

# NORWEGIAN TEXTILE LETTER

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## Card Woven Belt of East Telemark

*An adaptation of  
a traditional Norwegian technique*

*by Lila Nelson*

THE CARD WOVEN belt that accessorizes one type of festive dress worn in the area of East Telemark, Norway, has long impressed me as a superior example of work in that technique. Several belts are in the collection of Vesterheim, the Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, where I am responsible for the textiles, giving me an opportunity to graph their patterns and study them in some detail. An article by Aagot Noss, conservator at the Norwegian Folk Museum, Oslo, Norway, entitled "Banklaging" (Oslo, 1966. in Norwegian) described the backstrap method traditionally followed in East Telemark and the unique way of reversing direction while weaving. Finally, a workshop by the Norwegian artist/craftswoman Elsa Bjerck provided the opportunity for me actually to weave one of the belts.

After completing a second belt, I wanted to use what I had learned employing American materials. The result is a wall decoration with the possibility of being the basis for a larger piece. It could also be a cumerbund on a slim young waist. It is about 6 1/8 inches wide (15.5 cm), which is two or more inches broader than many of the traditional belts.

### **Materials**

Traditional Telemark belts are woven from a warp of fine two-ply wool. For my adaptation, I used three-ply "Nehalem" wool worsted from Oregon Worsted Company, Portland, Oregon 97202. Nehalem proved to be about twice the size of the Telemark belt warps. The traditional weft is a black cotton similar to a fine sewing machine thread; for my weaving I used the Nehalem in the same color as the outer warps.

Norwegian cards cost the equivalent of about twenty cents each. They are of an extremely durable brown material and have no printing on them as ours do.

### **Threading process**

Norwegians thread the cards in pairs and place them so that the threaded sides face each other. The result is exactly the same when one uses American cards, and for each pair thread one card from the front and one from the back. It does not matter which card is designated front and which back, as long as a consistent alternation is followed for all the cards.

Pattern for Card Weaving Adapted from Traditional Belts Worn in East Telemark, Norway

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
A.	RB	C	CR	C	C	T	MB	MB	T	C	C	T	C	C	T	T	RB	RB	T	T	RB	RB	RB	RB	C	C	W	W	CR	CR
B.	RB	C	CR	C	T	MB	MB	T	C	C	T	WH	T	C	C	T	T	RB	RB	T	T	RB	MB	RB	RB	C	C	W	W	CR
C.	RB	C	CR	T	MB	MB	T	C	C	T	WH	WH	WH	T	C	C	T	T	RB	T	T	T	MB	MB	RB	RB	C	C	W	W
D.	D is identical to B																													

	31	32	33	34	35	36
A.	S	S	C	C	MB	MB
B.	CR	S	S	C	C	MB
C.	CR	CR	S	S	C	C
D.	D is identical to B					

Note: Each number above represents TWO cards threaded with identical colors but with the first card threaded FROM THE FRONT and the second card threaded FROM THE BACK. Total number of cards needed is 142.

Color code: Based on Oregon Worsted 3-ply Nehalem

- C Copper 338
- W Wine 29
- RB Rust brown
- MB Medium brown (not on current color chart)
- S Scarlet 239
- T Tobacco 341
- CR Cardinal red 1510
- WH White 241

Note: No. 36 is the midpoint. Reverse back to 1.

Instead of the traditional backstrap method of weaving, I used my eight shaft Macomber floor loom as the tensioning frame in both the threading and weaving processes. Unspeakable frustration can result in trying to deal with over four hundred warp threads on a hundred or more stacked cards. My solution was to elevate a thin dowel a few inches above and parallel to the back beam on my loom. Two clamps accomplished this. Two cards were threaded and then immediately tied to this dowel. The end of the warp nearest the threaded cards was tied in a similar arrangement on my kitchen counter to hold the warps at a firm tension. After all the cards were threaded, I tied the thin dowel to the heavier rod on my warp beam and proceeded to wind the warp onto that beam. I retained tension while warping by moving the whole loom slowly toward the kitchen counter as I progressed. Tying to the cloth beam was the final threading step. Throughout this process, the beater, reed, and harnesses were, of course, not used.

**Weaving process**

The standard concerns of establishing a proper width, maintaining an even selvage, and beating firmly all apply here as in any type of card weaving. It does take practice to develop the feel of turning such a large number of cards.

In Telemark, the weaving is always done by turning the cards a quarter turn forward only. When the inevitable twisting becomes unmanageable, the back-strap weaver turns her entire warp and cards upsidedown; she will then be doing what we do when we reverse direction. This occurs about every six to eight inches; and the visible ridge in the

weaving pattern is accepted as part of the weaving process.

**Finishing**

Traditional Telemark belts have a fringe of varying lengths on one end only. The other is cut to no more than an inch. The belt is wrapped around the waist twice with the fringed end hanging down on the left front of the wearer. The fringes are left without further wrapping or knotting. In my own hanging, I plied small groups of fringe and then knotted the ends, for a more finished look.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

Lila Nelson who lives in Minneapolis, MN served as curator of textiles for Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum from 1969-1991. During a portion of this time she was also registrar for the museum. "Card Woven Belt of East Telemark" was first published by *The Weavers Journal* Summer, 1984 issue and is reprinted with permission from the author.

## *Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum* *2007 Textile Calendar*

- June 11-15      **Class** – This Rya is for Walking: Weaving a Pile Rug – with Betty Johannesen
- June 22          **Deadline** – Paperwork for entries for the weaving category (traditional and contemporary divisions) of the National Exhibition of Folk Art in the Norwegian Tradition. Entries may arrive between June 4 and 29.
- June 21-July 7    **Tour** – Textile Study Tour led by Laurann Gilbertson and Katherine Larson (FULL)
- July 14-18        **Class** – Warp-Weighted Loom Weaving: West Norway Style – w/ Marta Kløve Juuhl
- July 21-25        **Class** – Warp-Weighted Loom Weaving: West Norway Style – w/ Marta Kløve Juuhl

### *Featured Artist: Marta Kløve Juuhl*

Marta grew up in Voss, attended Statens Lærerskole i Forming in Oslo, and taught weaving for 20 years. She now lives in Indre Arna, near Bergen, where she teaches art at the high-school level. She has been active in projects to register and reproduce old textiles. Read about her work with the unique coverlets from Arna in the February 2001 *Norwegian Textile Letter*.

West coast or Vestland-style warp-weighted loom (WWL) weaving starts by attaching warp yarns directly to the beam. The weaver uses two sheds for a variety of patterns and can pick up for *krokbragd*. Students will use traditional looms, linen warp, wool weft, and patterns from old textiles. After warping and working together on the first several bands, students can chose from *krokbragd* and various inlay and pick up weaves. Marta is the only Norwegian teaching the west-coast style of WWL weaving.

- July 21-28        **Exhibition** –National Exhibition of Folk Art in the Norwegian Tradition
- July 27            **Banquet** – Annual banquet for all folk artists
- July 30-Aug. 2    **Class** – Hardangersøm Baptismal Dress – with Barbara Berg
- August 17-21    **Class** – Vestfoldsmett – with Syvilla Tweed Bolson (FULL)
- August 24-26    **Class** – Knitting Wrist Warmers – with Arnhild Hillesland
- September 8     **Mini Class** – Hardanger Embroidery – with Barbara Berg
- October 20       **Mini Class** – Tapestry Weaving – with Judy Shuros
- October 24-26   **Class** – Norwegian Tapestry: Dovetail Joins – with Christine Spangler
- November 9-11   **Class** – Holiday Coasters with Norwegian Motifs – with Syvilla Tweed Bolson

For information on **classes** go to [www.vesterheim.org](http://www.vesterheim.org) and/or contact Diane at Vesterheim (563-382-9681 or [dweston@vesterheim.org](mailto:dweston@vesterheim.org)). For information on **other textile activities** go to [www.vesterheim.org](http://www.vesterheim.org) and/or contact Laurann at Vesterheim (563-382-9681 or [lgilbertson@vesterheim.org](mailto:lgilbertson@vesterheim.org)).

## CORRECTION

A mistake occurred in the February, 2007 issue of the *Norwegian Textile Letter*. "Rag Rug Registration in Romerike – Old Rag Rugs, Something of Value" was translated by Katherine Larson instead of Trude Arnesen as stated in the newsletter. We regret this oversight on our part. Contact us at [bettydon51@aol.com](mailto:bettydon51@aol.com) if you would like to receive a corrected copy. The requested copies will be mailed with the Aug. newsletter.

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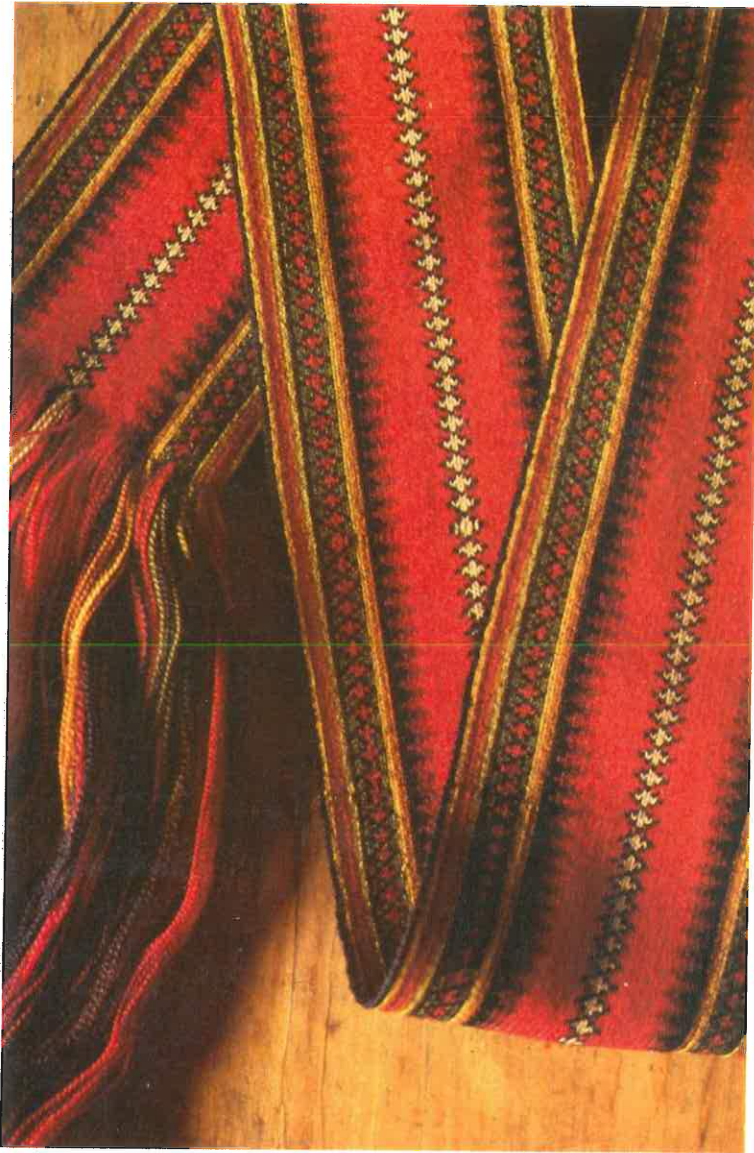
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*Reproduction of traditional Telemark card woven belt by Lila Nelson.*



*Costumes from the Telemark Region of Norway, showing the use of card woven sashes, Vesterheim Collection.*



*Card weaving in progress, using loom as tensioner*

