

# NORWEGIAN TEXTILE LETTER

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## Damask Weaving in Romsdal, A Registration

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Translated from the Norwegian by Christine Spangler

### Introduction

In 1980 I interviewed Johan A. Friisvold (1897-1996), a farmer from Ner-Frisvold in Eidsbygda, about the cultivation of linen on his farm. He explained that each year until about 1930, they grew an eighth acre of linen, which they retted, hackled and sent to Oslo to be spun. Later on in the conversation he mentioned that his grandmother, Kari Friisvold (born Hatle)<sup>1</sup>, had taught herself picture weaving,<sup>2</sup> when she was young, and there were eight textiles she had woven. This awoke my interest. Upon closer questioning it turned out he was referring to damask. I photographed some of the textiles there. Later I asked about the loom and found that it was quite special. The question that presented itself was this: Was this the only example in Romsdal or were there others who practiced this art?

After awhile I realized that there were others in the immediate area, who had woven on Kari Friisvold's loom. I contacted Oline Bredeli, a weaving teacher at Møre and Romsdal Home Crafts School in Kviltorp. Between the two of us we managed to find six looms of the same type. In 1981-82 Oline and some of her students set up one of the looms at the Romsdal Museum. In the years that followed many weaving specialists from various parts of the country have visited to study this "treasure."

I know relatively little about weaving. The purpose of this article, therefore, is not to go into details in that area. Rather, I wish to record the culture associated with this type of weaving and its extent: who wove, where they learned it, what type of equipment they used, what types of textiles exist today, etc. Mali Furunes wrote in 1934 that "damask was used a great deal, and in the past there were several damask looms in Romsdal. There is still one at Øvstedal in Tresfjord and at Frisvold in Eidsbygda." (Grimeland 1934, p. 39) A statement such as this made it even more inspiring to begin the hunt.

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<sup>1</sup> The repetition of maiden and married names and dates may seem tedious to a non-Norwegian audience. However, in a place where people are named after the farms they owned and where family relationships are extremely important, these names are considered essential. Since the same names might be used from one generation to the next, it helps to have the dates to sort out the characters.

<sup>2</sup> *Billedvev* is literally picture weaving. It is usually translated as tapestry.

### What is damask?

In *Damaskvening på Bondegården (Damask Weaving on the Farm)* the author states:

"Damask is characterized as a method of weaving in which the ground and pattern are made from the right and wrong sides of the same interlacement pattern. As a general rule the pattern is woven in weft satin on a warp satin ground. The technique is known in Europe from silk weaving manufacture in the 1400's. At the end of that century Flemish linen weavers adapted the technique to the weaving of tablecloths with figurative motifs. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it spread to the Netherlands, Ireland, England, Saxony, Denmark, and Sweden with weavers fleeing religious wars. In about 1700 the first damask looms reached Stockholm, and in 1729 Flors Manufakturie was established." (Bugge/Haugstoga 1968, 29)

Damask weaving came to Norway from Sweden. Those who wove damask in Romsdal did not necessarily call it "damask." As we have seen, Friisvold called it *picture weaving*. We know that Ingeborg Fiksdal, whom we will meet later, called it *art weaving*.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, when information was originally collected, the researchers did not inquire directly enough about local nomenclature.

### Old written sources

The oldest sources that mention damask in Romsdal are inventories from churches. For example, an old chasuble of damask is listed on the 1663 list from Vestnes Church. (RMA 1941-44, 17) This is not the only example. Damask was also used for clothing. We find an entry in the personal inventory of District Governor Ulrich Chr. Tønder, which states that he had "a charcoal gray suit with a damask lining" at his death in 1751. (Schneider 1905, 79) Damask was first sold commercially in Molde in the 1800's. Merchant Peter Schultz Møller, who died in 1806, had "damask", "blue wool damask", and "damask greige goods" in his warehouse. (Schneider 1905, 102) There were apparently none, who wove damask in Molde during that time, but it was available in the marketplace. A "damask vest" is one of the things listed on a document written by Ole Jakobsen Moen from Isfjord on May 30, 1817. It shows that damask was also used in rural areas. The material could have been woven in Trondheim. We know that "linen weaver" Edler wove

both "twill diaper,"<sup>3</sup> damask, plain cloths and other items as well as spinning and weaving a great deal for himself." He had twelve to sixteen looms producing goods in 1804. (Pram 1964, 65) Some believed that twill diaper and damask were affectations from a higher, city culture. When Knut Pedersen Haukas sat in a council meeting in Molde on July 10, 1841 and wrote *The Farmer's Ballad*, he could not keep himself from writing a bit on this point. Verse 11 goes like this: (Hukkelberg 1987, 113)

My wife goes like many others  
In wadmél, linen and tow.  
But when I see her dress up,  
We are both proud.  
The damask-clad snob,  
Who wears a sun hat or veil  
Like city ladies, no,  
She makes fun of them.

The song has nineteen verses and damask tablecloths, sun hats and veils were not the only things that the author disliked about high cultured city life.

A year or two after this song was written, damask looms were in use in Molde. A teacher came from Trondheim. Master weaver A. Olsen of Trondheim wrote to the Council of the Romsdal Agricultural Association, that he would like to teach pattern weaving. The Association showed enthusiasm for the idea and sent the offer to the city council as well. (Bolstad 1967, 21) At that time the Agricultural Association was working on a large industrial exhibition for September of that year in Molde. They chose a separate exhibit committee to organize "The Manufacture of Craft and Factory Operations." (Forhandler 1854, 4) The exposition in Molde lasted from September 26<sup>th</sup> through the 29<sup>th</sup>, 1853, and the Committee for Industry and Home Crafts Products awarded eight monetary prizes and five "Association Medals." Many more received prizes for weaving and dyeing,<sup>ii</sup> but only Mali Iversdatter Tollaas (Bolsøy) and Ane Viborg (Ålesund) received prizes in pattern weaving. Master Weaver Olsen received the Association medal "for pattern weaving with respect to his work in the district."<sup>iii</sup> It is obvious that this man from Tronderlag was working hard. A year later the same Olsen sent an application to the city council for a

<sup>3</sup> Diaper is the most readily accepted term for *dreiel*. It refers to a structure of twill opposites in blocks.



grant of six riksdollars to buy a loom for Olava Myrebø of Molde. He was given four riksdollars, and I assume the loom was purchased. (Bolstad 1967, 21)

Mali Iversdatter Tolaas and Olava Myrebø can be identified, but their work in damask is known only from that exhibition. Mali was born at Geitneset in Bolsøy in 1829 and in 1851 married Ole Olsen Tolaas (1820-1880) a farmer and itinerant teacher. (Solemdal 1987, 234) They left behind "an intellectual and gifted brood of children who did well in life," wrote Solemdal. But he also stated, that Ole had a big alcohol problem and died, when he was only sixty years old. Mali continued to live at Tolaas until 1911. It is not known if any of the damask she wove still exists. With all the problems this family had to deal with, she may not have found time or resources for more "pattern weaving".

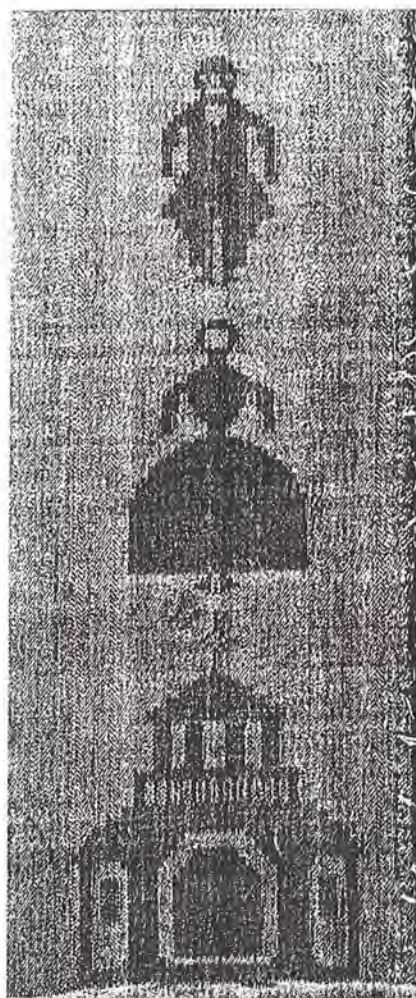
Olava Myrebø was born Olava Marie Johnsdatter Nerlandsrem at Nerland in Hustad in 1805. She is registered as moving into Molde in 1852 "for her marriage." This happened on April 14, 1852, and the bridegroom was master smith Jorgen Johnsen Myrebø from Grytten. According to the 1865 census, they lived in a house owned by carpenter Edvard Dybdahl at Myrabakken 169a. We must assume that she acquired a pattern loom in 1854, but there are no sources that tell how the weaving progressed. Councilman Thesen (1861, 624) wrote in 1855 that there were many capable craftsmen in Molde, but he does not make special mention of weaving.

As we shall see later, Olava could have run a weaving business in the 1860's. According to tradition, Marit Kristendatter Stokkeland learned to weave damask in Molde in 1861. Olava Myrebø was the most probable teacher as she is in fact the only one whose name is known.<sup>iii</sup>

In the 1850's the Council of the Romsdals Agricultural Association was involved in another home craft project. During the fall of 1855 "Mamsell Svenson" from Sweden came to the province to teach young ladies to spin on the double spinning wheel, a wheel with two spindles. The Association arranged the program and supported spinning wheel construction. The thinking was that this type of spinning wheel could compete with the spinning machine. The project was not a success, but the Association certainly showed its willingness to gamble.<sup>iv</sup>

### Damask Weaving in Eidsbygda

As I mentioned in the introduction, damask was woven in Eidsbygda. It all started when Ola and Eli Hatle of Øver Hatle sent their daughter to the Bekken Inn at Tingvoll to learn to weave finer textiles. Ole Hatle (1803-1896) was an affluent man who valued status symbols. He traded cattle and horses and was a successful farmer. He had only two daughters, Sigrid (born 1827) and Kari (born 1833), and he doted on them. It was said that he hired a carpenter for an entire year to make impressive furniture for his daughters' dowries.<sup>v</sup>



Section of a pillowcover (?) woven by Kari Hatle 1856

At Tingvoll the hosts were not ordinary innkeepers. Skipper Peder Tobias Toresen from Kristiansand and his wife Elizabet Kristine (born Moe, 1809) arrived at Bekken in 1848 as innkeepers and general storekeepers. The census of 1865 shows that they had a large staff with a housekeeper, three maids and two



men servants. Kari Hatle came here, perhaps in 1856, to learn more refined weaving, but she was required to take part in all types of work at the inn. The worst job was salting herring, which took place on an ice-cold pier. "Grandmother froze so much, she almost lost her feet," said Johan A. Friisvold in 1980.

Elizabeth Toresen was from Linvågen in Tustna. (Fugelsøy 1960, 231) She came from a culture in which crafts were important. Thesen (1861, 215) wrote in the 1850's "fine wool, cotton or diaper cloths are made in Surendalen, at the country store of Bækken in Tingvoll, and at other places, specifically at the minister's farm."

An Englishman W. Mattieu Williams traveled through the Tingvoll area in 1859 and spent the night at Bekken. He was clearly impressed at the standard of living.

"At about one o'clock I came to a beautiful house, which I would not have believed was a ferry station except for the obvious sign. I knocked and after I waited awhile, two young ladies—I do not exaggerate and use flattery when I say ELEGANT young ladies—came and in a cultivated and polite manner asked me to come in and showed me to a well-appointed room. There was nothing rustic here, and I rubbed my eyes to be sure I was not dreaming. . . (--) The supper, which consisted of veal with milk and white bread and was served with polite manners, was of such an elaborate character that it convinced me that the experience was real. My bedroom did not have straw or sheepskins, but was an elegant chamber with a canopy bed, crocheted lace curtains, draping eider-down comforters of the type that lie on the bed in the evening but are on the floor in the morning. . ." (Brakstad 1975, 111)

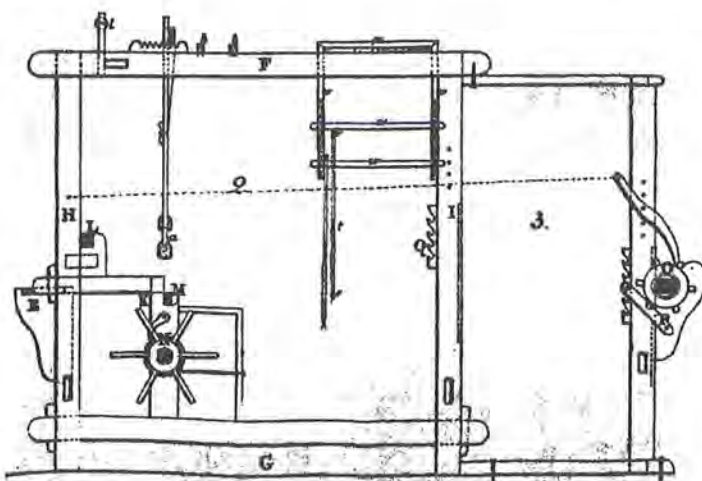
This was written just two years after Kari Hatle had worked there.

Kari Hatle received the weaving book *A Monograph on Diaper Weaves and Floormat Construction, with explanation of the Shaft Draw System, Written by J. E. Ekenmark and His Sisters*. Stockholm 1828. Her book still exists and on the last page there is the following dedication:

*Karen OD Hatle  
With loving memory of her  
Motherly devotion*

*Elizabeth C. Toresen  
Bækken 30<sup>th</sup> October 1857*

The book, which has 114 pages of text, has also accompanying pages showing damask patterns, working drawings of the loom, etc. The drawing printed on page 31 shows how "the original loom" looked. It is interesting that of the six looms that were registered in Romsdal at the time of this study, all are the Ekenmark type and they deviate a little from the original in the way the warp beam is fastened to the loom.



Part of a working drawing for the Ekenmark loom. The looms we know from Romsdal have a different configuration in the back. Otherwise they are identical.

When Kari came home to Eidsbygda, she taught her sister Sigrid (born 1827) to weave damask. There are/were textiles preserved from the time before either was married. One woven border reads:

*Thank you for your care  
Dear Parents, Hatle 1856<sup>vi</sup>*

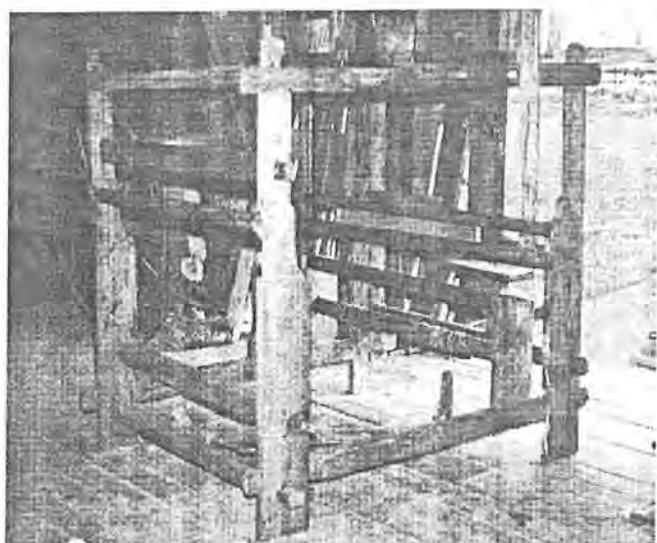
Sigrid Hatle put the following inscription on a tablecloth:

*Sigrid OD Hatle, Always be cheerful, happy  
And loyal, enjoy many beautiful days.<sup>vii</sup>*

In 1860 Kari married Johan Friisvold (1834-1915) of Ner-Frisvoll and took her loom there. It was in constant use. Sigrid, who had married Haukeberg in 1859, often wove together with her sister at Frisvoll. When daughter-in-law Hanna (born Devold) moved to

the farm in 1896, she also learned to use the loom, according to what Johan Friisvold (1897-1996) told me when I collected information in 1980-81.

The next generation at Ner-Frisvoll also wove on the damask loom. Herborg Devik (born Friisvold 1905) remembered that she wove on the loom together with her mother and Elen Emilie Haukeberg (1863-1946), daughter of Sigrid. But just before Kari Friisvold died in 1924, she gave the loom to her eldest daughter Anna (1865-1936), who had married Borge Eriksen Hatle. The loom was never used at Hatle and was, therefore sold to Landre farm in Rødven.<sup>viii</sup> In the 1980's it was purchased and returned to Ner-Frisvoll.

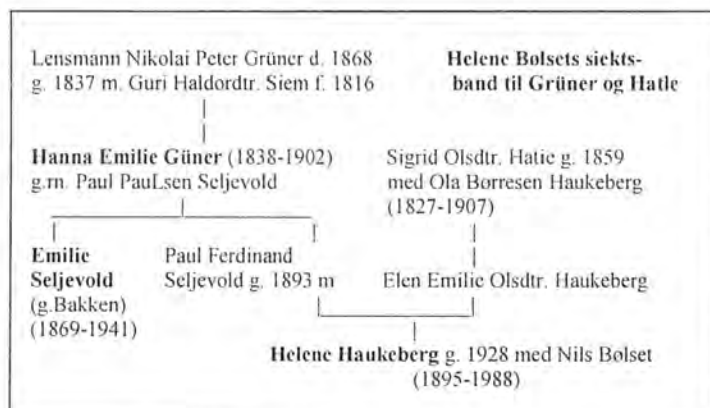


The Gruner loom

### Gruner Loom

One of my informants about damask weaving in Eidsbygda was Helene Bølset (1895-1988). She was born and grew up at Haukeberg farm. Sigrid Olsdatter Hatle was her grandmother, and she had textiles that were woven on the Hatle/Frisvoll loom. Helene Bølset told me that she also had a damask loom, but she had never set it up or woven on it. She received the loom from her father's sister, Emilie Seljevold. Helene remembered that it had come to the community with the Gruner family. Sheriff Gruner was from Tronderlag, but his wife Guri was from Siem in Gjersetbygda. It is reasonable to believe that Guri Gruner and/or her daughter Hanna Emilie Seljevold had used the loom. Hanna Emilie Gruner worked at the minister's farm at Veøy from 1852 to 1855 during the Reverend Frost's time. We know that they wove on the minister's farm at that time, but damask was not

specifically mentioned. (RMA 1991, 86) The loom could have been purchased at auction or inherited from Tronderlag. There is no information that the loom was used for damask or similar weaving in Romsdal, but it could have been. The genealogical connections Helene Bølset had with the Gruner and Hatle families are shown in the chart below.



Helene Bølset gave the loom to Lecturer Otto R. Gruner of Molde in 1980 after this collection work was finished.

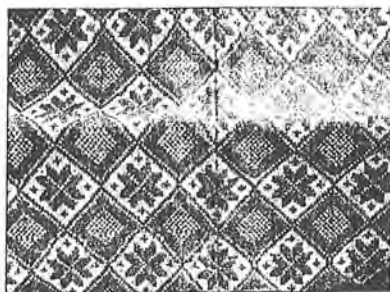
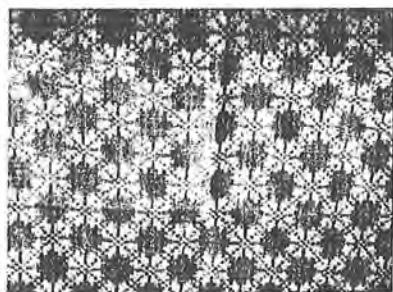
### Stokkeland/Øvstedal/Oren Tradition

As was mentioned earlier, Marit Kristensdatter Stokkeland (born 1837) learned to weave damask in Molde. From her we have an unbroken damask weaving tradition for three generations. We will now follow it. Marit Stokkeland's son's daughter, Astrid Oren (1904-1993) of Isfjorden was my informant.<sup>ix</sup>

It was Astrid Oren who told me that her grandmother learned to weave in Molde. She must have learned in 1861, because on the first page of her weaving book is written: *Weaving Book for MCD Stokkeland. Marit Christendatter Stokkeland 1861*. This date makes it natural to believe that Olava Myrebø was her weaving teacher.

Marit's parents were farmer, mayor and churchwarden Kristen Nilsen Stokkeland and his wife Anne Olsdatter (born Lindset). The family, which was descended from Nils Dahl and the Klokkars in Vestnes (Brovold 1901, 277), had high social status, and since finer weaving was fashionable at that time, it was natural that those who could afford it could send they daughters of marriageable age to learn it. In 1865 Marit married Jakob Olsen Øvstedal (1837-1909) and moved up the valley to Tresfjorden. The census of





Bedcover (left) and dresser scarf (right)  
in white cotton warp and blue weft  
woven by Marit Øvstedal

1875 shows, that they had one son, one boy servant and three maids. (Rekdal 1973, 439) With help such as this, there was time for Marit to weave, and there were people who came to Øvstedalen to learn to weave, among others Ingeborg Johansdatter Fiksdal, whom we will discuss later. Marit had orders for tablecloths and coverlets. There was an especially large demand from Stordalen. In special cases she wove borders with men, figures, letters and dates. When the warp neared the end, it was common to weave pillowcases for bolsters. Then she would lay in a stripe or two of pattern and weave the rest in "ordinary" weaving. This was a practical method, because the warp was "tight allover" with many shafts, when it was short.

Astrid Oren related that her father Ola Jakobsen Øvstedal (1866-1958) was so fascinated by the fine textiles his mother wove, that he wished that his daughter, Astrid, could learn the art. As a young boy Ola had read out the pattern numbers for his mother, so that she saved time. He could see for himself how the pattern grew on the loom as his mother worked. Ola was an only child, and as a boy/man he, of course,<sup>4</sup> did not weave, but he knew that Ingeborg Fiksdal—who was the same age as he was—had learned to the art from his mother, and that she continued to weave. In 1933 Astrid Oren and another lady were at Ingeborg Fiksdal's in order to learn damask weaving. Astrid set up her loom in 1933 and 1934. She wove comforter covers and tablecloths. The warp was white and the weft was in most cases blue. When I visited Astrid Oren in Isfjorden in September 1980, she had also set

up her grandmother's loom, but she did not have any work in progress.

### **Ingeborg Fiksdal and Her Loom**

Ingeborg Johansdatter Fiksdal (1864-1944) was a central person in the Romsdal damask weaving tradition. The 1900 Census showed that she lived on her home farm with her daughter Sigrid (born 1894), and she

had the professional title of tailor. In an interview I had with her granddaughter Palma Gjerde (born 1917) it came out that her grandmother "put all of herself into textile work, and she was a perfectionist in what she did. She dressed brides and rented out a silver bridal crown, she had bought back for the family." Palma Gjerde had the crown in 1981, and she related that her grandmother had made a special chest for it. On the chest is inscribed "Ingeborg I. D. Fiksdal, 1882". Further, she said that Ingeborg collected old textiles such as wedding vests, linen shirts, and others.

As mentioned earlier Ingeborg Fiksdal learned to weave from Marit Øvstedal (born Stokkeland). The two of them were also related.<sup>x</sup> It is not exactly easy to say, when she learned at Øvstedalen, but it is reasonable to believe that it was either near the end of the 1880's or in the beginning of the 1890's. In 1894 her daughter Sigrid was born. She was certainly not learning to weave at Øvstedalen after that. Ingeborg borrowed Marit's loom for a long period of time. Finally in the 1890's the problem was solved. Master carpenter Paul Olsen Espe moved to Fiksdalen. He ran a school for carpenters and had two or three boys learning at any one time.

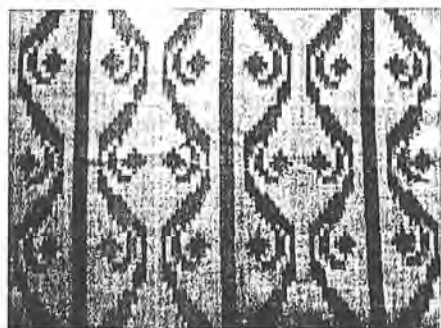
In the 1900 census Espe, his family, and the apprentices lived there and rented from Ingeborg's parents. During one of these years Espe made a copy of Marit Øvstedal's loom. Ingeborg had made her plans for the future. In 1898 she arranged to teach a course herself. On January 22 she advertised in *The Romsdals Budstikke*:

*Weaving course: At Fiksdal, beginning March 7 and continuing, a weaving course in old Norwegian satin and diaper weaving. Various patterns for dresses, coats, jackets, etc. More information available from Ingeborg Fiksdal.*

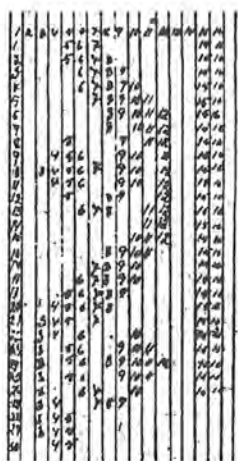
<sup>4</sup> Women were part-time weavers on the farm. In the cities men had full-time weaving businesses. Ola was from a long line of independent farmers, and it would never have been accepted in his culture for men to weave.

Lina (Oline Hanna) Overaa from Liabygda at Stranda was one of those who attended the first (?) course. She later married a Nakken, and we will come back to her.

The family informed us that Ingeborg had many weaving courses. It is possible that the last was in 1933, when Astrid Øvstedal attended. At first she sewed at home, but later she and her daughter moved to Eidsvika in Tennfjorden. In 1915 the daughter married and moved to a neighboring farm. After awhile the damask loom came there, too. Ingeborg's granddaughter Halldis Eidsvik Domaas (born 1933) gave the loom to the Romsdal Museum in October 1981. She said that her mother could also weave damask, but having a large family hindered her from practicing it after she came to Eikvika.



Tablecloth in cotton and wool by Astrid Øren 1933. Patterns for damask weaving consist of numbers on graph paper. "Weaving notation" is what Oline Bredeli calls such a pattern sheet with numbers. In the illustration, right, the weaving notation is shown for the tablecloth above. The numbers in the weaving show the numbers on the comb board. In this pattern there are just sixteen pattern shafts, but Marit Øvstedal had patterns with both thirty-two and thirty-four shafts. The numbers are read off line by line. After that she wove five picks, or as many picks as there were treadles. With complicated patterns, it was easy to make a mess of the Marit Øvstedal had her son help her by reading the weaving notes, while she drew the cords in the comb board.



Together with the loom came forty-six patterns. Weaving teacher Oline Bredeli drew them up, and she wrote:

"The weaving notation is done with numbers on paper on which squares were drawn with pencil. The squares are five to 8 mm. across. The numbers show the particular drawcord that should be used to lift the threads that are threaded through the pattern heddles. They produce warp effect where the numbers are written in the squares. The smallest pattern detail that is drawn out is one repeat of the pattern, which at the same time gives the number of shafts on the loom (squares on the paper).

A number of the patterns are identical to the 'Ekenmark and Sisters' book of 1828. One pattern is from the Nylander pattern book. Wreath pattern number three is found in *A Collection of Damask and Diaper Patterns from North Tronderlag, collected and published by the North Tronderlag Farm Women's Association*. All the patterns are drawn with one pattern repeat. The number of squares<sup>5</sup> in the repeat corresponds to the number of shafts necessary to weave the motif." (See the illustration)

#### **Lina Nakken (born Overaa) and Her Loom**

As mentioned earlier Lina Overaa (1876-1967) went to the weaving course that Ingeborg Fiksdal arranged during the winter and spring of 1898. We know this because she drew all the patterns in the same manner as Ingeborg had, and further that these drawings are dated March 19, 1898. She expected to be a weaver in the future and got Paul Espe to make her an identical loom to the ones Marit Øvstedal and Ingeborg Fiksdal had. As mentioned earlier, Espe lived at Fiksdal farm at that time, so it must have been easy to arrange.<sup>xi</sup>

Lina wed Anton Iversen Nakken from Kortgarden, and they settled down on the small farm "Bytengan" near the sea. She had her loom with her and continued to weave. Her daughter-in-law Jenny Nakken (born Kleive) had a door curtain, which was made in the 1930's, and a runner from the 1950's. It is possible that she did not set up the loom too many times. She, like other housewives, had enough daily work. Beret, her daughter, inherited most of what Lina wove, and it is not possible to track it down. Mali Furunes was able to buy a "sample" from her for the Romsdal Museum

<sup>5</sup> In a horizontal row

(RT 167) in connection with The Romsdal Exhibition in Molde in 1953.

Lina Nakken was a temperamental woman, said Jenny Nakken. On an impulse she sold her loom to Ingrid Kjersem (born Rypdal 1901-1991) about 1957. Ingrid set up the loom at once and Lina Nakken came to Tresfjorden to help her. In an interview I had with Ingrid Kjersem in 1981, she told me that Lina had given her the following advice: "Start with a simple pattern without a border or such on the edges." Ingrid followed the advice and chose a pattern with stars. By placing half stars at the edge, two length could be sewn together for a double width cloth. Ingrid purchased warp and weft from Husfliden for two hundred Kroner. The first warp was long enough for four tablecloths. Each half was 75 cm wide. The loom was placed in its own building and the room was large enough so that she could walk around the three-meter long loom.

Ingrid Kjersem did not get to weave on it as much as she wanted either. The roof in the out building where she had the loom developed a leak and some years before I visited her, she had taken down the loom with a warp on it and put it in the attic. The loom was then given to her granddaughter, Ingrid Elin Frostad.

### Rødven Loom

This damask loom was registered and photographed in 1984. Its owner is Målfrid Hatle (born 1929) from Dalset in Rødven, but she now lives in Fræna. She inherited the loom from her mother, Margy Gjerstad (1896-1981 born Dalset) who had inherited it from her mother Synnøve Dalset (1866-1947) born Hunnes. Tradition tells that Synnøve Dalset purchased the loom from Marit Pedersdatter Korsehagen (born 1867) after it had been stored some years in a boathouse in Rødven. Marit bought the loom in Ålesund sometime around 1900-1910. She was in charge of the dairy barn chores at Dalset one year, and she wove a trousseau for herself in her spare time. She did not, of course, receive a full salary. In 1914 Marit married the widower Mathias Jonsen Brevik, who had many children. It is possible that, after that the loom was set aside.

This loom has a great deal in common with the other looms we know of the Ekenmark design. When I inspected the loom July 19, 1984 both the comber

board and beater were broken, but the rest could easily be assembled for photographing.

It is not known whether anyone wove damask on this loom after it came to Rodven. Synnøve Dalset, however, wove diaper tablecloths and such on it.<sup>xii</sup> The owner said that it was a good and sturdy loom, but she could only remember dress material, comforter covers, sheets, and floor mats being woven on it.

### Romsdal Exhibit 1953

At the large Romsdal's Exhibit in Molde September 19-27, 1953 "Home Crafts and Small Industry" was one of the major divisions. The greatest number exhibited under "Women's Crafts", where ninety-three showed an unbelievably large assortment of articles. In the category "Old-fashioned Crafts" twenty-five men and women exhibited. In both of these groups there were many woven things, such as tablecloths, rugs, bedclothes, upholstery, hand towels, and others, but *damask* was not mentioned in the catalogue.

Ingrid Lindset told me in 1981, that Ova Syltebø, Agnes Aanes and she, took it upon themselves to collect old textiles for The Tresfjord Farm Women's Association. They acquired many different things. In the collected material there was also a good deal of Marit Øvstedal's damask, but those arranging the exhibit "did not understand what it was, this damask weaving," said Ingrid Lindset. Because of that, it was written "Number 319 Tresfjord Farm Women's Association. Old textiles from Tresfjord." Lina Nakken from Korsgarden was not among the exhibitors.<sup>xiii xiv</sup>

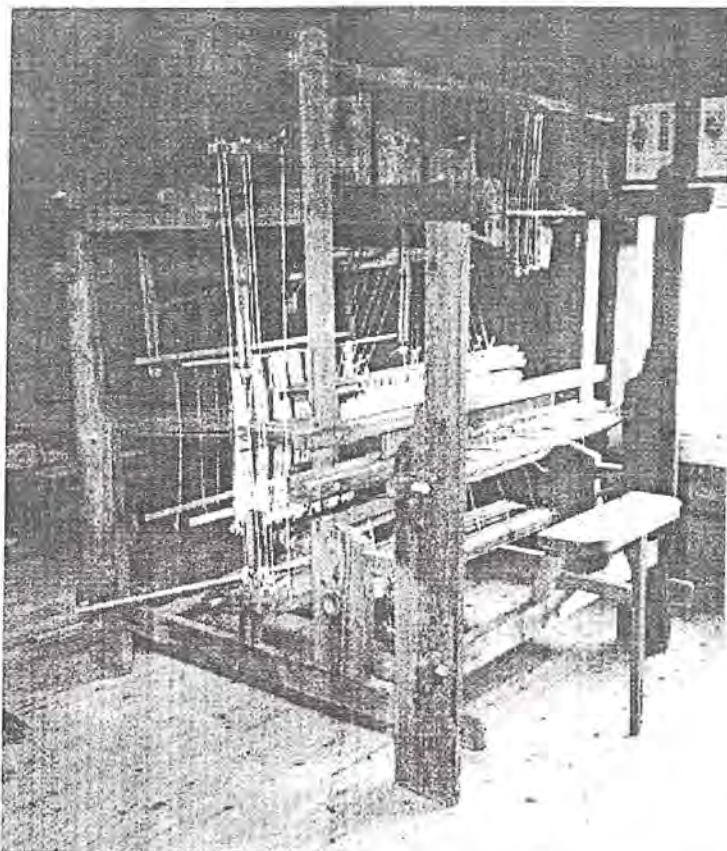
### Conclusion

The last to weave on the Ekenmark-type damask loom were Astrid Oren and Ingrid Lindset. Astrid Øren's loom was set up but not dressed, when Oline Bredeli and I visited her in 1981. Ingrid's loom was rolled up with the warp on it. One hundred to one hundred and ten years of damask weaving on the Ekenmark loom was over.

The pioneers of the eighteen fifties and sixties learned damask weaving in order to create something fine and grand, something that was *better than that they had everyday*. They who started it came from homes where the standard of living was higher than the average. The demand for tablecloths, coverlets and other weavings such as those of Marit Øvstedal shows that they were



prized. They were not just for decoration. Many of the textiles, as we have seen, show signs of long wear.



Ingeborg Fiksdal's damask loom set up at the Romsdal museum in 1981. The loom is a copy of Marit Øvstedal owned and was made by Paul Olsen Espe in the 1890's

When interest declined later in this century, it was for several reasons. For some the weaving environment was not large enough. There were, in fact, just not enough people who continued to weave damask, so they could not learn from or inspire each other any longer. I asked Ingrid Lindset directly why she thought it had stopped, and she was very clear: A great deal of cheap material came from the outside. In the Tresfjorden area she named two peddlers from Numedalen. She called them The Numedalingers. They sold factory made "rose cotton", that is cotton material with patterns.

"Some of the elderly thought it was good to trade. They fooled themselves by trading liquor goblets or silver tankards to the men, as well as pewter plates and pewter tankards. The men from Numedal rented a place at Sylte. They had a sort of store and rented

transport to take them all over the community. The next station was Gjermundes, and that was their circuit."

The Romsdal District Agricultural Association was behind getting damask weaving going during the 1850's. Later there was very little official help. After the Romsdal District School opened in 1877, there was a separate course for girls in which needlework was part of the curriculum. For many girls who attended, it was learning for life. From around the time of the dissolution of the Union in 1905 and onward home craft work was very popular. Many, girls especially, sewed their own regional costumes. Weaving, which called for more equipment, was left in the shadow by simpler handwork. Damask weaving was certainly of no interest. In 1948 Møre and Romsdal Home Crafts School for Women opened in Kviltorp. Not even there was damask weaving included in the curriculum—not even on looms that were simpler than the Ekenmark type.

However, they did not lack teachers. Weaving teacher Oline Bredeli demonstrated that. In her excitement over what was collected, she set up the Ingeborg Fiksdal loom at the Romsdal Museum. She and some of her students warped and threaded the loom with five ground shafts and thirty-two pattern shafts. After that she wove enough so that future generations could see what these pioneers from the nineteenth century had tackled. Weaving specialists from the entire country have been at Erikgard Loft and seen the wonder.

The Romsdal Museum and I owe Oline Bredeli a debt of gratitude!

#### Author's Notes:

- i Information from granddaughter Palma Gjerde, Tomrefjorden
- ii In the exhibition mentioned the following prizes were given for weaving:  
Midwife Ingeleiv Engen of Akerø for weaving and dyeing  
Christopher Domaas's wife for weaving of a fine wool cloth  
Ingeborg Jonsdatter Edø of Edø Rectory for weaving  
Ole Andr. Devold in Aalesund for production  
weaving of children's fur-lined great coats of wool.

- Dyer Arnt Olsen of Molde delivered work, but it was noted that his purpose was not to compete. Therefore, he did not receive a prize.
- iii Jørgine Pedersdatter Viig, age 17 from Nesjestranda, was a maid for the couple. There is no traditional information that she wove fine textiles. She married in 1869 and moved to Grytten. (Solemdal 1995, 632)
  - iv See Sverre Berge's article in *Romsdalsmuseets Arbok 1981 (Yearbook of the Romsdal Museum, 1981)*, p. 73-77.
  - v Gudrun Hatle (born Næss in 1898) Kleive inherited five of the chairs. When these chairs were reupholstered, it came to light that the original material was patterned, possibly damask. Information from Odd Sivertsen, March 1987.
  - vi It is at Ner-Frisvoll, Eidsbygda.
  - vii Helene Børset, Åfarnes registered this in 1980. It was later missing. The edge with the inscription shows wear. There is more on the tablecloth in the caption, p. 34.
  - viii Information from Johan A. Friisvold, June 2, 1983.
  - ix Interview with Astrid Oren, Isfjorden, September 15, 1980. She had her grandmother's--Ingrid Kjersem (born Rypdal 1901)-- weaving book. In an interview June 20, 1981 she said that she believed that Marit had learned to weave someplace in Fannestranda. "There were many important people there who could do a lot of different things," she said. Others have not confirmed that there was a special weaving milieu among the upper classes at Fannestranda.
  - x Information from Ingrid Lindset, June 21, 1981.
  - xi Paul Espe had a large family. His wife died, and when he married again, he moved to Vestnes and built himself a house "out in the garden." It is possible that he made only two damask looms. Information from Ingrid Lindset 1981.
  - xii Information from Magnhild Hunnes January 30, 1987, grandchild of Synnøve Dalset. She has one of her diaper tablecloths.
  - xiii "Romsdal Exhibition in Molde, September 19-27, 1953", Molde 1953, p. 109-117.
  - xiv Hanna Friisvold received a diploma for damask textiles at the Agricultural Exhibition in Molde 1931.

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## NANCY JACKSON'S WORK SELECTED FOR INTERNATIONAL DESIGN BOOK

NANCY JACKSON, Timshel Tapestry Studio, has had two tapestries, "Rev's Blues" and "City/CountryII," selected for publication in FIBERARTS DESIGN BOOK SIX as the result of an international competition.

From 5,500 entries received from 36 countries, the staff of FIBERARTS Magazine chose 550 works to be published in the book. Each work was selected on the basis of artistic prowess and technical expertise to meet the publisher's goal of producing a book that



accurately represents the diversity, depth, and unique vision that comprise the field of fiber arts.

Jackson is a member of Tapestry Weavers West, American Tapestry Alliance, and a Master Member of California Contemporary Craft Association. As Master Gobelin/Aubusson Weaver in the French tradition, Jackson has exhibited nationally and internationally with continued recognition for her achievements and numerous awards/ She also teaches and lectures on all levels of tapestry-making. For information regarding commissions or instruction in tapestry making, contact Nancy Jackson at [nancy.jackson@cwix.com](mailto:nancy.jackson@cwix.com) or 707-554-4128



Tapestry by Nancy Jackson

## WEAVING CLASS AT HOLMEN GÅRD, NORWAY

*By Unni Lorenz*

I received three scholarships to go to Norway to study Rutevev at Holman Gård. Two from Weavers guilds I belong to here in Vancouver and Surrey, and one from the Sons of Norway Foundation. The course was billedvev however, I telephoned ahead to ask if I could get instruction in rutevev. As rutevev is also a tapestry

technique, there was no problem. The course was set up for 5 days. Room and board was included with the class and you received three good meals and 2 coffee breaks each day. Sleeping quarters are for two sharing. If you're lucky, you get to stay in the old part of the farmhouse where the door is so short you can bump your head. All of the blankets, duvet covers, lampshades, and floor coverings are hand woven. The old part of the farm dates to 1729. The doors and ceilings are painted with rosemaling

At the same time that our course was in progress, a beginning weaving class was upstairs in the barn. We were in fjøset (cow barn). It had been nicely renovated

for classes. The third class was in birch root baskets. It met in the Blacksmith shop. I took many slides and pictures. There was a real sense of sharing. There were only 6 students in my class, 11 in the beginning class and 10 in the basket class. There was much individual instruction. I tried to speak Norwegian until my mouth felt like cotton batting. The Norwegians would use English words that they have now adopted into their language. They spoke very good English. My instructor Bjørg Kristiansen had written a beginner's weaving book in English when she worked in Africa.

On the premises was a small gallery, a travelling show, with works done by other guilds. A hand made knife display and a gift shop of hand made items. Holmen Gård is at Gjerstad, Aust-Agder. It is connected to Husfliden, the cottage craft industry of Norway. There was a vast array of items for sale.

It was a dream come true. I was born in Norway, and emigrated with my family when I was 10 years old. I always missed my friends. In 1961, I worked my way back to Norway on a 12-passenger freighter. I visited with family and friends and had several jobs. By this time too much time had elapsed, I became homesick for Canada. During this visit, I found my great

grandmother's spinning wheel in my grandmother's loft – the rest is history. I have now been weaving for more than 25 years. I teach Dobbel Krokbragd and Shearling slipper workshops to guild members. I also participate in the Heritage Camp, where I give instruction in various weaving techniques such as inkle belt and basket making.

Note: One of the Billedvev classes currently being offered by Holmen-gård will concentrate on details from "Sandsvaer-antependiet" coverlet dating from about 1615-1625. Bjørg Kristiansen will instruct this class. For more information contact NBClub member Unni Lorenze, 15387 82Ave. Surrey, B.C. Canada V3S 2K8

## NOTES FROM LILA

On April 28, a highly appreciative group heard NBClub member Edi Thorstensson speak at the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis about the continued use of the warp-weighted loom in the Manndalen, Norway area. She previously shared with us her experiences in that northern region in her article "*Rátnogöddin*, the Sami Art of Weaving Blankets: (February, 1998 in the *Norwegian Textile Letter*). Edi brought examples of craftwork in leather, bone, and fabric—including a *grener* --- and answered many questions from her interested audience. It was an excellent foundation for those of us going on the coming NBClub tour, which includes that region.

Scandinavian Channel, through digital linking with TCI, will be providing a 24-hour daily subscription cable TV service starting in the fall this year. It will be, it is said, "priced affordably" and will include a general fare: current events, documentaries, nature, music, drama, etc. For further information, write to the Scandinavian Channel, 7499 Park Circle, Boulder, CO 80301 (Ph. 303-581-7906, Fax 303-581-7931, e-mail [Shybert777@aol.com](mailto:Shybert777@aol.com)).

My husband Marion and I have just each given a lecture for the current Elderhostel at Vesterheim, held April 18-24. The museum goes all out for these events with every staff member helping to give attendees a familiarity with museum operations and the benefit of their broad knowledge about Norwegian and Norwegian-American folk culture. The town of Decorah and Luther College also share in acquainting

visitors with the many Norwegian characteristics of the region. One morning is devoted to demonstrations of various folk arts by craftspeople who also invite observers to try their hand. These spring and fall Elderhostels are excellent possibilities for studying the impressive textile collection and seeing the conservation and storage areas for it as well as for getting a pleasurable introduction to Vesterheim in general.

The April 10 issue of DN-MAGASINET in an article titled "Fra Wall Street til villsau" follows Amy Lightfoot's personal history from her ancestors (including a great grandmother from the Penobscot Indian tribe as well as telephone's inventor Alexander Graham Bell), through her upbringing in Southwick, Massachusetts, studies in biology and anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, a seven-month stint on Wall Street with Greenwich Village apartment, work at the American Museum of Natural History in Central Park, and then to London at a wild life organization. The last job took her to the island of Hitra off the coast of Norway, where her first concern had been the decimation of sea otter. Formerly subsisting happily on the catch of fishermen by chewing through their hemp nets, otters ended up entrapped and killed by the modern change to nets of nylon. Amy became fully absorbed by life on Hitra and with concern for the decline of knowledge and skills involved in age-old crafts centering around the lives of the fishermen. Learning Norwegian in several months, she began to interview, to learn the old techniques, and then to reproduce objects in them, such as mittens in the ancient looping method called *nalbinding*. All of this served as a firm foundation for her recent work with the reproduction of Viking sails, about which we have reported in previous newsletters.

NBClub member Ruth Duker has generously presented a copy of the rare DOBBELTVEV I NORGE BY Helen Engelstad to the library of Vesterheim. Printed by Gyldendal Norsk Forlag in 1958, it has long been out of print and is not generally available. (Large format, 150 pages, 10-page English summary, extensive bibliography).

Our NBClub member Sally Scott, now has a changed address: 801 Westmoor Drive, Sioux Falls, SD 57104-4515 (tel. 605-331-3869). Actively involved with our Minneapolis weavers Scandinavian Study Group and



## MYSTERY COVERLET



Åkle, or coverlet, from near Stavanger, Norway. Late 18th to early 19th century. L. 165 cm, W. 129.5 cm.  
Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum Collection, gift of Erling A. Dalaker. Vesterheim © 1999



with activities of the Minnesota Weavers guild in general, we will indeed miss her.

*By Lila Nelson*

## WEAVING EXHIBITION

The weaving class, taught by NBClub member Betty Johannesen, had a student teacher show at the Fernwood Nature Center in Niles, MI during the month of April. Betty's work is currently on exhibit at the Old Courthouse Museum in Berrien Springs, MI.

Betty has the good fortune to be teaching in the well equipped weaving studio of the South Bend Regional Museum of Art. The format of Betty's classes is that of a one-room schoolhouse, with a variety of brands and types of floor and table looms. Students work at widely varied skill levels. She teaches two sessions a week with a typical class size of 10-12 students per class. Classes are usually 10 weeks, with fall, winter and spring programs. Her students choose to learn either traditional or Norwegian weave structures.

*By Don Johannesen*

## NOTE:

Unni Lorenz, on behalf of the Vancouver Guild, would like to thank Kay Larson for her participation in the Dorothy McDonald Memorial Lecture sponsored by the guild. Kay's presentation was in response to Unni's request published in the February 1998 issue of the NORWEGIAN TEXTILE LETTER.

## Mystery Coverlet

Because of age and wear, the colors in the mystery coverlet are difficult to match to modern yarn. The yarns listed below approximate the original in color and weight, and are pleasing together.

### Raumagarn 5/2 Åklegarn, 2 ply

#703	light gray
#746	gold
#744	red
#749	dark blue

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(310) 382-3711, [smtweed@willinet.net](mailto:smtweed@willinet.net)



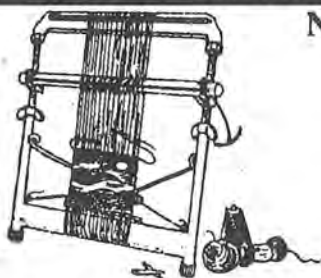
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  - Free Brochure, Sample cards of 121 colours available for \$7.50 (US), (free with first order of \$50.00)
  - Madeleine (Darling-Tung), co-editor of the Canadian Tapestry Network (CTN) newsletter, is an active tapestry weaver, floor loom weaver, and instructor, and is constantly giving presentations and demonstrating to promote the art of tapestry. For those who are not comfortable with designing for woven tapestry, Madeleine has a line of tapestry kits to encourage individuals to try their hand at this old craft. In addition, working with Brenda Franklin, another CTN member, designer and tapestry weaver, Madeleine and Brenda have introduced this Autumn a new line of needlepoint Christmas tree ornaments tapestry kits, which has also become quite popular. Only quality Norwegian Spelsau yarns are used in all of the woven or needlepoint kits.
  - For more information, please feel free to contact Madeleine at the above address.
- VISA and MasterCard accepted

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concluded Claudia A. Chase in her review for the American Tapestry Alliance Newsletter



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