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SHAKER TEXTILE ARTS



Synopsis

Today we witness a steadily growing interest in the Shakers and their way of life, especially their crafts. Although Shaker furniture, architecture, and herbs, for example, have been written about repeatedly, there are no other studies in depth of another all-important element in Shaker lives--Shaker textiles. Beverly Gordon, an experienced craftswoman and teacher, presents a comprehensive, illustrated book on the kinds of textiles the Shakers used, how they were produced, and their cultural and economic importance to the communities. She shows how Shaker beliefs were manifested in the actual artifacts and integrates detailed technical information in a way that will appeal to the nonprofessional admirers of these crafts as well as to experts. Professional dealers may use the book to verify the authenticity of a variety of items. An introductory chapter is followed by sections on the general characteristics of the textiles, their importance in Shaker lives, and the types of textile activities they undertook. Textile production, including fiber preparation, spinning, weaving, dyeing, knitting, crocheting, and sewing, is examined. Detailed descriptions of rugs and floor coverings, chair and seat tapes and cushions, clothing and personal accessories, popular cloth, and fancywork are followed by appendices on original Shaker weaving drafts, analyses of rugs and chair seat tapes, dye recipes, and instructions for knitting and constructing fancy items. This indispensable reference work results in part from the author's close association with Shaker textiles between 1973 and 1977, when she was a textile interpreter at Hancock Shaker Village. Since then she has had access to artifacts and original manuscripts and documents throughout the country, works that are reflected in her full bibliography. A study from the procurement and processing of materials to the uses of finished products, this is a book of lasting value to collectors and antique dealers, museum curators, home economists, historians, weavers, and fiber artists with related specialties.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“An exhaustive treatment of all aspects of Shaker textile production and artifacts. The author writes clearly of the tasks themselves, from the inventively efficient methods of wool and flax milling to the unique, laborious production of a popular cloth™. Gordon’s judicious use of original source materials--diaries, ledgers, instruction manuals--enriches these discussions and adds to our understanding of this small corner of the history of American crafts production. The book’s greatest strength is the discussion of the works themselves. The author writes knowingly of an enormous variety of household objects and articles of clothing. The typical Believer’s wardrobe was remarkably large, and Gordon handles each piece with a sensitivity to design and construction that clearly comes from years of intense, intimate study... The scholarly apparatus of the book is excellent...Nevertheless, the text is not overly technical, and will prove accessible and enjoyable to both layman and specialist. Handsomely designed and profusely illustrated (including several glorious color plates), Shaker Textile Arts is a worthy contribution to the history of American material culture.”

“History: Reviews of New Books”

Covers Shaker textiles so well that it is unlikely ever to have a rival as the standard reference work in its field. Indeed it transcends its title by enlightening one’s views of utopian sects and enlarging one’s appreciation of anything made of cloth.”

History News

6 x 8 trim. 153 illus. (14 color). 16 figs. 7 weaving charts. LC 78-69899

Haven’t read it cover to cover, but pages and chapters make it clear that this is a well researched text. I was impressed that it went so far as to describe the woven poplar (yes, tree) material used after the Civil war, by many Sisters in several villages, to make sewing accessories, etc.

Great find. Lots of interesting info. Book was never checked out of the library and is in excellent condition.

This book on the Shakers' Textile Arts was the only book I was able to find that helped me with my research. I wish it had more colorful photos, but all in all, it was a helpful resource for my research paper.

good book for descriptions of the Shaker textile arts, good patterns and a few photos. As someone interested in textiles, hard to find info

Arrives in good shape but I know little of this book ordered for a College teacher friend.

Very good reference book on a somewhat hard to find topic. I study textiles and found the book very helpful at a great price.

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