

Hand Loomed Textiles for Upholsteries and Other Household Uses

By CHRISTINE FERRY

Weaving enjoys the unique distinction of being one of few handicrafts continuously perpetuated, regardless of race or culture, during the countless centuries since the day when an aboriginal ancestor discovered its possibilities, developed the first crude loom and drew from Nature's store for her materials. As time has passed, the simple intermeshing of perpendicular and horizontal threads has been elaborated upon, but the fundamental principles remain the same.

Although machine-woven textiles have largely supplanted those done on the hand loom during the years since home industries have been so extensively commercialized, there has always remained a place for the hand-loomed product when a fabric of special texture or coloring was needed.

Period styles of design in architecture, furniture and interior finish being naturally reflected in the character of the drapery and upholstery textiles of the same era, the interest in things of an Early American and Colonial nature, during recent years, has been very stimulating to the production of the hand woven fabrics of these periods.

Weaving is, however, by no means confined to things of an Early American or Colonial nature, and as the work has developed and professional decorators have become alive to the advantages of being able to secure a limited quantity of material especially adapted to individual requirements, a new era in weaving as a home industry has dawned.

Quite naturally, the wider range of threads now available for the purpose—the woolen yarns of varied sizes and twists and the lustrous, highly mercerized cottons—make possible a diversity of style in texture and design not hitherto obtainable. Because of this, the weaver with imagination, who is most ingenious in her use of color and design, will profit most by the opportunity afforded

in this revived industry.

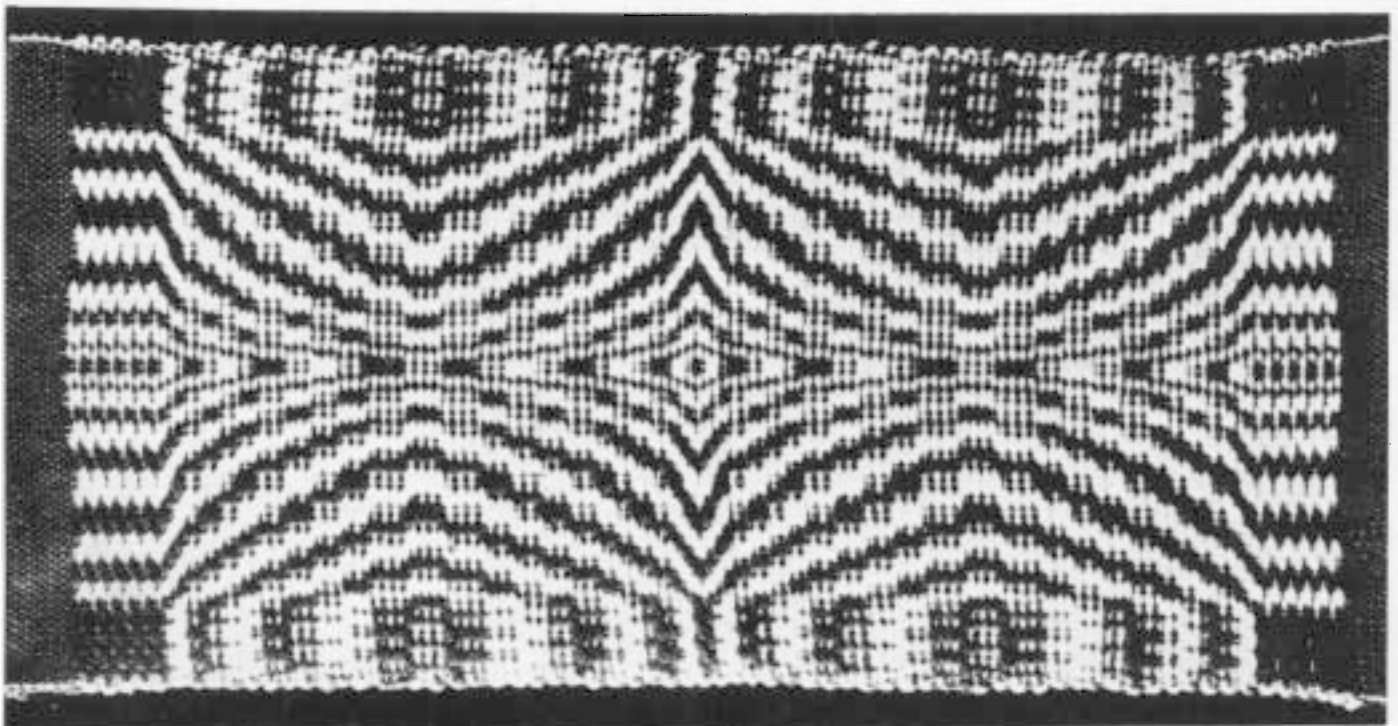
During recent years, down on the island of Nantucket, off the southern shores of Cape Cod, there has developed a home industry known as the Willow Cottage Weavers which, under the inspirational guidance of Mr. and Mrs. Melville B. Melendy, has produced textiles of unusual distinction, winning deserved recognition from professional decorators and private individuals of discriminating taste who appreciate the opportunity of securing upholstery fabrics and other material suited in color and design to the specific purpose for which it is to be used.

Starting with a single loom in the woodshed of their historic Nantucket residence, as the field has widened, one loom after another has been added, until now two floors of a nearby cottage echo to the shift of treadles, the passing of busy shuttles through the warp sheds and the whack of beaters pressing the threads firmly together.

It need hardly be said that all this has been accomplished in a day, but as the weeks have lengthened into months and the months into years the infant industry has thrived and grown into a live business enterprise demanding the utmost of executive and creative artistic abilities, and the Melendys have had the satisfaction of seeing the products of their looms meet with deserved approval because of originality of design, beauty of texture, charm of color and perfection of workmanship.

As the business has grown, the details have never passed from under their personal supervision. The making of drafts, the selection of materials, the planning of color schemes and the careful inspection of the textiles woven by the little group have continued to meet with their attention.

Contrary to an almost universal belief on the part of the lay person that hand woven material of this nature is only to be associated with things of a primitive nature.



Bathroom Mats of this nature find ready market. Rough cotton is used for filler. The model is blue and white.

the Melendys have demonstrated that there is no limit to the possibilities of its use and that suitability for purpose is merely a matter of the proper combination of pattern and material, regardless of whether the furniture to be upholstered is Spanish, Victorian or Early American in character.

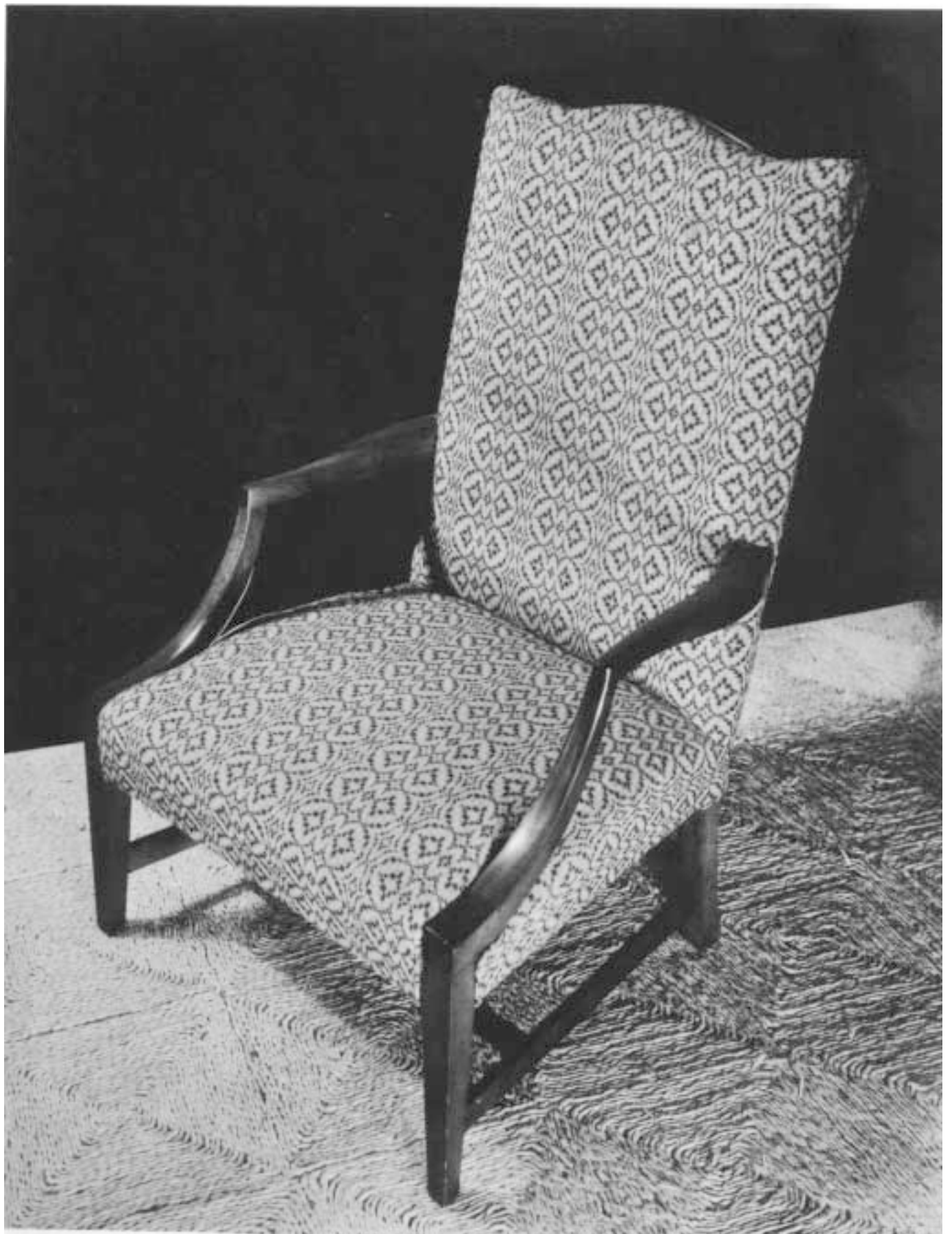
As a usual thing, woolen yarns, varying in size according to the effect which it is desired to produce, are combined with cotton warp threads in the construction of these upholstery textiles. Yet sometimes, as in the development of simulated haircloth effects, lustrous mercerized cotton threads are used for both warp and woof. woven with coarse cotton filler, floor rugs for which heavy rug wool is used and mats for table setups and other household uses, done in Colonial designs with mercerized

When a fabric of this nature is to be produced for a special purpose, it is of course necessary that the weaver be supplied with samples of the desired colors, other patterned materials used elsewhere in the furnishing of the room and the wall paper. She must be advised also as to the scale of the room and the style of the article of furniture which is to be upholstered — in short, every detail that will enable him to visualize the setting intelligently. With this information, a fabric can be developed in which the chosen colors are harmoniously blended in a pattern suited to its purpose.

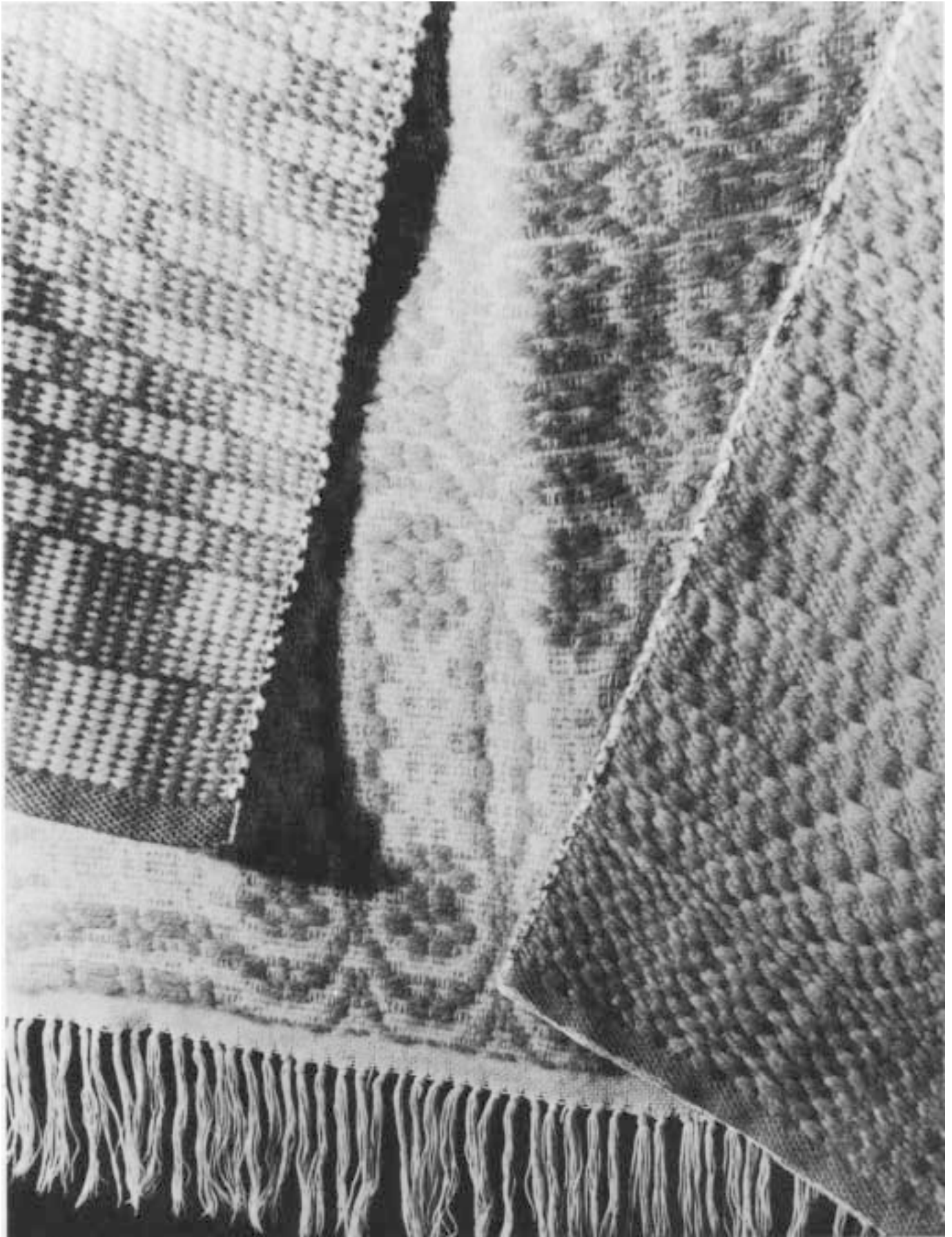
Aside from the upholstery textiles, bathroom mats cotton threads of various colors, are all products of these Nantucket looms that have proven popular with customers.



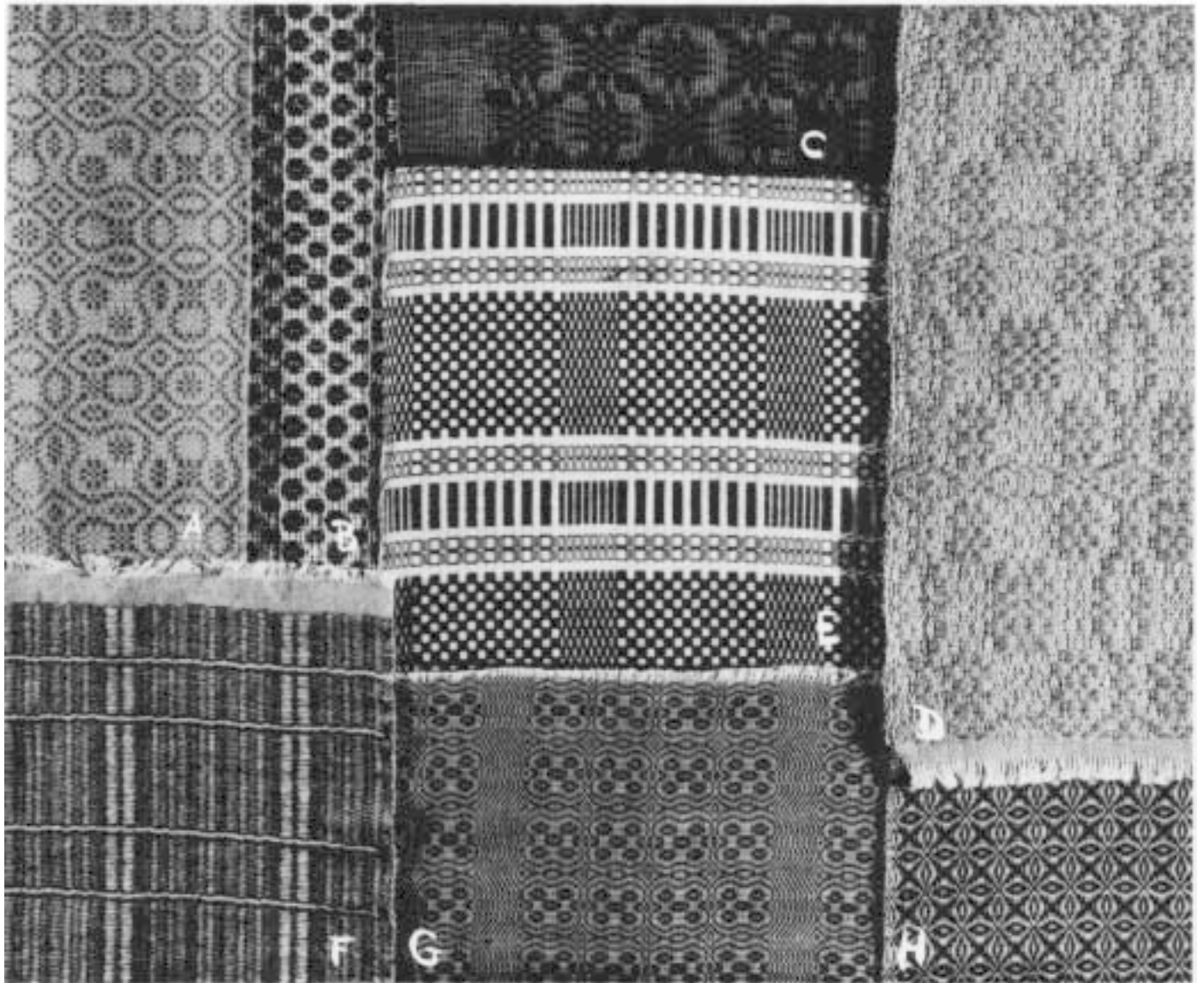
Sturdy table doilies of exquisite texture use lustrous twisted mercerized cotton, any preferred color, for filler in combination with 20/3 cotton warp. Cut edges are finished with a simple crocheted trim over a narrow hem.



Upholstery textiles patterned from old coverlet drafts are particularly appropriate for chairs of the Martha Washington type.



Closeups of three sturdy floor rugs that use rug wool for filler. The patterning is simple in the extreme.



Samples of upholstery textiles suitable for various purposes. (A) Done with mercerized cotton threads. Design in color on ecru ground. (B) Suggested by a bit of Spanish textile. Yellow cotton background patterned with coarse black yarn. (C) Simulated haircloth done with fine gold color silk warp and black filler. (D) Adapted from a coverlet draft. Wool weft and cotton warp. (E) An exotic piece done with fine soft threads in brilliant tones of red, green and gold in combination with natural. Algerian in character and good for sun room or porch furniture. (F) Modern in feeling and particularly useful for covering backs of large pieces of furniture upholstered in embroidered or patterned fabrics. Interesting blending of wide range of colors in fine woolen threads on cotton warp. (G) Striping is sometimes better than an all-over for large surfaces. (H) Small compact designs are good for small areas.