

MAFA Fellowship - Tina Mickley
Final Report

MAFA Workshop

The MAFA workshop I attended was titled, *2,3,4: A Lot of Interesting Older Weave Structures on less Shafts*. I chose the workshop due to an interest in historic weaving and textiles. The workshop was excellent! Marjie Thompson, the presenter, was well organized, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Having spent years researching early American weaving, she brought a wealth of knowledge and included antique examples of fabrics that displayed the weaves we would be using. We benefitted from actually seeing the type of yarns used, their sett and how the weaves were utilized for specific purposes, along with the chance to handle the fabrics.

The class was a round-robin one and between us we had 13 warped looms to work on, each with a different weave structure. There were 4 weaves which I found especially interesting. These were dimity, whose history required its own slide presentation to explain, a weft faced weave used on an antique coverlet she brought, a point twill derivative found on older fabrics from only Western Massachusetts and New York and a 3 shaft weave called crossbar, which was used in a 19th C. tablecloth I had acquired. Other highlights were attempting to weave white on white overshot with one shuttle, (requires **much** concentration), learning how to use the block pattern in a check for the design of an Atwater Bronson lace and changing some tie-ups to obtain different fabrics from the same warp. Marjie encouraged us to experiment with the weave structures as we wove our samples. She offered tidbits on how the weavers of yesterday worked, talked at length on some specific weaves and showed us how she adapted some of the weave structures for use in her own projects, which she offered the drafts of.

Fellowship Project

My Fellowship project consisted of 2 parts. The first, involved demonstrations given at 2 different historic sites. The other engaged 2 different guilds in a presentation based on my MAFA workshop.

The Living History demonstrations were conducted at the Hay Creek Historical Society's 3 day fall festival and at the Daniel Boone Homestead's Heritage Day. Both were special events drawing large crowds of people and both involved weaving demonstrations on barn frame looms. For the Hay Creek event, I warped the loom to the 3 shaft crossbar we wove in Marjie's MAFA workshop, altering the threading pattern a bit, to correspond with that of my 19th C. tablecloth. At the Boone Homestead, the loom was already warped. From the straight twill threaded on that loom, I was able to weave a 4 shaft banding pattern - another early weave structure we learned at MAFA. The specific pattern of banding was copied from one of my 19th C. textiles.

My presentations were given to the Daniel Boone Fiber Friends, a group of mostly spinners and knitters with an interest in history and my sponsoring guild, the Central PA Guild of Handweavers, a group of serious weavers. Because these groups were so different, I tried to gear my presentations to the interest and skills of each group, providing more weaving

explanation to the Fiber Friends and more weaving information to CPGH. I compiled examples of 18th and 19th C. North American fabrics woven in the different weave structures we sampled. Pictures of the fabrics, presented in a power point, were enhanced by items from my own textile collection and my notebook of samples from the workshop.

Effectiveness of Project

The demonstrations generated a general interest among the public, sparking numerous questions and conversations, with a smattering of keenly interested individuals. I failed to leave adequate time for warping the loom prior to the Hay Creek festival, so the first day consisted of a threading demonstration. My biggest take away though, was how effective seeing the loom dressed with a significant amount of thread (36 inch width at 40 ends per inch) was at catching people's attention. People were floored! The reaction repeatedly opened a door to further conversation about textile production and 18th and 19th C. weaving. The display on the loom was far more effective than the display of older fabric examples, weavers' drafts and equipment that I also had!

Set up to a 20 inch width and coarser thread, the cloth being woven at the Daniel Boone Homestead was less awe inspiring. Nonetheless, there was interest among the public. Most people stopped to watch, with at least one member of many parties asking questions. I found the fabrics in my display had been moved about and handled more at this demonstration, perhaps because they were placed farther from me, at the back of the loom, where people felt more freedom to handle them.

As for the presentations, the response from the Fiber Friends was a bit muted, with the greatest interest being shown by the person with the most weaving experience. On the other hand, the response from CPGH members was one of significant interest. The presentation even sparked some discussion on early American weaving methods. Unfortunately, the Daniel Boone site has closed temporarily, so I am unsure how the presentation might have enhanced the Friends' interpretive demonstrations.

What have I gained from being a MAFA Fellow?

I have gained some knowledge and increased interest in the fabrics and weaving methods of old, thanks to my participating in this MAFA workshop however, advantages gained from being a MAFA Fellow relate more to the application and fellowship process than to the workshop itself. The MAFA Fellowship helped me to organize my thoughts. Understanding what I was hoping to gain from taking a workshop and how I was going to use that knowledge, was a product of writing out my application. I believe, I would not have thought through what I sought to learn, without the push to do so. This perspective affected how I approached the workshop. To prepare for my presentations, I began collecting antique fabrics with interesting weaves. Knowing what I wanted from the workshop and beginning to really look at older fabrics increased the value of the experience for me. In addition, my proposal created a need to use the information I gained, encouraging me to experiment, study further and build on the foundation the workshop provided. Ideally, this should always be the result of a workshop. Too often though, the excitement wanes as time passes and the workshop experience becomes

more and more distant. Being a MAFA Fellow has encouraged me to gain perspective, use and build on what I learned in the workshop and overall, has helped make my experience all the richer. I had not realized this until now, nor had I considered there was a significant benefit to being a Fellow beyond jumping through hoops to be reimbursed for the workshop cost. I can only say, thank you for choosing me and providing me the opportunity.

How will I use these skills and insights?

I now realize, we can gain more from a workshop if we consider beforehand, specifically what we hope to gain, take active steps in that direction and provide for ourselves some means for using the information afterwards. I hope, I can approach future workshops with plans to use these insights.

The 3 shaft piece I put on the loom at Hay Creek needs to be completed. The warp, with shafts and reed are currently wrapped around the warp beam and resting on my sun porch, awaiting their return to a loom. I would like to finish, then donate the tablecloth to the Hay Creek Association as a raffle item for this year's fall festival.

I found the effort of using a wide warp with many ends for historic weaving demonstrations, is well rewarded by the 'wow factor' such a piece produces and the resulting questions and conversation.

Taking this workshop has opened a wealth of new possibilities for use in my historic interpretations. One exciting discovery was to learn the weave structure of the old tablecloth I had purchased. The weave structure drew me to the piece but prior to the workshop, I had no idea what the weave was, much less, how the cloth was woven. Now, I not only know, I have started to reproduce that tablecloth and I know how to distinguish a 3 shaft version from its 4 shaft counterpart. This was exactly the type of information I was hoping to gain! I have come away with an increased awareness of what a weave seen in an older fabric might be, how that weave might be reproduced and a repertoire of weave structures to use in my interpretive demonstrations. Marjie's tidbits on the early weavers' working methods has informed and enhanced my interpretations as well.

I also went into this MAFA workshop wondering how the weavers wove with just 3 shafts on their counterbalanced looms. Marjie thought they probably tied 2 shafts together, which was beyond my ability to understand, at the time. Since then, I have learned several different ways a counterbalanced loom can be set up for weaving 3 shafts and successfully dressed my own 3 shaft project on a barn loom. I have become fascinated by 3, 5, 6 and more, shaft weaves, since there are woven examples and old drafts using these varied shaft combinations, all presumably, on counterbalanced looms. I also took instruction on setting up the counterbalanced loom for 5 shafts and wove a length of 5 shaft Bronson. How the weavers set up their looms for these and 8, 10, 12, 16, 20, 24... shafts is a mystery, if they were continuing to use counterbalanced looms. This MAFA workshop helped me get my feet wet. I hope to immerse myself farther, working to answer this question.

Hay Creek Fall Festival



The counterbalance loom set up to a 3 shaft weave. The weave structure requires every other thread on the first shaft. The front 2 heddle horses are tied entirely to that first shaft. The rear 2 are as normal. And yes, there is a broken thread!



My warp yarn was 20/2 unmercerized cotton and the weft was 16/1 linen. This is patterned after my crossbar tablecloth and like the tablecloth, set at 40 epi. Although the tablecloth has a linen warp and cotton weft, I was afraid to try the singles linen as warp. I found though, the linen was difficult to control and like wire looping around the cotton selvedge yarns. Thus, the broken threads. When I resume working on this, I will add 2 or 3 ends of cotton warp to each edge, double threading them with my existing selvedge threads and will try taming the linen with moisture, by spritzing the bobbins then sealing them in a plastic bag overnight.



A picture of me at the loom, talking with a visitor. When the festival ended, the rod with yarn attached, together with the shafts and reed were rolled onto the warp beam, the beam was removed and the loom was dismantled and returned to storage. I have one of my own which I have yet to pull from the attic and set up. I hope to put the warp on my loom to finish the weaving. Weavers in the past commonly switched out their threaded shafts and reeds and replaced them with a different set when they needed to weave a different pattern or cloth type. Although, I do not know about removing a beam full of warp too. They tied their new warp to the old.



This is what the 3 Shaft Crossbar weave looks like and is the tablecloth I used for the pattern on the Hay Creek loom. We learned at the workshop that 3 shaft weaves are distinct in having a right and wrong side.



The display I had. Early fabric examples, labeled as to their type and use, copies of some 18th and 19th C. weaver's drafts, along with a raddle and a set of original shafts displaying knitted heddles.

Daniel Boone Heritage Day



The same display items set up at the Daniel Boone Homestead, minus the weaving equipment, which belonged to Hay Creek. These appeared to have been looked at more than at Hay Creek as the fabrics had been handled and moved.



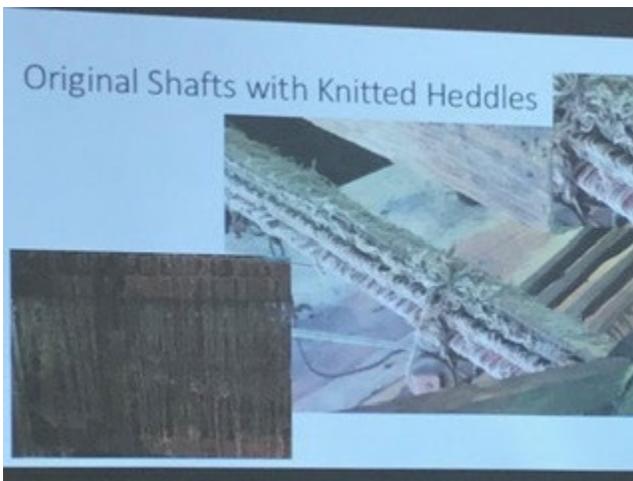
The banding pattern surrounded by plain weave. This piece uses the standard 4 shafts.



Comparing the pattern of the original with my woven one. The original was also done on 4 shafts. I know this thanks to the workshop; both sides look the same.



Presentation for CPGH



Presentation Slide