

A New Book on Pick-up Bandweaving

And Two Hallingdal-Style Bands

By Heather Torgenrud

I'm excited to tell you about my new book, *Norwegian Pick-up Bandweaving*, Schiffer Publishing, 2014 (Fig. 1). This is the book I would have liked to have had more than forty years ago, when I wove my first pick-up band on an inkle loom. I was fascinated by the beauty of pick-up patterns, but knew little of their history. As my fingers delighted in the rhythm of the technique, I longed to know about the culture in which pick-up weaving had flourished. What did pick-up bands look like in the old days? What had they been used for? What significance did they have for the people who wove them?

Although pick-up bandweaving in various forms has been known in many places around the world, for me a connection to Norway had the most personal meaning. My late husband's ancestors immigrated to America from Norway in the mid-1800s. Some came from Hadeland and Valdres in Oppland, others from Hallingdal in Buskerud. Other than one spinning wheel from Valdres that had once occupied pride of place in his great-grandmother's home in Minnesota, we knew of no textiles or textile tools that had been brought from Norway. But succeeding generations of the family had retained some of their native dialects, which sparked a desire in us to learn the language. This in turn led me to discover the links to pick-up weaving history that I had always yearned for, and I soon became passionate about putting the stories I found into book form.

To summarize the book in a nutshell, **Part 1 History & Tradition** tells how pick-up bands were used in the rural communities of Norway in the 1700s and 1800s. **Part 2 Vesterheim Collection** looks at a selection of pick-up bands brought to America from Norway. **Part 3 How to Weave Pick-up** has instructions for weaving two different types of pick-up on traditional band heddles. There are 123 photographs and diagrams, and 29 pages of charts that include more than 100 patterns from bands in museum collections. Part 3 is for weavers, but Parts 1 and 2 can be enjoyed by anyone interested in Norwegian culture, textiles, costumes, and folk art.

For me, the *bandgrind* (band heddle) is the perfect symbol for the story of Norwegian pick-up bandweaving. Take the one shown here, from Vesterheim's collection. It was apparently carved in 1828 for a young woman whose initials were MJD and was likely given to her as a courting gift as a token of a young man's affection. As a courting gift, it represents a traditional way of life, governed by time-honored conventions. As a tool, it represents the value that the old farm culture placed on skill with the hands. It spoke to the young man's proficiency in woodworking and to the young woman's proficiency in the textile arts—highly desirable skills for a couple to have in a society where families had to be largely self-sufficient. This particular heddle might be empty now, but at one time the young woman likely wove pick-up bands on it in intricate patterns and rich colors—bands that played significant roles in many important and deeply-rooted customs of the day, from the way a young girl's hair was braided to the way a baby was dressed for christening.

Part 1 History & Tradition paints a picture of life in the old rural society and of the textile traditions that were an integral part of that life. Then it explores the customs surrounding pick-up bands of all kinds: Bands used in folk dress, as hairbands, apron bands, belts, suspenders, stocking bands, clothing trim, and coat bands. Bands used to swaddle babies and protect them from unseen harmful forces. Bands used to fasten and decorate baskets of food for special occasions. Bands

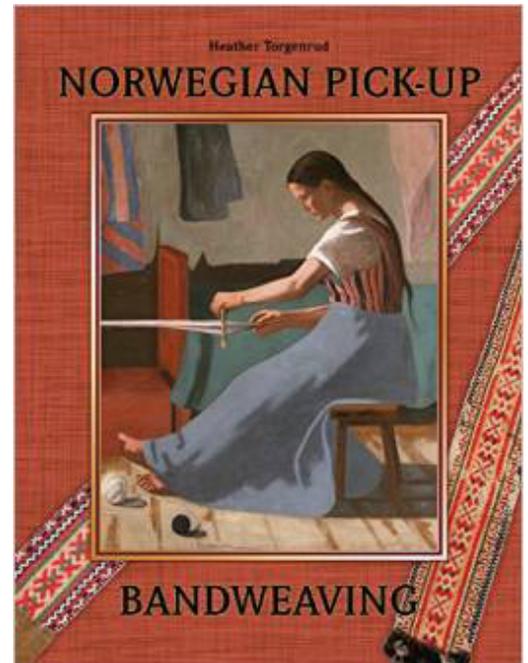


Fig 1. Schiffer Publishing
ISBN 978-0-7643-4751-1
Size: 8½"x11"
Illustrations: 152
Pages: 176
Binding: Hardcover
Price: \$24.99
Available: December 2014



Fig 2. *Bandgrind* (band heddle), collection of Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum (Artifact No. 1979.27.1). Photo: Alison Dwyer.

with woven-in names, initials, or dates. And bands sewn together to make wider textiles like coverlets and cushion covers. The story continues through the social movements that began in Norway in the late 1800s to preserve hand crafts and folk costumes, and through the immigration to America of many people from areas with strong pick-up weaving traditions. Here you can also read about the tools that were used to weave the bands and what we know of their history and about the use of band heddles as courting gifts.

Part 2 Vesterheim Collection looks closely at twenty bands from Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, many of which were brought to America by immigrants. The bands came from Nord-Østerdalen in Hedmark, Øst- and Vest-Telemark, Setesdal and Åmli in Aust-Agder, Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane, Trøndelag, and Øvre-Numedal in Buskerud. They represent the significance pick-up bands had for the immigrants, and they tell us much about traditional materials, colors, and regional patterns.

Part 3 How to Weave Pick-up is a complete primer for weaving your own bands, with information on tools, materials, weave structures, basic warping and weaving techniques, and two types of pick-up. One type of pick-up is shown on both the regular *bandgrind* (band heddle) and the *spaltegrind* (band heddle with extra pattern slots), see Fig. 3, since the two heddles require different ways of working. And the pick-up instructions are easily adaptable to other kinds of looms, such as the inkle loom. To help the beginning bandweaver, there are clear photographs, diagrams, step-by-step instructions, and hints and tips. For the advanced bandweaver there is a wealth of inspiration in the numerous pattern charts.

I like to think of Ingeborg Olsdatter, one of my late husband's forebears, born in 1811 in Hallingdal, who likely would have put up her hair with a pick-up band and might have trimmed her skirt with a pick-up band, according to the customs of that valley. And I like to think that she would be pleased and honored that I, too, weave pick-up bands in the same techniques, 168 years after she and her family immigrated to Winneshiek County, Iowa.

To illustrate the two types of Norwegian pick-up bandweaving, let's look at two Hallingdal-style bands, similar to those Ingeborg might have woven and used.

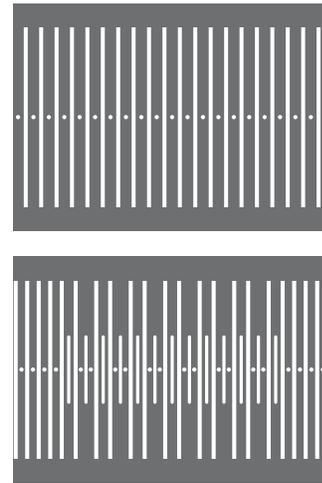


Fig 3. Two kinds of band heddles—the *bandgrind* (at top) and the *spaltegrind* (which has extra slots for the pattern ends).

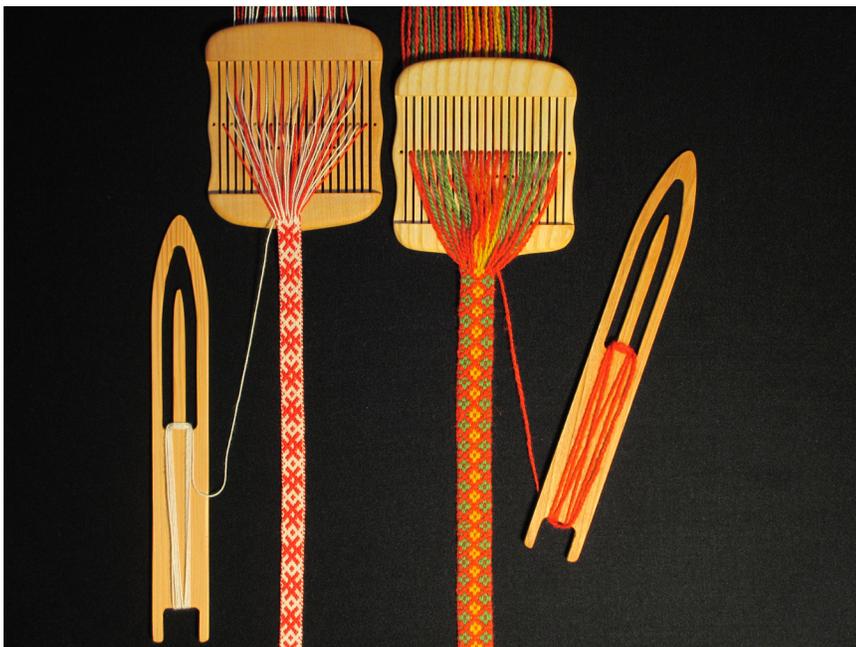


Fig 4. Two Hallingdal-style bands in progress. Photo: Heather Torgenrud.

Hallingdal-Style Bands

In Øvre-Hallingdal the *bandgrind* (band heddle) was used to weave hairbands and skirt bands. (Noss 1966, 126.)

Hairbands

Hallingdal hairbands traditionally used red wool for the pattern and unbleached cotton yarn for the background. A red end at each selvedge created a whipstitched appearance as it was encircled with the natural cotton weft on each row. Sometimes another color, like green, yellow, or blue, was used for these selvedge threads. Bands were named for their pick-up patterns. The finest bands were woven in a hatched diagonal cross pattern, like the one shown in Fig. 7, and were called *spåraband* (*spår* meaning animal tracks in this instance). Those woven in a simple chevron pattern were called *klaueband* (*klaue* meaning hoof). The bands varied in width from .75 to 1.5 cm. (from a little less than $\frac{3}{8}$ " to a little more than $\frac{5}{8}$ ") and were usually about 3.7 meters (4 yards) long. (Noss 1992, 17–18.)

Band woven after hairband in Hallingdal Museum (HFN.11750)

The hairband in Hallingdal Museum (HFN.11750), that I used as a model for the band shown in Fig. 5, was woven in red wool and white cotton and is 1 cm. ($\frac{3}{8}$ ") wide. I used the same pick-up pattern for my band, in Bockens Möbelåtta 8/2 wool in red (color 3822) and Bockens Bomullsgarn 8/2 cotton in natural (color 0000), for a width of $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

The **warp draft** is shown in Fig. 6. The red squares represent ends in red wool and the circles represent ends in natural cotton. There are a total of 37 ends—11 pattern ends (marked with asterisks) in red wool, 24 background ends in natural cotton, and 2 red wool ends at the selvages that are not a part of the pick-up pattern. The **pattern chart** is shown in Fig. 7, where dark grey represents red pattern ends. The natural cotton was used for weft. Each of the yarns I used was “lively”—when I allowed a large loop of yarn to hang freely it wanted to twist on itself—so the band has a tendency to spiral a little when it is hanging up, but it is delicate and lovely.



Fig 6. Warp draft for red and white band.

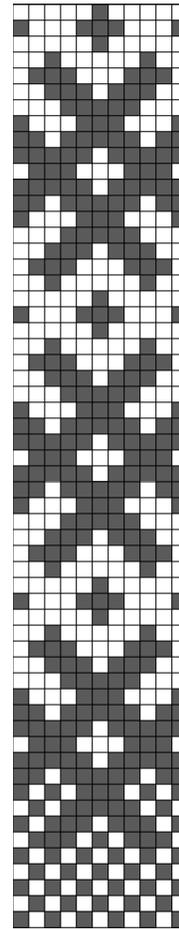


Fig 7. Pattern chart for red and white band.



Fig 5. Band woven after one in Hallingdal Museum (HFN.11750).

Skirt bands

Several different textile techniques were used to make bands to trim the lower edge of women's skirts in Hallingdal. Pick-up weaving was one technique; ornate wool embroidery and weft-faced tapestry weave done on the cradle loom were two others. The pick-up bands had a diagonally-checked pattern and were called *rutaband* (*ruta* meaning diamond or square), *trerutaband* (*tre* meaning three), or simply *bragdeband* or *band med bragd* (patterned bands). Most used wool for both warp and weft and were from 2 to 4 cm. (about ¾" to 1½") wide. Red, green, and yellow was a common colorway. (Noss 1992, 188.)

Band woven after skirt band in Norsk Folkemuseum (NF.1964-0160)

The band in Norsk Folkemuseum (NF.1964-0160), that I used as a model for the band in Fig. 8, was sewn as trim along the bottom edge of a red plaid cotton skirt. I used the same pick-up pattern for my band, in Borgs Brage 7/2 wool in red (color 6745), green (color 6609), and yellow (color 6038), for a width of ¾".

The **warp draft** is shown in Fig. 9. There are 38 ends represented by colored squares. The 36 pattern ends are marked with asterisks. The **pattern chart** is shown in Fig. 10. The dark grey represents red pattern ends, the medium grey represents green, and the light grey represents yellow. The red wool was used as weft.

I used my band to trim a hanging pouch or wall basket that I'll use it to hold bandweaving shuttles, and it could have many other uses. The pouch was knitted in Rauma Vamsegarn 5/3 wool (color V27, a red/rust twist) and then fulled (its finished dimensions are 4¾" by 7¼").

The skirt band technique uses an even number of pattern ends that are picked up in pairs, and an even number of total warp ends yields balanced selvages. The hairband technique uses an odd number of pattern ends for a central pivot point, and an odd number of total warp ends yields balanced selvages. In threading the heddle shown in Fig. 4 for the skirt band technique, I added an extra red selvedge end on the left (so I had 39 ends total, instead of the 38 shown in the warp draft). This built a slight curve into the band so it fit perfectly around the pouch, where the bottom edge of the trim needed to be slightly longer than the top edge.



Fig 9. Warp draft for red, green, and yellow band.

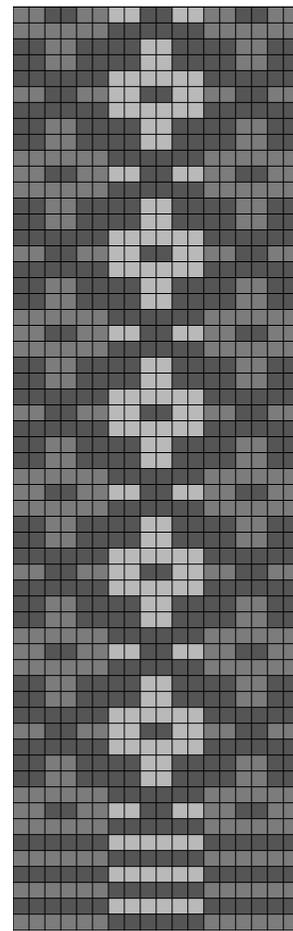


Fig 10. Pattern chart for red, green, and yellow wool band.



Fig 8. Band woven after one in Norsk Folkemuseum (NF.1964-0160) and used to trim a knitted-and-fulled wall pouch or basket for holding bandweaving shuttles.

I hope that in the pages of this new book you will delight in the beauty of pick-up bands, as I do, and find enjoyment, inspiration, and your own satisfying connections to the past.

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