

VISITING THE VESTERHEIM COLLECTION

BY JAN MOSTROM (GOLD MEDAL WINNER)

I have enjoyed visiting the Vesterheim textile collection to research their wonderful treasures. This will be the first in a series of articles that looks at Vesterheim's ryas and the weave structures of these ryas.

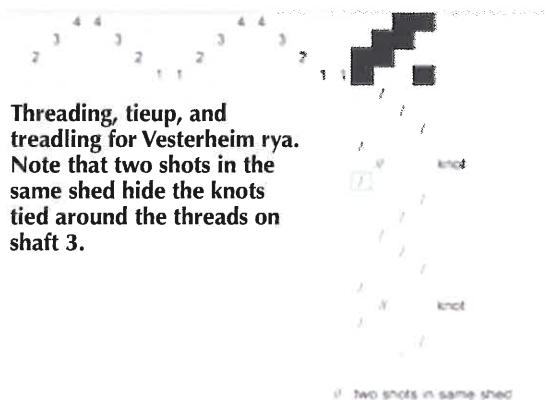


Vesterheim rya #1979.083.001 donated by Marion and Lila Nelson.

The warp sett is 22 epi and the weft is about 16 ppi.



Detail of Vesterheim rya.



Threading, tieup, and treadling for Vesterheim rya. Note that two shots in the same shed hide the knots tied around the threads on shaft 3.



Threading for Vesterheim rya. Sometimes there are 18 threads between stripes and sometimes 20 to make the correct pattern.

This rya's backing is a point twill variation in dark green, red, gold, and natural white warp stripes. The knots are in whites with borders of 5 red and gold knots. When the rya is hemmed, the warp which is knotted creates a border on those two sides of the rya blanket and helps to hold the white knots in color. All of the weft was woven in dark green.

When recreating this structure, I used Rauma Åklægarn for the warp and weft as well as the knots. The knots were tied on a shed that raises shafts 2 and 3. The knots are tied around the threads on shaft 3 and the ends come up between them. They

are hidden by the weft shot which is thrown twice in the same shed. I used a floating

selvage to make this easier. The double shots create a bit of a ridge in the weaving but hide the knots well.

I think this is the way the original was woven.

I used this backing for a rya wallhanging. It was inspired by the protective symbols painted in white on the dark walls of a medieval house in the Hardanger Museum. I made my knots in blacks and dark grays and browns and in white and off white shades. I liked the green, red, white and gold of the Vesterheim rya so much that I retained those colors in my backing. The brighter warp knots give a nice contrast to the neutrals of the other knots the colored threads need to match the right spot in the draft.



The backing of the Protection rya, in the manner of the Vesterheim rya.



Jan Mostrom, Protection rya, 19"x56."

MY TRIP TO NORWAY AND WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT CULTURAL SKILLS

BY KAREN AAKRE

I left Minneapolis on the 18th of June with the Vesterheim textile tour. (More details about the trip can be found in *The Norwegian Textile Letter* August 2011 and November 2011.)

After a couple of days in Iceland, we flew to Bergen and spent six days there. Among many unique sights, the log houses with the grass roofs at an outdoor farm museum were particularly interesting. I learned that birch bark under the dirt kept it from seeping through.

I snapped many loom and spinning wheel pictures. This was a trip of a life time. We stayed in Skei and Fagernes, and eventually made it to the Oslo airport where I separated from the group to proceed on to **RAULAND AKADEMIET**, where I would study *skinfeller* from the 30th of June to July 8th when I would fly home.

I had spent a year and a half tracking down Britt Solheim to take this class and was so excited to have it happen.

The class was taught in Norsk, and it was hard for me to keep up. Every morning I joined in singing Norwegian folk songs and we had class 9-5 most days and worked till ten at night most nights.

I started with a small skin for a chair cushion and then started to tackle a three skin *skinfeller* which took me a couple of days. I would pull the needle through with a pliers, and stuck my fingers many times. The blood on the skin was said to bless the hide.



Karen Aakre's Skinfell.

I used Gottland sheep for this one, and then I made one of spelsau which took two hides and I also made mittens, booties, two scarves, a head warmer, wrist warmers, and a pillow top. I left Minnesota with one suitcase and returned with three. I bought 14 birch blocks from Britt to make more here and I am weaving a Sami rock loom piece and will sew this in the Norwegian technique to skins I have at home. I had a hard time getting back to Oslo as I missed the bus in the morning of the 8th and a kind lady drove me to the nearest station. Then if the flight hadn't been delayed two hours, I might still be in Norway. Wow what a time! The hardanger, the rosmaling, the weaving, the carving I saw were so beautiful. I took 2000 digital pictures and 14 rolls of film and will cherish the trip for the rest of my days.

Karen lives on a farm outside of Underwood, Minnesota. She invites school groups to visit the immigrant cabins on her property..