silky quality would make a most delightful utility bag as well." In planning such a bag the sense of touch is an important consideration in the completed artistic work. I frequently carry an ample utility bag, and I have noticed that there is almost as much satisfaction in its rich softness as in its design. In other words, that a utility bag demands as much respect in its planning as a dainty, more elegant and formal conceit.

In selecting my wools I found it difficult to draw the line, but I decided on a range of colors which the girls would find as irresistible as the pigments on their palettes. I hoped, too, as they wove that they would be hypnotically enthused to feel that they were brushing glowing pigments, and were thus producing a craft allied to painting.





My theory evidently had the desired effect, for when camp days arrived, and I spread before the class the wools and outlined the work, the girls responded with a zeal that would have delighted any teacher. They selected colors in harmony with summer, blue for skies and white for clouds; for blossoms, pink and yellow. There were the greens of the foliage and the grays and mauves of the tree trunks, and the rich browns and oranges for the earth. The girls most often sought the ivory white wool for background or pattern, so like in color to the many white birches among which our camp was located. I do thoroughly believe that surroundings influence color in craft work as well as in painting. By some the white was combined with a very beautiful shade of bright red, a combination which was striking in the rather gray atmosphere of the woods. Of course we used the other colors, but the white and red and white and blue of gleaming lake through white birches, were the most popular.

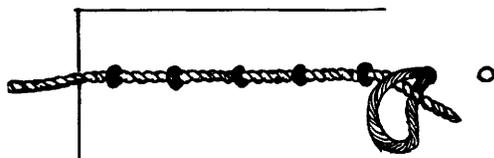
Weaving was the first subject I gave my class, for, with method in my madness, I hoped against hope that if they did respond, weaving might appeal during recreation on rainy days, which hope was realized. Our problem was bags, and bags there were, many of them. For some another after the

class one was completed, and one ambitious maiden designed an oblong folded purse with tapestry monogram. Perseverance she possessed in full measure, for, wishing to surprise teacher, she quietly worked on this problem without her aid, but confessed when showing the finished product that on turning the purse the monogram was wrong way round. Nothing daunted; she pulled out and reweave. Virtue hath its reward, for the final result was a charming piece which will make her happy for many a day, both for its interest and usefulness.

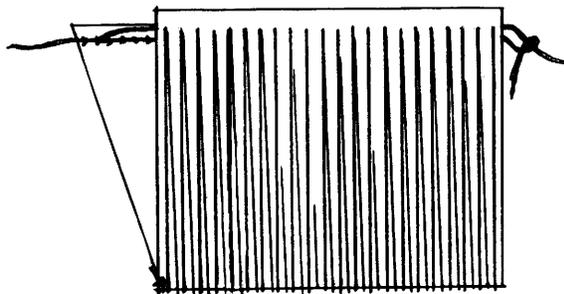
To describe my practical application of this simple method of weaving may be helpful to many; for instance, I have known novices to use a flimsy board, which soon warped and retarded, swimming ahead. Whereas we progressed smoothly with our good stout cardboard, twenty-two by thirty-six inches and one sixteenth of an inch thick. Too expensive for craft work, the considerate salesman at the printer's shop informed me. However, I did not begrudge fifteen cents a sheet, not only because no substitute could be found in the small town, but because it proved most satisfactory. It neither warped nor broke easily, and may be used many times. Also it had a good paper surface and thus received readily the drawings of the well worked-out designs over which the warp was stretched. These boards we cut in half, making two eighteen by eleven inches, very convenient dimensions for a medium size utility bag. In cutting the cards a triangle as well as a ruler is very useful, as accuracy is necessary.

On each board we first drew three parallel lines, one and one-half inches below the edge of the two narrower sides, and another through the center (Fig. 1). Along the latter, a knife cut lightly the surface paper, to make it possible to fold the board after warping without breaking it in half, or making a ragged fold. At the right, one-eighth inch





- STOWING METHOD •
- OF LOOPING WARP •
- OVER STRING ON UNDER •
- SIDE OF CARD •
- FIG. 2 •

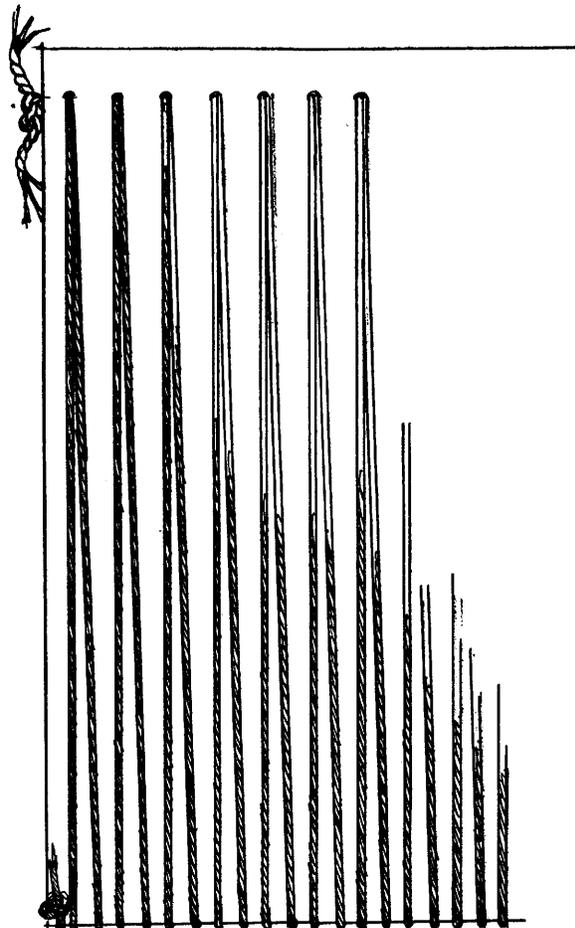


METHOD OF FOLDING & TYING
• FIG. 3 •

from the edge and just below the center line, we punched a hole through the cardboard, and for such a purpose an embroidery bodkin is useful, or perhaps at camp a more available nail will answer. On the top line, one-fourth inch from the right edge, another puncture was made, and then others at intervals of one-half inch all across the line, and likewise on the line at the other end of the board. Then from our equipment box we next selected a ball of three-ply mason's white twine, and from this each girl cut two nineteen-inch lengths. The cards were now ready for warping.

For warp we used handspun yarn, natural color, Item seventeen, or Peasant wool, Camel one-sixty-seven. A good neutral warp is Taupe one-ninety-eight. With this broad spacing of the warp, equal to about four sleys to an inch, the warp shows very little, yet enough to choose the natural for white and light colors, and the Camel and Taupe for medium and dark bags. I think that one may get very pleasing results from these three for the somewhat limited camp work. Of course if cottons are preferred, Perle Number five would give the interesting result of the warp being entirely covered, which is the true tapestry weave.

In beginning to warp we first tied the yarn, after winding it into a ball, to the perforation below the center line, then carried the yarn up across the line to the first hole above and hooked it through with an invisible hairpin, running one piece of cord through the loop. The yarn is pulled taut over the cord, carried down to the first hole at the other end, pulled through as before, and the second piece of twine run into the loop. The process is continued back and forth until the loom is warped. Then it is well for the weaver to go over the warp as carefully as did the eager young workers, pulling quite taut, but not too tight, each warp to assure an even tension. After that we doubled the board, seeing that it closed with no irregularities along the center line and that the edges came together evenly, tied the cord ends, adjusted into even spacing the warp along the fold, and our card loom was ready for weaving (Figs. 2, 3, 4). Counting the warp strands we found an uneven number and, that being correct, the real working of the bag began. With a long celluloid crochet hook the west of rug wool was

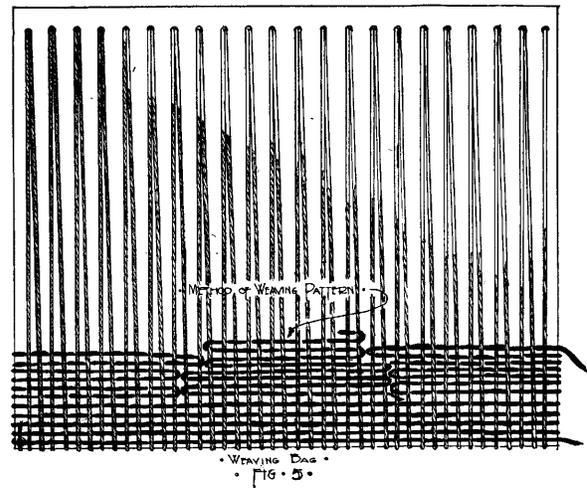


SHOWING CARD TIED READY TO WEAVE
• FIG. 4 •

drawn under and over the warp around at the fold of the card and pressed down with a coarse comb. It is possible to use a flat shuttle to carry the weft, if before each throw a shed is first made with a narrow flat stick. Nearing the top of the bag one must resort to the crochet hook, and at the top a tape bodkin or blunt embroidery needle is necessary to work the weft through.

After the first four or five rows were woven, came the excitement of planning designs and colors. The girls created naturally geometric patterns. I had talked of technique and had referred to a few principles of design such as consider use, material and construction. This rug wool lends itself to simple motives suggesting Indian blankets, and the class, being somewhat familiar with the history of design, gave expression happily to the primitive influence naturally expressed, as did primitive man when he followed the shape of his tool and created beauty.

Our patterns were easily drawn between the warp on the card. It may seem more logical to design before warping and to then trace the pattern, but the reverse for beginners, with an explanation of



weaving, created greater interest, proved by eager faces bent over intelligently worked-out patterns.

To choose the color scheme, no more incentive to the girls was needed than to bring out the bundle of wools and spread them on our long work table. I might say that the girls scrambled for them, and perhaps they did, and that I was more pleased than critical of their temporary disorder. Were they not responding to my own enthusiasm? For, when planning the work at home, I took from my selection of sample cards the one displaying Rug Wools, did I not find the colors irresistible and so had selected most of the lovely scales, averaging a skein to a bag and more, anticipating just such psychology to justify my extravagance. Nor was it extravagance, for with the left-over wools I am promising myself a charming little woven rug.

Tapestry weave seems the most natural technique in primitive textiles as well as the technique of the most beautiful tapestries. The open or slit pattern weave is, I think, the simplest of the three kinds, the other two being the locked and the closed or interlaced. The first we used, and I think it was the best for the novice. Here the weft is woven to meet the pattern, the pattern weft is picked up, woven as far as required, and then the next background weft is carried on. Obviously where two colors meet, there are slits in the fabric (Fig. 5).

The weaver of the bag in illustration number one was not only successful in her design but fortunate in her selection of colors which are: warp, Peasant Wool Camel one-sixty-seven; weft, background Rug Wool dark brown number four-fifty-nine; pattern, yellow four-fifty-one, dark orange four-fifty-three, and white four-seventy-five.

Illustration number two has rather a unique weave in the lower geometric border. A weave which I should not advise one to attempt who is not used to free-hand pattern weaving. The back-

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CAMP GIRLS RESPONSE TO CARD WEAVING

(Continued from page 12)

ground weft is carried over the pattern and, as the latter is thus hidden, it is rather difficult to follow its outline, but in this design it gives a pleasing raised effect which supports the flowerpot motif. Of course in tapestry weaving the wrong side is uppermost, too. In fact practically all free-hand pattern weaving is less complicated if so treated.

In this bag the combination of colors is rather unusual in arrangement. The dark band across the bottom is gray; the broad one tan; the base of the vase is dark brown and tan; the mass simulating flowers and stalk is of rose and medium green. The raised pieces are: right angles rose, and the vertical ones dark green. The narrow stripes are dark brown, excepting the lighter one at the top, which is rose outlined with medium green. It is the raised effect and the weight of the gray value at the bottom which make this bag distinctive. When selected these colors did not hang together well, but are now a pleasing tonal combination. To be out with the secret of drawing them together is to confess that the wools were placed in a kettle of cold water and boiled. An excellent test this for the Rug Wools, as it was a considerable period before the water showed any discoloration, and even then a longer time elapsed before the objective was accomplished, i.e., the echoing of the colors. Over the gray came subtle flecks of rose green, tan or yellow, and brown, while each of the other wools glistened with neighboring tints. This process gives a "saddening" to the colors which was much prized by old-time dyers, though no doubt their process of saddening was often acquired by a dye bath which had been stained by the dipping of yarns of different colors. A more even tone would be the result, a graying without the flecks of color.

When a bag was woven, the untying and the clipping of the cords at the back of the card brought the weaver to the most exciting period in its creation. It was a small matter to slip the bag off the card and turn it right side out. What a work of joy it was and how eagerly was discussed the matter of lining, which we thought quite necessary, even though the slits and ends of wool were carefully sewed. Sateen was suggested as suitable but, when pongee or rajah silk was compared, they weighed in the balance and the former was found wanting. This one limited experience in fabric making had created a keener sensitiveness to artistic combination.

Sateen we used for interlining, though canton or outing flannel is very good for a utility bag. Interlining a bag holds its shape better, and the lining proper is protected by the added softness to the inside. After the linings were placed and chain-stitched at the top with Peasant Wool, rope-like

cords made of Rug Wool were attached to the inside about one-half inch below the top and sewed over and over with the contrasting color of the chain stitching.

Happy the girls were and attractive the bags with their gay sport clothes. Utility bags may be as much an accessory of one's dress as the dressier handbag. It may lend itself decoratively to the ensemble, as no less a painter than F. Zurburan appreciated, and doubtless so did the saintly lady (Illustration number three). How charming it is, a Spanish saddlebag, which hangs so kindly on St. Margaret's arm. So modern, too, for fortunate is that traveler who may find an antique or modern one and turn it to like use, or better still to use such a find as an inspiration for a motif embroidered or woven on card or harness loom.

I would write more of a different type of card weaving, and would show you bags winsome and dainty, but space forbids until another chapter.



CUSHION MADE FROM SCRAP LEATHER

(Continued from page 22)

Then paste 16 of the square pieces onto the $\frac{1}{4}$ " edge of skiver around the central pattern. Turn the whole thing upside down and paste small strips of skiver across the joints between the squares. When these are dry the lacing may be completed, using black to join the small squares to the 9" square, and orange for the crosses that connect them with each other.

The 25 squares that form the back can now be arranged in their desired positions, and can be pasted together on the underside with strips of skiver across the joints as described above, and also with a patch of skiver at each point where four squares come together. (See Fig. IV.) This is more economical than using a solid backing and is perfectly satisfactory. Lace together with black. (See Fig. III.)

The two sides, each 15" square, are now ready to lace together. Holding the edges together, back to back, sew over and over with black lacing, through the holes as they come. Sew one side across from left to right; then reverse, sewing back again from right to left. The effect will be that shown in Figures II and III.

Before the last side is quite laced together, fill the cushion with scraps of waste from weaving, or with goat's-hair, or any other filler which may happen to be on hand.

Now that your cushion is complete the chances are that your friends when they see it will not say, "What a clever way to use up leather scraps!" but rather, "Where did you get that good-looking cushion?"