RAG RUG WEAVING IN NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA, 1930-1970

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Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

My grandmother, Angela Benicki Pazco Tecza, wove rag rugs on a Studio four-harness loom in Erie County, Pennsylvania, from the late 1930s until the 1970s. Using E. McClung Fleming’s artifact study model, I began research on rag rug weaving in northwestern Pennsylvania with analysis of extant artifacts, her loom and several rugs. Oral history interviews with other weavers from the same area helped me set her rag rug weaving activities into a cultural perspective.

I compared my findings to those of Geraldine Niva Johnson, who completed an in-depth study of rag rug weaving in western Maryland in the 1970s. My findings regarding reasons and motivations for weaving were similar to those reported by Johnson.

My oral interviews provided information on rug weaving in Erie County, Pennsylvania, from 1930s to the present day. I discovered that in the earlier decades, the decisions to weave rag rugs were often based on economics. Weaving rag rugs served several purposes in the life of farm women, like my grandmother. It was economical, and for many of those who lived during the depression era, it was a way to reuse household textiles. By weaving rag rugs, my grandmother was able to recycle clothing worn by any of her thirteen children and create something aesthetically pleasing for the farm home. Other women, in the early years, wove to supplement family income.
Those who began weaving in the 1960s to 1980s usually did so for artistic reasons. They found it to be a satisfying hobby and often used their products as gifts for family and friends. Women of all decades found the rag rug weaving craft particularly suitable to home life and important for self-satisfaction and self esteem. The methods they used to learn and practice their weaving craft, and the ways they used the resulting rag rugs supports Johnson’s belief that rag rug weaving should be considered a folk art.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thanks must also go out to all my Cooperative Extension support, especially my staff-assistants who were especially helpful, my co-workers, and my friends. Thanks for all your support and inspirational words. I most importantly want to thank my parents, who have supported me through the past few years in this endeavor. I love you and could have not done this without you. Also, special thanks must go out to my husband who was an inspiration and a special “force” to help me get through this. Thanks for sticking with me.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF FIGURES</th>
<th>viii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rag Rug History and Scholarship</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. LOOM ANALYSIS</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family History</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loom History and Analysis</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of the Loom</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. RUG ANALYSIS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for Rag Rug Weaving</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rag Rug Weaving</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Extant Rugs</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Rugs</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CULTURAL ANALYSIS</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rag Rug Weaving in Maryland, 1970s</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rag Rug Weaving in Erie County, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Fleming’s Artifact Study Model</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Wedding Photograph</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Photograph of the Tecza Family</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Ledger Record</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Studio Loom</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Newcomb Loom Company Emblem</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>The Weaver’s Delight Loom</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>The Original Studio Four-Harness Loom</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Studio Loom Parts</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Traditional Rag Rug Shuttle</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Overhand Fringe Completing a Rag Rug</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Angela Tecza’s Cream-colored Rug</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Detail of Cream-colored Rug</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Blue and Cream Rug by Angela Tecza</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Detail of Blue and Cream Rug</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Variegated Rag Rug by Angela Tecza</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Detail of Variegated Rug</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Summer-and-Winter Technique</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

As part of the postmodern society, fashions of the past are again in style today. In interior design, home furnishings trends include a resurgence of “grandma chic,” with people using rocking chairs, rag rugs, and chunky crocheted throws in a style influenced by grandmother stereotypes. According to William Hamilton, the director of merchandising for Garnet Hill, “it’s the completely groovy thing for an age group that didn’t live through it . . . to mix nostalgic and sweet with new and modern.”¹

My current interest in the discipline of Clothing and Textiles made me more aware of recreational activities related to textiles done by family members, including quilting, sewing, and weaving. In trying to analyze my personal connections with the past, I established a connection with my grandmother, who had a four-harness loom, used primarily for the weaving of rag rugs. I sensed an “artistic” connection with my grandmother, causing me to desire to learn more about the loom, its utilization, and the motivation behind her rag rug weaving.

This thesis began with an artifact study completed in a Material Culture Studies class. I chose to study the “Studio” loom that had once been owned by my deceased grandmother who had lived in Erie County, Pennsylvania. I learned that the “Studio” loom she used for weaving rag rugs had been manufactured by the Newcomb Loom Company and had been purchased in 1958 to replace an earlier loom destroyed in a fire.
I also discovered that Newcomb Studio looms had been marketed through the Sears Roebuck catalogs.

I wondered why women like my grandmother, a rural farmwife and mother, were drawn to the craft of weaving and the making of rag rugs in the modern decades of the mid-twentieth century. I decided to explore rag rug weaving in Erie County, Pennsylvania, from the 1930s through the 1960s. I hoped to determine why my grandmother and other women participated in the craft. How did rag rug weaving fit their family patterns and lifestyles? How did they use what they produced? How were their creations valued and appreciated? Were there any regional circumstances that influenced their work? Did they view rug weaving as an art form or strictly as a utilitarian craft?

Rag Rug History and Scholarship

Rag rug weaving is a cultural phenomenon that has been long ignored in historical documentation. Very little scholarly attention has been focused on rag rug weaving. Therefore, the history of the craft is rather sketchy and some of it includes rather romantic interpretation.

Weaving rugs as a unique art form can be traced back more than two thousand years to the early Egyptians. It is thought that rag rugs were an ancient product, but they were not widely used until the nineteenth century.²

In early American civilization, homes often had dirt floors. To keep the floors from turning to mud, people sometimes covered the floor with juniper needles, sand, or straw. Sand designs created in swirls and spirals added visual interest and they could be
easily swept up and replaced when the sand got overly soiled. As soon as possible, people added wooden floors.

By the end of the eighteenth century, people with means began to use oriental rugs and “Turkey carpets” on tables and occasionally on the floors of American homes. These imported rugs were a highly prized commodity and available to only the well to do. Some yarn-sewn rugs were made in wealthier homes to protect the valuable imported carpets near the hearth against sparks from the fireplace. These rugs were constructed on a base, by using a running stitch and leaving loops in rows across the width of the rug. The loops would be clipped in order to create the pile on the rug.

Prior to 1800 the floors in most American homes were kept bare. In the homes of the newly established Americans, floor coverings were classified as a luxury, which could not be afforded. Joel and Kate Kopp, rug experts, state that the concept of creating domestic rugs was not known until the 1830s.

The entire process of spinning the wool or flax into yarn, and creating it into a woven material was complex and time consuming. When the process was done, it would be used to construct clothing and other necessities such as the bedding and linens. Creating the material was such a time-consuming process that it was too special to simply walk all over it. The woven materials were treasured household heirlooms that were often used on top of chests or even hung on the walls. There had to be, however, some type of floor covering that would pick up grease and dirt left from the daily work and would absorb the dirt and mud. Sand continued to serve the purpose of a floor covering that was both easy to clean up and practical.
Gradually, average people began to weave or acquire textile floor coverings. An early predecessor of the woven rag rug was the braided rag rug. If the immigrants did not have looms, they could cut their rags into strips, sew them end to end and braid them together. The long strip was sewn by hand into a circular braided rag rug. The early rag rugs were not very colorful. They were made from rags of natural or white linen or dark cottons used in washable clothing or from the dark wools used for practical clothing. The colorful European folk costumes were seldom worn and therefore hardly ever cut up to make rugs.\textsuperscript{10}

One of the earliest fabricated floor coverings was rag carpet. Since cotton cloth was not made in England until after 1760, it is unlikely that rugs made out of cotton rags occurred in the United States prior to the early nineteenth century because they were difficult to acquire.\textsuperscript{11} Rag rugs were mostly constructed for practical reasons: old fabric scraps could be recycled to form the rugs; cotton rugs could be washed; they provided insulation for cold wooden floors; and lastly they were an economic means for beautiful décor within the home. Advertisements in loom catalogs suggest that some families wove rag rugs to supplement their income.\textsuperscript{12}

Families who emigrated from Europe brought their weaving skills to the new world, even though they had to leave their looms behind. In Sweden pieces of rag woven textiles dating back to the 1700s have been recorded. Rugs were woven with rag strips of natural linen in plain tabby. It is not known if rag rugs originated in Sweden, but the rugs fit the Swedish culture during that century. The people were very poor, mostly farmers who saved everything to be used over and over again.\textsuperscript{13} Since Sweden and other
Scandinavian countries had a strong tradition of rag rug weaving, the process of weaving rag rugs may have come to the United States with the first settlers from those countries.

When immigrants began their lives in America, they wanted to preserve treasured traditions from their former countries at the same time they were working hard to establish homes in their new country. They also wanted to use all their technical skills to improve their lives. The construction of new looms enabled weaving traditions to continue, and at the same time allowed families to conserve money and resources.

In order to weave, some families constructed large barn-frame looms made of tree logs. In most cases, within farming communities, at least one family possessed a loom and others within the society could bring their own rags to be transformed into beautiful rugs. The lives of those who lived on farms depended upon the cooperation of neighbors in order to complete daily farm tasks.

The act of making rag carpeting provided another example of the collaboration of people on neighboring farms, and “rag rug parties” become an anticipated family event. The term “carpet-rag party” has a strange ring to most people today, but to the Pennsylvania Dutch these parties meant a lot of fun and were a form of recreation. The host family would store old rags in the attic in a rug barrel, a burlap bag, or linen grain bag. The day of the party, the rags would be brought from the attic for the guests to prepare the material for the rug weavers. The women would cut the rags accumulated since the last party into strips of cloth and join them together. The men would wind the sewn strands into balls while jokes and riddles were exchanged. In northern New England and Canada, families would get together to weave carpets. These “BEES” often
involved as many as five households of the same family spelling each other on the looms.\(^{16}\)

Early rag rugs showcase a variety of patterns based on the region of the United States in which they were made.\(^{17}\) Those that study rugs noticed that different styles appeared in different regions, showing that weavers adapted to the resources they had available in their communities. The regional differences are difficult for the average person to identify and for the most part remain unexplored. From surviving examples of the workmanship there is a distinct difference between the early rugs from the northern United States and those from the South. Rugs made in northern New England, Canada, Pennsylvania, and the Midwest are more tightly woven, and very finely worked, when compared to the rugs woven in the southern United States. This made the Northern rugs much more durable.\(^{18}\)

One of the most popular patterns used in early rugs was the “Hit and Miss” pattern, recognizing the desire to not waste any scraps of fabric a family had.\(^{19}\) Beautiful rugs were constructed from the randomness of the colors used to weave the earliest rugs. Usually only one kind of material was used for each rug: cotton rags for kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom rugs, and wool for living rooms and hallways. Silk rags were used for door curtains, small rugs, seat mats, and couch throws.\(^{20}\)

Throughout American history, the popularity of rag rug weaving shifted in connection with periods of economic stability and uncertainty. The rag rug phenomenon peaked during the Arts and Crafts Movement in the years from 1890 to 1910.\(^{21}\)

During the First World War and the prosperity of the twenties, interest in rag rugs declined. Several books on home rug making appeared in the 1920s when “Colonial
“Revival” decorating became very fashionable. These books included some information on the weaving of “Colonial rag rugs,” but it was limited. The production process was difficult to explain in a succinct manner and it was more economical for most women to purchase rag rugs than to make them.22

With the arrival of the depression and frugality within the household, rag rug weaving once again garnered household interest.23 In addition to the economic necessity for rug weaving, there was a social dimension to this activity. A sense of camaraderie developed between people who were involved in the process.

Weaving rag rugs is still done today by those who appreciate the historical significance of the folk art. Contemporary methods used to create rag rugs duplicate those that were done almost two hundred years ago, indicating that new technology does not affect all things. Today, the weaving of rag rugs does not seem to be solely financially steered, but the social aspect still does exist. There are also weavers who create rag rugs based on the desire to express themselves artistically.

Rag rug weavers, today, can share their creations and ideas in a special newsletter entitled *The Weaver’s Friend: A Publication for Rag Rug Weavers*. It began in the Fall of 1989 and is edited and published twice a year by Janet Meany of Duluth, Minnesota. She offers it as a vehicle to exchange “ideas, instructions, interviews, new & old patterns & techniques.”24 Rag rug weaving is often identified as a lost art. This grassroots publication keeps current weavers connected with one another.

fieldwork, photography, and tape-recorded oral history interviews with twenty-five rag rug weavers. She recorded and analyzed the complexities of rag rug weaving. She discovered that the rugs in the small area she studied were influenced by regional preferences worked out and shared over time. She also found that individual weavers expressed their own aesthetic taste and modified the group value system to make their own work distinctive.

Research Design

Geraldine Johnson stated that it is important to carefully study a small group of people in a small area who practice a craft if one wants to really understand the importance of that craft tradition. I chose to study the rag rug weaving tradition in Erie County, Pennsylvania, where my grandmother lived and wove rag rugs from the 1930s through the 1960s. I have gained an understanding of why women in Erie County, including my grandmother, wanted to participate in this craft. I have been able to compare my results with the findings of Geraldine Johnson’s study of Maryland weavers.

In carrying out my research I followed the “Artifact Study” model developed by E. McClung Fleming (see figure 1.1). The first step in Fleming’s model is to research all aspects of an artifact: analyzing its history, material, construction, design, and function. I began with an analysis of my grandmother’s Newcomb Studio loom and of the three extant rag rugs that she made. This analysis had to be completed without the guidance of my grandmother, who has passed away. The second step of Fleming’s model calls for evaluation of the artifacts, in this case the loom and rugs, in comparison to other objects. I investigated the Newcomb Loom Company, which constructed the Studio loom, distinguishing between the Studio loom and other looms available during the
twentieth century. I also analyzed my grandmother’s extant rugs and compared them to other rugs woven in Erie County and to those described in Johnson’s book.

Cultural Analysis, step three of Fleming’s model, calls for discussion of the relationship of the artifacts to their culture. I evaluated the process of rag rug weaving within Erie County, Pennsylvania, where my grandmother lived. Since my grandmother is no longer living, it is quite difficult to understand the exact purpose behind her construction of rag rugs. In order to gain a better grasp of her interest in the craft, I interviewed my grandmother’s sisters, and my own father and my aunts and uncles. Interviews with my family were conducted either individually or within a group setting. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

In order to understand why other women who lived in Erie County wove rugs, I used oral history methods with people who have created rag rugs in Erie County, Pennsylvania. The interviewees were contacted through the Northwestern Pennsylvania Spinners and Weavers Guild, an active organization promoting education on spinning, weaving, and other fiber art procedures. Each interview was conducted individually, tape recorded, and transcribed for further analysis.

The last step in Fleming’s model is interpretation. It calls for addressing the significance or value of what has been studied to the present culture. The literature involving rag rug weaving activity in Erie County, Pennsylvania, is very scarce. My goal was to create a document about the craft of rug weaving that would add to my family’s history and to the county’s history. The use of oral history and Fleming’s model helped me complete a study of rag rug weaving in northwestern Pennsylvania.
NOTES


7 Joel and Kate Kopp, 8.

8 Victor Weinblatt, 126.


10 Ibid.

11 Bowles, Handmade Rugs, 10.

12 Meany and Pfaff, 34.

13 Ligon, Rug Weavers Source Book, 75.

14 Meany, “Rag Rug Traditions,” 56.


16 Weinblatt, 134.

18 Weinblatt, 134.


20 Ibid, 56.

21 Gray.

22 See, for example, Ella Shannon Bowles, Handmade Rugs (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Company, 1939 (1929), 162-71; Lydia LeBaron Walker, Homecraft Rugs (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1929), 64-77.

23 Gray.

24 For information, contact THE WEAVERS FRIEND, 5672 North Shore Drive, Duluth, MN 55804.


CHAPTER II

LOOM ANALYSIS

In order to understand why my grandmother began weaving, it was important to delve into the history of my grandmother and her upbringing. Family history serves as the framework to understanding why my grandmother began to weave. Environmental factors play a very important role in rag rug weaving as well as the social context of the weaver. Through interviews with my family members, including aunts, great-aunts, and uncles, and with experts in the field, I discovered how my grandmother acquired her loom and the historical context in which my grandmother worked.

Family History

My grandmother, Angela Benicki Paszko Tecza, was born to Frances Maciak and Joseph Benecki on November 21, 1910 in Erie, Pennsylvania. Angela was the oldest of seven children including: Louis, Joe, Henry, Ida, Virginia, and Eleanor. My great grandparents, Frances and Joseph Benicki, were both born in Poznan, Poland, and came to America at a young age. It is not clear how the two met. Poland is identified as being rich in textile weaving. No one knows whether my great grandmother wove, but she was identified as an expert seamstress who developed her own dress patterns and made all the clothing for her family.¹ My grandmother apparently inherited some of the skills that her mother possessed in sewing and textile traditions. Also, being the oldest in her family, my grandmother instantly took on a motherly role.²
Grandmother married at the early age of 16 to Joseph Paszko in 1926 (see figure 2.1). Joseph worked at the General Electric plant in Erie and my grandmother stayed at home. Her first born, Stanley, arrived in 1930, followed by the birth of Theresa in 1932. In 1933, when Grandma was pregnant with Edward, her husband was electrocuted to death at the local General Electric plant.³

Widowed, with three small children, my grandmother used the little money she had and bought a farm along a dirt road in McKean, Pennsylvania, nine miles south of Erie. The buildings on the farm were in relatively good repair and the farm included several cows and a team of horses. The person from whom she purchased the farm knew a man, Andy, who was willing to help her, primarily for room and board. Thus, Andy came and helped out at the farm. In order to conserve money, Grandma canned everything she could: vegetables from the garden, fruit from the trees on the farm, and meat from the animals that Andy and the neighbors slaughtered.⁴

Grandmother had to somehow manage to finance the farm’s mortgage, which by today’s standards was very small. In the 1930s, however, one had to sell a lot of eggs, fruit, and vegetables to pay off a $1500 debt during the Great Depression. There was just not enough money to be earned, and subsequently, Grandma lost the farm. The Svotscetslar family, who had lent Grandma the money to buy the farm, repossessed it. Eventually, my grandmother would obtain and lose the property three times before it finally became solely owned by her.⁵ Each time she lost the farm, she moved back into the city of Erie to live with either her parents or one of her sisters until she could earn enough money to pay her debtor. She would move her three children back to the farm
Figure 2.1. Wedding Photograph. Angela Benicki, on her wedding day to Joseph Pazco in 1926. Angela is in center of photograph with her maid of honor, Louise Ellis, pictured to her right. The woman on Angela’s left side is not known. Photographer is not known.
and pick up where she left off each time. Andy, the hired hand, stayed on the farm and kept it running while Grandma was moving back and forth between Erie and the farm.  

In 1935, Grandma was again struggling to make the payments on the farm, when friends of the family, Magdalene and Mike Polka, took notice of her plight. Magdalene had a brother, Stanley Tecza, who arrived in the United States from Poland when he was seventeen years of age. Stanley traveled back to Poland to serve in the Polish Army during World War I and eventually was repatriated back to the United States. He worked at small odd jobs, but during the depression work was very difficult to obtain. Stanley, like thousands of other men, rode the freight trains from New York to Chicago picking up jobs that were made available. Magdalene eventually asked Stanley to help a young woman with three children on her farm in McKean, Pennsylvania. Stanley would remark many times later to my father that “I really did not have anything better to do and I needed a roof over my head so I decided to go and help this woman. I only agreed to be there for short period of time.”

Stanley worked with Andy and would eventually earn enough money to begin paying off the mortgage. In the process, Grandma and Stanley Tecza became very fond of one another, resulting in a rendezvous to Ripley, New York, where they were married in 1936. Less than one year later, their first child was born, a son who they named Theodore, my father. There was much rejoicing over their first child together resulting in a christening celebration that lasted three days.

Grandma was a very resourceful, talented, and hard-working woman. She did her grocery shopping once or twice a month, often buying 100 pounds of flour, as well as sugar, canning supplies, shoes, and occasionally a fifth of cheap whiskey, since Grandpa
Tecza liked to have a swig or two when company would come to the farm to visit. Grandma sewed all the clothes for the family. She also baked bread, cookies, and cakes. The Tecza family consisted of thirteen children (see figure 2.2). With thirteen children, Grandpa never earned enough money to purchase all the things he believed he needed to run a successful, self-sufficient farm. While he worked at various jobs in town, Grandma, with the older children, worked the farm.

In the late 1930s, to continue her resourcefulness, Grandma began to hook rugs. She learned to do this from a neighbor, Mrs. Peiffer, who lived a quarter mile down the road. With her children and very little money, every time relatives came to visit they brought clothes that their own children had outgrown. There were times when Grandma had a dilemma on her hands as to what to do with all the “hand me downs” that did not fit one of her children. Trying to conserve money, and not wanting to waste anything, she began to integrate used clothing into rugs. She would take some of these clothes and tear them in one to two-inch strips, sew the ends, and roll them into big balls to use in constructing hooked rugs for the house.

The hooked-rug making went very slowly since she stayed busy with all the other things that needed to be done for the large family. She would sit quietly in the living room after the children went to bed and make the rugs or sew clothing for the children. All who saw them marveled over Grandma Tecza’s needlework products.

Mrs. Pieffer, the next-door neighbor, was especially impressed with Grandma Tecza’s rugs, as she had initially showed Grandma how to make these rugs. She was also aware of the surplus rolls of cloth that Grandma Tecza had and could not consume fast enough using the hooking method. One day in the fall of 1939, Mrs. Pieffer came to the
house to tell Grandma about the loom she had seen at the Porter house. Mrs. Peiffer showed Grandma Tecza one of the rugs that Mrs. Porter had made, further explaining how long it took to make this rug. From this point, Grandma Tecza longed to have one of these looms for her rug-making chore. With six children already, and a seventh on the way, it did not seem financially feasible to spend money on something that was not a necessity. For the best interest of her family, my grandmother willingly abrogated her desire to obtain the loom. A few years later, in 1941, she learned that the Porters were moving to their daughter’s home in Oil City. Thus, all their belongings, including the loom, were being sold at an auction held on their former property. Grandma Tecza was very excited about the prospects of buying that loom at a price that she could hopefully afford. The price paid for the loom remains unknown, but Grandma was able to obtain it.

Over the next several days Mrs. Porter taught Grandma Tecza how to run the warp yarns and weave the rug strips through the warp yarns. It was not long before one heard the thump of the loom as Grandma Tecza worked diligently at her rugs. Through time and practice, she established a high level of skill and workmanship.

The process of rag rug weaving eventually involved the participation of the whole family. The children spent many evenings cutting up clothes, while Grandma Tecza would sew the ends of the strips together. The kids, furthermore, would roll the strips into large fabric balls. There was often a competition as to who could roll the biggest ball. Grandma was often very particular about the color of the cloth that went on each ball. The white and light-colored cloth went on one ball and the dark colors were rolled onto a different ball. My grandmother’s children never recognized the objective behind
Figure 2.2. Photograph of the Tecza Family. All thirteen children are pictured with parents Angela Tecza and Stanley Tecza sitting in front. Date is approximated to be 1957. Photographer is not known.
the difference. After visually inspecting some completed rugs, and analyzing grandma’s placement of color, her logic for the color separation indeed did make sense. When company came to visit, and on Sundays, the light-colored rugs were always placed on the kitchen floor. Grandma would say the light colors made her meticulous kitchen look even cleaner, prompting good conversation at the kitchen table. The darker colored rugs were placed in the bedrooms, dining room, and living room. Immediately after the company left or Sunday dinner was over, the light-colored rugs were removed from their placement and stored in a closet off Grandma’s bedroom. They were never left on the floor after company left or when Sunday dinner was over.18

Grandma moved her loom to the top floor of the barn and her children could often hear the loom thumping during the early morning hours. None of the family can clearly recall a traumatic night in 1957, but the effects, however, are unforgettable. One night, when a storm was passing through Erie County, my grandparents’ barn was struck by lightning and quickly engulfed in flames. Everything in the barn perished, including my grandmother’s loom. Before this tragic event, my grandfather had moved the family’s treasured belongings to the top level of the barn. All important family heirlooms were placed in the barn for easy storage, since functional storage space was at a minimum in the house with all the children. Family members speculated that Grandma and Grandpa may have had the barn insured, because they were able to purchase another loom.19 According to Newcomb Loom Company records, my grandmother placed an order on January 10, 1958 at the cost of $115.00 to have her loom replaced (see figure 2.3).20 The type of loom she obtained was a Studio loom, which is characteristically utilized for more artistic expression than for weaving rag rugs.
Figure 2.3. Ledger Record. Copy of ledger recording Angela Tecza’s purchase of the Studio loom on 10 January 1958. Photocopy courtesy of Theresa Trebon, founder of The Newcomb Loom Historical Society.
Loom History and Analysis

The loom purchased by my Grandmother in 1958 had the word “STUDIO” stenciled on it (see figure 2.4). The Studio loom was a product produced by the Newcomb Loom Company of Davenport, Iowa. Charles Newcomb started the Newcomb Loom Company, located in Davenport, Iowa, in 1887 (see figure 2.5).

Newcomb got interested in loom construction when he rebuilt an old barn frame loom. The company he founded lasted for ninety years. Later owners included: William Stark in 1900, Frank Knierman in 1919, Lyman Knierman Sr., and Lynn Knierman, who saw the demise of the company in 1982. The company’s main selling point during all its years of business stayed the same. It put its emphasis on meeting the needs and concerns of the customers, who made the company successful for over ninety years.

The looms produced by the company were primarily used for rag rug production. In 1893, the Newcomb looms were noted as excellent for their speedy production of rag rugs. The Newcomb Fly Shuttle Loom, or the number three loom, was the first popular loom designed by the company, and was the only loom designed for the construction of rag rug carpets. It had a fly shuttle, two harnesses, and was semi automatic. According to a statement in the 1893 catalog, the number three loom was “the only flying shuttle rag-carpet loom in existence that is built solely for rag carpet weaving; the only rag carpet loom with a peculiarly constructed shuttle that will weave automatically.” The Newcomb shuttle loom also had an attachment that finished the rag strips identically. This allowed for even distribution to achieve a uniform carpet. The rags would be torn and placed into metal cylinders. When the strips passed through rollers, the rags would turn, resulting in the strips being folded, ready for weaving.
Figure 2.4. Studio Loom. The Studio four-harness loom, now owned by Helen Fick, and previously owned by Angela Tecza. Photograph by author.
During the late-nineteenth century, hobby or home weaving grew in popularity. Other loom companies, including the Deen Company, the Eureka Loom Company, and the January and Wool Company, offered their versions of looms. Due to the expanding interest in weaving, Newcomb needed to differentiate his looms from those of the competition. He constantly tried to improve his looms. He visited Chicago in 1893 to attend the World’s Columbian Exposition where he saw the wide range of looms available. He wanted to construct a loom which would be user-friendly. He decided to create a loom that could be used to create a rug from one long strip of rags. 

Based on his eagerness to create a loom that could do this, Charles invented the Weaver’s Delight loom and the Little Daisy loom. The Weaver’s Delight was in production from 1897 to 1941. It was a counterbalance loom with two wide harnesses and a fly shuttle that allowed for the creation of intricate patterns. There were approximately eight thousand Weaver Delights produced for customer purchase (see figure 2.6). According to Janet Meany, the best loom to be used for rag rug weaving is the Weaver’s Delight produced by the Newcomb Loom Company. The Little Daisy loom, sold between September 1897 and 1943, had a fly shuttle and shafts that altered the shape of the items created upon movement of the beater.

There were improvements made on each of the Newcomb looms. By having a newsletter, selling parts for its looms, and corresponding directly with customers, the Newcomb Company remained successful and customers were satisfied with all of their products. Newcomb would only allow one loom to be sold in a community. The family with the loom would do the weaving, while the community would bring this family their
rags to be constructed into rugs. This practice, typical during the time period, provided opportunities for women to earn money in their homes.

Charles Newcomb also offered payment plans for his customers. While the costs of his looms were reasonable, those living on farms, like my grandmother, often found the total amount too much to pay at one time. Another customer accommodation Newcomb offered was to have the looms fully warped, saving the weaver the most difficult and time consuming task in weaving. Typically, the looms would come with twenty yards of warped threads, ready for production.\textsuperscript{28}

When the company was taken over by Frank Knierman in 1919, the focus of weaving was changing into more of a hobby, although some people in farming communities were still weaving because of necessity. In the 1930s, the Studio Art Loom appeared on the list of products offered by the Newcomb Loom Company (see figure 2.7). The Studio loom was developed for those who were interested in weaving items other than rag rugs and for users who wanted to utilize the loom for more artistic exploration. The new loom was a wooden four-shaft six-treadle loom with a rising shed. The Studio loom was aimed towards weavers who were not as concerned with speed and volume production, and who wanted to construct coverlets, rugs, and other items.\textsuperscript{29}

The Studio four-harness loom owned by my grandmother is made of maple or other seasoned wood. There was not a specified wood for the Studio four-harness loom. Perhaps the company did not want to bind itself to one particular wood because other suitable woods might be available for purchase.\textsuperscript{30}
According to Dr. Shoemaker, professor of artistic weaving at Edinboro University, no matter what type of loom one possesses, they last a long time. Fire is the most destructive force for wooden looms. Another problem with these looms is that the wood will swell with huge fluctuations in weather. This is difficult to prevent. These looms, however, are fairly easy to repair. If a treadle breaks, it is not difficult to construct a new piece and replace the broken part.\(^{31}\)

In the 1930s and 1940s, weaving was approached with a different perspective. In most cases, except for farm families, there was a recreational approach to weaving during this time. Some even believed it to be very therapeutic. Individuals were becoming more involved in learning about the patterns woven by their ancestors. People were learning old weaving techniques of the past including coverlet designs and lace weaves.\(^{32}\) The new desires in weaving led manufacturers of looms to construct items that would accommodate the weavers’ desires to create patterns and designs with ease. The Studio four-harness loom was created for the specific customer needs during this period.

The Studio loom can be broken down into sixteen mechanisms (refer to figure 2.8). The first component (letter A) is the castle. This is the central part of the loom that supports the shafts (letter B). They are the frames which hold the heddles on the loom. The castle and shafts are usually made of hard wood and are very sturdy. They need to withstand the pull of the stretched warp and the constant pounding of the beater or battan.\(^{33}\) The beater (letter C), also called the battan, lathe, or lay, is the movable frame that holds the reed. It is the swinging frame set across the loom that carries a slotted metal strip which serves to space the warp drawn through the slots.
Figure 2.8. Studio Loom Parts. Illustration of the Studio four-harness loom with identified parts. *Newcomb Loom Company Studio Four Harness Manual*, no date.
The reed (letter D) is the metal, comb-like device placed on the beater or battan. The vertical divisions of the reed force the filling up against the woven fabric. The shuttles race (letter E) is the bottom of the beater where the shuttle rides. It is a narrow shelf on the beater on which the shuttle travels through the warp separations.\(^{34}\)

Nearby to the shuttles race, the cloth beam (letter F) is the rotating front of the loom where the finished material is wound around as it is woven. The cloth beam is usually equipped with a ratchet to control the tension. The apron (letter G) is the canvas cloth that fastens the apron bar to the warp or cloth beam. The apron bars are rods that the warp is attached to at the front and back of the loom. The lever for the front rachet (letter H) is attached to a wheel with notches or teeth and is used to put tension on the cloth beam of the loom. The lever is used to roll the finished material on the cloth beam as the weaving progresses.\(^{35}\) The breast beam (letter I) is the rigid beam at the front of the loom over which the cloth passes to the cloth beam below it. It is a form of a roller that is connected to the frame at each end. The brake release lever (letter J) serves as a brake to keep the tension on the warp beam. The release lever is used to release the tension on the warp when required. The lamms (letter K) connect the shafts to the treadles (letter L). Other levers on the loom are called lamns. There are three groups of fours levers which are connected directly or indirectly with the heddle frames and treadles. Two groups of levers are on the right side and one set is visible. The other set is encased between the two pieces of steel that run through the center of the loom.\(^{36}\)

The treadles serve as the pedals to raise or lower the shafts on the loom.\(^{37}\) When seeing my grandmother’s loom for the first time, a question arose as to why there were six treadles on a four-harness loom. This is because, according to the instruction manual,
“Equipping the loom with six treadles permits connecting up the treadles in such a manner so that by simply depressing one treadle two of the hedge frames are raised at the same time. If four treadles were used it would be necessary to use both feet to depress two treadles at the same time.”

The Studio loom was designed so that when a pattern instruction called for a different treadle hook up, the change could be made easily. The treadles and lower levers are equipped with openings to receive the rod so that different combinations can be made on this six-treadle four-harness loom.

The shedding mechanism of a loom consists of two or more frames that carry the heddles, operated to rise or sink by foot pedals. Tie-up cords (letter M) can either be constructed from cords or wires. These cords or wires connect the treadles to the lamms. These cords allow for the shafts to be raised or lowered by moving the treadles. The sectional warp beam (letter N) is the rotating beam resembling a roller where the warp is stored and unrolled as the weaver rolls up the cloth beam. The wooden pegs found on the beam keep the warp separated, which is required for winding the warp onto the beam from spools. The back beam (letter O) carries the warp from the warp beam over to the breast beam. The back beam serves to keep the warp parallel with the breast beam to keep the woven item from becoming crooked.

There is also a take-up lever attached to the right side of the loom which is used for winding up the finished product on the cloth roller. The release lever works in conjunction with the warp beam. It is operated and controlled by the wood pedal located at the lower right-hand corner of the loom.
The spool rack (letter P) consists of two parts, the upright and the base. The upright is driven into the base and fastened with screws or nails for extra security. The thread guide on the loom, the device perforated with many holes, is attached to the upper rear roller and used for guiding the warp threads as they are being transferred from the spools to the various sections of the warp beam.42

**Evaluation of the Loom**

The Studio loom owned by my grandmother is a jack loom rather than a counterbalance loom. A jack loom is a loom is where the shafts rise when the treadles are pressed; thus the Jack loom can also be referred to as a rising-shed loom. A counterbalanced loom has a pulley system at the top of the loom which lowers the shafts when treadles are pressed.

The Newcomb Studio loom was placed into production during the 1930s. Most jack looms came outfitted with metal heddles. The metal heddles add weight to the shafts and create a characteristic noise during the weaving process. When the shafts fall down to the jacks, there is a loud metal pitch.43 The Studio loom was a very early version of a jack loom. It had string heddles rather than metal ones.

On a jack loom, unlike the counterbalance loom, the shafts work independently.44 The shafts are moved by jacks located typically right above them, on the castle, or they can be found just below the shafts. They hold down the warp threads at a high tension, which can result in a tremendous amount of wear on the warp threads while weaving.

Jack looms also present an uneven tension on the top and bottom of the shed. Because of the movement of the warp threads, the upper threads become tighter than the
threads on the bottom of the shed. This is a problem for weft-faced weaving, because every other thread is loose.

What is also integral to weaving is the total loom weight. Rug weaving requires a very heavy loom. When rug weavers beat the weft, they want the rags to be extremely tight. They need to ensure that they beat heavily, at times doing it twice. When this is done, they may unintentionally move the loom when beating it. Therefore most rug weavers prefer to weave on a very heavy loom, which is characteristic of the counterbalance loom.45

According to weaving expert Linda Ligon, a rug loom is evaluated in three ways: the ability of the loom to handle high-tension warp, the type of shedding device, and the effect of the beating process.46 Some looms are apparently better for the construction of rag rugs than others.

The loom and all its components have three main functions: (1) to hold the warp in order and keep it taut; (2) to hold the warp apart to make “sheds” or openings to permit the shuttle(s) to be passed from one side to another; and (3) to drive the weft (rags or yarn) together for the production of a solid web.47 Although, the function of a loom can be simply stated, certain parts of the loom are especially critical to successful weaving. Most rug weaving experts will agree that the warp yarns have to be extremely taut. The woven rug will then look better aesthetically and it will wear better. During the weaving process, the warp yarn must also be able to resist abrasion because of the movement of the shuttles and the movement of the heddles against the yarn. A heavy beater is required to literally beat the rags or yarn into a tightly woven fabric.49
There is not one specific loom that is better than others when it comes to rag rug weaving. The Newcomb Studio loom was not aimed specifically for the weaving of rag rugs, but it served this purpose for my grandmother. Most weavers typically used what they had access to, or what they were comfortable with. My grandmother may have decided to select a versatile loom that would work for rag rugs as well as for any other weaving that she might want to do. In the case of my grandmother’s loom, there are four harnesses and six treadles. The number of harnesses on the studio four-harness loom allow weavers to create patterns. My grandmother did not utilize her loom to its full capacity. Based on evaluation of the rugs that I was able to salvage, she typically constructed rag rugs in a plain weave, which only requires two harnesses.

After Grandma Tecza passed away in 1977 the loom went to her daughter Helen Tecza Fick. The loom resides in Helen’s basement where it sits idle, waiting for someone to once again produce beautiful rugs. Very few of Grandma Tecza’s rugs remain. I was able to analyze three rugs, which are in the possession of my uncle Edward Paszko. As I examined the rugs, I recognized the labor of love and care that went into weaving the rugs. While the Studio loom was not specifically designed for the weaving of rag rugs, my grandmother’s rugs attest to the successful use of her Studio loom for this purpose. The next chapter will address my analysis of these rugs.

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NOTES

1 Virginia Ropelewski, interview by author, Erie, PA., 3 November 2001, tape recording.
2 Eleanor Fratus, interview by author, Erie, PA., 3 November 2001, tape recording.

3 Virginia Ropelewski, interview by author.

4 Theodore Tecza, interview by author, Erie, PA., 3 November 2001, tape recording.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Virginia Ropelewski, interview by author.

8 Theodore Tecza, interview by author.

9 Louise Ellis, interview by author, 3 November 2001, tape recording.

10 Virginia Ropelewski, interview by author.

11 Louise Ellis, interview by author.

12 Theodore Tecza, interview by author.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Eleanor Fratus, interview by author.


17 Ibid.

18 Theodore Tecza, interview by author.

19 Ibid.

20 Newcomb Loom Company Ledger, 2.


22 Ibid.
23 Ibid, 93.

24 Ibid, 95.


26 Meany and Pfaff, 92.

27 Ibid, 94.

28 Trebon, 4.

29 *Newcomb Loom Company Studio Four Harness Manual* (Davenport, IA: no date), 2.

30 Trebon, 4.

31 Dr. George Shoemaker, interview by author, 21 August 2003, tape recording.

32 Geoff Domowicz, interview by author, 21 August 2003, tape recording.


34 Atwater, 37.

35 Meany and Pfaff, 5.

36 *Newcomb Loom Company Studio Four Harness Manual*, 2.

37 Atwater, 35.

38 *Newcomb Loom Company Studio Four Harness Manual*, 1.

39 Atwater, 32.


41 Ibid.
42 Meany and Pfaff, 93.

43 Ibid., 7.

44 Ibid.

45 Newcomb Loom Company Studio Four Harness Manual, 2.


49 Dr. George Shoemaker, interview by author, 21 August 2003, tape recording.

50 Ligdon, 24.
CHAPTER III
RUG ANALYSIS

This chapter discusses the process of creating a rag rug. This includes preparation for weaving, the weaving process, the patterns, and the finishing techniques. Three extant rugs that my grandmother created are analyzed, specifically looking at the patterns, the color placement, the materials used for the filling, and the warp chosen by my grandmother in their creation.

Preparation for Rag Rug Weaving

The preparation done before weaving rag rugs is as important, if not more important, than the actual weaving of the rugs. These preliminary steps include gathering, sorting, and perhaps dyeing rags; cutting or tearing rags into strips; joining the strips and forming balls; and planning for the way in which the rug will be woven and the pattern formed.

The first step to complete is the gathering of rags. When using old clothing, it is very important to remove notions and cut away the overly worn pieces of cloth. In the past, most rags could be used in rugs. Today, however, some synthetic fabrics are flimsy and not suitable for use in rag rugs. Rag rug weavers must carefully evaluate the materials available before using them in a rag rug.1 Weavers usually have their own techniques, and strongly believe theirs are superior to others. They all, however, cover
some basic steps. For example, if the rags are first sorted by material and color, it will be easier to see what one has to work with and what colors are available for use.

Sometimes the decision is made to dye materials. According to testimony given by my father, my grandmother often dyed her rags on the stove utilizing Rit dye.² According to Geoff Domowicz, curator at the Girard Historical Museum, Rit dye was an innovation that came on the market in the 1920s. Before this time, weavers often did their dyeing with natural dyes. There had been other dyes available to the public before Rit, but they never become popular. Rit dyes provided intense colors, more so than natural dyes, and they were reasonably priced. The dye product, therefore, gained customer approval right away.³

After all the rags are organized and sorted, cutting or tearing the rags into strips is the next step. In Geraldine Johnson’s study of rag rug weavers in Maryland, a woman identified as Ellen explained: “Now the material that doesn’t ravel too much, why it’s better to tear it. You make a neater, straighter job of it.” She continued, saying “The material that doesn’t tear, then, of course, you’ll have to use scissors and try and cut it as near to the same width all the time.” There can be local variations used when cutting rags. Ellen stated that in her region the rule of thumb is “the heavier the material, the more narrow you cut the material. If I’m making a plain rug and striping it in, I cut the cotton material about an inch and a half wide. The heavier material shouldn’t be cut over an inch and a fourth wide.”⁴

Tearing is the easiest method to use in preparing the rags. This can create a lot of dust, however, so it is advisable to use a mask. Weaving the torn rags in a rug can cause
the rug to appear to be ragged. So if one wants the final project to be neat in
construction, this rag preparation method may not be advisable. In cutting strips of rags there are many methods that can be used. The first
method, the up and down method, is done by cutting on the lengthwise grain of the
fabric. Cuts in the fabric are made alternating between starting at the top and then the
bottom of the fabric. Cutting these strips typically rounds the edges, creating “ears” that
result in a neater appearance when weaving the rugs. The desired width of the strips is
one to one and a half inches. This may vary, depending on the thickness of the material
used. The rule of thumb is the thinner the material, the wider the strip of fabric.

In the second method of preparing strips, called the tube method, two fabric
widths are first seamed together. Then this is folded and sewn to form a large tube.
Evenly spaced slashes are made in the flattened fabric about three to four inches from the
edge of the fabric. The tube is then opened and cutting is done in one continuous step by
cutting diagonally from each strip to another. Finally, you have the circular method in
which one simply uses a rotary cutter to cut the rag in a spiral by working from the
outside inward.

After the strips are made, they need to be joined together to construct one long
continuous strip that will be wound into a ball and used in the construction of a rug. In
Maryland, a common method of joining, that most rug weavers used, was looping and
stitching. The looping is typically called knotting, where a large slit is cut in one strip,
and another strip is looped through the slit to joint the two. Some weavers in the past
thought it was a waste of time to stitch the rag strips together, so they just laid in and
overlapped the pieces as they wove them.
There are numerous methods for machine stitching strips. In one method, a strip is first folded over another and then sewn near the edge and turned inside out. In another method, blunt ends of the strips are overlapped and machine stitched in a semi-circular pattern. This was a method done historically to achieve what can be done today with the machine zigzag stitch. Earlier, women did not have sewing machines that could create the zigzag stitch. They wanted durability with the rag strips. They, therefore, would use a circular stitch because it was a simple stitch to create on a treadle sewing machine, and it enhanced the rag strength. It is a stitching method that remains a part of rag rug weaving today.

Today some weavers simply use fabric glue if they do not want to use a sewing machine. The main goal is to create as long a strip of rags as possible, so the weaver can continuously weave the rugs without interruption.

After the small strips are joined in long lengths, they are ready to be formed into large balls, ready to be wound on the shuttle for use on the rug. The balls are typically arranged in a container, allowing for easy access to the balls. My aunts and uncles would frequently have competitions to see how large they could wind the ball after my grandmother had sewn the strips.

There are different shuttles available which are suitable for carrying the rag wefts. The classic rag shuttle is the type my grandmother used. The rag shuttle measures 18 to 20 inches in length and 3 inches in width. The braces, which allow for the rags to be wrapped around the shuttle, are spaced approximately fourteen inches apart (see figure 3.1). Most rag rugs are about 28 inches wide. One wrap around the shuttle equals one shot across the width of the rug. This is a very useful tool to have because you can
calculate how many shots there will be with the amount of fabric on the shuttle. This is a
typical accessory for older looms and one that came with my grandmother’s loom.11

Another variation of the shuttle is the stick shuttle. It is smooth and flat with
notches at both ends. You wind the rags in a figure eight manner which allows a large
amount of rag weft to be placed on this particular shuttle.12 The ski shuttle, another
choice, is also smooth and flat, which allows extremely thick rags to be shot easily
through the shed on the loom. Ski shuttles are approximately 12 inches long and 1 and
5/8 inches wide and are suitable for older looms that had smaller shuttles races.13 It is
useful to have several types of shuttles on hand so that the proper shuttle is available to
accommodate the type of rag weft being used and so the proper amount of weft can be
placed on the shuttle to minimize interruptions in the weaving process.14

Placing the rags on the shuttle begins by loosely tying the rag on one end of the
shuttle. Then the rag strip is wound on the shuttle until it is full, but not bulging. An
overfilled shuttle will slow the weaving process.15 Some rag rug weavers have a
methodical way of prearranging the weft, or the prepared rags, to control the colors to be
used in the rug. Others are fortuitous in their rag ball selection.16 According to my
father, my grandmother sometimes arranged her rag weft to create striped patterns.17 She
constructed most of her rag rugs, however, in a hit and miss pattern.

There are variations in forming the hit and miss patterns. This technique typically
uses a variety of fabrics in a huge variety of colors. This effect is produced in the
seaming of the rag strips to be used on balls. In some regions, hit and miss is typically
constructed by consistently placing light and dark strips together. Janet Meany suggests
that the strips should not be longer than 18 inches in length.18 She suggests dividing the
strips in groups from light to dark, being cognizant of pattern and prints. In seaming the strips together, consistently take one from each pile, so there is a progression of color. In another hit and miss technique, some weavers just weave without reason in the utilization of the rag strips. The results can be astonishing in the color combinations.

Rag Rug Weaving

The weaving process can be described as interlacing of vertical yarns (the warp) and horizontal yarns (the weft). In the case of rag rug weaving, the weft is made up of the rags, and the warp is typically made of heavy 4-ply cotton threads. In some terminology, the weft is sometimes referred to as woof or shot. In planning the pattern of the rug, one may find it useful to construct a “draft” for the rug pattern to be woven.19

Rag rugs can be classified as unbalanced weaves because the warp and the weft are not of equal proportions. One can have either a warp-faced rug or a weft-faced rug. Both are constructed with the simplest form of weaving, the plain weave. The warp-faced rug is woven when the weaver desires to construct a rug that will be heavily used. The weft-faced rugs, which my grandmother wove, can easily be identified as having the warp yarns going in the up to down direction and having the rags move over and under these yarns.

Before the process of weaving with the rags can begin, the loom must be warped. The warp threads are passed through the heddles, which are little needles that hold the warp yarns that are strung from the back to the front of the loom. In the shedding process, the heddles, which are found on the shafts, are pressed up by the treadles, which are pushed by the feet. This allows for parts of the warp yarns to be raised. The raising or separation of some of the warp yarns is called shedding. This allows for easy passage of
the shuttle wound with the rag strips through the width of the loom. The shuttle is passed right to left and then left to right.\textsuperscript{20}

Rag rug weaving typically begins by weaving six to eight rows using the warp thread as the filling. This portion is called a heading. The rug is finished in this same manner. This allows for stability on both ends, and gives the rug enhanced strength and durability.\textsuperscript{21} Once the heading is complete, the weaver begins to weave the rag weft.

With each passing of the shuttle, the weaver will need to beat the rag weft firmly in place to ensure a tight weave. According to Linda Ligon, weavers must not only use their arms, but must use the whole upper body to beat.\textsuperscript{22} Using both hands on the beater ensures an even beat. At night, my grandmother would wake up my aunts and uncles, because of the loud noise coming from the shed, the room attached to their kitchen, where my grandmother was powerfully beating the rags into a tight rug. Weaving rugs is a physically demanding job. My grandmother had to be brawny enough to create the tightly woven rugs that she did.\textsuperscript{23}

There are several ways to handle the weft edges of the rug. When beginning with the rags, the beginning end can be tucked into the first shed woven. An alternative is to tuck the end into the next shed. Two beats between each shed helps ensure tightness in the packing.

During weaving, changes are often made in rag colors.\textsuperscript{24} To ensure evenness and uniformity in the rug, the weaver can take the old rag and wrap the new color of the new weft and taper off the end. This is the same technique utilized for changing shuttles. My Grandmother, however, would shed like normal, but place the remaining bit of the rag into the shed. This locks the remaining rag weft in place.
Some weavers use a temple or stretcher to help them achieve rugs of even width. The temple or stretcher is a device consisting of two narrow pieces of wood with sharp pointed pins on the ends. It is used to keep the rug or whatever you are weaving the proper width. The temple or the stretcher is set for the width of the warp in the reed. The temple is adjustable, but to get the best results, care must be taken in using the temple in a proper manner.²⁵

Rag rugs are often finished with fringe, formed by allowing five or six inches of warp yarn at each end. The knotted fringe is the most typical, and is the one that my grandmother used (see figure 3.2). After the rug is removed from the loom and laid on a table, an overhand knot is used to tie groups of six threads and anchor the fringe at both ends of the rug. Finally, using the edge of a table as a guide, the ends of the fringe are cut evenly.²⁶

Analysis of Extant Rugs

The three extant rugs woven by my grandmother are very simple in weave and design. All three of the rugs have been used but they are still in good condition. They illustrate the functional rugs rural women of Erie County, Pennsylvania, wove for their farm homes in the mid-twentieth century. People familiar with Erie County rugs state that there was no distinctive pattern in Erie County for a very good reason --the weather.²⁷ This is very different than the results Geraldine Johnson discovered in her research. Johnson identified interesting regional preferences in rag rug patterns in her study of Maryland weavers. While some weavers wove the simpler plain, striped, or hit and miss rugs, others specialized in unique waffle-weave designs or checkerboard designs.²⁸
Figure 3.2. Overhand Fringe Completing a Rag Rug. Reprinted from Janet Meany, and Paula Pfaff, “History and Looms,” in Rag Rug Handbook (Loveland, CO: Interweave Press Inc.), 92.
The plain weave is the easiest weave to construct on a loom. It is also the most durable weave. The weather in Erie County, Pennsylvania, is very harsh, with terrible winters, and very humid summers. The women wanted to construct rugs that would be able to last through the elements. The time spent on weaving could not be wasted on producing rag rugs that would fall apart. It simply was not worth the time and effort. Decorative patterns did not wear well, especially on the farm. In decorative weaves, the weft does not go over and under every warp thread, allowing for the warp to wear and tear. How my grandmother was able to achieve more of a decorative rug was through the colors she chose for the warp and the weft. Analysis of the three extant rag rugs constructed by my grandmother show that she wove her rugs where they would be most durable and functional. She did, however, eventually try to create more of a pattern but through variations in the warp yarns and the combination of the rags she used as the weft.

**Cream-colored Rug**

The first rug I analyzed is made with a combination of cream-colored cotton corduroy and cotton bed sheets (see figures 3.3 and 3.4). The family believed that out of the three rugs, this was an earlier creation of my grandmother’s. It measures 53 inches in length and 26 and 5/8 in width. Each row consists of 185 warp threads. The rug is a simple plain weave with no variation in how the weft or filling yarns are twisted.

The condition of the cream-colored rug is relatively good except for two stains located at both ends of the rug. The fringe, however, is worn on one end of the rug. The weft is completely gone in three small locations on the same end where the fringe is worn, exposing the warp in those areas. There is slight distortion in the selvage of the
Distortion in selvages may be due to inconsistency in beating the warp or because of using different types of fabric in the weft.

The warp of this rug is made from 4-ply cotton. This type of warp is durable for a rug for everyday use. It was probably purchased cream in color. In the other rugs analyzed, my grandmother may have purchased cream-colored warp yarn and used Rit Dye to tint the warp the color or colors she would need to create a rug.

The weft of the rug was created by using both corduroy and cotton bed sheets. The strips were made from two and a half strips twisted together for the filling. The corduroy could be determined by the pile in the pieces of the fabric found interchangeably in the filling. The weight of the corduroy and the cotton bed sheets is considerably different. If various types of material are used in the filling, the fabrics will react differently when washed, which can cause the selvage to warp. This rug also has a cream cotton variegated yarn added to filling. This technique is labeled as the laid-in technique. The technique could have been done a few ways. It could have been laid in by hand after completing a shed. Or it could have been incorporated when wrapping the rags on the shuttle. Based upon evaluation, and the twisting of the variegated yarn, the second technique seems to be the case.

There is heading done in the beginning and end of the rug. The warp yarns were used to create the heading. When using the warp threads for the heading of the rugs, weavers typically take two or three spools of warp thread, twist them, and wrap them around the shuttle. My grandmother used two shots of warp for the heading before she
Figure 3.3. Angela Tecza’s Cream-colored Rug. Photograph taken by author.
Figure 3.4. Detail of Cream-colored Rug. Photograph taken by author.
would beat the rug between the rows. She continued this for ten more rows, which is one and a half inches long, and finished the edges with a knotted fringe. She took the warp threads and knotted them. This technique is called crossed warp where she took a few of the warp threads in a given area and knotted them to lock the weft in place. The fringe on this rug is half an inch long.

**Blue and Cream Rug**

The second rug (see figures 3.3 and 3.4) reveals that my grandmother also experimented with different colors. This rug measure 50 inches in length by 26 inches in width. It consists of 179 warp threads per width of the rug. The condition of the rug is fair. The weft rags near the selvage at one end of the rug are completely gone, exposing part of the warp. There are also three small areas of the rug where the warp is worn, exposing parts of the filler or rags. There are also a few stains located on the rug. Lastly, there is slight deviation in the selvage on both sides, which can be caused by using various materials in the filler or inconsistently beating the warp.

The plain weave was used to create this rug along with a hit and miss pattern. Evident in the construction of the rug was also a two-color twisting technique, which most often is used to expose different colors when two separate strips are sewn together. Typically the weaver will separate rag strips into piles of color. The piles are then arranged in a certain order and strips are sewn together in that order, not deviating from how the piles are arranged. The result is the hit and miss pattern.  

She used four-ply cotton warp yarns in the colors blue, yellow, and cream. She achieved a pattern by switching the warp colors every eight threads. She used eight
Figure 3.5. Blue and Cream Rug by Angela Tecza. Photograph taken by author.
Figure 3.6. Detail of Blue and Cream Rug. Photograph taken by author.
blue, eight yellow, and eight cream warp yarns in sequence. Evaluation of the warp revealed that my grandmother had one base color of warp, which was cream, and dyed the other warp yarns yellow and blue to achieve a color pattern.

Woven cotton cream and blue rags were used for the filling of this rug. Some of the rags used for the rug were dyed blue prior to weaving to create the pattern. The same dye colors used to dye the warp yarns were used for the filling to achieve a consistency in the colors used in the entirety of the rug. The cotton strips were cut two half and inches wide and twisted together for the filling of the rug. The blue and cream rags are angled sporadically or twisted together, allowing for a visually interesting rug to be constructed from the randomness. In order to expose the different colors, the twisting technique brings the bottom color to the surface at different intervals.32

She used the warp yarns as the heading at both ends of the rug. The pattern consisted of taking one shuttle of the blue, one shuttle of the white, and one shuttle of the yellow. She continued this for 24 rows, which is one and a half inches long. She then finished the edges with a knotted fringe, taking the warp threads and knotting them in groups to lock the weft in place. The fringe on this rug is half an inch long.

Variegated Rug

The last rug analyzed showcased Grandma experimenting in pattern (see figures 3.5 and 3.6). This rug measures 37 ½ inches in length and 26 and 5/8 inches width. When first analyzed, the rug seemed to be carelessly constructed because of extreme warping in the selvages. Further analysis suggested reasons for the unevenness on the edges of the rug.
Figure 3.7. Variegated Rag Rug by Angela Tecza. Photograph taken by author.
Figure 3.8. Detail of Variegated Rug. Photograph taken by author.
The rug is constructed of a combination of cotton and nylon fabrics for the filling. It must have been made later in her career, because during the 1950s, nylon was very a popular fiber utilized in apparel. Cotton and nylon fibers perform differently when washed. I expect this may have caused some of the distortion of the edges. The distortion can also be attributed to the fact that there is a heavy presence of both knit and woven fabric within the rags. Upon washing, knits and woven fabrics also react differently. Based on these two factors, the rug was more than likely even on the selvages when constructed, but through use and time, it warped at the edges.

The condition of this rug is very good. There are no stains and the warp is not worn down in any areas like that on the other two rugs. This rug has a total of 179 warp threads, just like rug two. This rug, however, is considerably smaller in size.

The rug was woven in the hit and miss pattern in a plain weave structure. By using this pattern, my grandmother created an interesting pattern of color. Just like the process on the second rug analyzed, rag strips were probably divided by color and sewn together in a certain order to create a hit and miss pattern. There was a pattern evident in the creation of this rug, created with color. She used the warp yarns, and the filling to achieve an interesting color effect. Home necessities such as flour and sugar would come in decorated sacks. My grandmother would go weekly to pick out the feed needed for the farm, and evaluate the new feed bag prints. She would, then, use the feedbags in the rag rugs. This particular rug shows possible evidence of using feed bags for the rag rug weft.

The warp is four-ply cotton just like the other rugs. The pattern is unique in that she had a three, three, three, five pattern. She would warp three threads in one color,
continuing to do three more in another color, then three threads in a third color, and then five in the fourth color, repeating that pattern for the warp. The colors she used here were the most vibrant of all the three rugs analyzed. There is a combination of yellow, pink, white, and orange warp threads.

The filling my grandmother used was very colorful, also. The combination of colored warp yarns highlights the white, green, yellow, blue, pink, and purple colors used in the filling direction. This rug suggests a sense of artistic color expression. To add to the color, my grandmother used the laid-in technique, adding a cotton yarn to the rags to create an interesting color effect. The yarn could have been incorporated when wrapping rags on the shuttle or it could have been laid in by hand after completing a shed. The second technique seems to have been used in both this rug and rug one.

The warp yarns are used to create the heading for both ends of the rug. The heading pattern was created by taking one shuttle of three warp threads, and continuing that pattern for nine rows, which measures one and a half inches. The edges are finished with a knotted fringe, just like the other rugs. The fringe on this rug measures half an inch long.

**Evaluation of Rugs**

Based on the evaluation of Geoff Domowicz, curator of the Girard Historical Museum, the rugs constructed by my grandmother depict good workmanship. She was, however, an amateur weaver. There are a few indicators of that. The best selvage edges should not resemble a loop. Instead, they should be tight and tucked in, which is not the case for my grandmother’s rugs. The selvages are clearly loops. If the selvages are too tight, however, you will have draw in. When weaving, my grandmother drew in the
edges on some areas of the rugs. This caused some of the distortion in the rugs, as seen
in the variegated rug. Through practice and experience, weavers achieve even edges on
rugs. In overall evaluation, the cream rug constructed by my grandmother had even
edges and was most consistent in width. It therefore, was probably the later woven of the
three salvaged rugs, rather than the earliest as family members suggested.\textsuperscript{34} Distortion is
also caused by the material weavers place in a rug and the number of washings it has
gone through. If the cotton rags used in a rug have been washed fifteen times, shrinking
is usually complete. If those rags are mixed with others, that have only been washed
once or twice, the two will react differently in the rug after it is washed. This may have
also caused some of the distortion in the rugs.\textsuperscript{35} This again could have been corrected
ahead of weaving.

Tension can also affect the weaving process. Often amateur weavers are initially
tense. As they start to get relaxed, weaving tension variations can occur. It is not
unusual for the beginning of a rug to be drawn in, whereas in the middle and the end of
rug, the tension is even. This is normal for hand weaving. These rugs were hand woven,
so there are going to be imperfections. Overall, my grandmother’s rugs depicted good
craftsmanship.\textsuperscript{36}

\begin{notes}
\item Mary Meigs Atwater, \textit{The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving}, (New
\item Theodore Tecza, interview by author, Erie, PA., 3 November 2001, tape
recording.
\item Geoff Domowicz, interview by author, 21 August 2003, tape recording.
\end{notes}


7 Domowicz, interview by author.

8 Ibid.

9 Johnson, 18-19.

10 *Newcomb Loom Company Studio Four Harness Manual* (Davenport, Iowa: no date), 2.

11 Domowicz, interview by author.


13 Ibid.

14 Johnson, 18-19.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Theodore Tecza, interview by author.

18 Meany and Pfaff, 29.


24 Collingworth, 68-69.

25 Dr. George Shoemaker, interview by author, 21 August 2003, tape recording.


27 Domowich, interview by author.

28 Johnson, 22.

29 Theodore Tecza, interview by author.

30 Domowich, interview by author.

31 Meany and Pfaff, 29.

31 Ibid.

32 Domowitz, interview by author.

33 Walter Tecza, telephone interview by author.

34 Domowitz, interview by author.

35 Shoemaker, interview by author.

36 Ibid.
CHAPTER IV
CULTURAL ANALYSIS

I wanted to determine if there were similarities between why women wove in Maryland and why women wove in northwestern Pennsylvania. Through my interviews, I also wanted to understand more about the time period in which my grandmother wove. Did it make a difference if you started weaving in the 1930s as compared to the 1960s?

Rag Rug Weaving in Maryland, 1970s

Geraldine Niva Johnson began a study of folk life and folk art being done in Maryland in 1974. She traveled to thirty-nine different counties and came to realize that rag rug weaving thrived more in two counties, Garrett and Alleghany, than in any other location in the state. In an effort to figure out why, she completed more fieldwork in 1975. She began her oral history work by interviewing forty-five rug makers, who used techniques including crochet, braiding, or rug hooking. She decided the topic of rug making was too broad and narrowed her study to rag rug weaving, talking and meeting with twenty-five rag rug makers. Her book, *Weaving Rag Rugs: A Women’s Craft in Western Maryland*, published in 1985, records Johnson’s findings about rag rug weaving in the years 1974 to 1978.¹ Her study focused primarily on three groups of weavers: women who wove independently, women who were part of an Amish community, and women who worked in textile mills. The women in Maryland found out how to weave a variety of ways. One way was through the Cooperative Extension Service, at its
demonstrations and county fairs. Others learned from neighbors (as did my grandmother), from friends, and from reading books.²

One of the independent weavers, named Ellen, lived by herself, owned a gas station, and operated a small cottage industry within the confines of her home in Garret County. Weaving played a very important role for her economically; she also looked upon it as a means to recycle.³ Ellen did not begin to weave until she was married and wanted to create something for her home that would be durable. The rag rug seemed to meet that need. It was easy to create, inexpensive, and it did not take a long period of time to create. Ellen’s weaving room was a third of a formerly used chicken house in the back of her home. She found refuge from her daily chores by going into her weaving room to create rag rugs.⁴

While Ellen recalled getting rag balls ready for her own mother as a child, she learned how to weave on her own. She bought her first loom from a former weaver, who seemed not to remember how to weave. So Ellen learned the intricate process of weaving by reading a book that came with the loom, by practicing with the newly acquired loom, and by getting verbal instruction from friends and family. She soon learned that people really appreciated the aesthetics of the rugs she created and she began to weave for others. In the 1970s, when Johnson was doing her study, customer demands were changing the work. Ellen did not like to use knits, white fabrics, or new rags in her work. Due to customer demand, however, she altered her weaving preferences.⁵

The second group of women Johnson interviewed lived in an Amish community in Gortner County. The Zook sisters, for example, primarily did rag rug weaving as a way to earn extra income. They were unmarried, and weaving was an acceptable trade
for unmarried Amish women. It provided a way to earn money in the Amish community.

While working together to prepare rags was one of the social events in the Amish community, weaving was not considered a hobby or a favorable experience for the Zook sisters. Their father brought home a loom for them to begin an occupation as rag rug weavers.⁶

Rag rug weaving is a craft that most Amish women learn at an early age. It was even used as punishment. If girls behaved badly; they would be sent off to weave. When a young girl was old enough, the elders taught the craft of weaving, a vocation passed on from generation to generation. The Zook sisters learned from their aunt and it took off from there. They got commissions for their work. People brought rags to them and the Zook sisters created the rugs.

The room that held their looms was in the back of the house. They had three looms that always had warp ready to begin weaving. The first loom was handmade by their great-grandfather, a larger model to create wider rugs. The second loom was a standard Studio model with four harnesses (just like my grandmother’s). The last loom was built by one of the Zook sisters, carefully put together by just observing the other looms in their possession.

The main concern that these ladies had was continuing the tradition. They felt that the younger generation would just decide not to weave anymore and the tradition of rag rug weaving would be lost forever within their Amish community. They were having a difficult time trying to pass on the tradition.⁷

The third group of ladies Johnson interviewed primarily worked in textile mills located in George’s Creek. After they retired from the mills, these women continued
their camaraderie. Several of them had an overabundance of fabric scraps from the mills, and they wanted to find a use for them. Thus rag rug weaving was a logical way to recycle the scraps and create something for their homes. Many of the ladies wove to earn a supplementary income. Some said that it helped to enable their children to go to college, improving the lives of the next generation. Others indicated they did it just for the joy it brought them. At the time of Johnson’s study, most of them did rag rug weaving primarily for gift giving. None of their family members wanted to learn how to weave, so they noted that the tradition would stop with them.

All the women in Johnson’s study created their rugs in a similar fashion, even though they learned to weave at different ages, at different times, and for different reasons. Most used two-harness, foot-treadle looms. All the weavers had their looms modified to fit their specific needs. In Garrett County weaving was typically a family affair with sisters and children joining in creating the rugs. In the Amish community, the creation of rag rugs was a family event. People came into the Amish community and watched the artisans while they wove. George’s Creek women, on the other hand, wove in their free time, not to interfere with their family life, on an individual basis.

Rag rug placement was also an area that Johnson explored. She found that rugs were strategically placed throughout the home, at the entrance of a home, in front of a couch, or dividing areas of a home. Most rugs were placed parallel to the object of interest: the bed in a bedroom, a couch in the living room, the tub in a bathroom. In the George’s Creek area, however, rugs were intersected to create both horizontal and vertical patterns. Johnson suggested that there might be some underlying meaning to how rugs are placed in a home, and suggested this topic should be given more attention.
After completing her study, Geraldine Johnson concluded that rag rug weaving in Maryland would remain a popular craft because it served several functions and fulfilled a variety of needs. These included a need to recycle, a need to earn extra income, a need to have a craft that fit with homemaking, and a need to have a creative or an artistic outlet. For those who lived in the depression era, reusing and recycling worn-out items was a typical activity for the times. Rag rug weaving allowed both the weavers and their customers to recycle clothing and other household items and not be wasteful. This was exactly what my grandmother did. Recycling has been seen as a good thing, not only in the 1930s, but also in the 1970s, and again in the early twenty-first century. Turning items no longer useful into something that is useful has continued appeal.

Creating rag rugs enabled weavers to earn extra income. In the 1970s, people in western Maryland still wanted to use rag rugs, creating consumer demand. In farming communities, rag rugs trap mud and dirt brought in from the farm. They are also the easiest type of rug to clean. Women can simply take them outside and shake them free of dirt and debris. When the rugs get really dirty they can be washed at home. Women were willing to purchase these functional objects from weaving entrepreneurs.

The women who wove played an important role in the economy of their small communities. They frequently sold their items at flea markets, bazaars, and fairs. Rag rugs are fairly inexpensive to make and it is not difficult to customize a rug to the client’s taste. If a customer gave the weaver her own prepared rags, the rugs could be easily created to the client’s style and taste. The customer might also indicate the color of weft to be used. Weaving is also at the mercy of the customer. A weaver could have her own set of standards, but if a customer brought improperly prepared rags, the finished rugs
might not be the quality desired. If customers requested an unrealistic deadline for the rug to be completed, a weaver might compromise on the usual quality and not pay attention to every detail in order to finish on time. There is a level of compromise with the quality and timing of the end product due to customer demands.\footnote{7}

For some weavers, the craft was a hobby. These weavers enjoyed weaving for the sake of creating items to be given as gifts, not for extra income. Weaving also served as a social hobby, just as quilting and sewing groups have historically served as a way for women to get together and socialize. Farm women’s interaction with others is somewhat limited. The Amish women who Johnson interviewed indicated that weaving had helped bring customers to them they might not otherwise have met. Similar interests had helped them to have social interaction with the non-Amish.

Johnson noted that the craft of rag rug weaving had another feature that helped make it an appealing craft. It could be coordinated with other home tasks and added a balance to home life. Weaving was extremely practical for the women’s roles in their homes.\footnote{18} One of the most important aspects associated with weaving was the significance of home and family. Weaving is craft or profession that allows women to stay home. Women must multi-task in the home and often have three or four different projects going at once. They can weave, but also very easily have their attention diverted toward other household duties. Weaving allows women to stop and go when needed, and pick up right where they left off without altering the end product. It is a hobby or profession that allows weavers to devote time to their families as well as allocate time to their weaving. Many women started to weave so they could stay at home but also provide a supplementary income.\footnote{19}
Johnson also found that many women who wove used it as an escape from their typical household chores. She quoted one of her interviewees as locking herself out of her weaving room on days she had to clean. Weaving became a reward of sorts; she could weave after the task was completed.

The process of rag rug weaving also connected the women of Maryland to their ancestors.\textsuperscript{20} I understand, because delving into the history of my grandmother has created a connection with her. In one of the interviews I conducted with Lynn Nagle and her grandmother-in-law, rag rug weaving connected them in a wonderful way.

Whether they wove rag rugs for income or as a hobby, weavers noted that it provided a creative outlet and a means of artistic expression. Like other craft artisans, weavers took pride in their craft so it helped to provide self-fulfillment and self esteem. Woman who used their weaving skills to contribute financially to their families’ wellbeing experienced a sense of accomplishment. Having their work admired by others gave weavers a sense of pride and pleasure.\textsuperscript{21} Most who did rug weaving for extra income noted that they would not be doing it if they did not enjoy the process and the outcome.\textsuperscript{22}

The rag rug weavers in western Maryland knew their craft and know how to critique rag rugs. They indicated that the most important part of creating their rugs was to be sure that they were pleasing to the eye. In Michael Owen Jones’s study of handmade objects and their makers, he indicated that a historical artifact with aesthetic appeal must fulfill two categories: the beauty part and the lasting part. Rag rugs last through the hard use they are put to during the harsh winters in Maryland, as well as in Erie,
Pennsylvania. Rag rug weavers embrace the beauty concept as they use their critical eye to analyze rugs and determine their quality and beauty.\(^{23}\)

For most of the women in western Maryland, money seemed to be a common thread that motivated them to weave.\(^ {24}\) Ironically, if they wove primarily for money, the Maryland weavers did not seem to think that the rugs they sold were “artistic.” In most of the women’s minds, the fact that they could obtain money to do their craft put it in the realm of work and not art. Weavers devalued their lumpy rugs, but customers would often choose these rugs because they saw that texture as artistic. Through her study, Johnson did determine that rag rug weaving was indeed folk art.

With her study, Geraldine Johnson, a folklorist, also wanted to determine whether the women rag rug weavers she interviewed were participating in true folk art. The women did not believe their work could be considered art or artistic. They thought that those who participated in art did it for their own interest, rather than to make money from their work. Johnson used Michael Owen Jones’s theory of aesthetic beauty, which he applied to chair making, and applied it to rag rug weaving. Jones’s theory states that an artist knows the quality of works he or she creates.\(^ {25}\) In western Maryland, women communicated whether they liked a rug and about its quality by their use of language. “Bright” indicated that they approved and thought a rug was very colorful. “Bumpy” was an indication that they did not approve and or that it was uneven on the sides.\(^ {26}\) They were able to critically look at rugs and recognize quality. One weaver controlled color quality by making it a point to put specific colors into one rag ball and to keep the balls organized in color-specific baskets.
In his article entitled “Structure and Function, Folklore and Artifact,” Henry Glassie indicates that a very important characteristic of folk art is symmetry, whether it is bilateral, repetition, or tripartite symmetry. When observing bilateral symmetry, specifically in rag rug weaving, if a rug was split down the middle, there would be symmetry on the right and left sides. In repetition, a certain theme or pattern would be evident in the rug. Lastly, tripartite symmetry has symmetrical properties along three axes. Johnson concluded that the weavers she interviewed, according to this theory, could be classified as folk artists because many of the rugs she observed showed evidence of bilateral symmetry and repetition.

Johnson’s study is the only in-depth contemporary study of rag rug weavers. She focused on a small geographical region in order to concentrate in detail on “the various forces that sustain the craft.” That way the craft item was placed in cultural context, in the “community and individual traditions that helped to shape it.” Johnson, a folklorist, believed that “it is only by coming to grips with the sense of shared traditions within small groups that we can fully understand the craft.”

Rag Rug Weaving in Erie County, Pennsylvania

To understand the culture of the region and the traditions that may have influenced my grandmother’s rag rug weaving, I decided to explore rug weaving traditions in Erie County, Pennsylvania, where she lived and worked.

Seeking information on rag rug weaving in northwestern Pennsylvania, where my grandmother wove, I discovered the Northwest Pennsylvania Weaving Guild and contacted a few of its members. The president of the Guild graciously sent an e-mail message to all of the members and asked if anyone either knew of or did rag rug weaving
during the specified era of 1930 to 1970. I received four e-mails in response. I completed oral history interviews with those who contacted me in April 2004.

**Broznell Interview**

Eric Broznell, a gentleman who contacted me, had a particular interest in people creating handmade items, and his wife was involved with the Guild. He indicated that his maternal grandmother was a rag rug weaver. Mrs. Louise Broznell, his mother, a very kind and generous woman, agreed to be interviewed. Just like many other children of those who wove rag rugs, she did not pay particular attention to her mother’s trade, but she was able to share valuable information. Mrs. Broznell lives in a house about five minutes from downtown Erie. She indicated that the house she grew up in was not too far from where we were for the interview. Unlike my grandmother, Mrs. Boznell’s mother, Margaret Schmitt, lived in a more urban setting.

Margaret Schmitt earned a living by cleaning houses during the 1920s and 1930s in Erie, Pennsylvania. Mrs. Broznell thought that one of her mother’s clients had a loom that she was willing to share with her mother. She learned the art from this person. Eventually Margaret acquired the loom and began to weave rag rugs when Mrs. Broznell was a small girl. She used them around the house and also sold them. The original purpose of creating them was to earn extra income. Mrs. Broznell did not believe that her mother truly enjoyed weaving rag rugs, but they did generate extra income. Mrs. Boznell was unable to answer many of the questions because her mother died when she was only twelve years of age. She did, however, believe that during the great depression of the early 1930s her mother needed extra money as well as the ability to relieve stress. The
thirties was a time of recycling. Weaving rag rugs was a typical way to conserve, recycle, and help bring income into the home.

Showing Mrs. Boznell some photographs of rag rugs created by my grandmother enabled her to recall some of the rag rugs that her mother created. The sizes of the rugs were typical to the sizes my grandmother wove. She did not remember her mother ever making runners or anything very large. She believed that there was no true rhyme or reason to how her mother created the rugs. They were made from recycled clothing from their household and from the clothing of the clients whose homes she cleaned. Based on her daughter’s speculation, Margaret Schmidt began to weave in the early 1930s and continued until her death. Mrs. Broznell remembered having a lot of rag rugs in her family’s house, and she had them for years after her mother’s death. They eventually wore out. Mrs. Broznell remembered helping tear old clothing for some of the rugs. Mrs. Broznell believed that after her mother died, the loom was sold. 28

Demmler Interview

Sally Demmler began weaving in 1974. Sally was introduced to weaving by her grandmother, who taught her how to weave in the early 1970s. Her grandmother did rag rug weaving in the 1920s and 1930s as a way to earn extra money. Her grandmother lived in Erie County, Pennsylvania for ten years, she learned how to weave and then moved to Ohio and began caring for an elderly man. When Sally’s grandmother relocated to Ohio, she acquired a big barn-frame loom. Sally, however, never got to see that. 29

At the time of the Bicentennial in 1976, Sally made contact with the Weaver’s Guild in northwestern Pennsylvania. Sally had an interest in weaving, and after her
grandmother died in the early 1970s, she wanted to continue learning. Sally was one of the original members of the Northwest Pennsylvania Weavers Guild. The group met every other month and the women would come from all over because they had never had an interest group specifically devoted to weaving. They met in Edinboro to learn different patterns, but they also formed friendship bonds. By joining the Guild, women who like to weave found a support/interest group.

Sally resided in Waterford and taught weaving there for many years. Waterford Township is on the other side of Summit Township, adjacent to McKean Township. The three townships join together like a triangle. Some of the rag rugs she has created were for school-age children. The children would give her their old socks and she would create rag rugs with the school colors. Much of way Sally learned how to do rag rug weaving was self taught or through the guild. She frequented workshops at Edinboro University, where she really learned the technicalities of weaving. Sally enjoys weaving. She does some rag rug weaving, but she enjoys doing colonial patterns. She joined a coverlet group that involved women weaving sections of a coverlet. The sections would be sewn together, and each member of the group got their own coverlet.30

According to Sally, weaving in Pennsylvania, as in Maryland, remains popular. What makes rag rugs popular, and the reason why rag rugs are still sold in many stores, is because they are easy to maintain and clean. In Pennsylvania, the winter snow storms and the weather typically makes people’s shoes extremely wet and dirty. Rag rugs catch the dirt and will typically keep their shape and colors after being washed numerous times. They are durable and very strong.31
The third interview conducted was with one of the most enthusiastic, knowledgeable weavers I have ever come into contact with. Mathilda Murphy is a very experienced and avid weaver in northwestern Pennsylvania. After coming into contact with numerous weavers, I soon learned that weaving is a passion for many of these ladies, but especially Mathilda. I ended up staying at her house for more than four hours because she was so excited about discussing her passion, weaving. She was the only individual I interviewed who actually taught weaving.

Mathilda was born and raised in the Erie County area and returned in 1996. Her husband was a minister, which required them to travel throughout the country. When she was first married forty-eight years ago, it was frowned upon if the wife of a minister worked outside the home. A wife could be involved with her husband’s work, or not involved at all. Mathilda was somewhat involved with her husband’s work.32

Mathilda’s maternal grandmother wove during the early part of the century and her mother started weaving in the 1930s. Her grandmother and mother would create rag rugs as means to recycle clothing and other materials around the house. As Mathilda’s mother got more involved in the craft later in her life, she wanted to become more efficient at weaving and learn how to do other weaving projects. She, therefore, studied at the Chautauqua Institution. Mary Snyder, a master weaver, taught at the institution and Mathilda’s mother was able to take some of her classes.

In 1966, Mathilda’s husband, the pastor, was not feeling very well and he had gallbladder surgery. He was told to go home and take the summer off. A United Methodist pastor’s home is a parsonage, and most Methodist ministers do not own their
own home. Mathilda’s aunt owned a home near the Chautauqua Institution, and Mathilda and her husband moved there for the summer, and her mother encouraged her to take classes.

Mathilda started to take classes as a means of stress relief. She made a variety of things including a small version of a rag rug. Two years later, in 1968, when they moved to Massachusetts, her children were a little bit older and so she decided to teach classes. As she was creating items, basic word of mouth from people seeing her work enabled her to start selling some of her items.33

Mathilda thinks of herself as an folk artisan. She takes her craft very seriously. She wanted to improve her work and took advantage of professional improvement opportunities. She had the opportunity to take a workshop with Walter Nottingham, an accomplished weaver, and she learned a very important concept. At his workshop, she learned that if you want to be seen as an artist, you learn and do all sort of mediums, and experiment with all sorts of things. If you want to be considered an artist not a crafter, you have to dig deeply into something and pick out two or three things on which you want to concentrate and forget the other things. Mathilda considers herself an artist because she has chosen to concentrate on a few things.

The first area that she has concentrated on, to be considered an artist, is creating textiles for churches. Mathilda showed me a scrapbook of rag rugs that she had woven for the variety of churches where her husband was the pastor. She created items from her heart that could be enjoyed by others. She took great pride in her work. Mathilda’s creation of woven items, such as rag rugs, for the churches clearly supports Johnson’s theory that women weave for the self-esteem.34
The last area which she concentrates on is weaving a certain category of rugs that she calls “raw rugs.” She defines raw rugs as those made from solely raw (natural) materials, typically wool. Wool wears well, is very warm, and repels moisture. Some weavers who weave raw rugs use old military uniforms which are made of 100 percent virgin wool. Mathilda became interested in working with wool during the time she created colonial patterns in the summer-and-winter technique (see figure 4.1).

Mathilda has a porch area that is part of her home where she stores her three big looms and teaches her classes. It gets cold in the winter and warm in the summer, but it is an area of her own in which she can do her weaving. Just as Johnson indicated, it allows her to escape her daily chores, and have the ability to go back to weaving when it is convenient for her. She does not weave everyday, but had several major projects in process.

Mathilda got her first loom from a distributor of looms in Penland. It had four harnesses. Her mother encouraged her to get an eight-harness loom, so the second loom she bought had eight harnesses with the ability to add more. They were both Macomber looms, made by a company that started in Saga, Massachusetts.

Mathilda obtains her warp yarn from weaving catalogs, and always purchases mercerized cotton. She stated that she refuses to use anything synthetic, explaining that synthetics are a fire hazard. Early on, just like my grandmother, Mathilda purchased her warp yarns from the Sears catalog, but Sears stopped selling them. Today weavers can only buy cones of warp yarn over the counter in specialty weaving shops.

Yarn has gotten somewhat expensive, but Mathilda purchases it from a gentleman who is a middle man, buying yarns from manufacturers and then selling them to weavers.
Manufacturers of warp yarn will sell them at retail for about $29.00 per cone. He will sell a cone to her for $15.00. Mathilda noted that weaving is beginning to be an expensive hobby. Looms have also gone up in price, from 1 to 8 percent.

When Mathilda knows that she will be making a rag rug, she will take the warp and line it on her warping board and tie it in many places tightly, then wash and dry it before she uses it. That will allow the warp to shrink the same way it would if it was in rug, where it will do the most shrinking the first time it is washed. What is interesting about Mathilda’s rag rugs is that she never leaves fringe on her rugs; she hems them. She states that she will always like the way they wash if she hems the selvages.35

When preparing rags, Mathilda will use cotton and occasionally a small bit of synthetic fabric, despite her dislike of synthetics. When she lived in Massachusetts she recalled hearing about a place where you could take denim jeans, cut them, and then make your own rugs. In the state of Pennsylvania, it is illegal to recycle clothing and sell it. In Pennsylvania she bought new items from big discount stores. She could also buy big rolls of prepared rag rug fillers from the Edgemont Company, and then use and cut what she needed.

Mathilda prepares some of her rags the same way my grandmother did. She takes a square and creates one long strip and ties the strips together. This was the technique her grandmother and mother used. She also uses an electric carving knife for cutting, which adds an interesting outer edge to her rugs, stating that is a lot easier than using scissors. She also uses a rotary cutter to cut strips with at least four layers of fabric and sometimes she can do up to eight but she has to do some snipping along the way. She often connects
the strips just by sewing the edges. She also sews some along the bias, so there is a bit of stretch in the rags.  

When planning a rag rug, Mathilda indicated that it is really impossible to answer how long it takes. Just like Johnson indicated, a woman’s role in the home is unpredictable. It is difficult to devote a large amount of time to weaving without getting interrupted. Therefore, it is hard to determine how long in one sitting can be devoted to completing a rug. She estimated that it takes around twenty to twenty-two hours to complete a rug. This includes the amount of time to warp the loom. It takes longer to warp a fifteen-yard rug than a two-yard rug. The width of the rug also affects the length of time it takes to weave.

In planning a rug, Mathilda decides where she wants to use it. That will give her insight on the colors she wants to include in the warp and rags. This seemed to be the same motivation to my grandmother’s rug planning. The location will also determine the length and width of the rug. A rug to be used at the back door would be a different length and width than one to be used as a bath mat. For those who only have one type of loom, the maximum width may be a predetermined factor due to the width of the loom. Sometimes the customer determines the size. For example, her daughter wanted two rugs placed together rather than one long rug for the area from her garage to her laundry room.

Mathilda seemed to be very dedicated to her craft, but she has been somewhat limited in regard to her health. She has had knee replacement surgery, trouble with her hips, and other complications which make it difficult for her to stand for a long period of
Most of the weaving she does now is commission work. Mostly, she prefers to do things for the church. Mathilda finds it very important to give back to the community.

In recent years, the cost of materials has increased. Selling some of her items helps to provide for her craft. One of the places where Mathilda continues to sell her work is at Market House, located in Meadville, Pennsylvania. In addition, the classes she teaches may have a small fee associated with them. When she taught at church, however, there was no cost to participants. It was a way for Mathilda to give back to the church and the community. At the time of the interview, 10 percent of her sales during the year were being given to the Soup Kitchen.

Nagle Interview

The last interview was with Lynn Nagle. Lynn learned to weave in the late 1980s, a few years after she got married. Her grandmother-in-law, who she referred to as Grandma Nagle, or Irene, started weaving in the 1950s. Grandma Nagle, who grew up in northwest Pennsylvania, also made braided rugs. At the time of the interview Grandma Nagle was in a nursing home, inaccessible to non-family members. Lynn could not provide a lot of insight to her grandmother-in-law’s rag rug weaving. Her mother-in-law never learned to weave. One of the points that Lynn made was that no one really took a genuine interest in what Grandma Nagle did, not her own mother-in law or any of her other children. Just like my aunts and uncles, they really did not pay attention to what their mother did.

Lynn did, however, save many of the rugs that Grandma Nagle made. The technique of the rugs was the same as my grandmother’s, simple tabby with a variegated yarn inset into each row. Lynn also had an example of Grandma Nagle’s rag balls.
Lynn believed that Grandma got much of the information on how to weave from trade magazines published by the textile industry in the 1950s, because she inherited a lot of these magazines that Grandma had.

Grandma Nagle made rugs for other people and also kept them. Irene did take commissions for some of the rugs she created, but not many. Grandma Nagle gave Lynn her two looms, one of which she put into the Chautauqua museum. The other loom Lynn obtained from Grandma Nagle, a Macomber four-harness loom, was in her basement.

Grandma Nagle taught Lynn how to weave. She started her the old-fashioned way. She had Lynn drafting first on paper, coloring the squares. The process for rag rugs that Irene taught Lynn was relatively easy. She stressed that you have to know the width of what you are trying to create and where you will place it. Lynn believes that Grandma Nagel used a lot of natural-colored warp during planning. She believes that, just like my grandmother, Irene may have dyed some of the natural-colored warp to obtain different colors.

Grandmas Nagle would have Lynn wrap warp yarns around a ruler to see how many threads per inch would go around. She had her cut the strips of cloth and zigzag stitch them together, some by hand, some by machine. Grandma Nagle would fold the rag strips, and use all recycled things. When Lynn prepares the rags, she uses the same technique as my grandmother, ripping and tearing larger pieces of fabric. Lynn stated that Grandma Nagle had really bad congestion from using a rotary cutter to cut rags. She noted that it was the wool workers’ disease.

The pattern Grandma Nagle used was tabby or plain weave and that is what Lynn typically does as well. Lynn described the technique she uses when weaving rag rugs
as just “back and forth.” She arranges her prepared balls of rag rugs according to color. If she wants to have a variegated rag rug, as one rag ball ends she inserts another rag ball of a different color. Her patterns were very simple but practical. Both Grandma Nagle and Lynn mainly put their woven creations in their homes. The one I first noticed in Lynn’s home was at the entrance, a practical location for a farm.

Grandma Nagle was the founder of the Chautauqua Guild in the 1950s. Irene brought together weavers who wanted to learn new and interesting things. Chautauqua was at the forefront of weaving, because it was where Mathilda learned to weave and many others did also.

Grandma (Irene) Nagle sold some of her work, mostly to friends and family, but later in Irene’s life, she wove just for a hobby. Lynn also weaves for a hobby, for the enjoyment of the craft. Lynn does not sell her weaving. She weaves rag rugs for herself and as gifts. She believes you can not get enough out if it for the time you spend.

Lynn had a wealth of information about weaving in general. She knows how to weave a variety of different ways. She showed me a technique called card weaving. It seemed to be an ancient type of weaving where the results were similar to braided cord. She also had a variety of small tabletop looms, one she has used to show her own four-year-old granddaughter how to weave. She now designs on a computer and likes to weave old-fashioned patterns.

Lynn indicated that Grandma Nagle was her best friend. Lynn takes a genuine interest in her grandmother-in-law’s beloved hobbies. Lynn recalled that she gathered some rag balls from Grandma Nagle and made a rag rug for her in the nursing home. Grandma Nagle was just delighted, recalling all the dresses that were used to create the
rags. Grandma Nagle wove until she taught Lynn. She then felt she had passed it on to another person who was going to continue the craft of weaving.\textsuperscript{43}

Completing the interviews in Erie County, Pennsylvania, helped me put my grandmother’s weaving in cultural perspective. Completing this research project has helped me to understand the wisdom behind E. McClung Fleming’s model for artifact study. I have been able to compare my grandmother’s extant rag rugs with other rugs woven in Maryland and in the same region of northwestern Pennsylvania where she lived and worked. I have been able to understand the relationships between her craft of rag rug weaving and the culture, time, places, and circumstances that influenced her life. This model provided a method for arriving at the conclusions that I will summarize in the last chapter.

\section*{NOTES}

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CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In comparing my study with Geraldine Johnson’s, there are many similarities as well as variations. When starting this study, even though I knew my grandmother created rag rugs from the 1930s through the 1970s, it never crossed my mind that the decade in which weavers actually created their rugs would be a huge influence on how and why women did their weaving. I discovered that the era or time period in which weavers worked definitely influenced whether it was more for a hobby or for economic reasons. The individuals who wove in the 1930s, such as Margaret Schmitt, Mathilda Murphy’s mother and grandmother, Irene Nagle, and my grandmother, wove for the financial contribution it could bring into the home. Most weavers today, such as Sally Demmler, and Mathilda Murphy, who may have started in the 1960s and 1970s, weave for pleasure and enjoyment.

With today’s weavers, there is not as much of a need to recycle, as there was for the women in Maryland in the 1970s. Most of the women Johnson interviewed were older, and grew up during the depression era. Typical characteristics of those who began weaving during the depression included recycling and reusing materials. Mathilda Murphy’s mother and grandmother, Sally Demmler’s grandmother, and Margaret Schmitt, as well as my grandmother, used weaving as a means to recycle.
Johnson, who did her study in the 1980s, believed that weaving would continue because of its role in the community and the income it could provide for the weaver. In the early twenty-first century, some customers who want unique hand-woven rugs have more income to spend and are not concerned about the cost. In the United States, however, people also have access to machine-made rag rugs at a fraction of the cost compared to handmade rugs. Today, because materials are more costly, the craft is rarely economically advantageous for the weaver. Therefore, for most of the women who I interviewed, weaving was mainly a hobby. Mathilda was the only weaver who was able to make significant supplemental income with her weaving but also her teaching. She continued to do it as times changed to help to cover the cost of the woven textiles she gave to churches.

In both Maryland and Pennsylvania, weaving served a social role for the women. Most began weaving on their own, and found avenues to further their artistic endeavors in a social setting. Irene Nagle founded the Chautauqua Weavers Guild, bringing women and men of the same interest together. Lynn Nagle established a relationship with her grandmother-in-law that bound them forever. Sally Demmler began weaving and further expanded it by joining the Northwest Pennsylvania Weavers Guild, and also by doing coverlet pattern exchanges. Mathilda Murphy made her weaving social by teaching others how to do it. Creating woven textiles for the churches her husband served was also very social for her.

My research supports the connection that Johnson points out between self-fulfillment and weaving. The ladies in northwest Pennsylvania were all very proud of
their accomplishments and were eager to share some of the items they created with me. They took great pride in their looms and what they created using them. Mathilda, who made rugs for her churches, was very proud to share her photographs and letters of appreciation from churches all over the country.

Johnson reported the use of weaving as an outlet from daily tasks and the importance of being able do weaving in the home. The importance of the “home and family” connection was also apparent in my study. My aunts and uncles noted that my grandmother had the opportunity to go out in the shed to weave, away from her thirteen children, and enjoy that time to herself. It was, however, important for her not to be too far away so that if she needed to be pulled away from weaving and get back to her motherly responsibilities, she was able to do so at a moment’s notice. My grandmother used weaving as an outlet for stress, and it seems as though she looked forward to that opportunity to get away and have alone time. Mathilda Murphy’s weaving room also enabled her to escape daily chores, but still be able to drop it to attend to a child or get supper on the table, and pick up where she left off.

When doing this artifact study, I did not intend to determine if weaving rag rugs was a folk art trade. In completing my research and comparing the findings to Johnson’s study, I now believe that rag rug weaving is a folk art trade. By reading Geraldine Johnson’s study of western Maryland rag rug weavers, it dawned on me that Johnson considered this to be true folk art with all its complexities. Could my grandmother have been a true folk artist? I now believe she was.
Analyzing Michael Owen Jones’s theory of aesthetic beauty, just as Johnson found in her study, the ladies in Pennsylvania also had their own language for and appreciation of quality work. My father, his family, and my grandmother’s sisters all noted that my grandmother definitely had an appreciation of quality rugs. Mathilda, Sally, and Lynn all were able to analyze and appreciate my grandmother’s rugs and their construction.

The theory by Henry Glassie of symmetry indicating folk artistry was also proven accurate in the work of the Pennsylvania rag rug weavers. In observing the products of rag rug weaving in western Maryland reported by Geraldine Johnson, as well as the rugs made by my grandmother and the people I interviewed, it was clear that there was symmetry in the rugs created. The rugs that my grandmother wove specifically show repetition with how my grandmother warped the threads or the colors of the rags used for the weft. Some of the rugs even demonstrate bilateral symmetry.

At the conclusion of her material-culture study, Johnson concluded that you cannot truly understand rag rug weaving without studying weavers in small groups. She stressed that women’s crafts have not been a topic explored thoroughly in the past; only men’s crafts have been truly explored thoroughly. She strongly believes that more research is needed on women and their crafts. There is little to no research done on many of the crafts that women have done throughout history and on the context in which they were done. Johnson explained that we would know much more about women’s lives and their psychological processing if we were able to research women and their craftwork.¹
She hoped to do further exploration and analysis on how woman are able to fit working on a specialized craft with their daily responsibilities in the home.

Rag rug weaving also needs more research attention. Its exact origin and who brought it to the United States, according to Johnson, is not known. Johnson explored rag rug weaving in Maryland and I explored it in northwestern Pennsylvania, but it would be interesting to study other communities that continue to do rag rug weaving and find out if there are any correlations with Johnson’s study or my study.

Johnson indicated that weaving has endured in the Maryland communities for a variety of reasons. Geography played a vital role in rag weaving in the Maryland communities, and I would agree that the same holds true in northwestern Pennsylvania. The rag rugs are economical, durable during the harsh winters, and cost efficient to create. Harsh winters in Pennsylvania make using and creating rag rugs an aesthetically pleasing and economic way to cover floors. My grandmother used them to cover her floors, but she was very particular of their aesthetic beauty. Women in Pennsylvania wove their rag rugs in simple patterns made in plain weave variations. They did not try more elaborate patterns that were used by some of the Maryland weavers.

Because of the length of her study, Johnson discovered that in some of the communities weaving had stopped because weavers passed away and no one new had taken over the craft. In other communities, there were family members that learned the craft and continue the tradition. The concept of “survival” is a question that applies to rag rug weaving in Pennsylvania as well as in the Maryland communities. Mathilda Murphy, Mrs. Broznell, Lynn Nagle, and Sally Demmler all indicated that their children
have no interest in pursuing the craft. It will sadly stop with them. Weaving in some Amish communities may continue because of the way the women live in tradition. In others, however, it may no longer be economically advantageous to weave rag rugs.

Geraldine Johnson’s book included a poem that speaks to me of my grandmother and her influence on me and the world of rag rug weaving. The first stanza and chorus of the poem are as follows:

There’s an unfinished rug that is folded away,
By an old parlor organ that’s silent today.
Mother’s work basket is standing so lone.
The rug is unfinished; God beckoned her home.

Chorus:
Wonderful one, life’s work is done.
Her place is won in heaven.
On the rug we will kneel down life’s way.
And pray that we’ll meet her in heaven some day.²

When I began this study, my family had never given much thought to the weaving my grandmother did. It was looked upon as another household chore and for the most part was unnoticed and forgotten. Most of her rugs had been worn out and her loom was carefully kept, but unused. This project has helped us to understand the reasons why my grandmother wove rag rugs. I have explored her craft and have been able to create a wonderful connection with her through her weaving. Whether it was for self-fulfillment, stress relief, or economic gain, I have concluded that grandmother was a folk artist who, like all female folk artists, worked beauty into daily life and contributed to our history. Through this artifact study, beginning with her looms and extant rugs, I can now understand the love of family, and the work, dedication, and artistic spirit that were central facets of her life.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL

January 29, 2007

Ashlee R. Tecza
537 Graystone Drive
Owensboro, Kentucky 42301

Ms. Tecza:

The University of Akron’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) completed a review of your application for continuing review entitled “Rag Rug Weaving in Northwestern Pennsylvania, 1940-1970”. The IRB application number assigned to this project is 20029904-5.

The protocol qualified for Expedited Review and was approved January 6, 2007. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for expedited review:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior of research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation or quality assurance methodologies

This approval is valid until February 9, 2008 or until modifications are proposed to the current project protocol, whichever may occur first. In either instance, an Application for Continuing Review must be completed and submitted to the IRB.

Please note that within one month of the expiration date of this approval, the IRB will forward an annual review reminder notice to you by email, as a courtesy. Nevertheless, please note that it is your responsibility as principal investigator to remember the renewal date of your protocol’s review. If your project is funded, failure to comply with IRB requirements could jeopardize your continued funding. Please submit your continuation application at least two weeks prior to the renewal date, to insure the IRB has sufficient time to complete the review.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, you must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

Sharon McWhorter
Interim Director

Cc: Virginia Gunn, Advisor
    Rosalie Hall, IRB Chair
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to participate in a study being conducted by Ashley E. Toczko, a masters level student from the College of Fine and Applied Arts, School of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Akron, Akron, OH.

My project focuses on rag rug weaving in Erie County, Pa. This project will specifically look at individuals who weave rugs in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. I am particularly interested in discovering why individuals wove rugs and how it was done in Erie County.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in an individual interview. This interview will take place at a time and place convenient to you.

Participation in the project is completely voluntary. If you do not want to participate in the project, you may withdraw at any time, or pass on any question you do not wish to answer.

Any audiotapes of interviews and any other data obtained from you will be kept confidential and will not be listened to by anyone but the researcher and her advisor. All audiotapes will be retained in a locked cabinet or other locked storage area. The tapes will be erased at the completion of the project.

There are no anticipated risks to you as a participant. The anticipated benefits that can be obtained from your participation will be refined historical knowledge added to Erie County. There will also be enhanced understanding of the purpose of rag rug weaving, since now it is not considered a true artistic endeavor. Your experiences and knowledge can add to the understanding of the tremendous skill involved in weaving rag rugs.

If you have any questions about the research project, you can call me at (334) 476-7378 or my advisor Dr. Virginia Gunn at (330) 972-7729.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. Questions about your rights as a research participant can be directed to Gerald Paker, Director, Research Services and Sponsored Programs, at 1-888-232-8796.

Thank you for your participation!

I consent to participate in this project:

Name ______________________________ Date __________________

The University of Akron is an Equal Education and Employment Institution