

# Yarns



## The Newsletter of The National Museum of the American Coverlet

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### From the President's Desk

By Edward Maeder



#### WHY A LIBRARY?

As a person who has spent his entire life collecting books, more than 6,000 at this point, it has always been my understanding that one of the basic tenets of LIFE is that libraries are important. As a kid I used to 'make' books on all kinds of subjects from colored pencil drawings of American birds, to wall paper covered booklets on historic subjects such as European Kings and Queens. I lived in a house that was filled with

books. Our mother, a former teacher in a one-room school in rural Wisconsin read to us for as long as I can remember. Sharing the written word by reading aloud is still one of my favorite things to do.

When I became involved with The National Museum of the American Coverlet more than 10 years ago, the subject of a research library was always an integral part of the discussion. Young people will say "we have the internet, why do we need a library?" The answer is simple. The information that specialists need to do their research is NOT on the internet. Of course the genealogical possibilities are endless and increasingly helpful, but often it is only by going to the 'source', the library or historical society where important documents of history are housed that particular facts can be discovered.

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**President's Desk continued:**

We are in the process of organizing the research library at the National Museum of the American Coverlet to make it available to visitors, scholars and in particular those who attend Coverlet College. It is my personal hope that one day there will be an endowment for the purchase of books and that we will be able to post on our website a list of our holdings. Of great concern to each and every one of us is "what will happen to my precious personal library when I leave this mortal coil?" Now is the time to think about this and to make arrangements for its safe care and keeping. We want to establish our library as a repository for those dedicated and avid collectors who are inspired and charmed by American coverlets. I would like all our members to know that all of the 'coverlet'

related books in my personal library will eventually come to the museum.

Knowledge is power, or so they say, although these days I think it should be changed to 'money is power.' The power of books, however, cannot be overestimated. They are the bedrock upon which our scholarship is based and I believe it will always be the case.

Think 'library.'

*Edward Maeder*

President of the Board of Directors



## The Director's Corner

By Melinda Zongor

### The NMAC Library

As Edward mentions in his From the President notes, a research library can be a critically important asset to any institution, but especially this one. From day one here, we have worked toward building a comprehensive array of reference materials geared toward coverlet/weaver/weaving research and documentation.

As you can imagine, this is a big project that will take many years of ongoing and (hopefully) never ending effort – but we have already come a very long way toward the goal. In only nine years, our humble library has grown to include numerous important printed materials – books, pamphlets, catalogs, etc. – many are historic, hard to find and often out of print. Some titles are not, and never have been, available on the open market.

Donors have contributed hundreds of coverlet-related photographs, slides and personal records of private and public collections, exhibitions, events and research notes. Other varied materials include DVD's, woven samples, dyestuffs and more.

... And we have artifacts from the sublime to the entertaining, including two little china bells that were souvenirs of CCGA (Coverlet Guild of America) annual meetings from 1960 and 1964, a piece of rope from the original bell wheel that was located in the attic of the Museum building, and Museum archive including early NMAC press coverage/publicity, our coverlet print fabrics and a jar of our locally made "Coverlet Jam" (bottles of this delicious, specially made apple/blueberry jam were a big hit in the Shop in 2008).

The wide range of materials is suitable and useful for enthusiasts and interested persons from novice to expert.

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**Director Corner continued:**

The latest improvements, currently in the works, include shelving and a fresh coat of paint in the library room itself. This has been a long time coming and it is a rather sizeable job, but we're pleased by the way it is shaping up. Future plans include a digital inventory for easy searching. So the next time you visit the Museum, stop by and check out our library. If you have time, stay a while and enjoy some great reading!

All materials in the NMAC research library are available for on-site use and at no cost to Museum members and (by special request) other institutions. Edward Maeder, our Board President, has pledged his personal library to the Museum. The Zongor library is already

at the Museum; and even though it is not yet officially Museum property, the materials in it are also available for use by Museum members.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP:** Materials are always welcome. We are interested in anything that will help further the understanding and appreciation of woven textiles. Of particular interest are histories, draft/pattern books, weaving books (new or old) on any aspect of weaving, early industrial manuals, images (engravings, photographs, slides, etc.) and more. If you have something and aren't sure whether it is relevant or not, give us a call and we can discuss the situation!



Coverlet! Where did the time go?

Those of us on the "front lines" here at the Museum

## Coming in 2016: NMAC's 10th Anniversary

Hard to believe, but true! The year 2016 will be the tenth anniversary of the opening of The National Museum of the American

are truly proud and grateful to announce that, in spite of all the many challenges, the Museum is still going and growing.

It couldn't happen without you, dear friends and fans, visitors and donors.

We are planning a celebration of this happy milestone, and we'll let you know more as details are worked out.

### The National Museum of the American Coverlet

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### We Need Your Email Address

If you are a member (past or present), donor, and/or event participant and are not receiving our eNotes, we do not have your current email address. Please make sure to update your contact



information with us, as email is the best way for us to get you important time sensitive announcements. **FACEBOOK:** While you're at it, check out our Face-

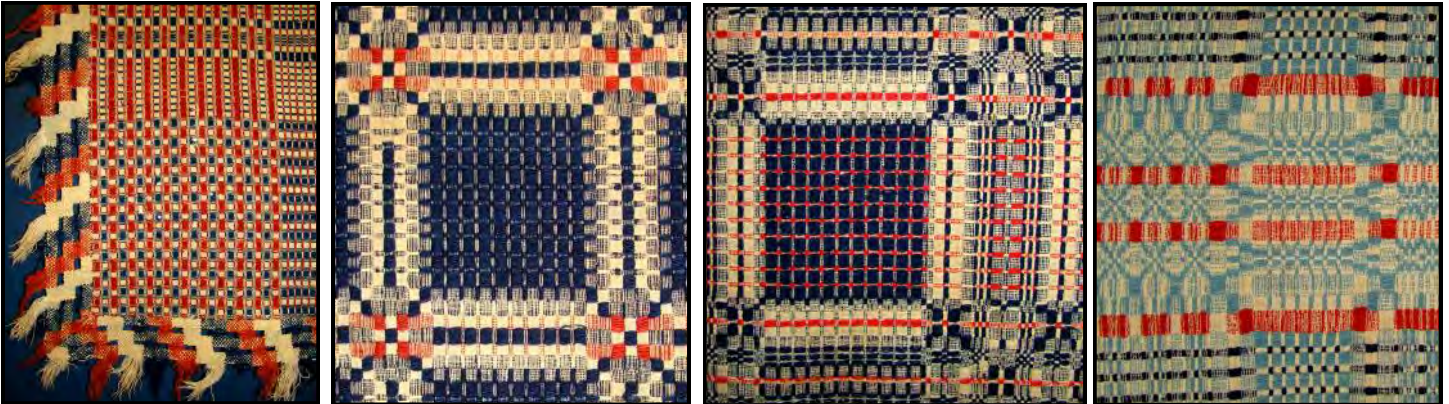
book page if you're "into" social media. We post messages there too! Yup – we're all over the place. Find us under **National Museum of the American Coverlet.**



# Variations on a Theme

Now through August 2015

By Melinda Zongor



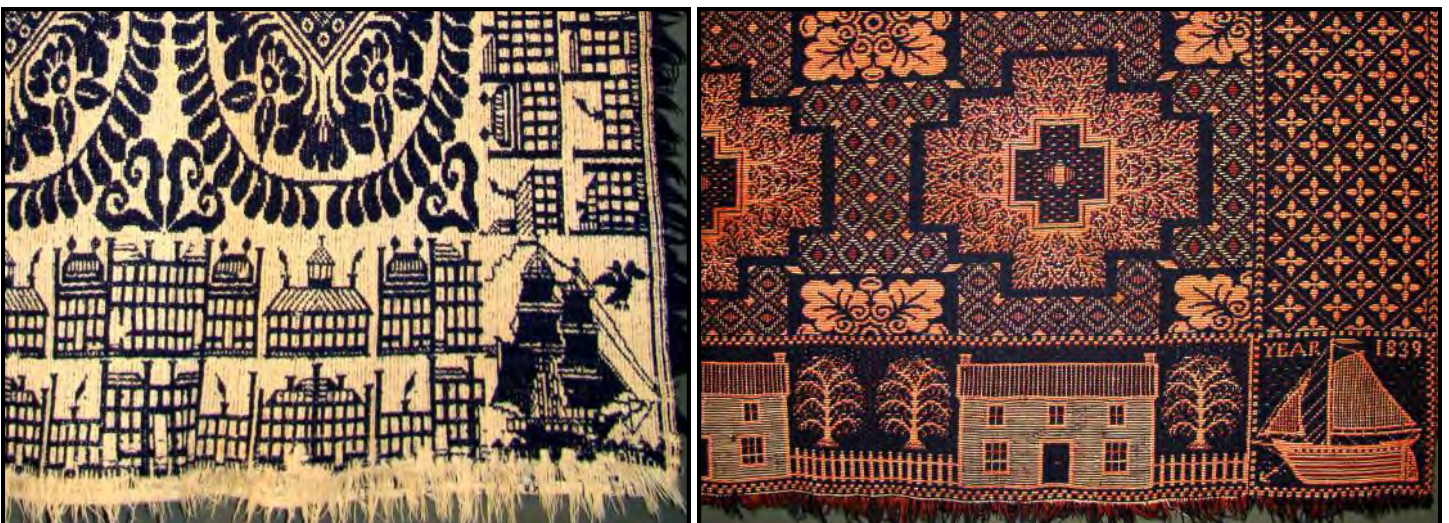
One of the most interesting aspects of woven coverlets is their sheer variety. Coverlets are a tour-de-force in color, texture and design. Variations can be bold or subtle but all are distinctive, and each individual coverlet is a reflection of the skill and creativity of its weaver.

A modern collector might assemble a large number of coverlets, all referred to by same pattern name or style, and each one of them will probably be quite different. This is a key reason why it is fun to see numbers of coverlets, since a display of only one or two – or even twenty – is too small a sampling to illustrate the impressive depth of field in the design skills and technical abilities of 19th century weavers.

American coverlets were made in great numbers by people, both male and female, who came from many ethnic and economic backgrounds and influences, all of which contributed to an incredible legacy of beautiful textiles.

The current exhibition, VARIATIONS ON A THEME, includes pairings and groups of coverlets with similar “themes,” comparing, contrasting and illustrating pattern, style, weave structure and regional differences.

Sixty-six colorful and graphic coverlets, both fancy and geometric, are on display. Included are examples from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio and more. As always, many of them have not previously been shown, as they are new to the fast growing Museum collection.





# Upcoming Exhibition

## “LIONS AND TIGERS (NO BEARS) – OH, MY!”

### A Noah’s Ark of Animals in Coverlets

By Melinda Zongor

As you have probably noticed, animals are quite often depicted in coverlets, and the exhibition opening in September will be a true safari. From butterflies to pussycats, from foxes to horses and from monkeys to giraffes, the display will include critters both wild and domesticated – and no animals will be harmed in the process!

The exhibition will include coverlets from several private sources as well as the Museum’s permanent collection. We look forward to sharing these great coverlets, with their amazing imagery, for the enjoyment of all you “dye in the wool” animal lovers!

Coverlets are already being gathered for this special exhibition, and we promise you that this will be great fun for all.

**We are actively seeking a donor or donors to underwrite the cost of producing a catalog for this event.**

We’ll keep you informed as news develops...



Oh Deer Me!

Coverlet on Loan from Jim and Betty Doig

## Coming Event:

MAFA (Mid-Atlantic Fiber Association) Conference  
 Millersville University, Lancaster County, PA  
 July 16-19, 2015

The Coverlet Museum has been invited to participate as a vendor at the upcoming MAFA conference in July.

The vendor hall will be open to the public during the following hours, and all are welcome:

Thursday, July 16 – 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.

Friday, July 17 – 12:00 – 5:30 p.m. and 8:00 to 10:00 p.m.

Saturday, July 18 – 12:00 – 6:00 p.m.

For more information on this event, you can go online to [www.mafafiber.org](http://www.mafafiber.org).



# Recent Coverlet Donation

By Melinda Zongor

Lynda Crowley (PA) recently donated this beautiful figured and fancy coverlet, made by New York weaver Archibald Davidson.

The corner blocks contain his usual misspelling of the word “INDEPENDANCE” (sic), and they also show the initials of the coverlet’s owner in smaller blocks above the slogan. The appearance of just the initials is a bit unusual, as Davidson generally inscribed the full name.

The pattern repeats in the borders and centerfield are considerably larger than other similar Davidson coverlets we’ve seen, with these corner blocks measuring 7.25” wide by 10.5” high from line to line and each centerfield floral medallion measuring 10.5” wide by 13” high. The size differential from one coverlet to another is due in part to the gauge of the yarns, and this coverlet is a hefty one.

The donor included a detailed family history. The coverlet was woven for her father’s ancestor, Mary

Scotfield, upon the occasion of her engagement. It was commissioned by Mary’s father, Ananias Scotfield (and we have a photocopy of his portrait). Sadly, Mary’s fiancé was killed in a farm accident just weeks before the wedding, so the marriage did not take place. Mary Scotfield never married.

Lynda Crowley’s father was Robert D. Brooks of Ithaca, NY and his mother was Helen M. Townley of South Lansing, NY. Helen’s mother was Martha A. Scotfield, born July 18, 1837. Martha’s aunt was Mary Scotfield, born December 22, 1800 and died September 29, 1883. Thus, the Mary Scotfield identified in the coverlet is Lynda’s father’s great grand aunt and Lynda’s great, great grand aunt.

It is uncommon to see a coverlet in such wonderful condition, virtually unused, made by an important and talented weaver, and passed down through a family who kept a detailed and documented account of its history.

A portion of the bottom (foot end) border of this coverlet is pictured on page 54 of the original Checklist of American Coverlet Weavers, and the donor has included the paperwork documenting its 1976 loan to Williamsburg for that purpose.

This coverlet will be included in the upcoming Noah’s Ark exhibition at The National Museum of the American Coverlet.





# Guest Exhibition

## Huntingdon, PA

by Melinda Zongor

From February 6 to 28 of this year, the kind folks of the Huntingdon County Arts Council hosted a mini-exhibition of NMAC coverlets at The Art Space in Huntingdon, PA. Fourteen coverlets were on display for the month. On opening night, a wine and cheese party was well attended by friends new and old, a surprising number of whom knew about NMAC and have visited here! Those who hadn't, have made it a point to do so!

We thank Ginny and Larry Mutti and John Kearns for their support and assistance with the project – they were a true pleasure. The Muttis are members of both the Arts Council and NMAC, and the exhibition was their idea. John Kearns is the Executive Director of the Huntingdon County Arts Council and he generated great publicity with his poster design and news releases. Hats off to all three of them!





# 42<sup>nd</sup> Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival

By Mike Pasquerette

The coverlet museum was pleased to participate in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival that was held May 2-3, 2015 at the Howard County Fairgrounds outside Baltimore MD. This was another very successful event for the museum, as the weather cooperated to encourage a large turnout for the festival. One of the largest festivals of it's kind, the MD Sheep and Wool Festival attracts over 250 vendors, more than 1,000 sheep, and over 50,000 visitors over the weekend.



One of the most important functions of the festival



for the museum is the outreach we are able to perform over the course of the weekend as we engage thousands of visitors to our booth to inform them of the museum and its mission. We get many visitors to the booth who turn up in the coming days or weeks to the Coverlet Museum and mention the booth at the Sheep and Wool festival as the reason they are visiting the museum. This year, one of the booth's main draws, a floor loom with an overshot pattern in progress caught the eye of one visitor who had a similar loom unassembled at home and was looking for information on how to put her loom back into working order. We were able to take some pictures for her that got her loom back together!

Another important goal of the festival is selling items from the museum's gift shop so visitors can take a part of us home with them. Thanks to a wonderful variety of items from books, to quilting fabrics based

on coverlet patterns, to newly created coverlets and blankets, the museum had a very successful weekend in this area as well.

Lastly, on occasion, the festival also provides an opportunity for people to donate coverlets that are no longer wanted by their owners who want to find a place that will care for and appreciate and periodically display their coverlets for the public to enjoy. This year we had the privilege to accept a donated geometric coverlet from a family in Georgia who gave a great account of its history with the family.

Next year's festival is scheduled as always for the first full weekend in May, which will be May 6-7, 2016. We hope you can make plans now to visit us and the festival next year!





# Donation Wish List

Please help us acquire the following:

Unbuffered acid free storage/conservation boxes – to pair with the new shelf units (see grant article). Each box will be inscribed with its Donor’s name. Cost is lower for more quantities purchased!

Dehumidifiers – for storage and exhibition areas.

Small chest freezer, preferably energy star certified – for initial quarantine of incoming textiles.



## Local News: The Great Bed Races

May 24, 2015

By Melinda Zongor

Bedford (where else) has re-established its tradition of Bed Races! After many years of dormancy, they were brought back by popular request. The event was organized by Downtown Bedford, Inc. Twenty four-person teams did their best to outrun everyone else.



Bedford Lions



All Fired Up

Two by two, the teams pulled and pushed their wheeled creations to the delight of over 1,000 happy folks who enjoyed a sunny afternoon of silly fun.



The Great Bed Race

# Fundraising

By Melinda Zongor

As we all know, for most museums the term “non-profit” generally translates to “always fundraising.” No matter how important the mission is, it takes cold hard cash to keep a museum’s doors open – and without it, all can be lost. This museum is no exception. NMAC has no endowment, and it receives no funding from federal, state or local government. It runs on admissions, donations, memberships, shop sales, program events, the occasional grant and whatever else we can think of. And, as you can imagine, there are a hundred different ways to apply each dollar that comes in. Here is a list of things that need attention. The list is incomplete, to be sure, but these are the most urgent.

## Building/Facility Related:

-- The main roof is still in need of new shingles, and about half of the project has been completed. The remaining portions are seriously deteriorated and must be replaced as soon as possible to minimize structural damage. We have been attacking the job in sections, with each section costing about \$10,000. The remaining work to be done will amount to four or five more sections.



Museum Roof Section in Need of Repair

-- Gas heat is expensive. Fortunately, tenant rental income covers a portion of the costs of running the building. However, the biggest bills come at the time of year when we have the lowest visitor income – and we have a remaining balance due on the cost of the last heating season.

-- One of the two furnaces will need major repairs before winter. We are in the process of getting estimates. Insurance is expected to cover some, but not all, of the cost.

## Operations Related:

-- We have no budget for acquisition of coverlets. Virtually all additions to the collection are by donation. We would like to develop a fund to be used for acquisition of important examples.

-- There is an ongoing need for unbuffered acid-free storage boxes and shelving. Boxes, costing about \$25, will usually store three coverlets each. Steel shelving units, at a cost of \$100, each hold ten boxes. We recently secured a grant to add five shelf units, but we need more to accommodate the growing collection.

-- Although we have sufficient tables for events like Coverlet College, we need four more six-foot folding tables for the storage/conservation area. These tables cost about \$50 each.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP:** Obviously, cash is always welcome. But there are other forms of assistance as well. We can accept stocks, bonds and articles to be sold for fundraising purposes. We can work with you to establish a pledge account for donations to be made periodically on a prearranged schedule. Think of us in planning your will or trust. ... And we are interested in learning of new grant opportunities. Any form of financial support is very much appreciated, no matter how large or small the amount! Your generous assistance will help secure this museum and its future.



# Reminder: Coverlet College 2015

September 25-26-27, 2015

by Melinda Zongor

September will be here before you know it, and the fourth annual Coverlet College is promising to be another exciting and enjoyable program covering both “basic” and “advanced” topics (we use these terms loosely), including hands-on opportunities and show-and-tell sessions.

As always, our presentations change each year and there is something for everyone, including collectors, researchers, antiques dealers, and just regular folks. If you want to know more about coverlets – in an informal, friendly atmosphere – this is the series for you. And don’t be intimidated. We welcome folks at all levels of expertise, or the lack of it. After all, that’s why we’re here!

New this year is the addition of optional Friday afternoon workshop sessions. This is a fun, affordable and unique opportunity to learn from the best teachers around. Karen Clancy will be here from Williamsburg to offer a hands-on session of natural dyeing with a variety of fibers. Pat Hilts will show you how to interpret early pattern drafts and adapt them for present-day use. Note that the workshops will run concurrently. Important: We must limit the number of students for these sessions, so sign up early while spaces are still available!

Friday evening will be our informal Meet & Greet, and all are welcome.

The Saturday and Sunday presentations will cover fibers; basic weave structures; an introduction to looms and loom attachments, patents and licensing chronology; a history of 18th century dyeing; the evolution of ingrain carpeting in New England 1820-1840; the revival of interest in coverlets and handweaving; a collector’s personal journey; a close up look at the VanDoren family, NMAC Weavers of the Year, and several presentations relative to the Noah’s Ark exhibition that will open in September. This year, in addition to the show-and-tell (students are invited to bring a coverlet or two to show and discuss), there will be a special discovery session for coverlets brought in by attendees new to coverlets.

Short breaks between sessions will allow for stretching and socializing. Lunch and snacks are included on Saturday and Sunday, and (NEW) an optional dinner at the Museum will be offered on Saturday evening.

Don’t miss this one!



# Finding Provenance: Pennsylvania German coverlets

By Gay McGeary

On my second trip to the National Museum of the American Coverlet in October 2006, I found an attractive coverlet that really intrigued me shown in Photo 1. I recognized it as belonging to the genre of Pennsylvania German geometric coverlets. I wanted to know more. Who might have woven it, as well as where and when it might have been woven.

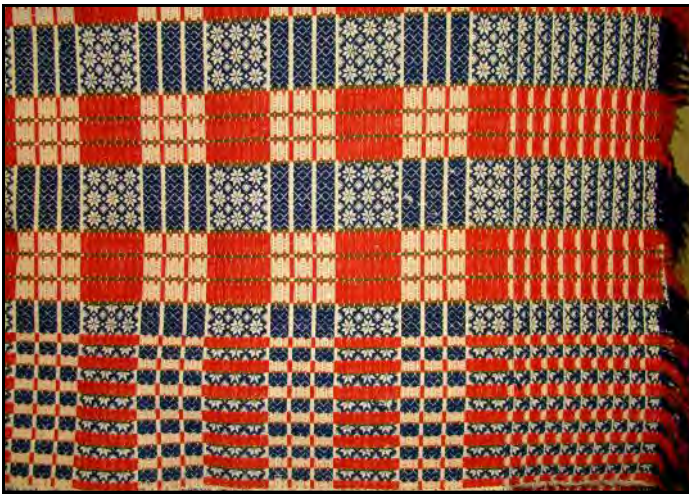


Photo1 - Star & Window coverlet at the Museum

In order to research a geometric coverlet, I knew I needed to analyze the design elements in the coverlet. I could tell it belonged to the class of multi-shaft float work coverlets, because it is basically a piece of plain weave cotton cloth with strands of wool woven over and under it to create a pattern. Okay that is simple enough, but what is the pattern. The main pattern is made up of motifs or figures that are repeated throughout the coverlet. Here, the first motif is a grouping of nine stars (Photo 2) and the second is a grouping of nine boxes (Photo 3) which I later learned is called a "Window" motif by Jacob Biesecker, an early weaver. The rest is just background cloth for the Star and Window coverlet. The coverlet is framed on the two sides and bottom with a border created by a repetition of half stars. A wool fringe finishes off the edge on the two sides.



Photo 2 - Nine Star motif  
in Star & Window coverlet



Photo 3 - Window motif  
in Star & Window coverlet

I figured out what was woven, but I still did not know who, when or where it was woven. Since my 2006 visit to the Museum, I have been researching Pennsylvania German multi-shaft float work coverlets by determining the threading draft of the extant coverlets I find and then comparing them to drafts found in nineteenth century pattern manuscripts handwritten by Pennsylvania German weavers usually when they were working as a journeyman for a master weaver. This coverlet draft was not easy to match with ones in weavers' manuscripts. However, I found drafts for patterns with the Nine Star motif shown in Photo 4, but the second motif in the drafts was a lattice-like table shown in Photo 5, both formed a coverlet pattern as shown in Photo 6. I have found the Nine Star coverlet pattern in several Pennsylvania manuscripts

*continued on page 13*



Photo 4: Nine Star motif  
in Nine Star coverlet



Photo 5: Lattice-like Table  
in Nine Star coverlet





Photo 6: Nine Star coverlet

### Finding Provenance continued:

including manuscripts for Christian Frey, an Adams County weaver dated 1833-34; Jacob Biesecker another Adams County weaver in the 1830-50s; Abraham Serff, a York County weaver dated 1858; and Cyrus Uhler, Lebanon County. I have also found many extant coverlets woven in variations of the Nine Star pattern.

In addition, as stated above, I found a draft in the Jacob Biesecker manuscript that he labeled "Window," which is a good description of the motif with nine boxes. It would produce a coverlet similar to the one



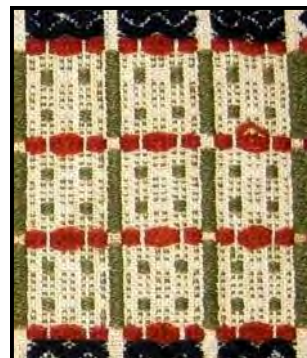
Photo 7: Window coverlet

in Photo 7. It has the nine window panes (Photo 8), but like the Nine Star pattern, the window motifs are separated by a lattice-like table (Photo 9). It appears to be a classic pattern that I have located in a total of thirteen weaver's pattern books working in western, central and eastern Pennsylvania. I have also found numerous extant coverlets in this pattern.

Now, if I take the lattice-like table out of the Nine Star pattern and the Window pattern, I get the pattern found in the Museum's Star & Window coverlet. It took me a while to find a draft in a manuscript for this pattern. In fact, I found only two weavers who had pattern drafts for it.

They are Joseph Capp and Johannes Schmidt, both from Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. They were also among the weavers who included the Window pattern style drafts. So what can I determine? The Star & Window coverlet might have been woven in the first half of the 19th century by either Joseph Capp or Johannes Schmidt in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. Therefore matching pattern drafts determined from coverlets to drafts found in manuscripts is an important tool for discovering the provenance of geometric coverlets.

The Star and Window coverlet is a truly handsome coverlet which is currently on exhibit at the National Museum of the American Coverlet along with a Nine Star coverlet and a Window coverlet. Stop by to see the three coverlets and see firsthand a beautiful example of the creativity of Pennsylvania German coverlet weavers.

Photo 8: Window motif  
in Window coverletPhoto 9: Lattice-Like Table  
in Window coverlet



## ShopforMuseums.com

### Help Benefit the Museum through Your Online Shopping

ShopforMuseums.com is a fundraising website where you can shop your favorite online stores and, **at no extra cost to you**, have a portion of your purchase amount donated to the museum, park, zoo, aquarium, or other related organization of your choice.

You simply go the Shop for Museums website (<http://shopformuseums.com>), register, choose a museum partner to support (hopefully, us), then select a store and start shopping.

Two very important details:

- (1) You **MUST** go to shopformuseums.com first and not directly to the store website, or it won't work.
- (2) In the dropdown list of Museum Partners, we are listed under the letter **N** as National Museum of the American Coverlet (The).

An amazing variety of stores is listed—yes, even eBay and Amazon are on there—and it's easy to do. So think about this great resource for all your holiday and year-round online shopping!

## Membership Renewals

The National Museum of the American Coverlet is your museum. It is here *for* you and *because of* you. By renewing your Membership, you help this Museum continue in its mission of education, exhibition, and conservation, introducing the public to American woven coverlets.

Your membership includes

- a full year of free admission,
- reduced rates for events and programs,
- a 10% discount on your Museum Shop purchases, and
- free access to the reference library.

Take advantage of these “perks”—visit frequently and make the most of your membership. Meet and greet other people who share your (and our) interests in early textiles. Come and enjoy the beautiful town of Bedford, Pennsylvania, with all its myriad attractions. Your continued support and membership are truly appreciated. We hope to see you often. Let us know what we can do for you.

