

## NOTES OF A PATTERN WEAVER

# Plaited Twill Projects

by Philis Alvic

**I**NFORMATION SHARED BY FRIENDS, research in monographs and magazine articles, previous experience, sampling and serendipity all came together in my final product. The seeds for this purse were planted while I was visiting Madelyn van der Hoogt in Missouri. She asked if I would accompany her to her "More than Four" study group. Hearing, talking and just being around weaving is a pleasure, so I readily agreed. Members of the group reported on their research into two-tie unit weaves. Madelyn discussed her efforts to decipher the intricacies of plaited twills and passed around a hand-out. When I examined the samples, I was hooked. I too wanted to weave twills at different angles that appeared to be strips woven in and out on diagonals.

Back at my studio I looked over Madelyn's materials. By then I had also acquired an article by her as well as Clotilde Barrett's monograph, *Double Two-Tie Unit Weaves*. As I read through these items on plaited twills, I was struck by two things. First, designing would take some concentrated effort. I grasped the basic concept, but I was unable to visualize the actual product. To come up with an original pattern, I would have to carefully follow the procedure for designing and then do a drawdown on graph paper. My second thought was that this threading was what I had always called Double Summer and Winter. This meant that I could treadle both weave structures on the same warp.

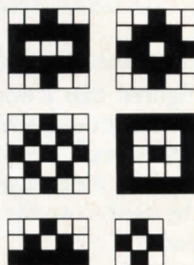
As the weather got colder, I thought it would be nice to have some small, special hand-woven Christmas gifts. My ideas on double two-tie surfaced. The plaited twills seemed ideal for bookmarks. It would give the illusion of intricacy while actually being fast one-shuttle weaving. And, as a special bonus, I could place a small Summer and Winter figure at the top of each bookmark.

In reviewing the technical problems this would present, the biggest was the number of treadles needed to weave the two structures. I could retie the treadles part way through each book mark, but I have never liked crawling under the loom. The easiest solution was to use most of the treadles on my 16 harness loom while limiting the harnesses employed.



Plaited twill purse.

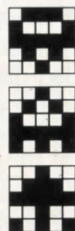
Motifs used in purse.



solid bookmarks.



2 color bookmarks.



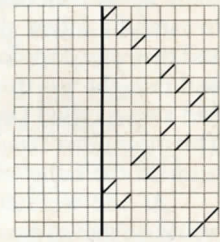
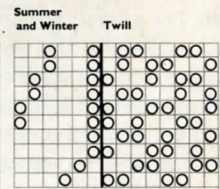
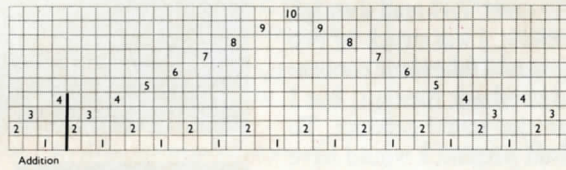


I figured that I would need at least three blocks to construct interesting shapes at the top of each bookmark. So with the addition of another block for the ground, a total of 10 harnesses would be used—two for each block plus the tie threads.

Since more blocks would also require more treadles, the decision to work with four appeared to be the most sensible. After deciding the number of blocks, I began to hunt through Clotilde's book for ideas of what I might possibly use. I found a twill pattern that I liked employing 10 harnesses and using a small number of treadles in the weaving sequence. Choosing an already-designed pattern was much easier than going through all the work of creating one of my own. I did alter the threading slightly by extending the width of the block on both ends by one unit. By doing this, my Summer and Winter figure had more space around it and the plaited twill was not changed appreciably.

I wanted a thin bookmark stiff enough to hold its shape. I had some nice shiny rayon that worked well sett at 20 e.p.i. I decided that the fabric would look richer if I used three pastel colors in random stripes rather than choosing one of them for the warp.

Setting up the treadles was not difficult after the design concept was worked out. The plaited twill section was set up on the right side of the loom to be treadled by my right foot. On the left



Threading for bookmark.  
Repeat 4 times for purse.

were the block treadles and the tie thread treadles, and one tabby comprised of the block harnesses. The two separate tie thread treadles were stepped on together for the second tabby—thus saving a treadle. Treadling some of the block designs did require some gymnastics. The blocks were all tied singly so at times it was necessary to depress several treadles at one time. Occasionally the design required blocks that were not adjacent, so I would step on one, slide my toe under a treadle and catch the desired one.

The figure in Summer and Winter at the top of the bookmark was a two shuttle weave. I did the designing of these three block figure at the loom and made each one different. The straight Summer and Winter treadling in singles was used rather than the Double Summer and

Winter, because I wanted a bold figure rather than a busy one that would compete with the plaited twill. I used the same pattern weft as for the plaited twill, three times the weights of the warp. I added sparkle to the figure by using a fine lurex yarn as the tabby. A happy accident occurred when I ran out of tabby yarn just at the changing point between the two weave structures. I did not have enough to complete the top so I used another color. Now, this does not seem earth-shaking or even clever, but I had been happy with my single-color bookmarks and would not have changed if I had not been forced to stop and seek another bobbin. I liked the two-color one much better and finished off the remaining third of the warp in two-color bookmarks.

At about the time the bookmarks were finished, I decided to make a new purse. The prospect of soon being among a group of weavers acted as a motivating force: Only then did I realize how shabby my present purse had become. I needed to weave something rapidly and the plaited twills fit the bill. I decided that several bookmarks side-by-side would form an interesting fabric for a purse. Executing this idea of multiple connected bookmarks would be fast because I already had the design and even the treadles on the loom already set up to weave it.

My purse-making experience is not extensive but I have a style that I particularly like to carry—a not-very-large shoulder bag. I make the

strap by weaving a strip of fabric and folding it in thirds. This strap then angles out for the sides of the purse. The body of the purse is usually one continuous piece closing in a generous overlap of the front.

The design for the body of this purse and the strap was the same extended plaited twill I used for the bookmarks. By repeating my bookmark threading, I got an irregular hexagonal shape where the two units connected as a bonus. This made my copied twill design very different from the original. The overlap portion had rows of Summer and Winter figures on different colored grounds. I wanted the stability of two selvages for the strap, so I decided to do the body on a narrow warp in two separate pieces and sew them together. To cover the seam and to serve as part of the closing device I commissioned my son and inkle-weaving expert, Ezra Schroeder, to weave a narrow inkle band. I formed a loop with the band at the bottom of the overlap to close the purse by slipping a handmade ceramic bead through it. The body of the purse was padded with polyester batting and lined.

This purse has proved very serviceable. It is lightweight, the fabric has worn well and the colors coordinate with most of my wardrobe. I still like the design of the fabric and am happy that the forces came together as they did to make it happen.

### References

- Barrett, Clotilde and Eunice Smith. *Double Two-Tie Unit Weaves*. Boulder: Colorado Fiber Center, 1983.
- van der Hoogt, Madelyn. "Twill in Double Two-Tie Unit Weaves," in *Handwoven*, Vol. VI, No. 5 (November 1985), 64.