

THE LOOP

The Hunterdon County Rug Artisans Guild (HCRAG) Newsletter

May 2008

From the President's Corner – As our new officers and chairs assume their new responsibilities, we want to extend our appreciation on behalf of the entire Guild to our past officers/chairs who have worked hard and so effectively in the past two years. Through their efforts, our Guild is a strong, exciting and rewarding organization for rug hooking enthusiasts at all levels of experience. We are grateful for what you have accomplished and will strive to follow in your foot steps.

Those who attended the April meeting were treated to a master class on rug design. Joyce Combs and Barbara Lugg were inspirational. They shared their approach in moving an idea for a rug from its conception to a pattern on backing. They brought many of their rugs to serve as examples. Neither Barbara nor Joyce has had formal art training, but their rugs illustrated what is possible following simple, easy to use techniques. During the “show and tell” portion of the meeting, several Guild members shared ideas and approaches that they use in designing their rug patterns. Once again, it was so clear that our members are talented and that we all benefit from sharing what we know with others in the Guild. Thank you to all who made this a special meeting.

Nina Seaman has agreed to serve as the Guild's Vice President. She is a gifted rug artisan and we look forward to working with her.

Keep on Hooking! -- Weezie

May Meeting – May 9, 2008 – **Please note the change in our location for this meeting. The date remains the same, but our May meeting will be in the Court Room at the Police Station within the Raritan Township Municipal Complex.** The meeting will begin at 10:00 and end at 2:00. Plan to get some hooking done. Bring your equipment.

Guild Program – Nationally known rug hooking instructor, Norma Batastini, will talk about the importance of the backgrounds in hooked rugs. This is a topic that Norma has been working on for the last two years and she will have many examples from her work. Members and guests are encouraged to bring any rugs that have interesting or unusual backgrounds. Anyone with a rug in progress who is wondering what to do to make the background more interesting can bring it. After the presentation, Norma will be available to share her ideas individually or with the group.

Show and Tell – Bring rugs with interesting or problem backgrounds. In addition, members are always encouraged to bring their current project to share with us. This portion of the meeting is the source of much inspiration.

Hospitality – We thank those who responded to the need for refreshments when several of those scheduled were unable to attend the meeting last month. For our May meeting, we thank in advance Sharon Ballard, Kathy Edwards, Carol Kindt and Margaret Lutz for volunteering to provide the refreshments. Your treats add to the enjoyment of the meeting.

Membership – We welcome new member Sharon Bennett.

Sharon Bennett
143 Second Street
Dunellen, NJ 08812
908-463-8144
moosecraft@optonline.net

Eileen Mahler has moved. Her new address is 952 Millbrook Road, Newtown, NJ 07860 and her new phone number is 973-383-3845. Eileen's email address is eamahler@embarqmail.com.

Linda Reitz' email address is lindareitz@embarqmail.com. Please update your membership list.

Let the Sun Shine – Our sympathy is extended to Kitty Platt whose mother-in-law passed away. We wish Margaret Lutz a speedy recovery from her recent pacemaker procedure. Let our new Sunshine Chair, Lib Ryman, know if there is a member who needs a get well card or a note of cheer.

May Birthdays – This month our birthday wishes go to Donna Brandt (5/22), Deanna Kinney (5/13) and Margaret Lutz (5/21). Have a great day!

HCRAG Bus Trip to Lancaster Heritage Center – There are seven seats still available for our bus trip on Wednesday May 28. Invite your friends and family to join us for a fun day. We will be visiting the two museums that comprise the Lancaster Heritage Center and enjoying their hooked rug exhibit -- "Rags to Rugs". Because of the Guild's successful fund raising efforts last year, the bus trip costs only \$8 for members. (It is \$28 for non-members.) We will be on our own for lunch. The bus will leave promptly at 8:00 AM from the parking lot at the Hunterdon County Complex (our normal meeting place) and return around 8:00 that evening. Contact Kitty Platt at 908-782-8985 or kitty_platt@hotmail.com for more information or to register. *(Please note that Kitty will be in Texas until May 3 for the funeral services of her mother-in-law. In her absence, contact Connie Coleman at 215-766-8428 or coleman_powell@verizon.net.)*

Members are encouraged to bring their name badges for the benefit of our guests who will be travelling with us.

2008 HCRAG Rug Hooking Camp (August 11- 15, 2008) – The balance of the fee for camp is now payable. For most, the remaining balance is \$125. Cancellations will be accepted until June 1, 2008.

Several openings have developed. There are now two openings currently available in both Anne-Marie Littenberg's and Jayne Hester's workshops. Gail Dufresene has one person on the waiting list.

Camp instructor Gail Dufresene is known for her creative and expert wool dyeing. Her expertise is illustrated by her article "Dyeing a Painted Sky" that is in the April/May 2008 issue of the ATHA Newsletter. Those working with Anne-Marie Littenberg may want to see her article entitled "Abstract Painting on Wool: An Innovative Technique for Impressionistic Hooked Rug Designs" in the current issue of Rug Hooking Magazine.

Camp Scholarship Fund Established -- At the April meeting, the Guild voted to establish a

scholarship fund in memory of Madeline Brightbill. The fund will be used to sponsor attendance at our annual rug hooking camp. A committee is being established to develop the procedures for selecting the recipient. Their recommendations will be made in time for our camp in August. In the meantime, if you want to nominate someone or apply yourself, just let Weezie know. The scholarship can be used to recognize a member who has made an important contribution to the Guild, for someone who would not attend otherwise, to recognize a long time member, to welcome a new member, etc. In other words, the criteria are very broad.

Contributions to the fund can be made by sending a check made payable to HCRAAG to Guild Treasurer, Gisele Meader, at 74 Barry Road, Lambertville, NJ 08530.

The Jersey Girls' Rug Challenge -- The Alice Beatty ATHA Chapter is sponsoring "The Jersey Girls' Rug Challenge" that will result in a hooked rug show in 2009.

New Jersey has countless areas that make the state appealing and unique. There is a long beautiful coastline, all kinds of water sports, salt and fresh water fishing, agriculture and horse farms, mountains and lakes. You can find charming lighthouses, historical towns and Cape May – the nation's first seaside resort!

Here are the guidelines for participating:

- The challenge is open to any and all rug hooking artisans.
- There is no restriction on the size of rugs.
- All entrees must have a rod pocket sewn onto the top of the back.
- Each artisan may submit three rugs.
- Include a short paragraph explaining the selection of the rug theme.
- The theme must be in good taste and be complimentary of the state of New Jersey.
- Rugs are to be ready for exhibition by March 2009.

All wishing to be included must register to receive additional information as it becomes available. (Note: All HCRAAG members have automatically been registered.) Questions should be directed to Norma Batastini at 973-746-2936 or G_batastini@msn.com (Place Jersey Girl Rugs in the subject box.)

Visit the Guild Website at www.hcrag.com to find out what is happening with the Guild. Use it to check on membership information, the schedule of programs and to connect with other rug hooking links. There are also photos from recent meetings and a gallery of rugs hooked by HCRAAG members. Laurie Rubinetti updates the site monthly. Take a look! The site is being looked at by others. We had an inquiry this month from a rug hooker in St Louis who has interest in finding the source of a pattern of one of the rugs shown in the Gallery Page.

Guild Members Demonstrate at the Peter Wentz Farmstead and The New Jersey History Fair – The weather forecast leading up to Sheep Shearing Day at the Peter Wentz Farmstead was bleak, but improved as the week went on. Saturday April 12 turned out to be a beautiful day and the families came out to see the sheep lose their winter coats. Guild members Joanne McIlmurray and Karl Gimber reinforced the versatility of wool by demonstrating how wool was used to create functional and attractive rugs for homes in the mid 1800s. Joanne brought a table frame so that visitors could try their hand at hooking. There was considerable interest at all age levels leading to the suggestion that the site may want to provide a beginners' workshop. The Guild returns to the Farmstead in October for its Larenswaert Festival.

("Larenswaert" means "worth learning" in Pennsylvania German.)

On May the 3rd, the Guild will again be demonstrating traditional rug hooking at the Washington Crossing Park in Titusville, NJ as part of the festivities of the NJ History Fair. As in the past, we will be located by the Johnson Ferry House. Margaret Brightbill needs several volunteers to assist her.

Meet Our Member – Bernice Smith -- Bernice Smith's mother-in-law, Ada "Mae" Smith, was an accomplished rug hooker in the Pearl McGown tradition. She was basically self taught with an excellent color sense and technique using #3 and #4 cuts. She started hooking in the late 1940s. After moving to Hillsborough, NJ, she became part of a small rug hooking group. Bernice recalls that Mae had a number of books dealing with rug hooking and McGown newsletters. She introduced Bernice to rug hooking about a year after Bernice's marriage to her son, Barrett, and gave her a new Puritan frame, a new Bliss cutter, and her first hook. The frame and cutter are still in use today, 40 years later, but the hook eventually needed replacement.

The first rug (#4 cut) that Bernice hooked was a McGown floral called "It's a Cinch" that contained roses, iris, pansies, leaves and a simple scroll. Over the years, she has settled into hooking mostly with a #5 cut, but will also use a #4 cut or #6. Bernice has moved away from hooking commercial designs. She does not see herself as a rug designer, but the truth of the matter is that Bernice does design most of her own rugs. Photos, slides and pictures are the sources for most of her rug ideas. She is drawn to family related subjects such as: her Bedlington Terriers, her son's interest in lacrosse, the beautiful windows of the church she attends, and early trips to the Maine Coast. "Eclectic" is the word she uses to describe her style and the rugs she creates. Her tendency is to choose projects that challenge her even though she is not quite sure she is up to the task. Bernice jokingly says that she is "better at starting than finishing" referring to some rugs that take years to complete. Once she starts a rug, she works on it to completion, which is why she is determined not to start any new projects until the few she has in progress are complete.

Bernice hooks weekly with a group that meets each Thursday at the Everittstown Church. This assures that she works on her hooking at least one day a week and also provides for wonderful fellowship and interaction with some very fine and talented ladies.

In the late 1970s, while at her son's swim team practice, Bernice met Pauline Phillips who was working on a rug while waiting for her son to finish practice. Through Pauline, she met another rug hooker, Peggy Zahn. The three formed a friendship and started meeting to work together on their rugs. Peggy and Pauline introduced Bernice to HCRAG in about 1978. Through the Guild she met a talented teacher, Penny Waring Hayes, and worked under her tutelage for about a year until Penny moved to New England.

When it comes to dyeing wool, Bernice does it if she has a need. She is "not a serious student of the dye pot". She likes working with both new and recycled wool and if needed may over-dye. Her favorite backing is rug warp that she finds works well with her cut. Bernice has used linen also. For small, odd projects she will use monk's cloth, which she has among her supplies. She no longer uses burlap. Bernice has found that one of her mother-in-law's early rugs has serious problems where the burlap backing has given way. Bernice wants her hooking projects to last, hopefully, for generations.

After earning a Bachelors Degree in Elementary Education from Paterson State College (now William Paterson University), she went on to a teaching career where she taught at the elementary

and middle school levels. While teaching she earned a Masters Degree in Guidance and Personnel from Rutgers University where she met her husband. Bernice stopped teaching when her son, Evan, arrived and remained at home until he was in high school. During that time she earned an Associates Degree in Computer Programming. In 1987, she went to work as a computer programmer for a large insurance company. After retiring 1997, she was able to return to hooking rugs and the Guild once more. She attended several of the Guild's summer rug camps where she became acquainted with a wonderful rug-hooking instructor, Helen Wolfel. Helen returned to the camp several times and also taught two summers for the small rug hooking group Bernice meets with on Thursdays. Helen was an avid dyer and over a period of time got Bernice started on four of her most challenging rugs.

Bernice's husband, Barrett, is a retired earth science teacher. They enjoy playing cards in the evening and reading aloud to each other. Fiction, history and poetry are among the subjects they most like to read. She enjoys using her digital camera and sharing her photographs with others. Bernice has also been very active in her church over the years.

Last year the Guild was treated to a program on hooking trees that was presented by Bernice. Many who attended have commented that they now find themselves looking at trees differently and observing things they had not noticed before. The Guild is fortunate to have Bernice Smith as a member.

"More About Hooked Rugs" – The November 1922 issue of The Magazine Antiques includes an article by Leonard F. Burbank entitled "More About Hooked Rugs". The article has been presented in four segments in previous issues of The Loop. The fifth and final segment follows.

“Many of the Nova Scotia rugs now coming to the United States are made of wool, are low in tone, being in black or gray, and dark greens, with a small amount of brilliant red or yellow. The designs are attractive and harmonize with modern furnishings; but the drawing-in is so regular and the loops are so far apart as to give the appearance of machine work. The rugs too often lack the body that the old ones possessed.

While most of the old rugs are of greater length than breadth and of relatively small size, they are also found half round, elliptical and square. Occasionally, too, we find them so large that they become of carpet size. The half rounds were made to go in front of doors. Many were inscribed with the word *Welcome*. The carpet sizes were done in strips and sewn together.

Not long since, one of these carpets was brought to the United States from Nova Scotia, and the church from which it was taken (for it was used in a church) received a considerable sum for the floor covering, which its members had made because they could not afford a commercial carpet! Again, some years since, the women of a New Hampshire town, in which was a woolen mill, were engaged in competition to see who could produce the largest rug. I know of one sizable enough to cover a large floor. Its design is of flowers and vines, and, though it is an exact copy of a Brussels carpet, its fabrication in wools gives it much the appearance of a *Mouquette*.

As with bed-spreads so with rug patterns; they were often named, and such designations as *Brick*, *Boston Walk*, *Sunshine and Shadow*, -- and many others -- are heard of.

Today old rugs are being hunted for in every promising locality, and, while some of them are fresh and perfect, others seem worn and faded almost beyond recall. A good rug, however, is

worth repairing; and, once restored may prove extremely serviceable.”

Laurie rubinetti User 4/29/08 10:52 AM

Comment:

Hooking Events and Related Activities

Rags to Rugs: Pennsylvania Hooked and Handsewn Rugs Exhibition – Through December 31, 2008 at the Lancaster Quilt and Textile Museum. For more information contact Kim Fortney, VP, Heritage Center of Lancaster County at 717-299-6440 or kfortney@lancasterheritage.com.
Tribal Arts in the Garden State 2008 - New Jersey Arts Annual -- Through May 11, 2008 at the Montclair Art Museum, 3 South Mountain Ave., Montclair, NJ 07042-1747. For more information contact the museum at (973) 746-5555 or www.montclairartmuseum.org. A catalog will be published. Guild member Linda Rae Coughlin has two of her works in this juried show.

FIBERFEST 2008 -- August 9, 2008 in Yellow Spring, WV, sponsored by the Mountain State Fiber Artists. Contact Susan Feller for pre-registration and program information at rugs2w@yahoo.com. Lunch included with registration fee. There will be vendors as well as hooking and fiber artists.

The Old Barn Rug Hooking Guild Hook-In -- Saturday, August 16, 2008, at The Blue Heron Art Gallery in Wyalusing, PA. Vendors, coffee and snacks along with several charming places for lunch located in Wyalusing. Pre-registration is \$10.00. Contact ATHA Guild President, Janet Schleeter at jschleeter@epix.net for details.

Summer Workshop with Gail Dufresne – August 20 -24, 2008 at the Goat Hill Studio, Lambertville, NJ. For more information contact Gail at gailduf@aol.com.

Rugs by the Sea – The 21st traditional rug hooking school will be held in Cape May, NJ from September 14-25, 2008. The instructors for the first week are Bev Conway, Gail Dufresne, Cindy Gay and Nancy Miller Quigley. The second week features Bev Conway Lucille Festa, Judy Quintman and Abby Vakay. For more information contact Norma Batastini at G_Batastini@email.msn.com.

Hooked in the Mountains XIII –November 8-16, 2008. The annual show and workshops sponsored by the Green Mountain Rug Hooking Guild will be at the Shelburne Museum. For more information go to the guild's web site – www.greenmountainrughookingguild.org.

The Mercer Hookers meet on the first Thursday of every month from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the Mercer County Library in Pennington, NJ. It would be a good idea to contact Weezie Huntington (weezie711@gmail.com) if you are coming for the first time. The hook-in is open to anyone sharing an interest in rug hooking. Bring your lunch.

HCRAG Calendar of Events

May 9, 2008 – Monthly Meeting – Hooking Backgrounds (Norma Batastini) -- Meeting at Court Room in the Police Station at Raritan Township Complex

May 28, 2008 -- Bus Trip to Lancaster Heritage Center

June 13, 2008 – Monthly Meeting – Annual Picnic

August 11 – 15, 2008 – 12th Annual HCRAG Rug Hooking Camp featuring Gail Dufresne, Jayne Hester and Anne-Marie Littenberg

September 12, 2008 – Monthly Meeting -- Program TBD*

October 4-30, 2008 -- HCRAG Rug Exhibit at Lebanon Township Museum

October 10, 2008 – Monthly Meeting – Program TBD*

November 14, 2008 – Monthly Meeting – Program TBD*

December 12, 2008 -- Holiday Luncheon *

- * Unless otherwise noted, our meetings run from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the County Administration Building, which is part of the Hunterdon County Complex on Route 12, Flemington, NJ. As you turn off Route 12 onto the road leading into the Complex, it is the first building on the right.

Guild Officers -- Our officers are anxious to hear from you on ideas and suggestions on how we can make the Guild responsive to your needs. Feel free to contact them with your thoughts.

President – Weezie Huntington -- 609-466-1882 or weezie711@gmail.com

Vice President – Nina Seaman – 609-785-5705 or bona1@comcast.net

Historian – Marion Michel – 609-397-3425 or marionmichel@earthlink.net

Hospitality – Helen Buchanan – 908-284-0749

Barbara Lugg – 908-996-2562

Librarian – Kathy Donovan – 908-755-1670 or freyja@optonline.net

Programs – Sharon Ballard – 908-236-7410 or cballard2@patmedia.net

Public Relations/Newsletter -- Karl Gimber -- 215-297-0803 or karlg@nni.com

Secretary – Joyce Combs -- 609-737-9281 or fjcombs@verizon.net

Special Events -- Kitty Platt – 908-782-8985 or kitty_platt@hotmail.com

Gail Ferdinando – 908-735-6720 or thebrownieexpress@att.net

Debbie Walsh – 908-272-7012 or debywalsh@yahoo.com

Sunshine – Lib Ryman -- 908-604-9459 or libr21226@aol.com

Treasurer – Gisele Meader -- 609-737-3123 or g.meader@att.net

Margaret Brightbill – 215-968-2711 or katie4rose@aol.com (Asst. Treasurer)

Web-Master – Laurie Rubinetti -- 908-995-4030 or Lrubinet@ptdprolog.net

Guild's Email List Policy - The HCRAG Email list is not for commercial purposes, internally, or externally. The Guild does not make the list available to vendors outside the guild, and asks that vendors within the group not solicit the membership as a whole.

The Loop is the newsletter of the Hunterdon County Rug Artisans Guild (HCRAG). It is published monthly (September through June). Articles, suggestions or ideas for the newsletter can be submitted to Karl Gimber at P. O. Box 16, Carversville, PA 18913 or by email to karlg@nni.com by the 20th of the month.

4/29/2008