

NORWEGIAN TEXTILE LETTER

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A TEXTILE TREASURE IN NORD-ØSTERDALEN PART 3

[translated by Heather Torgenrud]

These articles were originally published in *Årbok for Nord-Østerdalen 1985*, *Musea i Nord-Østerdalen*, Tynset, Norge. Used with permission.

Translator Heather Torgenrud's notes appear in brackets. Some of the original text has been modified due to space considerations.

[In the *Norwegian Textile Letter* Vol. XV, Nos. 2 and 3, we looked at some interesting 19th century band textiles from Nord-Østerdalen that were first exhibited in the 1980s.

In this issue we have three related articles from the same source. The first tells how the band textile exhibit came to be. The second looks at some special hole-and-slot heddles that came to light at about the same time. The third has specifications for making patterned bands with these heddles.]

NORD-ØSTERDAL'S WEEK 1982—BANDS.

As the theme for the exhibit during Nord-Østerdal's Week 1982 at Tolga, the Museum in Nord-Østerdalen chose bands.

The most important reason for this was that district consultant Torbjørg Gauslaa had discovered a rich bandweaving tradition in Nord-Østerdalen—individual bands, a coverlet and pillows sewn together of bands and some special *bandgrinder* [hole-and-slot heddles for weaving bands]. They had not one row of holes, but two. Torbjørg Gauslaa brought forth much new and exciting material. But it was clear that this was just the beginning.

One question was how were the *bandgrinder* with two rows of holes used? Textile artist Barbro Gardberg from Kalix in Finland has long been involved with bandweaving. She has found similar *bandgrinder* and has also found some who use them.

She came to Tolga with her especially fine band collection, *Rosband och plockband*. And we received from Dalarnas Museum in Falun [Sweden] the loan of a traveling exhibit on bands and bandweaving in Dalarna, *Särktåg och bandkrus*. In this way it became an exhibit rich in content and variety connecting Finland and Sweden to the Nord-Østerdalen tradition.

The exhibit also contributed to several more band textiles coming to light, something that still continues.

OLD BANDGRINDER WITH TWO AND THREE ROWS OF HOLES.

BY TORBJØRG GAUSLAA.

At the same time as the band textiles were being registered, there was much interest in the kind of tools that had been used to make them.

The *bandgrind/bandskjea* [hole-and-slot heddle, used in a backstrap arrangement; plural form is *bandgrinder*] is a familiar tool for bandweaving that has been known for a long time.

The oldest known *bandgrind* is a narrow one with three rows of holes. This *bandgrind* has three tines and four spaces. It was found at the archeological dig at Bryggen in Bergen and is from the High Middle Ages.

In *bandgrinder* with one row of holes it is possible to weave both simple and more difficult/demanding bands and band techniques; in other words it is a suitable tool for both young and old, expert and novice.

Most *bandgrinder* look like the one in **Picture 1** with tines carved out of a single piece of wood, but with only one hole in each tine.



Picture 1:
Bandgrind from Tynset 1747, now at Tynset Bygdemuseum.

The warp is threaded in the *bandgrind* with one thread in a hole and one thread in a space between tines, and this gives two sheds—one made by lowering and one made by raising the *bandgrind*—for warp-faced bands.

There are also *bandgrinder* that have more than one row of holes in each tine, *bandgrinder* with two and three rows of holes.

Counting those we are familiar with to date [September, 1985], here in this country in museums and private ownership there are 10 *bandgrinder* with three rows of holes and 83 + 1 with two rows of holes. The collective known tally of *bandgrinder* with two and three rows of holes is 94.

WOODEN BANDGRINDER.

Nine *bandgrinder* have these dates: 1740, 1743(?), 1747, 1755, 1757, 1771, 1779, 1790, 1805. Ten have dates from the 1820s-1840s, seven from the 1850s, four from the 1860s-1870s, and three from 1890 through the first decade of the 1900s. The most recent dates are 1898, 1902, and 1905.

Some *bandgrinder* have text, many have initials, but others are without inscription.

Of 76 wooden *bandgrinder* four have three rows of holes and 47 have two rows of holes over the whole width (one is a narrow *bandgrind* with five spaces and six tines). Two have three rows of holes and nine have two rows of holes over the middle section of the *bandgrind*, with places for from 1 to 17 pattern threads, while there can be up to 20-31 pattern threads in *bandgrinder* with three rows of holes. Fourteen of the *bandgrinder* have a little section with two and/or three rows of holes in 1-5 of the middle tines.

REINDEER HORN/BONE BANDGRINDER.

In the Samisk department of the Norsk Folkemuseum there are 14 *bandgrinder* with two rows of holes and three *bandgrinder* with three rows of holes, and in private ownership one *bandgrind* with two rows of holes over the whole width.

Three have dates, one from Tysfjord with the year 1811, one from Finnmark dated 1899, the third from Bodin dated 1902. The one *bandgrind* from Lebesby has a crosspiece of wood, painted blue.

One of the 17 *bandgrinder* in the Samisk section is from the Finnish side of the border, from Polmakvann, a well-made *bandgrind*.

Three of the *bandgrinder* have only a general local connection to: Finnmark, or to "Lappish goods bought from dealer Frandrem" (on the map obtained in Lebesby/Porsanger), the other 13 *bandgrinder* are from communities in: Nordland—one from Bodin, one from Tysfjord. Troms—one from Kåfjord. Finnmark—two from Kautokeino, one from Karasjok, one from Porsanger, five from Lebesby, one (plus 1 in private ownership) from Sør-Varanger.

All of the Sami *bandgrinder* have two rows of holes over the whole width. The rows of holes are placed much closer to one another, a distance of about .5 to 1 cm, than in the "Norwegian" *bandgrinder*.

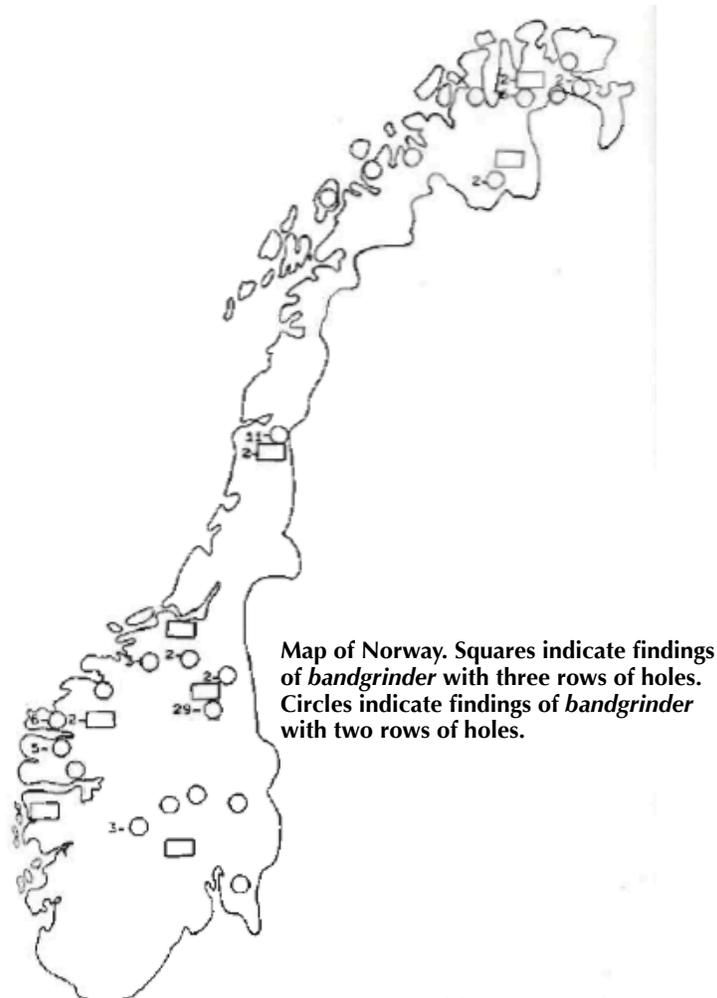
Of the material that has been collected to date, there are, in addition to the Sami area in North Norway, two other areas of the country that stand out where quantity is concerned—see the map. One is Nord-Østerdalen—the communities of Alvdal, Tynset, Tolga and Os.

Up to September, 1985, there are registered one *bandgrind* with three rows of holes and 28 with two rows of holes with from 19 to 44 tines, and one with six tines,

most in private ownership. In the neighboring community of Røros there are registered two with two rows of holes. All have the rows of holes over the whole width of the *bandgrind*, except for one in Tynset Bygdemuseum.

This one has two rows of holes over the middle section for 20 pattern threads plus four single holes on each side, 28 tines in all (see Picture 1).

This *bandgrind* has text on both sides of the top crosspiece and the year 1747. It has the next to the oldest date; the *bandgrind* in Meldal Bygdemuseum has the year 1740. One *bandgrind* in Tromsø museum from Senja has the date 1755.



Map of Norway. Squares indicate findings of *bandgrinder* with three rows of holes. Circles indicate findings of *bandgrinder* with two rows of holes.

From the Helgeland communities of Hattfjelldal, Brønnøy, Alstadhaug, Hemnes, Dønna and Rana there are two *bandgrinder* with three rows of holes in the middle section, six with two rows of holes over the whole width with from 19 to 28 tines with double holes, five with two rows of holes in the middle section with room for from 12 to 17 pattern threads; one has the date 1790.

These *bandgrinder* are in museums in Rana, Trondheim, Lillehammer and Bygdøy-Norsk Folkemuseum; one is in private ownership.

Another area, Nordfjord-Sunnfjord-Sogn, stands out with 12 *bandgrinder* with two rows of holes in one, two or

three tines in the middle section, two with three rows of holes in the 3-5 center tines; in other words *bandgrinder* with extra holes for a small group of pattern threads. Four of the *bandgrinder* have dates: 1832, 1847, 1859, 1866.

Most of the *bandgrinder* have a specific connection to the area, but with others in the museums the local connection is uncertain.

A completely different type of *bandgrind* with two rows of holes is one in Nedre Numedal with the date 1814.

This has ten wide tines with two holes side-by-side in each tine (at the same height), 20 holes in all; in addition it has nine narrow tines without holes that give double the number of spaces between tines in the *bandgrind*.

In addition, Drammen has a 9 cm-wide "*bandgrind*" with two rows of holes with 1.5 cm between the rows, 21 holes in the upper row, 15 in the lower. It is made of one piece of wood is decorated on both sides. It has no tines or spaces, just the two rows of holes.

Bandgrinder with two and three rows of holes (and those with shorter pattern slots) are also known in Sweden (*Västerbotten* [magazine from Västerbotten Museum] no. 2-81) and Finland (*Hemsløjden* [magazine] no. 1-80).

Barbro Gardberg: "*Bandgrinder* with two rows of holes have been encountered only in the coastal regions around the Gulf of Bothnia and the surrounding skerries and also the island of Åland, but not farther inland. This type of *bandgrind* is clearly the older form; dated examples are often from the beginning of the 1700s. The type with the shorter slots for pattern threads occur about 1840 and could have been developed from the ones with two rows of holes.

"Also, a seldom-seen variant with three rows of holes has been encountered in the skerries but to date there have been no discoveries of bands. Among the Sami there are *bandgrinder* with two rows of holes, but whether a connection exists here has not been demonstrated.

"That these *bandgrinder* have been fine working tools for pick-up patterned bands can certainly be established, and it is, in fact, strange that they have been forgotten. The literature mentions them only in passing, and I have never seen the weaving technique written down anywhere."

In Nord-Østerdalen the use of *bandgrinder* with two and three rows of holes had completely disappeared, but in 1982 the museums in Nord-Østerdalen with conservator Per Hvamstad addressed this with Nord-Østerdal's Week and the large exhibit of band textiles (among others one coverlet and 11 long cushions, all sewn together of 1 cm to 5 cm-wide pattern-woven bands). Barbro Gardberg came from Finland and shared her knowledge about the use of these *bandgrinder*, and of *bandgrinder* with additional shorter slots for pattern threads. She has previously held classes in Oppdal and an exhibit in Husfliden, Oslo; see *Norsk Husflid* [magazine] no. 1-80.

By using these *spaltegrinder* [those heddles with extra tines and additional shorter slots for pattern threads] it is much quicker to weave pattern-woven pick-up bands.

Barbro's students at Tolga and others have taken this work further, and are helping to increase interest in bandweaving in Norway and in the use of these previously-much-used tools.

Use the techniques and the tools; the applications will increase with use. It is fun and quick!

BANDS WITH PICK-UP PATTERNS—EXAMPLES OF RECIPES. BY ANNE GRETE STUKSRUD

PICK-UP BAND WOVEN IN SPALTEGRIND.

Diagram 1 shows part of a *bandgrind* [hole-and-slot heddle for weaving bands] with 9 *spalter* [shorter slots, cut into the tines, in addition to the longer slots between the tines in the heddle, for weaving pick-up bands with two background ends between pattern ends]. The centermost *spalte* is placed in a narrow tine, which is often marked. In this one there are places for 9 pattern threads, 8 background threads on each side of the middle and 14 border threads on each side.

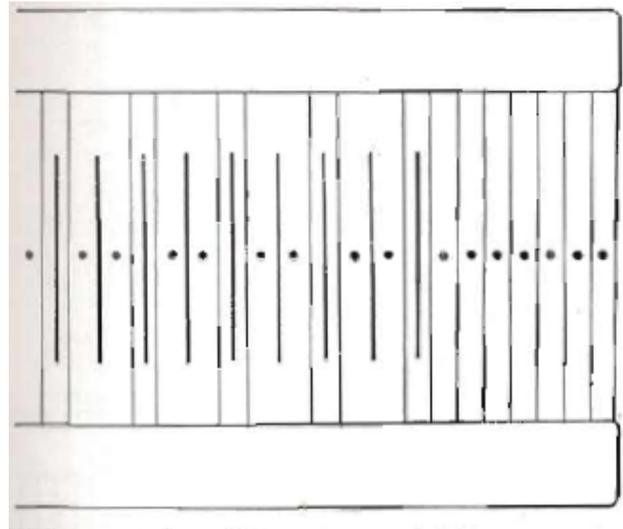


Diagram 1: *Bandgrind* with *spalter* [shorter slots for pattern threads, in addition to normal slots between tines].

Warp: First the pattern threads are wound around the back of a chair, with spaces for background and border threads where these will be added in.

Material: Wool and linen. Røros *billedvevgarn* 12/2 for the borders. *Lingarn* [linen] 16/2 for the background, with Røros *billedvevgarn* 12/2 for the pattern threads.

Warping order: (1 end dark wool, 1 end light wool) x 7 for the border (1 end dark wool, 2 ends linen) x 8 + 1 end dark wool for the pattern section of 9 pattern ends (1 end light wool, 1 end dark wool) x 7 for the border.

On the shed made by lowering the *bandgrind* take the weft from the right. On the shed made by raising the *bandgrind* take the weft from the left. Thus the pattern will stand out more clearly from the background.

Warping order: 4 ends blue linen 2 ends green linen (1 end blue linen, 1 end green linen) x 2 (2 ends green linen, 1 end white wool) x 3 1 end blue linen 1 end green linen 1 end white wool (1 end blue linen, 1 end green linen) x 2 (1 end blue wool, 2 ends blue linen) x 5 (center) (1 end green linen, 1 end blue linen) x 2 1 end green linen 1 end white wool 1 end blue linen 1 end green linen (1 end white wool, 2 ends green linen) x 3 (1 end blue linen, 1 end green linen) x 2 1 end green linen 4 ends blue linen.

Thanks to **Heather Torgenrud** for her translation work for the *N.T.L.* Heather is available to translate textile-related articles and patterns from Norwegian for \$10/hour. Email her at fjord@blackfoot.net.

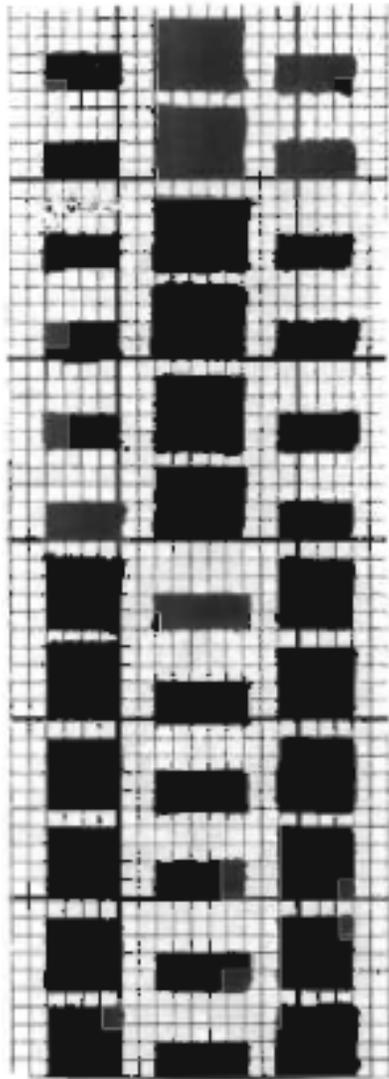


Chart 2.
Draft of band to weave in bandgrind with three rows of holes and half heddles of string [darkened squares indicate floating pattern ends, four vertical rows of squares at each side represent white pattern ends threaded in lowest row of holes and through string heddle loops, five vertical rows of squares in center represent blue pattern ends threaded in uppermost row of holes and through string heddle loops, one horizontal row of squares = one pick].

Plain weave [balanced, not warp-faced] with floating pattern threads. Half-heddles [string heddle loops] around pattern threads in the upper row of holes, through the warp and down, make it possible to pull these warp ends down, below the warp. Half-heddles around pattern threads in the lower row of holes, through the warp and up, make it possible to raise these pattern threads up, above the warp.

Background: Threaded in the middle row of holes and in the spaces between the tines, over the whole width of the band. The outer pattern threads are threaded in the lower row of holes. The middle pattern threads are threaded in the upper row of holes.

NEWS FROM VESTERHEIM

A **Knitting Education Fund** has been established at Vesterheim in memory of Ann Swanson, a knitwear and needlepoint designer from Rochester, Minnesota. The fund is being used for the first time in December 2010 in support of a class and lectures by Sue Flanders and Janine Kosel.

Flanders and Kosel are the authors of *Norwegian Handknits: Heirloom Designs from Vesterheim Museum*. In their class (December 2 & 3), Flanders and Kosel will teach how to embellish (with needle felting, embroidery, and knit pile) a handknit bag, which is the Rosemaled Shag Bag project from their book. For more information, visit the museum's website (vesterheim.org) or contact Diane at 563-382-9681, dweston@vesterheim.org.

On December 4, Sue Flanders and Janine Kosel will talk about the inspiration for their book and some of the projects. Held at Vesterheim Westby-Torgerson Education Center, the times will be announced. The lectures are free and open to the public.

Ann's impressive library of knitting and embroidery books was donated to Vesterheim. Many of the books, especially those on knitting in Scandinavia, the British Isles, and the Baltic Countries, were cataloged and are available to researchers. The remainder of the books will be sold on December 4 & 5 from 10-4 at Vesterheim in the education center. For more information about the library books and sale, contact

Laurann at 563-382-9681, lgilbertson@vesterheim.org.

Proceeds go to the Knitting Education Fund.

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TEXTILE ARTIST

BECKY FRANKLIN



When Becky Franklin attended Luther College from 2001 to 2005, she took classes in Norwegian Folk Art, Scandinavian Fine Handcrafts, and Fiber Arts. In 2006, she traveled to Norway and visited the cultural museums in Oslo and Bergen. Becky's interest in Scandinavian textiles was cultivated at an early age by her parents. Her mother is a weaver, her father is a woodworker, and her parents have a great love for history.

Her family regularly took road trips from Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin to her mother's alma mater Luther College, and would often stop at the Vesterheim Museum. There her father would study the historic looms, and later build a modified version at home, and her mother would weave on it.

Her appreciation of Scandinavian textiles grew significantly when she joined the Weavers Guild of Minnesota in 2008 as the full-time office manager and organization assistant. Her work is clearly influenced by the guild members who are passionate and knowledgeable about Scandinavian textiles.

COLLECTION STATEMENT:

THESE PIECES WERE SHOWN IN THE FAITH AND LIFE BUILDING, LUTHER COLLEGE. DECORAH, IA. SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2010.

The people of Scandinavia used sheepskin to protect themselves during the long, cold winters. Surviving a winter was tolerable when luxurious sheepskins (or a large, pieced-together sheepskin, called a *skinnfell*) were between their bodies and the cold wooden furniture or the chilly air. These treasured skins could not exist in the home just as is, especially since the suede side of the skin is essentially the perfect canvas. They would print, with wooden blocks and alder-bark dye, a collage of symbols that represented their prayers for protection, good harvest, energies that fuel life, love, fertility. Traditionally the symbols often printed were vines, animals, roses, and repeating geometric designs.

Like our ancestors, we still hope for the things that we need to exist comfortably. For this collection, I used iron-on transfer paper to print our prayers onto sheepskin. The pieces are from 12"x12" to 16"x20". Each piece consists of traditional designs and a modern translation in the symbols we understand today.

Bibliography:

- Sundbo, Annemor. *Invisible Threads in Knitting Norway: Torridal Tweed* (2007).
 Parsons, Thomas. *Designer's Guide to Scandinavian Patterns* San Francisco: Chronicle Books (1993).
 Paine, Sheila. *Embroidered Textiles: Traditional Patterns from Five Continents* London: Thames and Hudson (1990).



Wedding



Shopping Cart/Abundance



Sperm and egg/Fertility



Internet/Life energy



Water



Customs/Protection

BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by NTG member Joanne Graves.

Joanne Graves says: Several years ago my daughter decided she wanted to make a Beltestakk folk costume (She danced with the Poulsbo leikarringen youth folk dancers). After doing some research on-line I told her if she figured out how to weave the belt, I would figure out how to make the dress. Thus began an avid interest in belt weaving. Four years later Hannah has her *beltestakk* as well as several rosettes from County Fair for her tablet woven belts. I enjoy teaching others how to weave and have especially enjoyed seeing my daughter become an accomplished weaver and spinner.

Jämtland Band Weaving

RESEARCH BY GÖRAN KARLHOLM

TRANSLATED BY VIRGINIA THOMPSON

Jämtland Band Weaving is the result of years of collecting and documenting woven bands and a friendship that began at folk dance camp. In 1983 Göran and Inger Karlholm came to Mendocino, CA to teach folk dancing and finger weaving. Virginia and her husband were there as students. A shared interest in folk dancing and weaving, visits to Sweden, and Göran's collection of woven bands resulted in this book.

Jämtland Band Weaving was not written as a "how to" book. It is a compilation of diagrams, charts, and photographs documenting bands from the Jämtland region of Sweden. Jämtland is in the center of Sweden, bordering Trondalag, Norway on the west. The woven bands depicted in the book are similar to many seen in Norwegian folk costumes today.

Although not intended as a weaving tutorial, *Jämtland Band Weaving* offers a wealth of information on traditional woven bands. The first part of the book includes charts and graphs for rigid heddle woven bands. The second part of the book is a detailed description of finger-weaving (flat braiding) as done in Jämtland. It includes line drawings showing 12 variations that can appear in the middle of plain or twill braided bands. Charts for flat braided bands using anywhere from 16 - 49 threads follow. Many of the charts are accompanied by quaint captions such as "the band was found on a shelf in the Oviken School in 1981". Appendix B includes some interesting excerpts from old documents:

"A wedding couple was expected to give gifts to their parents and in other cases to their brothers and sisters. . . . These gifts were to be tastefully wrapped with new pairs of stocking bands. . . so when a couple prepared for a wedding there were many pairs of stocking bands to be made."

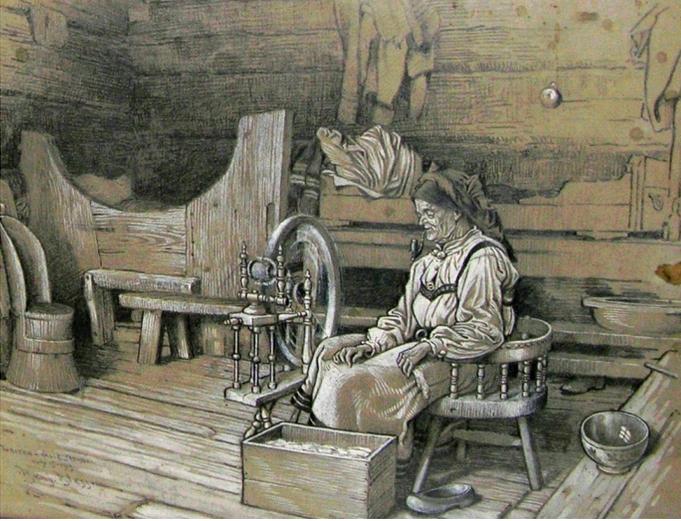
The final section of the book includes 12 pages of color photographs showing many of the designs previously charted in the book. Brides in Jämtland were certainly creative!

In his introduction to the book, Göran Karlholm says: "We hope that this notebook provides a rich source of information and stimulation for the study of making patterned and braided bands". Virginia Thompson's English translation has certainly achieved this goal. The book is spiral bound, in an 8.5" by 11" format with a sturdy plastic cover and back for ease of use.



For information about the book, contact Virginia Thompson at 184 Colman Drive, Port Townsend, WA, 98368. A more extensive Swedish edition of the book is also available.

COLLECTION HIGHLIGHT – VESTERHEIM NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN MUSEUM



BY LAURANN GILBERTSON, CHIEF CURATOR
Ben Blessum, *Interior at Tveiten farm, Setesdal, 1920s. Charcoal and pastel on paper. Vesterheim 2000.016.003 – Gift of J. Harry and Josefa Andersen in honor of Carol Hasvo*

Artworks and photographs can sometimes offer information on costume, textiles, and traditions. Several artworks by Ben Blessum in Vesterheim’s collection do just that. In Part I of this Collections Highlight, we will meet Blessum and see just one of several of his artworks that feature textiles and traditions.

Benjamin Johnsen Blesstuen was born in Romsdal, Norway, in 1877. His family lived for a time in Trondheim and then immigrated to Wisconsin in 1888. The family settled in Eau Claire and used Blessum as their name. When he was 18, Ben went to Chicago, Illinois, to work as a bill clerk at a wholesale house. He managed to take a few evening classes at the Art Institute then freelanced as a commercial artist. From this point on, he spent much of his life as an artist, illustrator, and journalist. He took his first trip to Europe in 1903 and made many more trips to Europe and Norway. During the 1920s, Blessum spent time in Setesdal painting. He felt that the valley and residents were “fairly uncontaminated by modern improvements and still testifying to the oldtime good taste, originality, and spiritual independence.”¹

Although Blessum chose nostalgic scenes or images, he accurately portrayed what he saw in terms of landscape, architecture, clothing, and textiles. His charcoal and pastel drawing of the interior of the farmhouse at Tveiten, Valle, Setesdal, shows a great deal of detail in the furnishings of

the room and the activities of the farm wife. Blessum may have done this drawing to comment on Norwegian and American gender differences. “This peasant woman shows that smoking was once combined with such womanly pursuits as spinning,” he wrote.² But we are more interested in her spinning wheel, the box of fleece at her feet, the wooden shoe that she’s kicked off, her outfit (undyed wool for everyday), and the clothes hanging on the wall and over the bed.

In Part II of this Collection Highlight, featuring artworks by Ben Blessum in the Vesterheim collection, we will get a look at knitting and *ruteåklær*, geometric tapestry coverlets. - LAURANN GILBERTSON

Endnotes:

1. Ben Blessum, “Saetersdal Sketches,” *The American-Scandinavian Review*, vol. 8, 1920, 282.
2. *Ibid*, 285.

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