HANDWEAVING NEWS

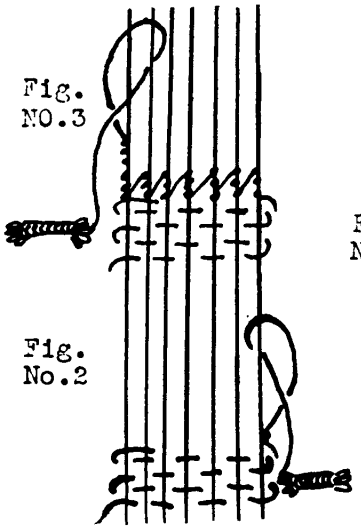

Fig. NO.3

Fig. No.2

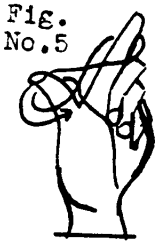

Fig. No.5

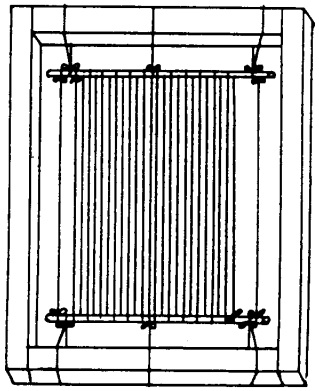

Figure No.1

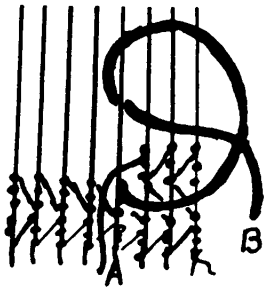

Fig. No.6

Greek Soumak Knot Stitch.

Lately a number of requests have come in for directions for making unusual fabrics that are different. And as we have been having loom controlled pattern for the past three months, I thought perhaps it might be of interest to discuss a free weaving technique this month.

The Greek Soumak Knot stitch was introduced to American weavers by Mr. Gilbert Foldes. And it is to Miss Emily Goodwin, 91 Cambridge Place, Brooklyn,N.Y. that credit must go for the first written description of the detail of this interesting weave,in her excellent book,"Tapestry Weaving, A Correspondence Course." I know that a few of the News subscribers have Miss Goodwin's course,and I hope others will find it of interest to write to her concerning it. And it is with Miss Goodwin's kind permission that I am sending this out to you this month.

Whether this particular form of the Soumak stitch is a variation of Mr.Foldes, I do not know. I have never seen any textile among either ancient or primitive fabrics whichat all resembles it,nor has Miss Goodwin. There is also some little difference in the spelling. Luther Hooper in "Weaving on Small Appliances" Book I, spells it "Soumak" as I have here. While Miss Goodwin says that Mr. Foldes preferred to spell it "Summak".

Design Requirments. It is most important in this type of weaving to have an excellent design. This is a very permanent weave and a very handsome one. It can be used for rugs, upholstery, bags, or for wall hangings,and the design must be something one will wish to have around for a long time. Hence considerable time and thought should be spent on the design used. It may be planned out as a line design,and then transposed to cross section paper to be followed exactly in the weaving. It is best to have rather large masses with as little fine detail as is possible.This speeds up the time of working to considerable extent. Horizontal lines and diagonal lines weave very easily. No single vertical lines should be used,and it is best to keep any vertical line rather short,as the knots on this vertical line have to be staggered in order to lock together the two colors correctly as they come together. Cross section paper can be used with the same number of squares to the inch as the warp is set,and then the design will be full size. The colors,or approximate ones, may also be blocked in on the cross section paper design. And one square of the cross section paper design represents one complete knot of the weaving. The design on Page 3 was worked out for an experimental piece and as a small wall hanging. This was woven in tapestry wools, shades of brown,tan ornage, yellow, and greens, with a dark brown border all around the outside edges. It was set up on a simple frame 24" x 30" as shown at Figure No.1 at the top of this page.

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Nellie Sargent Johnson.

Frame for Soumak Stitch. Small pieces up to about 18"x27" can be made on a simple wood frame as shown at Figure No.1 on Page 1. This can be a hooked rug frame,a picture frame well braced at the corners,or a frame such as artists use for stretching canvas. For larger pieces a regular loom should be used rather than attempt to work on too large a frame.

Materials. Warp should be a good quality of cotton cable cord such as heavy Butcher's twine No.12, No.10 medium, or No.8 for finer work. Weft should be good quality Germantown or tapestry wool of fast colors. For this set the warp threads at 10 threads to the inch. Rug yarn can be used if the warp is set from 6 to 8 threads to the inch.

Warping the Frame. At Figure No.4 is shown a simple method of making a continuous warp for this frame loom. Two removable pegs No.1 and No.2 are set in holes in a piece of board 2" wide by 30" long. The holes are set so the pegs can be put in at several different distances,depending on how long a warp is desired. Tie the warp end to peg No.1.Bring it around peg No.2 as shown and then back to No.1 again, making a cross or leash at L and X. Allow one warp thread for each square of the cross section paper design. So if the design is 80 squares wide,you need 80 warp threads. Put these warp threads on the pegs as carefully and as even as possible,and make no mistake either in the count or at the crossing LX. A single cord can be looped around the warp at LX to count every ten threads as they cross at LX. Now take two ½" dowel rods 20" long,mark these rods off carefully in ¼",½" and 1 inch marks all across their width. As soon as the correct number of warp threads are on the pegs,pull out pegs No.1 and No.2 and slip the warp threads over to the dowel rods.Secure the ends of the warp to the dowel rods as the pegs are taken out,and keep the tension of the warp even as the change is made. Now the warp is all made and on the dowel rods. Tie these into the frame as shown at Figure No.1 Page 1,with stout cords which can easily be adjusted either to loosen or tighten the warp threads. Space the warp threads so there are 8 warp threads to the inch,the marks on the dowel rods help do this. Tighten up the warp threads enough so they will make a strumming sound as the fingers are run over them. Cords at the top and bottom of the frame should be very stout,and securely tied.

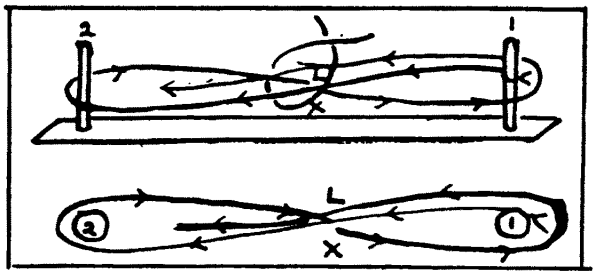


Figure No.4.

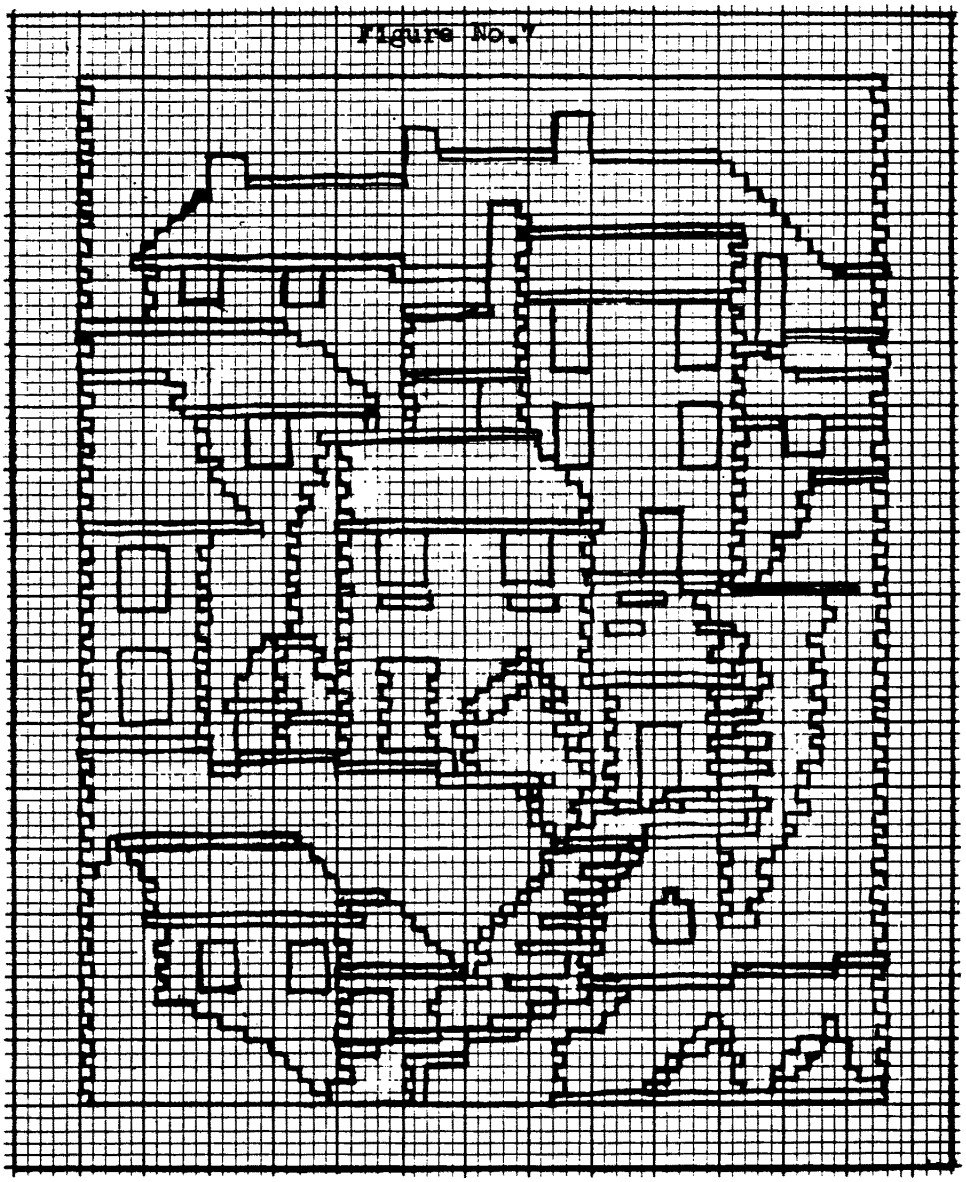
To Weave a heading or Foundation for the Knot Stitch. Take a piece of heavy warp or twine,twice the width of the frame.Loop it around the left hand side of the frame near the bottom on a level with the bottom dowel rod and tie to the frame. Pass a flat leash stick through the opening between the warp threads above the cross of the warp near the upper dowel rod.Push this stick down toward the bottom dowel rod,and pass the double cord through the shed made by turning the leash stick on edge. Push the double cord down close to the bottom dowel rod with a fork or comb,spacing the warp threads evenly as this is done.Tie the ends of the double cord to the right handside of the frame about level with the bottom dowel rod. Take another double length of cord,tie it to the left hand side of the frame at the top,and pass it over and under every warp thread,push up against the dowel rod at the top spacing the warp as this is done.Tie to the right hand side of the frame as below. Rest the frame against a chair or support of some sort.Do not let the warp or dowel rods touch the support.It is best to keep the same angle all during the work,so there will be no change in the appearance of the knot due to different tension or pull on the weft. Wind a small bobbin of either warp or yarn and weave a plain weave heading,passing the weft over and under each warp thread.Push each row down very firmly against the dowel rod. Weave this heading about a half inch wide. If the piece is to be hemmed,it is better to weave this heading of yarn the same color as the first row of knots. When the weaving is removed,stitch close to the first row of this heading on the sewing machine to fasten the edge securely. The method of winding a yarn bobbin is shown at Figure No. 5.Hold the yarn down with the middle finger,and wind around the thumb and first finger,then slip the end through and wind to form a tight firm bobbin.

Wind several yarn bobbins of each color of yarn to be used for the design in this manner.Be sure they are firm and tight,they need not be larger than about ½"thick by about 2" long.

Greek Soumak Stitch consists of from 2 to 5 knots on the same warp thread. And the right side of the work is toward the weaver.

Detail of Working Greek Soumak Knot.
1. With a single knot,tie the end of the wool from the yarn bobbin to the first warp thread on the right hand side.Pull end through to the back between the first and second warp thread. Always begin a new thread or color in this way.
2. Hold the yarn bobbin between the thumband first finger of the right hand,put it over and then under the first warp thread,as at Figure No.2 on Page 1. To aid this, place left hand palm upwards,back of the warp threads holding 6 or 8 warp threads on the fingers. With the first finger of the left hand,hold out the warp thread on which the knot is to be made. Count the tie as one knot,and pass the weft twice around the first warp thread to make three knots on the first warp thread. Let the first warp thread slip off the first finger of the left hand,and make three more knots on the second warp thread. Continue all across the width. Keep the weft as short as possible,not more than 6" from knot to bobbin is best. Do not warp the weft around the little finger of the right hand,keep weft vertical between knot and the yarn bobbin.
3. When last warp thread is reached on the left edge,make 3 knots on this.Then turn and come back to right as shown at Fig. No.3 on Page 1. Throw the weft in the opposite direction from the first row,and make three more knots on the last warp thread to begin the next row.
4. Inter-locking. At Figure No.6 on Page 1 is shown the method of inter-locking when short verticals occur. Finish the ending color with the last knot on the 3rd warp thread.Let this end pass over the 4th warp thread to the left.Tie in the new color on the 4th warp thread,make the knot as usual,then pull the ending color thread to the right. On the return row,pick up the end A,and make knots as usual.

Design for Small Wall Hanging in Greek Soumak Stitch.
(Note how long vertical lines are staggered.)



Nellie Sargent Johnson,12489 Mendota Ave.
Detroit, Mich.