

GCW 2019 Samples

In 2019, the Salt Spring Island Weavers and Spinners Guild was asked to provide the Guild of Canadian Weavers with samples for their quarterly publication, *The Bulletin*. Each sample was accompanied by a short article providing background and other details about the structures. What follows is a slightly edited version of those publications.

Introduction

Our fabric samples explore variations of canvas weave and basket weave, and were chosen to illustrate the seasons through fibre, colour and intended use. As we live on the west coast, south of the 49th parallel, you might imagine us unqualified to appreciate the full scope of Canada's seasons, but we are an island of well-travelled incomers from the BC interior, the prairies, Ontario and beyond. We urge *The Bulletin* readers to re-visit these simple, under-utilized weaves and find delight in their variations.

Canvas Weave Part I: Spring

Actual canvas weave cloth is more rare than you might suppose; it is not used by artists or rug-hookers or needlepoint practitioners or tent-makers, all of whom work with plain weave textiles. Nor is the term “canvas weave” often found in weaving books. Sometimes it's called mock leno or linen weave or monk's cloth – none of which helps pin down its structure or classification. Often, it is confused, or used interchangeably, with huck.

Donna Muller¹ calls it “the simplest true false gauze” and hence it is a mock leno, along with huck, spot Bronson, lace Bronson and Swedish lace. Unlike huck which has an odd number of ends and picks (usually 3 or 5), canvas weave has 4 ends.

	Threading Unit Shafts
3-end huck	121 434
canvas weave	1221 4334
5-end huck	12121 43434

Now, the main difference is apparent: huck threading can (does) allow plain weave (shafts 1-3 versus 2-4) but canvas weave cannot. In fact, Harriet Tidball² says canvas weave is just “a complicated form of basket” due to the doubled threads on shafts 2 and 3.

Conventional canvas weave looks a bit like huck lace with “lacy” holes appearing at the corners where four units meet. It has been used for commercial dishcloths and seen as a dishtowel in an Australian cookbook.

Our first canvas weave variation is the one that permits repeats of the separate threading units. In the same way that 5-end huck can morph into Swedish lace with a tie-down between repeating units, canvas weave can become a block weave also. The threading units are 1221[4] and 4334[1]. The tie-downs [4] and [1] are inserted between repeating units but not in the transition between 1221 and 4334. For examples, see “Myrtle Westola” and “Swarthmore Check” in Marguerite Davison³, but be aware that other examples in Chapter VII: Canvas Weaves are 3-end huck.

In soft yarns this variation is well suited to scarves and shawls. If woven with firmer yarns like cotton, cottolin or hemp the canvas weave areas provide substantial texture which might contrast effectively with nearly plainweave stripes.

1 Muller, Donna, 1991. *Handwoven Laces*. Interweave Press, Loveland, CO.

2 Tidball, Harriet, 1966. *Textile Structure and Analysis*. HTH Publishers, Santa Ana CA.

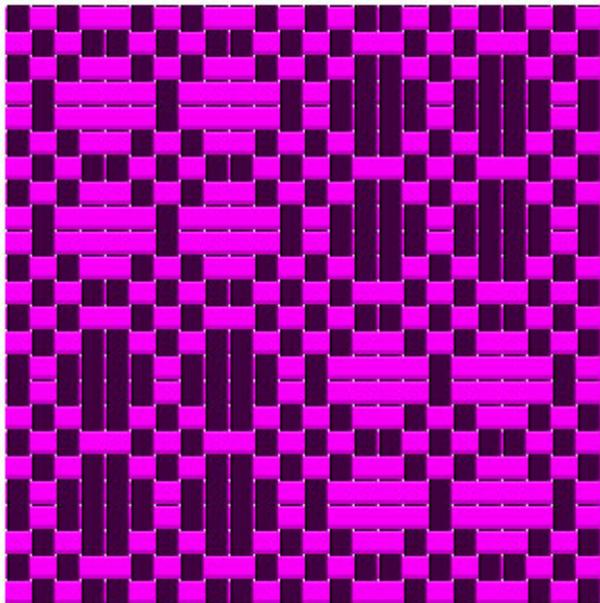
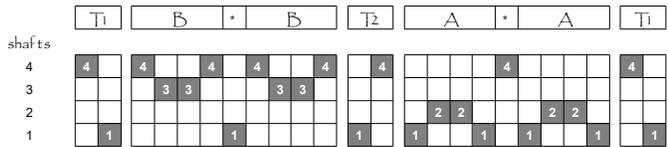
3 Davison, Marguerite, 1950. *A Handweaver's Pattern Book*. Self-published, revised edition.

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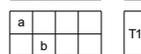
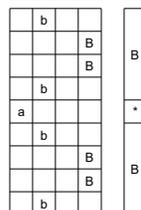
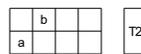
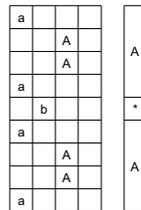
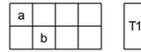
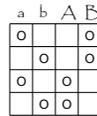
GCW Sample 1: Spring 2019

a bamboo scarf

in repeatable blocks of canvas weave



* tie-down thread/pick

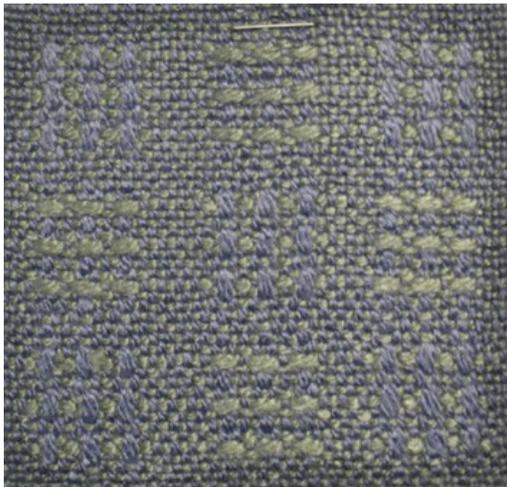


Pattern units A and B, in both threading and treading, can be repeated any number of times if separated by the appropriate tie-down thread and pick (labelled *).

Optionally, the A units can be separated from the B ones with stripes of almost plain weave (labelled T1 and T2 for tabby).

We chose 3x3 unit repeats with narrow plain weave separations.

The resulting cloth has beautiful drape and the characteristic lacey holes of traditional canvas weave are subtle.



Pattern source: M.P. Davison, A Handweaver's Pattern Book, p. 69, "Myrtle Westola" pattern.

Warp: 8/2 bamboo (periwinkle) 3360 yd/lb
Weft: 8/2 bamboo (cactus) 3360 yd/lb

Yarn source: Maurice Brassard & Fils Inc
<http://www.mbrassard.com>

Sett: 20 epi; beat 20 ppi

Take-up & shrinkage in length: 15%

Draw-in & shrinkage in width: 18%

Canvas Weave Part II: Summer

Conventional canvas weave has two 4-thread units, often threaded on shafts 1221 and 4334. Our spring sample was a variation that permitted repeats of the separate units by adding a tie-down thread between the repeats: 1221[4]1221 and 4334[1]4334.

The summer sample explores another variation from Marguerite Davison⁴ (p. 68) attributed to Oscar A. Bériau. It has two 6-thread units 412214 and 143341 (see the sample sheet insert on the following page). The source of this threading variation is Bériau's *Home Weaving*⁵ (p. 153).

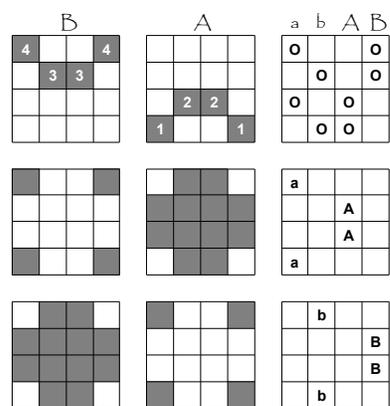
Oscar A. Bériau is hardly a familiar name, but his influence on weaving in Canada persists into the 21st century. Although he never wove, Bériau saw the potential economic value of weaving for farm families in the 1920s. Through his influence, the Québec Minister of Agriculture contracted Nilus Leclerc to make a loom that would fit in a typical home.

The four-harness counterbalance design was based on a Normandy barn loom. At the 1926 Québec Exposition Leclerc's new loom was demonstrated by Emilie Chamard, a prominent weaver and consultant to Bériau. Her assistant was Nilus's nine-year-old son Robert. For the complete story, go to www.oscarberiau.com.

For our summer sample, we used Davison's treadling variation I and her regular denting. Woven this way, the conventional 4-thread units are isolated by so much plain weave that the lacy holes vanish. Although the resulting fabric is scarcely canvas weave, its pleasant surface texture makes a good cloth for clothing and kitchen linens.

Curiously, Bériau's treadling had no doubled picks (just baAab and abBba) which meant that the selvages could be perfectly plainweave. For "very fine threads" in a 16-dent reed, he crammed the four canvas weave threads (1221 or 4334) in a single dent with the adjacent threads at one per dent. It was recommended for "furniture coverings" in 16/2 cotton or 16/1 linen and for draperies in 8/2 cotton. Davison's Linen Weave pattern (var. III, p. 70) incorporates both characteristics using 12/2 cotton at 27 epi.

Shakespeare wrote "Be sure of it; give me the ocular proof." In that spirit, our 2018-19 guild weaving challenge was to use canvas and basket weave structures for a public library display in June 2019. The illustration shows some of the submissions. On the upper shelf are Bériau's canvas weave tea towels in 8/2 cotton sett at 18 epi. The lower shelf towels, also 8/2 cotton at 18 epi, have the GCW spring sample threading enhanced with colour-and-weave effect. There are more pictures on our September 2019 blog [Display in the Library](#).



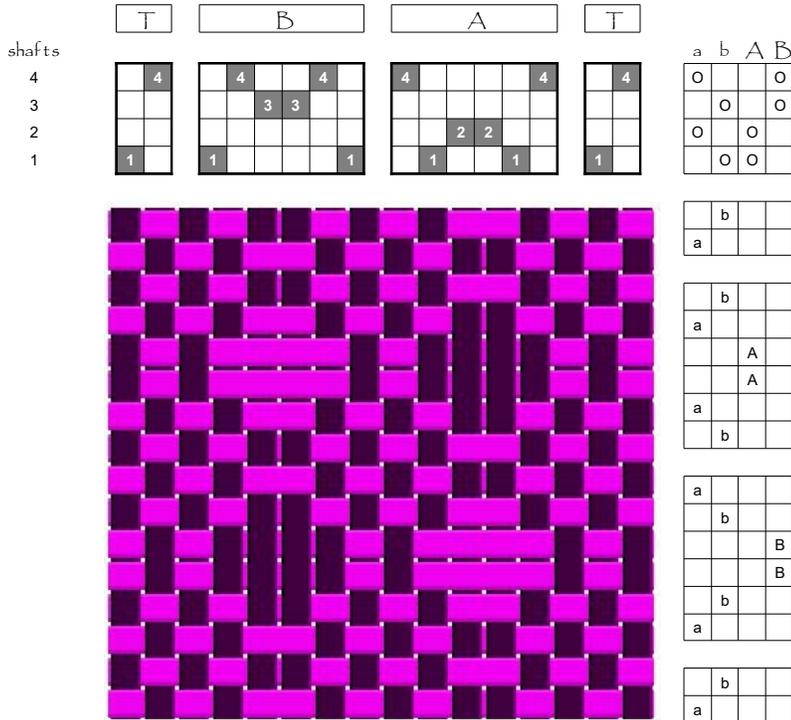
4 Davison, Marguerite, 1950. *A Handweaver's Pattern Book*. Self-published, revised edition.

5 Bériau, Oscar A., 1939. *Home Weaving*. Department of Agriculture, Québec.

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GCW Sample 2: Summer 2019

a light-weight cotton/ cottolin top in Oscar A. Bériau's canvas weave



Alternating pattern units A and B in both threading and treading form an all-over pattern with the possibility of almost plain weave selvages or stripes (labelled T for tabby).

The resulting cloth preserves the drape and texture of traditional canvas weave without the lacey holes.

In 16/2 yarns it makes a lovely garment fabric; in 8/2 absorbent towels.

To learn more about Oscar Bériau and his contributions to weaving and handicrafts in Canada, visit <http://www.oscarberiau.com/>



Pattern source: M.P. Davison, A Handweaver's Pattern Book, p. 68.

Warp: 16/2 cottolin (natural) 6720 yd/lb
60% organic cotton, 40% linen

Weft: 16/2 cotton (peach) 6720 yd/lb

Yarn source: Maurice Brassard & Fils Inc
<http://www.mbrassard.com>

Sett: 24 epi; beat 24 ppi

Take-up & shrinkage in length: 20%

Draw-in & shrinkage in width: 12%

Note: 16/2 cottolin is not recommended for warps, but we encountered no problems, other than occasional slubs, using texsolv heddles on a countermarche loom.