NORWEGIAN TEXTILE LETTER

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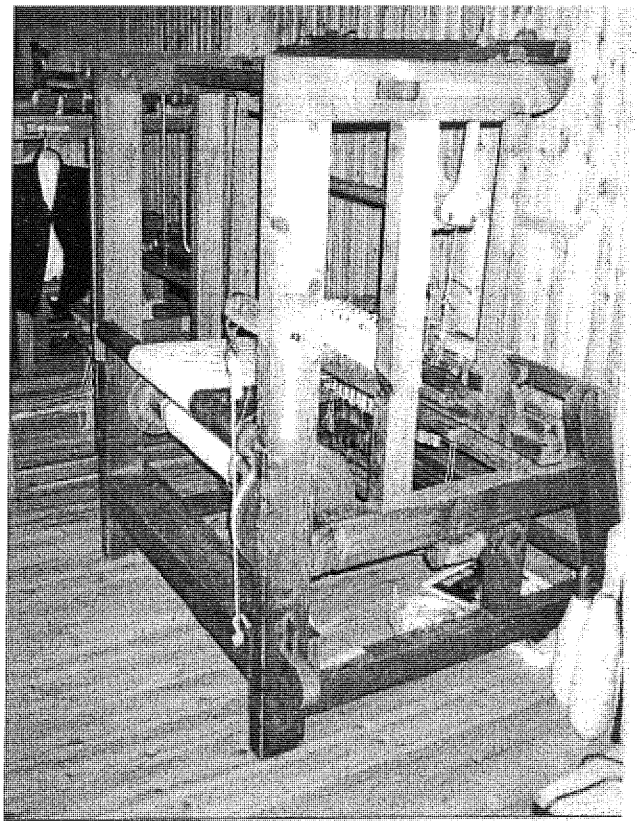
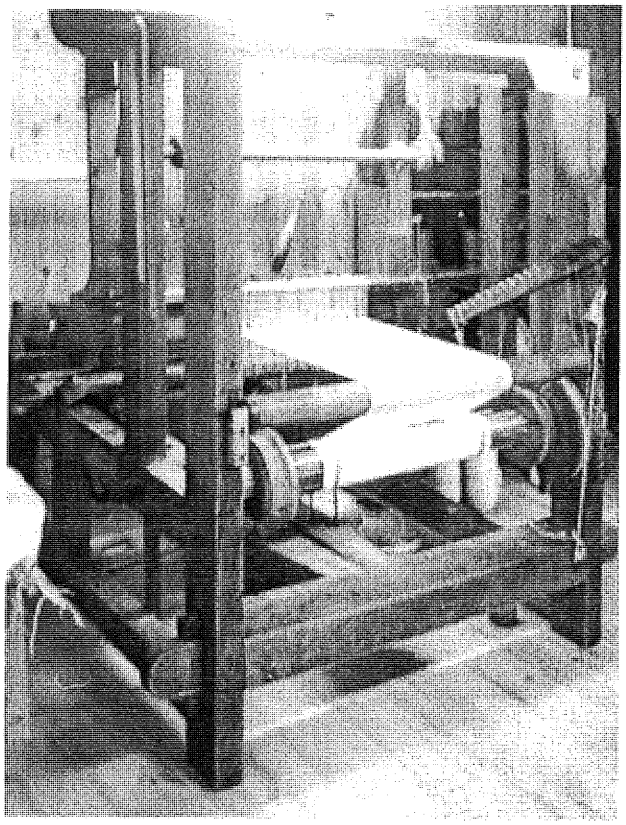
THE LOOM

by Janet Meany

Olav and Eli Vesaas live high in the mountains 550 meters above sea level in Vinje, Telemark, Norway. They run a farm today with a combination of farming, raising sheep, logging and traditional crafts, blacksmithing and silver work, weaving and knitting. They make "Vesaas-Kurv" a dinner sausage of ground mutton, smoked and spiced. The farm goes back many generations in Olav's family

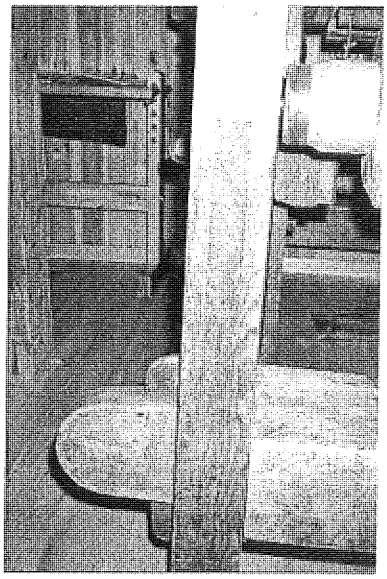


Tarjei Vinsaas Loom - front.

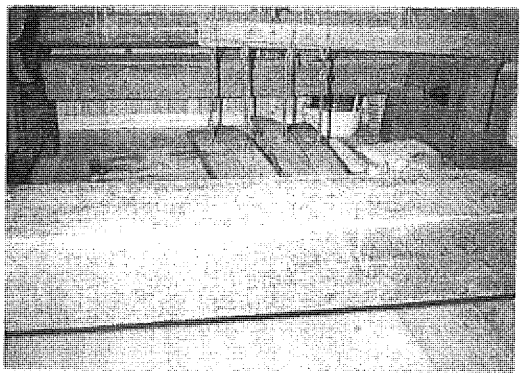


Loom - back - showing automatic advance.

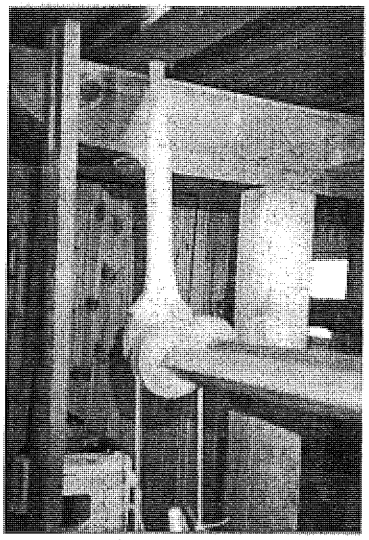
A modern weaving studio is in the large barn and is equipped with looms and textile tools, fully outfitted for the teaching of classes and workshops. In the weaving studio there is a unique loom built around 1850 by Olav's great grandfather, Tarjei Vinsaas. This loom is all the more remarkable because it was made entirely by hand, all on the farm, with materials which were available there. Not only were the wooden parts carved with decorative accents but the metal work was also cleverly wrought to mirror the industrial equipment available at the time. The basic structure has two sturdy back posts from which the cantilevered cross members project towards the front of the loom. These have gracefully carved endings. They hold the working parts of the loom. A second set of vertical supports rests on the two side rails, the back-to-front beams, which are joined to the main supports by mortis and tenon joints.



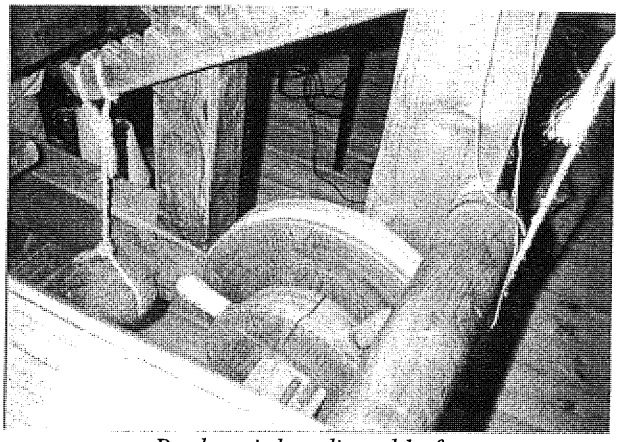
Mortise and tenon joint secured by wedge.



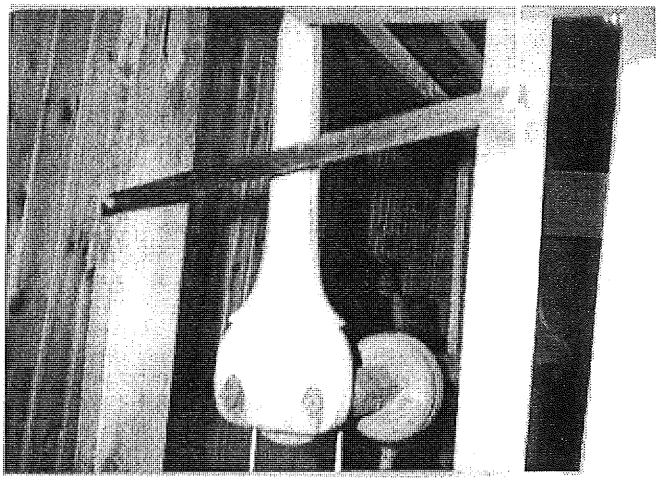
Treadles, attached in the rear.
Treadles attached to the lamms with stiff wires.



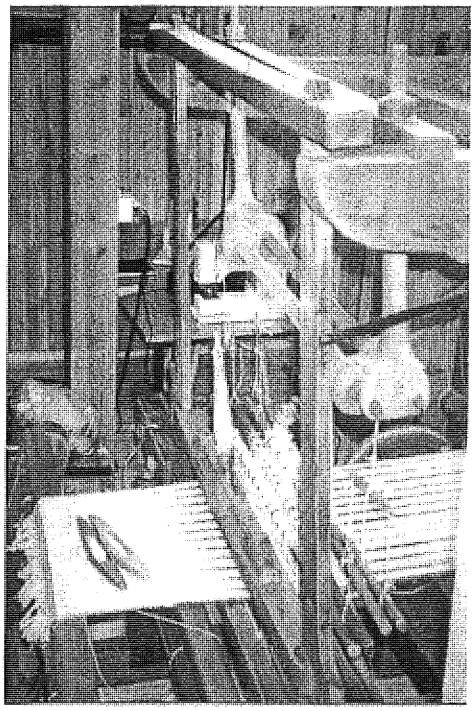
Pulleys with turned wood screws.



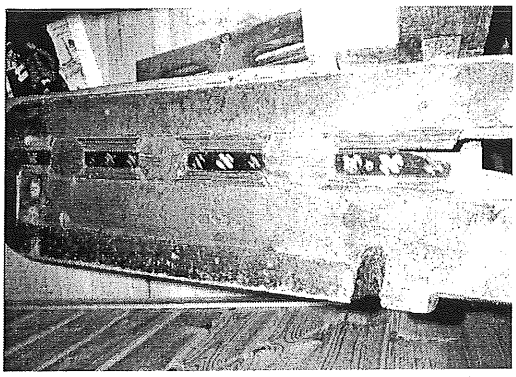
Rock weight adjustable for automatic advance of the warp



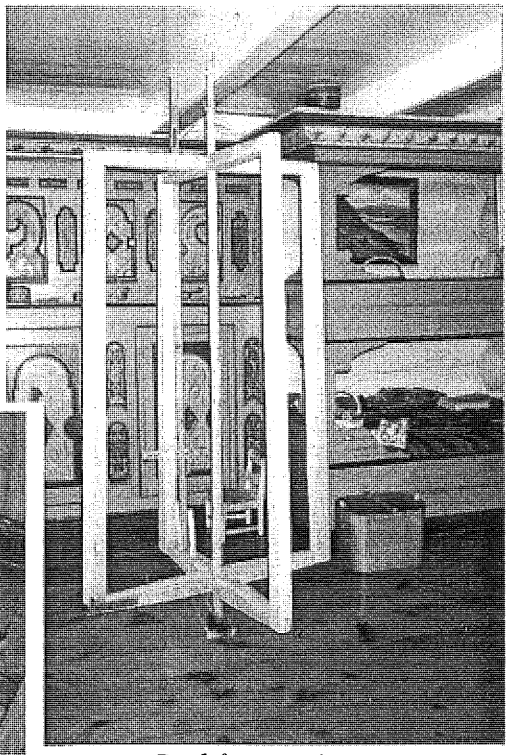
Carved end holders for circular pulleys.



Full view of shafts and two pulley arms encased in handsome

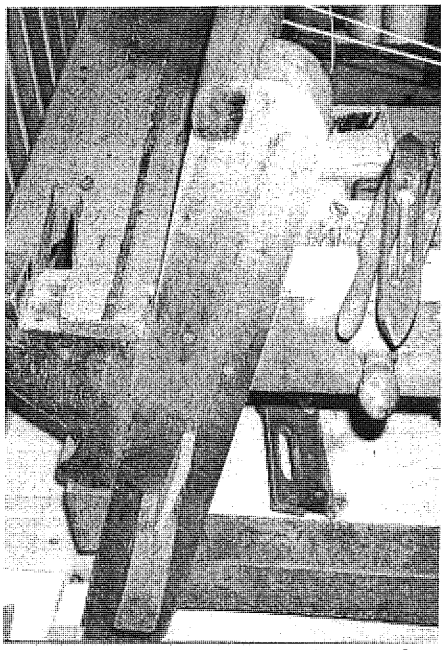


Flat board. Wood for board was taken from a decoratively painted bedstead.

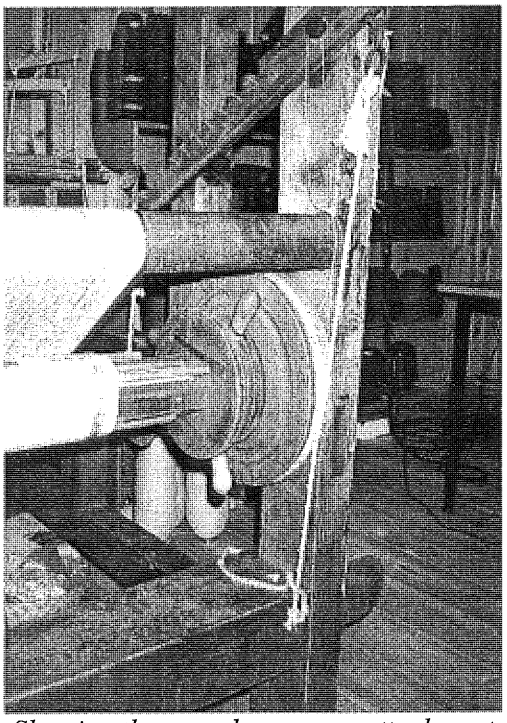


Reel for warping.

Box which travels up and down as the reel is filled with warp.



Side of loom showing slant and concave curve of bench support. Turned knob with incised decoration holds the knee beam.

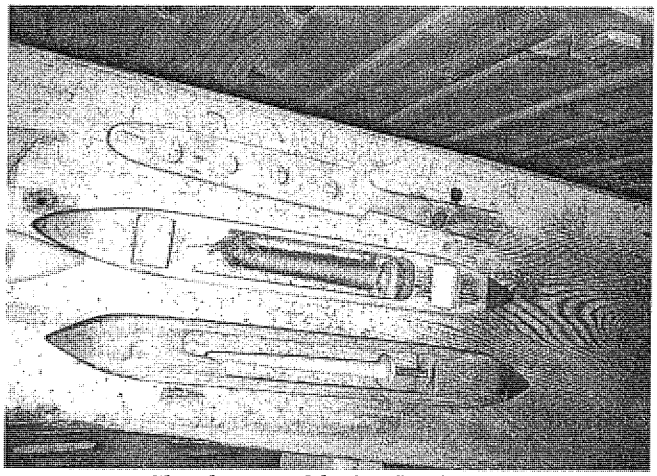


Showing the warp beam rope attachment for automatic advance. and incised planes on it. The wheel has turned pegs

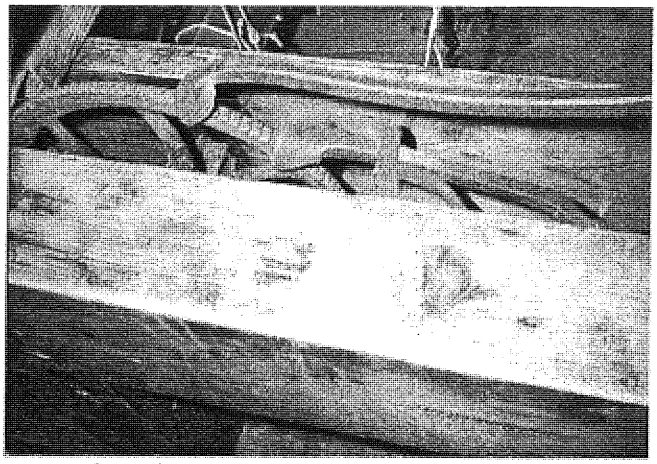
It is a counterbalanced loom with four shafts and four treadles. The treadles are attached to the lamms and the lamms to the shafts with stiff wires which are easy to move and keep the distance constant between the shafts, the lamms and the treadles. The automatic advance on the warp beam has a rock hanging to produce the gradual letting forward of the warp while weaving. The automatic advance can be adjusted by moving the rope holding the stone to any one of a number of wooden slots or by using a heavier or lighter weight stone. Wooden screws, which are adjustable, hold two sets of pulleys mounted on two separate cross bars on the top. The shafts are suspended from these pulley wheels on ropes. The wooden wheels can be moved up and down as needed. The two wooden holders for the pulleys are gracefully carved on the ends. The seat for the loom is made from a board from one of the beds in the old house. The board is painted with decorative patterns. There are holes in the bench to hold winders.

Preparation of the warp is done in the Vesaas family home. Inside the main room there is a warping reel which has a block with four holes, which travels up and down as the reel is filled. On the loom the warp winds onto the warp beam over the back beam and around the warp beam instead of traveling straight down from the back beam to the warp beam as in most hand looms. There's a knee beam with decorative turning in the front of the cloth beam so that the weaver can sit more comfortably The shuttles are made to approximate those used in industry, carefully fashioned with the materials at hand. These are end delivery shuttles which have wheels on the bottom to propel them across the shed. On each end the points are weighted with metal and there are proper holes for the weft to feed from the shuttle in a gradual manner.

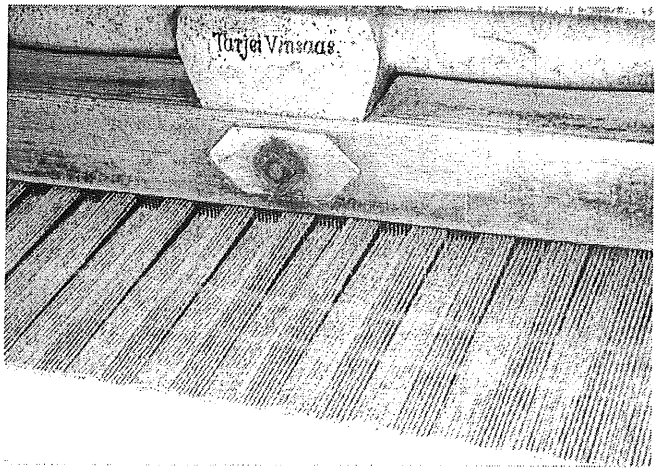
The hexagonal warp beam is carved and has a wooden disk on either side which slides in or out depending on the warp width. The width can be regulated by moving the wooden disk in and out. There is a sophisticated ratchet system with pawls and three wheels. The catch on one of the ratchets is fashioned into a delicate curve.



Shuttles suitable for fly shuttle.
Paddle used for winding warp.



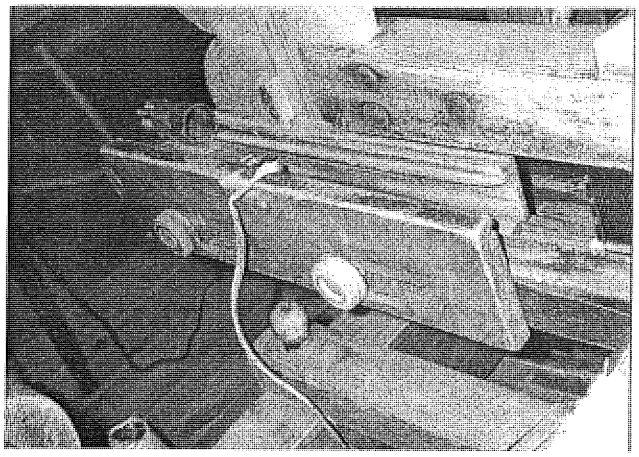
Metal ratchet wheels and gracefully arched pawls.



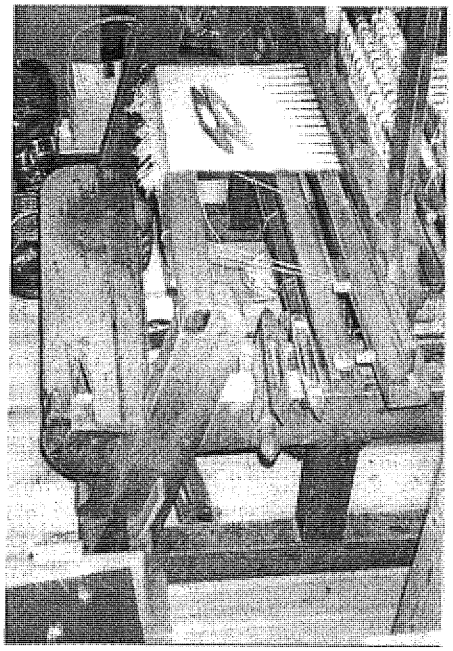
Beater with "Tarjei Vinsaas" carved on it.

Tarjei Vinsaas, the builder of the loom, has carved his name on the front of the beater. During this time in Norway there was ample opportunity to hear of the outside world. Emigration to other countries occurred because there were large families. There was much

intermarriage. On every farm there were people doing some craft. They lived in an environment of craft and they appreciated it.[1] Tarjei Vinsaas was knowledgeable about the weaving practices of the times. He must have seen looms which used the many improvements which he created on his own loom. There is a fly shuttle, a device invented in the 1700's. Vinsaas made a fly shuttle attachment with a delicately turned handle. The fly shuttle was made with a cord with the handle in the middle. By jerking the handle the weaver could propel the shuttle (now metal tipped and set on wheels) along the shuttle race, a widened track on the front of the reed, to the catch box at either end.

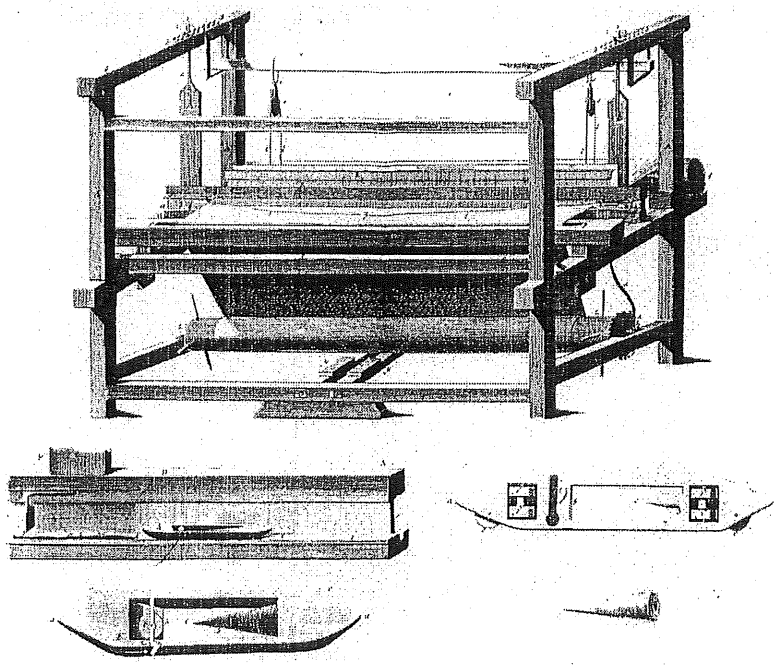


Fly shuttle box



Top view showing fly shuttle handle in upper right corner.

In the 1800s as the age of industrialization advanced the handweaver found his trade replaced by factory looms which could turn out vastly larger amounts of work. Diderot's Encyclopedia says in reference to the fly shuttle loom: "With this loom the textile industry took its first step into the industrial revolution. It is equipped with John Kay's flying shuttle which he had patented in 1733....The loom is powered by foot petals. These move the heddles which raise or lower alternate threads of the warp. The weaver makes his shuttle fly by jerking the cord with its handpiece in the center. The cord pulls the picker which strikes the shuttle such a blow that it rolls on its small wheels right across the batten or track prepared for it. When it reaches the side, it slides into the grove formed by the escapement. This arrests the shuttle without rebound. Solving the problem of rebound was the essential trick in Kay's famous device. A second pull of the cord sends the shuttle back. On each passage it moves through the warp along a channel opened by the heddles leaving a trail of thread to form the weft. The shuttle carries a bobbin ..... All of this is pictured in Denis Diderot's Encyclopedia of Trades and Industry which was first published in 1751.[2]



Loom with fly shuttle as shown in Diderot's Encyclopedia of Trades and Industry

Cont'd on pg 7

Textile Study Tour to Norway – Update

June 19 to July 8, 2003

GOOD NEWS if you are still thinking about registering for the Norwegian Textile Guild's second study tour to Norway. There are two class spaces remaining. One space is in Åshild Fjose Kløve's skillbragd class. Students will weave a table runner in one of three traditional Voss patterns. Skillbragd is a complex overshot weave, so students should be good at warping. There is a second space for class in either billedvev, pictorial tapestry, taught by Ingebjørg Vaagen, OR in warp-weighted loom weaving, taught by Marta Kløve Juuhl. Tapestry students will design and weave a small contemporary or traditional piece. On the warp-weighted loom, students will weave a west-coast style cradle blanket using several different traditional pattern bands, including krokbragd. There are currently nine spaces for people who will enjoy free time in Voss rather than taking a workshop.

The price for the tour, including weaving workshop and round-trip airfare from Minneapolis / St. Paul, is $4,300 or $3,340 for "land only." If you do not take a workshop, you receive a $225 discount. The complete itinerary with workshop descriptions and registration form is available on the Vesterheirn website, <www.vesterheim.org> or by contacting tour leader Laurann Gilbertson at 563-382-9681.

2003 Vesterheim Textile Calendar

June 22	**Deadline** - Entries for National Exhibition of Weaving in the Norwegian Tradition
June 19 - July 8	**Tour** - Textile Study Tour to Norway sponsored by the Norwegian Textile Guild and Vesterheim
June 25-29	**Class** - Beginning Weaving with J. Murphy & L. Demuth. $285 / $250 Vesterheim members
July 12-16	**Class** - Creative Weaves with Betty Johannesen $285 / $250 Vesterheim members
July 17-18	**Class** - Finishing Techniques for Fiber Artists with Betty Johannesen. $135 / $100 members
July 19-23	**Class** - Krokbragd & Boundweave Variations by Syvilla Tweed Bolson, Jan Mostrom. $285 / $250
July 21-26	**Exhibit** - National Exhibition of Weaving in the Norwegian Tradition
Sept. 27 - Jan. 4	**Exhibit** - "Incarnations" Nancy Jackson Retrospective
October 25	**Event and classes** - Iowa Federation of Handspinners and Weavers Gathering hosted by Oneota Weavers & Spinners Guild. Speaker: weaver Kelly Marshall. Classes (t.b.a.) will be offered.
Nov. 6-10	**Class** - Intermediate Tapestry with Nancy Jackson. $285 / $250 Vesterheim members
November 8	**Event and lecture** - 5th Annual Weavers Banquet with special speaker Nancy Jackson
November 9	**Lecture** - "Incarnations" Gallery Talk by tapestry weaver Nancy Jackson

Complete class information is available on the Vesterheim website - www.vesterheim.org or contact Angie at Vesterheim (563-382-9681 or classes@vesterheim.org) for a print-out. There will not be a class booklet. Classes will be added to this list. Please ask for updates.

For information on the tour, exhibitions, lectures, and events, check the website and/or contact Laurann at Vesterheim (563-382-9681 or textiles@vesterheim.org).

Cont'd from pg 5

Where did Vinsaas see looms like this? Did he see pictures' Did he travel to centers of manufacture? How did he know how to build such a technologically advanced loom and, most miraculously, how did he manage to fashion all the parts from materials which he had on the farm? It appears from looking at the beautifully carved reeds in his textile tool collection that he wove a variety of cloths, some must have been extremely fine from the count of the old reeds. Did he also weave rag coverlets like that which can be seen on the bed in the carefully preserved home of Aasmund 0. Vinje, the famous Norwegian journalist? Did he weave vadmel for clothing? What about all manner of household goods?

Not only has Tajei Vinsaas made an efficient and eminently usable loom, he has created a beautifully decorated tool for weaving in the mountains of Telemark..

1.) Conversations with Ingebjorg Vaagen and Eli Vesaas, June, 2002

2.) Diderot, Denis. A Diderot Pictorial Encyclopedia of Trades and Industry. 485 Plates Selected from "L'Encyclopedie" of Denis Diderot edited with introduction and notes by Charles C. Gillespie in two volumes. First published in 1751. Reprinted in 1959 by Dover Publications, Inc. New York. Also, Broudy, Eric. The Book of Looms. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1979..

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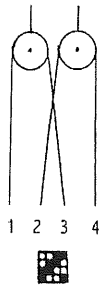
VINSAAS LOOM

The Vinsaas Loom has two sets of two pulleys mounted on two separate cross bars, one set on each side. It is possible that the two pulley systems were used to weave 2/2 twill which could have been made into material which was felted to produce vadmel or wadmal.

In *Kankaankutojan työvälineoppi* by Helvi Pyysalo (Otava, 1971, p.48) this diagram shows how 2/2 twill can be woven by using two pulley wheels on each side. A number of old



Norwegian looms have this arrangement of pulleys.

Marta Hoffmann in the glossary of The Warp-Weighted Loom (P. 420) defines:

"Wadmal. Woollen cloth,
usually in plain 2/2 twill, fulled."

Vadmel for use on the farm could have been woven in this manner on the Vinsaas loom.

UPDATE ON "ARTISAN CLOTHING: WEAVING AND DESIGN IN NORWAY"

from Carol Colburn

I want to share good news regarding the weaving course which began last year in Vinje, Telemark Norway with myself and Ingebjørg Vaagen and Eli Vesaas as collaborating teachers. The workshop course focuses on weaving, fulling the cloth, and developing contemporary clothing designs for handwoven *vadmel* cloth. Utilizing facilities at the Vesaas Farm and the Mjonøy Handcraft and Cultural Center, the experience is richly inspired by Norwegian handcraft traditions.

New this year - The course is now listed as a Study Abroad Summer Program through the University of Northern Iowa, my home university. We are looking for a few participants who would join the course this summer in

Norway, either college students or non-students. This year the course is set up so that students in university programs can register for 2 credits without out-of-state tuition required, so we can easily enroll students from other college programs around the country. Participants can also register who are not interested in university credit. Those not needing university credit do not pay Study Abroad Program service fees, so the overall cost would be a little less. We already have participants from both the U.S. and Canada, so it will definitely be a fun international experience.

Also new - Registration Deadline: March 10, 2003. The deadline has been extended to allow for student participation.

The UNI Study Abroad web site (www. uni. Edu /studyabroad/programs/program-Norway.asp) invites participants to spend two weeks studying weaving and design and includes pictures of the rural mountain setting in the community of Vinje, Telemark, Norway. The web site includes a link to <www. wendyjsundquist.com/Vadmel>, which describes in detail the experiences of previous participants in the course. Take a look!

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