

**MARGARET BERGMAN:  
TEACHER, INNOVATOR, DESIGNER**

Sue Walsh

History Study Group of the  
Association of Northwest Weavers Guilds

# OVERVIEW

- Margaret Bergman
  - Biography – Teacher, Designer, Innovator
  - Impact on Weaving in the Pacific Northwest
- Association of Northwest Weavers Guilds History Study Group
  - Purpose of the study group
  - Studies – past and future
- ANWG Study Group Members' Projects for the 2021-22 Margaret Bergman Challenge

## MARGARET BERGMAN: BIOGRAPHY

- Born Margareta Olofsson on June 22, 1872 in Jämtland, Sweden
- Learned to weave at age 7 from her mother, Maria Einarsdotte, a professional weaver
- Immigrated to the USA in 1901 to marry John Bergman in Seattle
- Settled in Breidablik, Scandinavian settlement north of Poulsbo, WA
- Focused on raising six children for the next 13 years, then asked John to build her a loom
- Returned to weaving in 1914; did custom weaving from 1918-1930
  - Initially, could not find "good" yarns, so wove functional but beautiful rugs
  - 1925 – through Mary Meigs Atwater, discovered Bernat as a source of yarns
  - 1928 – acquired book by Atwater, learned Summer & Winter
  - 1930's – taught classes, helped establish weaving guilds, patented looms, founded the Yarn Barn in Poulsbo
  - 1940's – published weaving designs, continued to refine the Bergman Loom
- Died in Poulsbo, July 18, 1948



# MARGARET BERGMAN: TEACHER

- 1931: Initially invited to demonstrate weaving at a department store in Tacoma, WA, which generated public interest in weaving
- Students had increased demands for community, materials, equipment, designs
- Helped establish weaving guilds in western Washington
  - 1935: Tacoma Weavers Guild (first in the Northwestern US)
  - 1937: Seattle Weavers Guild
  - 1938: Kitsap County Spinners & Weavers



# MARGARET BERGMAN: TEACHER

- Opened Yarn Barn to provide supplies for students and the general public; sold yarns; taught weaving; made looms
- Generated and freely shared her designs with her students
- It is believed only a fraction of her designs are documented



## MARGARET BERGMAN: WEAVER & DESIGNER

- Wove mostly rugs prior to 1925
  - Could not find “suitable yarns” to weave finer table linens and cloth
  - Wove custom goods and sold in local department stores
  - She believed there was no reason why rugs couldn’t be BOTH beautiful and serviceable
  - Wove complex rug designs, some up to 10-shafts

## MARGARET BERGMAN: WEAVER & DESIGNER

- After finding Bernat yarns through Atwater, designed and wove table linens using fine linen and cotton, many in woven laces; explored Summer and Winter, Crackle



National Nordic Museum



National Nordic Museum

Left: Placemat in cotton,  
ca. 1935

Right: Napkin in linen,  
lace weave, "Thistle",  
1934

Source: Bergman  
Collection, Archive  
Record of the National  
Nordic Museum

# MARGARET BERGMAN: WEAVER & DESIGNER



National Nordic Museum



National Nordic Museum

Left: “Owl on the Moon”  
in doubleweave pickup,  
undated

Right: Sample woven in  
Summer & Winter, 1944

Source: Bergman  
Collection, Archive  
Record of the National  
Nordic Museum



## MARGARET BERGMAN: WEAVER & DESIGNER

- Publication: Northwest Weavers (1941-1942), 25-cents per issue
  - Bergman's designs were collected by Pacific Northwest Weavers to make her designs available to all weavers
  - 4-12 harness\* designs, 4 designs per issue, 4 issues per year, 1941-42.
  - <https://northwestweavers.org/education/wrapped-in-history/historical-drafts/>
- Several designs published in Greer's *Adventures in Weaving* (1945)
- Created a new weaving structure: Bergman Technique (tied block weave)

# MARGARET BERGMAN: WEAVER & DESIGNER

- Example of an original Bergman Summer and Winter design, “The Constellation Orion in Summer and Winter Weave” woven by Mrs. O. M. Gaudy of Port Orchard, WA; Bernat’s #20 mercerized cotton warp and #38 Scarlet Perugian Filler for weft (Henderson).

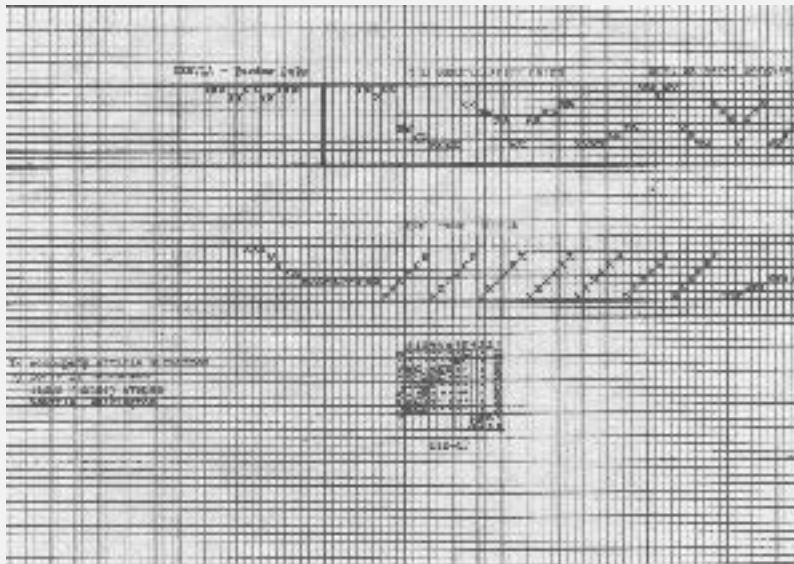


Figure 26.1

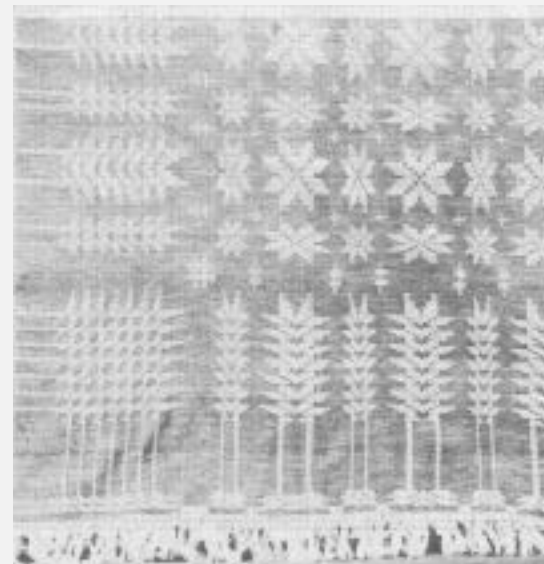
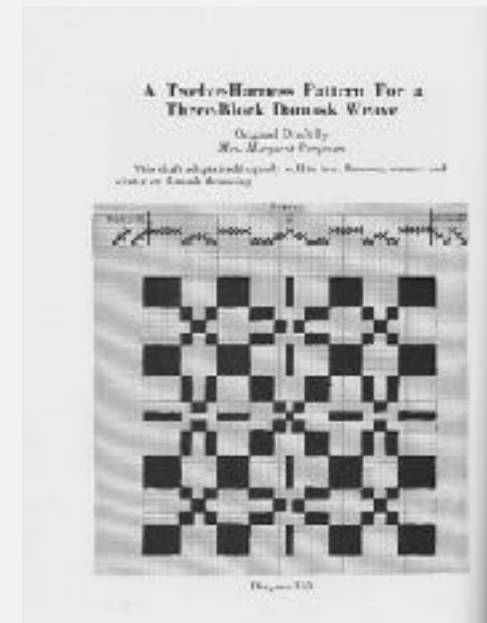


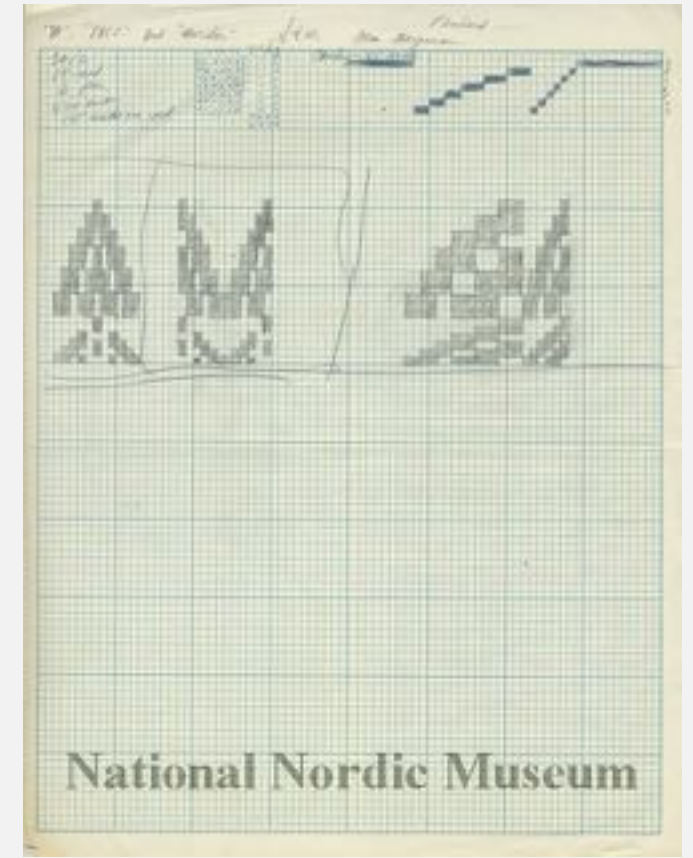
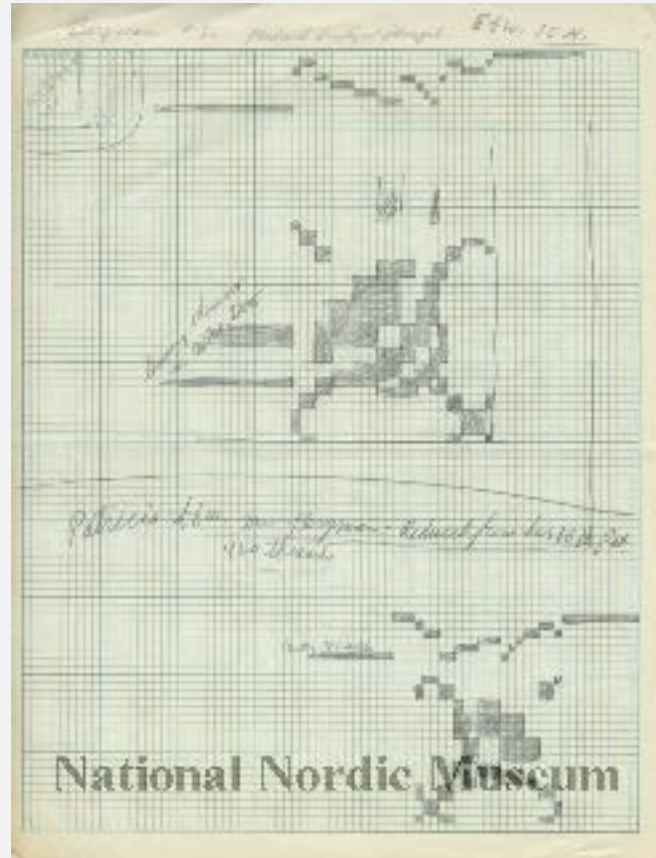
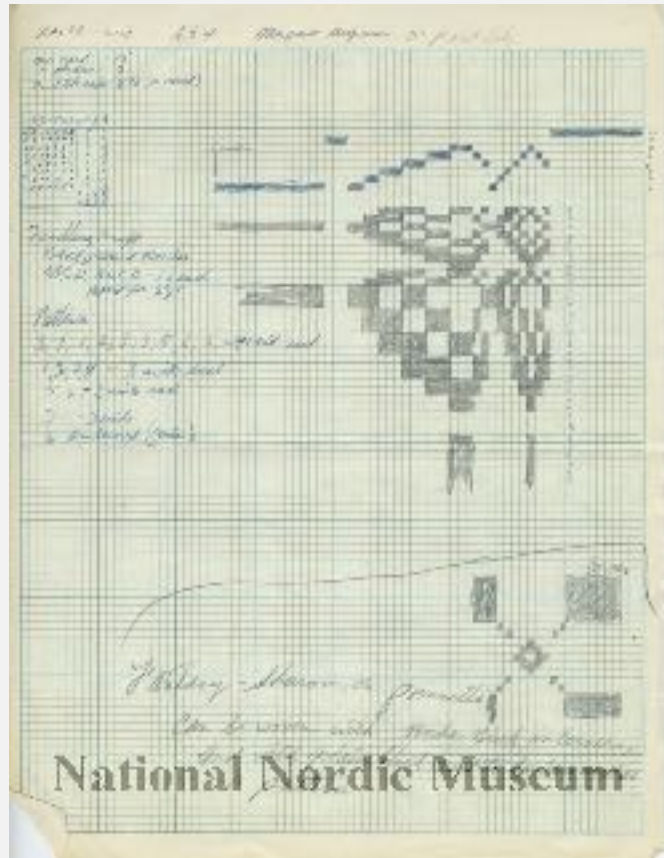
Figure 26.2

# MARGARET BERGMAN: WEAVER & DESIGNER

- Crackle Weave Material for Bag, designed by Margaret Bergman, woven by Juanita Minard of Bremerton, WA (Greer,).
- “New” Bergman Technique Sample, designed by Margaret and woven by her son, Arthur Bergman (Greer)
- Original Bergman 3-block design for damask, lace, Bronson, or summer and winter (Greer)



# MARGARET BERGMAN: WEAVER & DESIGNER



Source: Bergman Collection, Archive Record of the National Nordic Museum

# MARGARET BERGMAN: WEAVER & DESIGNER

*“The weavers of the Pacific Northwest have felt for some time that the original patterns and new arrangement of old patterns by Mrs. Margaret Bergman should be made available to weavers everywhere. With that in mind, we have gathered these patterns together, and are presenting them in a series of pamphlets, of which this is the first edition. In our selections for each edition we have tried to include things which will be of interest to all weavers. In the description of a technique we have also tried to be clear that even new weavers can follow. There will be an article for four harness looms in each pamphlet, but we hope to introduce to more and more weavers the pleasure that comes from playing with a multiple-harness loom.”*

*Mrs. Bergman has inspired some of our local weaver to try designing for themselves, and some of these patterns will be included from time to time. We hope our readers in turn will get an incentive likewise to create.”*

-Northwest Weavers, Vol. 1, No. 1



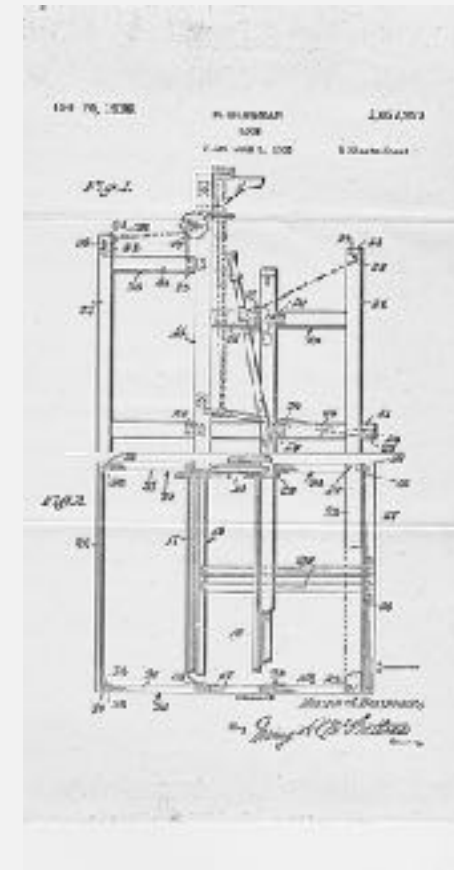
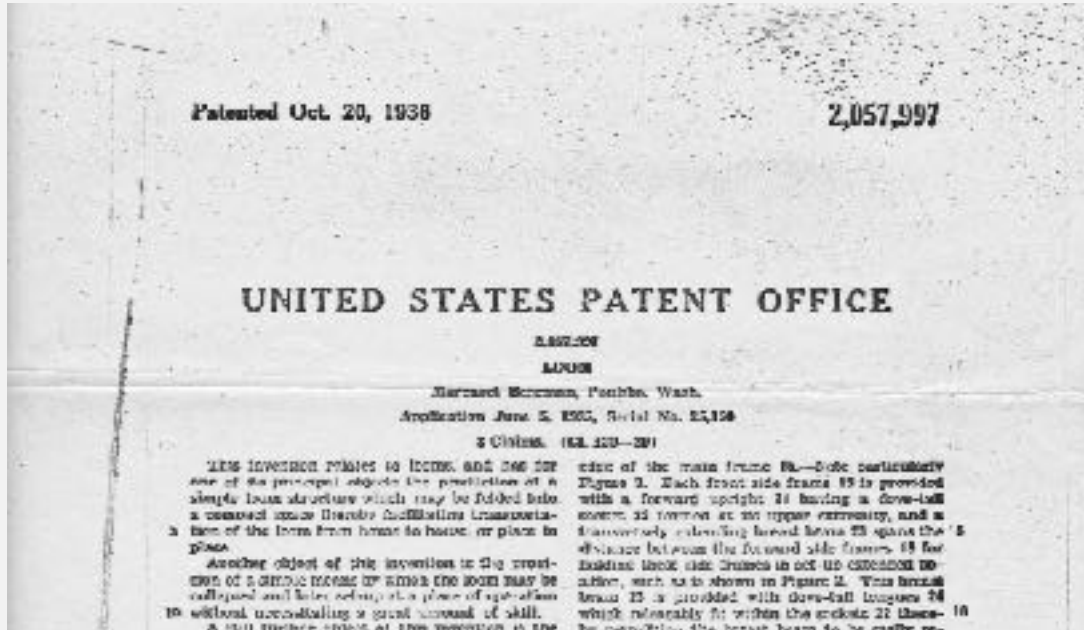
*Northwest Weavers, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1941.*

1. TREES ... A Crackle Weave on Four Harnesses
2. THISTLES ... A Lace Weave on Eight Harnesses
3. DOUBLE SNOWFLAKE ... A Summer and Winter Weave on Eight Harnesses
4. LACE AND DAMASK Luncheon Cloth on Twelve Harnesses

# MARGARET BERGMAN: WEAVING INNOVATOR

- Resource challenges drove her to innovate
  - Few looms available to her, so she asked her husband to make her loom
  - Demonstrating weaving was a challenge; she couldn't transport looms easily
- So ... Built and patented looms to meet her and her students' needs
  - 1933: The Bergman Suitcase Loom
  - 1936: The Bergman Floor Loom
    - Countermarche and counterbalance
    - 4-12 shafts, varying weaving widths
    - Foldable/Collapsible
- Arthur continued to refine, build, and market the Bergman Floor Loom until the early 1970s

# THE BERGMAN FLOOR LOOM, PAT. NO. 2,057,997



# BERGMAN FLOOR LOOM

- Carpentry by John Bergman, then son Arthur; fir, maple
- Countermarche (counterbalance also available)
- 4-shaft, 8-shaft, and 12-shaft versions in weaving widths from 30" to 54"
- Used to teach weaving in schools, Army hospitals; therapy
- Ruthie's Weaving Studio, Portland, OR has 17 working Bergman Floor Looms in regular use by students





# BERGMAN FLOOR LOOM - FEATURES

- Metal lamm wires
- String heddles, hand-tied by Margaret Bergman
- “Scandinavian roots” in wedges, tenon joints
- Tool tray in castle; pockets in front wings
- “Green” cotton cords for tie-up cords, treadles, beams, castle tool tray
- Accessories included benches, shuttles



# IMPROVEMENTS OVER TIME

- Back beam modified to be held in place by pins instead of warp tension
- Beater bar changed to allow for various widths and lengths of reeds
- Wedges and tenons replaced by hardware
- Many weavers replaced metal lamm wires, hand-tied heddles, green cords, other soft parts with Texsolv®



# UNFOLDING A BERGMAN FLOOR LOOM



Side view of fully folded loom



Front view of fully folded loom



1. Open front side panels

# UNFOLDING A BERGMAN FLOOR LOOM: FRONT



2. Drop the treadle bar



3. Drop cloth beam and pin in place with cotter pins



4. Move breast beam from castle storage to front of loom

# UNFOLDING A BERGMAN FLOOR LOOM: BACK



View of back of loom



5. Open back side panels



6. Move back beam from castle storage to back and secure with pins

# THE ANWG HISTORY STUDY GROUP

- A group of weavers in ANWG guilds who study an aspect of Northwest Weaving History
  - Intended to mitigate loss of the region's weaving history
  - Participants weave a piece and document and/or provide draft
  - Work is shared in summer at ANWG annual meeting/conference
  - Currently 31 members, not all contribute weaving projects with documentation
- We use the [groups.io](https://groups.io) venue to share what we are learning
- This is the fourth year this group has produced a significant body of weaving study
  - Previous projects:
    - 2019: Wrapped in History – "scarf challenge" using design of a NW weaver
    - 2020: For the Table – table linens, etc. in a historical NW design
    - 2021: Russell Groff Challenge – weave designs published by Russell Groff
- Study area for 2023 will be the weaves of Ingrid Boesel

## 2022 STUDY TOPIC: MARGARET BERGMAN

- Significant Impact on Weaving and Weavers in the Pacific Northwest
  - Guild Development
  - Looms, Equipment and Material
  - Weaving Designs
  - Weaving Instruction

Photo:  
Margaret Bergman  
Weaving at Penland



# CAROL HUNTER

WALL HANGINGS IN  
BRONSON LACE,  
BERGMAN "TREE  
PATTERN"

20/2 LINE LINEN  
WARP AT 24EPI

20/2 LINE LINEN  
WEFT,  
20/2 TOW LINEN  
WEFT





# HOLLY HAYNES

RUNNER IN SUMMER & WINTER  
FROM *NORTHWEST WEAVERS*,  
*VOL. 1 NO. 4*

8/2 COTTON WARP  
5/2 PATTERN WEFT  
10/2 TABBY WEFT

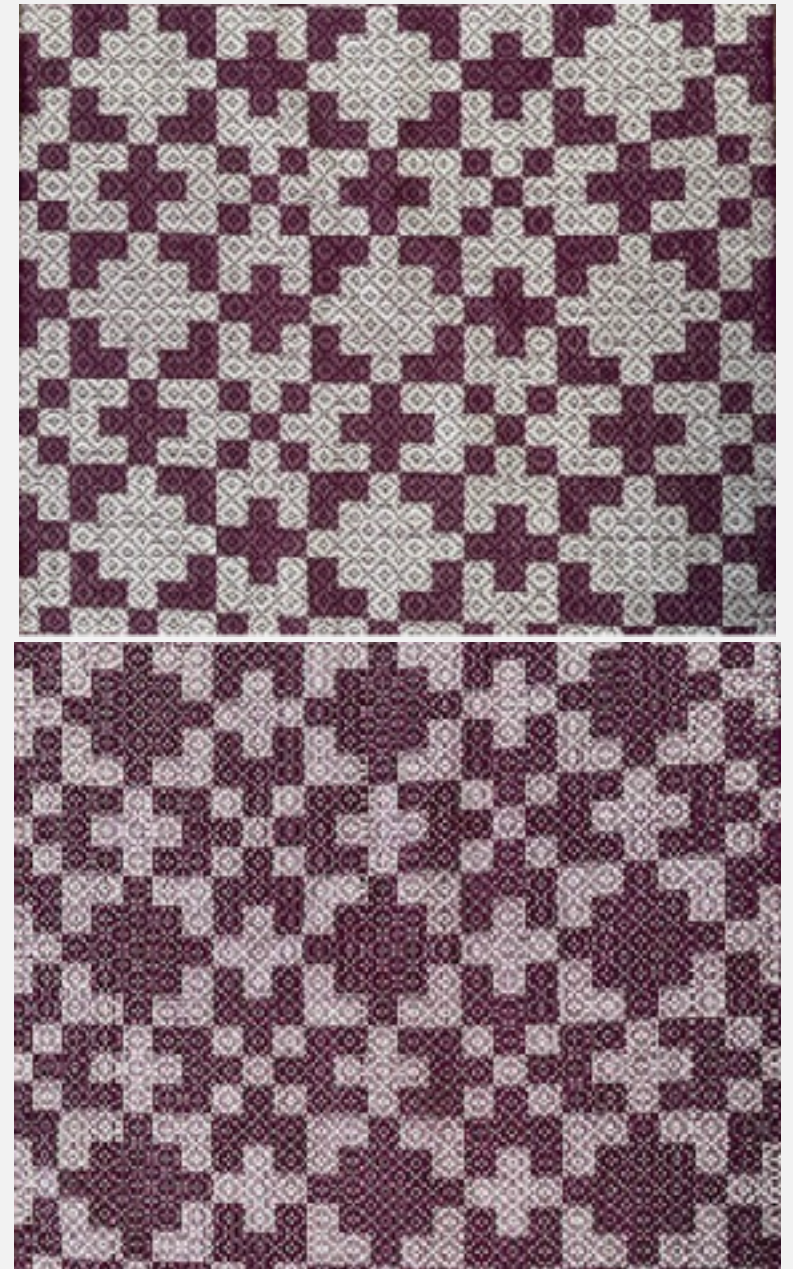


The photos above show both sides of the Runner

# ILA MCCALLUM

RUNNER IN BERGMAN  
WEAVE FROM  
STRICKLER, #603-605

10/2 COTTON WARP  
5/2 COTTON PATTERN  
WEFT  
20/2 COTTON TABBY  
WEFT



Detail photos show two sides of the Runner

# ISABELLE FUSEY

*DIAMONDS IN THE  
ROUGH*, WALL HANGING  
IN BERGMAN WEAVE, A  
“BERGMAN-ALVIC  
MASHUP”

8-SHAFT, 3-TIE WEAVE  
8/2 COTTON WARP, 20EPI  
8/2 COTTON PATTERN  
WEFT  
16/2 COTTON TABBY  
WEFT



JACKIE WORBOYS

COTTON TOWELS IN  
CRACKLE WEAVE

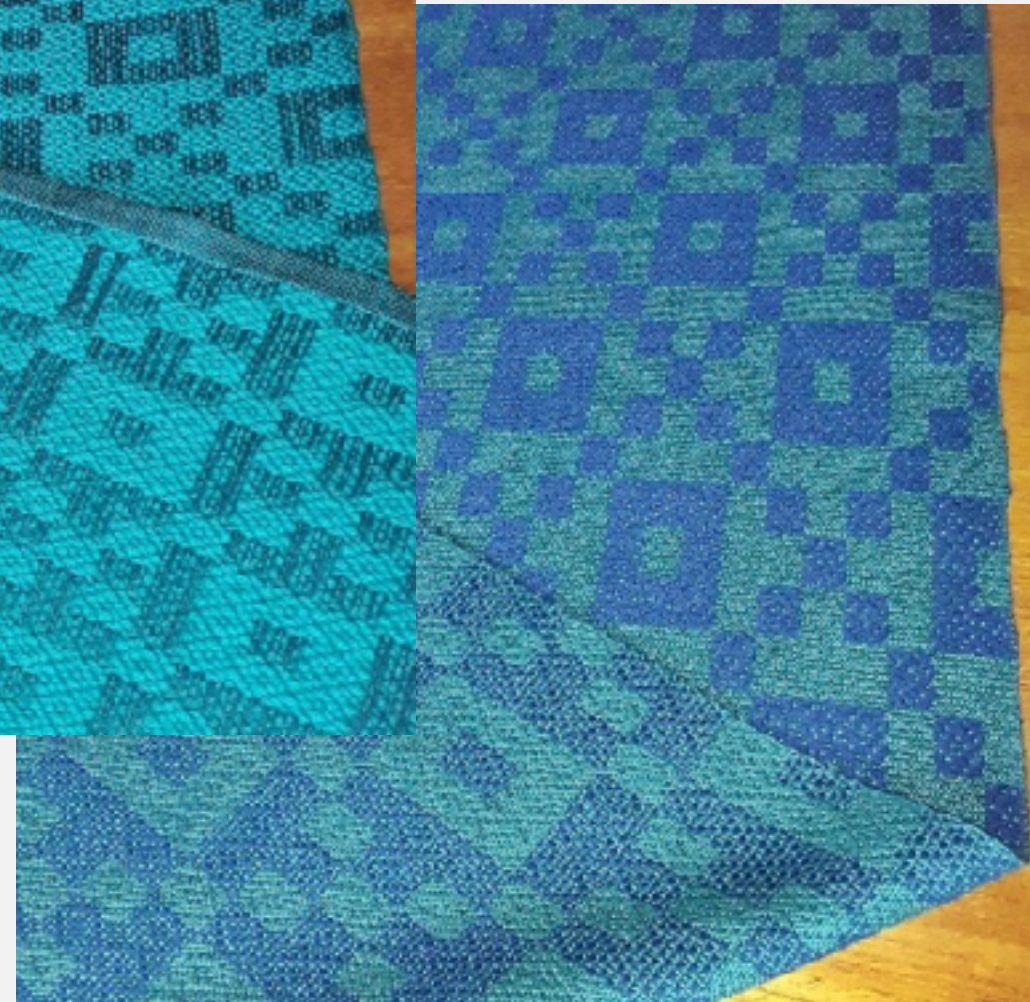
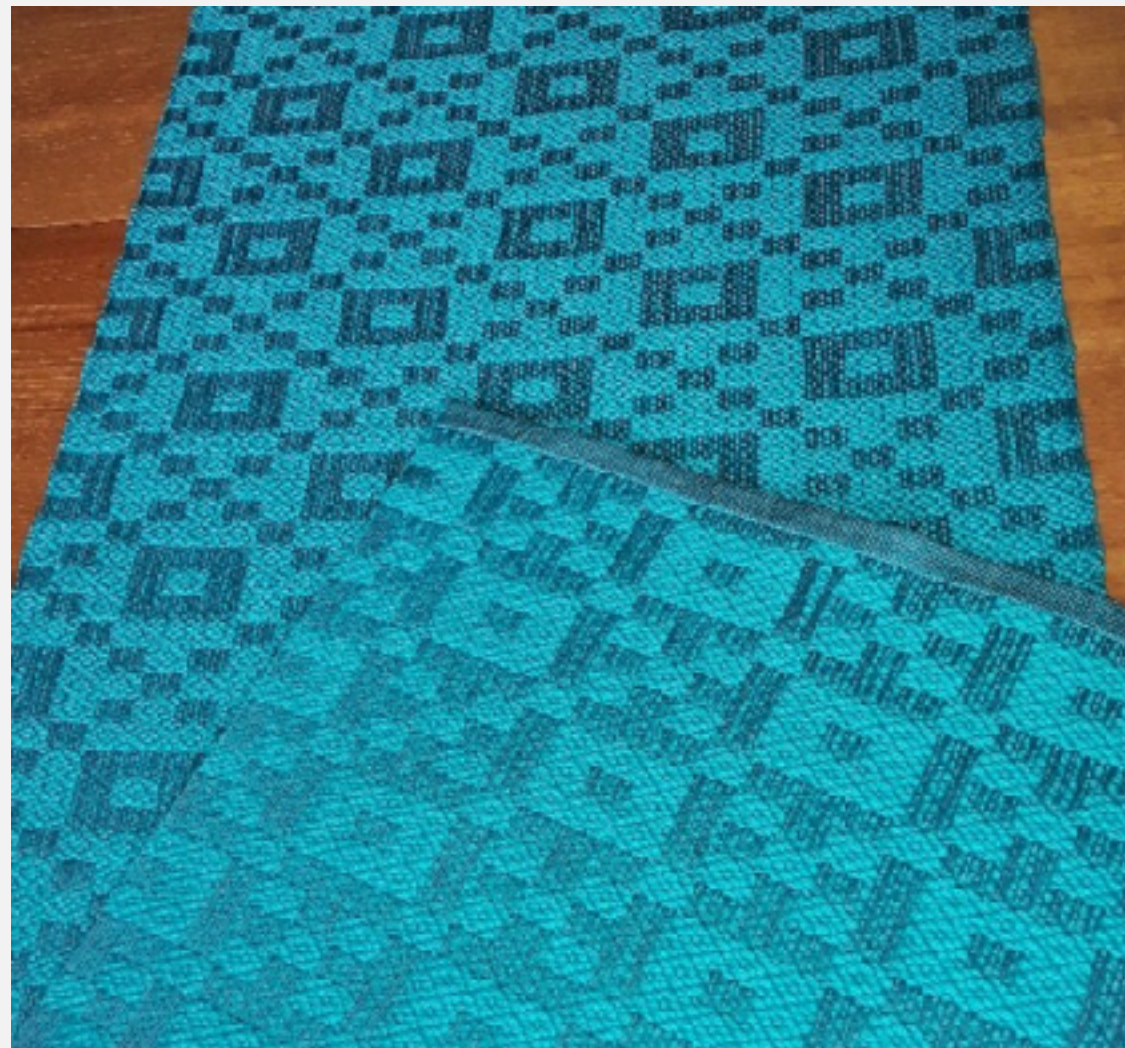


# LINDA GETTMANN

TWO RUNNERS IN  
BERGMAN WEAVE,  
STRICKLER #603

#1: 10/2 COTTON WARP  
8/2 PATTERN WEFT  
20/2 MERCERIZED  
COTTON FOR THE  
TABBY

#2: 10/2 COTTON WARP  
5/2 COTTON PATTERN  
WEFT  
NO TABBY



# MEGAN ROTHSTEIN

CURTAIN IN BERGMAN  
CRACKLE FROM  
*NORTHWEST WEAVERS,*  
*VOL. 1, NO. 4*

WARP IS DRAGON TALE  
RAYON SLUB  
PATTERN WEFT IS LION  
BRAND, LITTLE BIT OF  
EVERYTHING  
TABBY IS 10/2  
MERCERIZED COTTON



# PAT DONALD

PILLOW IN BERGMAN 5-  
SHAFT, 3-TIE WEAVE;  
DESIGN PUBLISHED IN  
TIDBALL AND GREER –  
NOT IDENTICAL

WARP AND TABBY WEFT  
ARE 10/2 COTTON AT  
24EPI

PATTERN WEFT IS 3/2  
MERCERIZED COTTON



# REBECCA WINTER

“THISTLES” BLOCK  
DESIGN FROM  
*NORTHWEST WEAVERS,*  
*VOL. 1, NO. 4;*

RUNNER DONE IN  
SWEDISH LACE: WARP IN  
BUCILLA COTTON AT  
15EPI; WEFT SAME

WALL HANGING IN  
SHADOW WEAVE WOVEN  
IN 5/2 COTTON SET AT 15  
EPI; WEFT SAME





ROBIN QUINN-DOWLING



Placemats in  
Crackle, 8/2  
cotton warp at 16  
epi, 3/2 rayon  
pattern weft, 20/2  
cotton tabby



Bergman Technique  
Samplers  
8/2 Cotton at 24epi



# SHEILA CAREY

SHAWL IN  
BERGMAN BLOCKS

WARP IS 6-PLY  
SILK SET AT 32EPI

WEFT IS SAME AS  
WARP

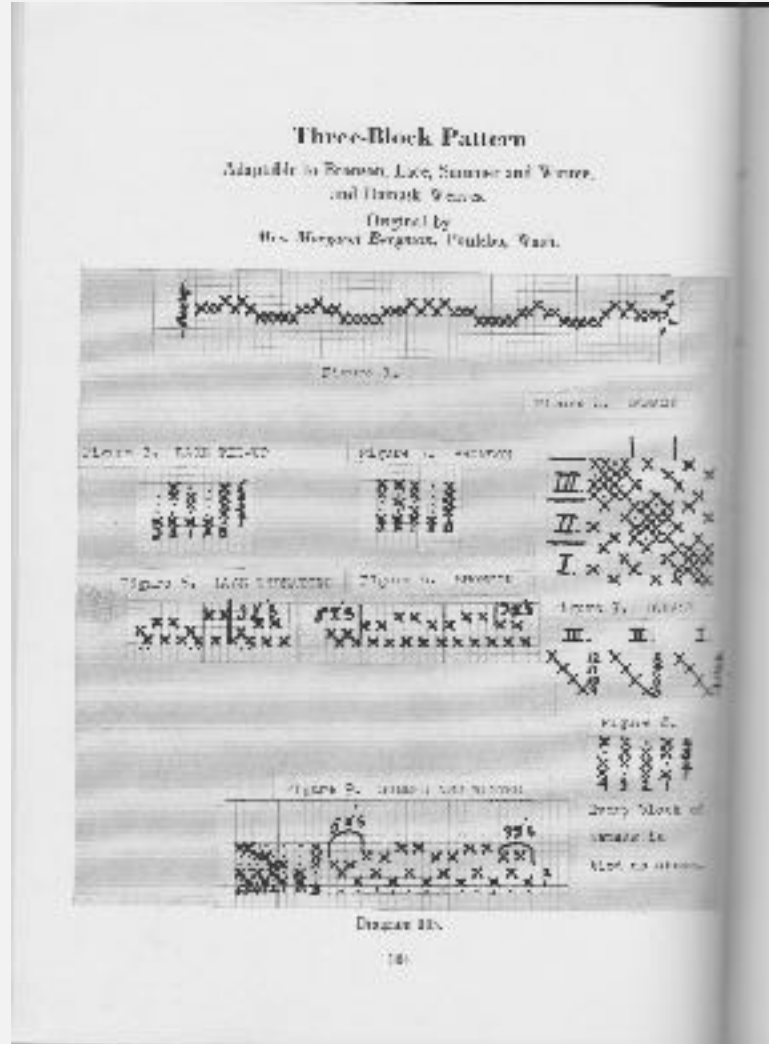


# SUE WALSH

THREE-BLOCK  
PATTERN BY  
BERGMAN IN TWILL  
BLOCKS (GREER,  
PG. 184)

WARP IS 16/2  
UNMERCERIZED  
COTTON SET AT  
30EPI

WEFT SAME AS  
WARP



*Quote from Robin Quinn-Dowling's study report:*

*"I especially enjoyed discovering more about Margaret Bergman's life, her generosity, and her talent. A new favorite quote, attributed to Margaret, found on the Eugene Textile Center's website (2022) is 'Share what you have. Nothing ever comes out of a closed fist.'"*

*"Öppna din hand och dela med dig av" – Northwest Weavers*

## SUMMARY

- Margaret Bergman was a significant force that shaped weaving in the Pacific Northwest in the 1930's and 1940's
- Her influence remains strong
  - Designs are still attractive and used today
  - Bergman Floor Loom still used and popular
  - Bergman technique designs still being published (Strickler)

# RESOURCES

- Association of Northwest Weavers Guilds, Wrapped in History, <https://northwestweavers.org/about/history/russell-groff-challenge/>
- Margaret Bergman and Bergman Loom Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/BergmanLoom/>
- Eugene Textile Center, <https://www.eugenetextilecenter.com/>
- Greer, Gertrude. *Adventures in Weaving*. Peoria, Illinois: Chas. A. Bennett Co., Inc. 1951.
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- National Nordic Museum, [Bergman, Margaret | National Nordic Museum \(pastperfectonline.com\) https://nordicmuseum.pastperfectonline.com/byperson?keyword=Bergman%2C%20Margaret](https://nordicmuseum.pastperfectonline.com/byperson?keyword=Bergman%2C%20Margaret)

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  - *Northwest Weavers*, Vol. 1, No. 2, c/o Ruth Busfield, Secretary. Monroe, WA. 1941.
  - *Northwest Weavers*, Vol. 1, No. 3, c/o Ruth Busfield, Secretary. Monroe, WA. 1941.
  - *Northwest Weavers*, Vol. 1, No. 4, c/o Ruth Busfield, Secretary. Monroe, WA. 1941.
  
  - *Northwest Weavers*, Vol. 2, No. 1, c/o Ruth Busfield, Secretary. Monroe, WA. 1942.
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- ❖ NB: All issues of *Northwest Weavers* can be found at <https://northwestweavers.org/education/wrapped-in-history/historical-drafts/>

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- Tidball, Harriet, with Virginia Harvey. *The Handloom Weaves Enlarged Edition*. Shuttle Craft Guild Monograph 33, p. 30. Freeland, WA: HTH Publishers. 1984.
- U.S. Patent Office. Patent Number 2,057,997, Loom. Margaret Bergman, Poulsbo, Wash. Application June 5, 1935, Serial No. 25,150. Patented October 20, 1936.