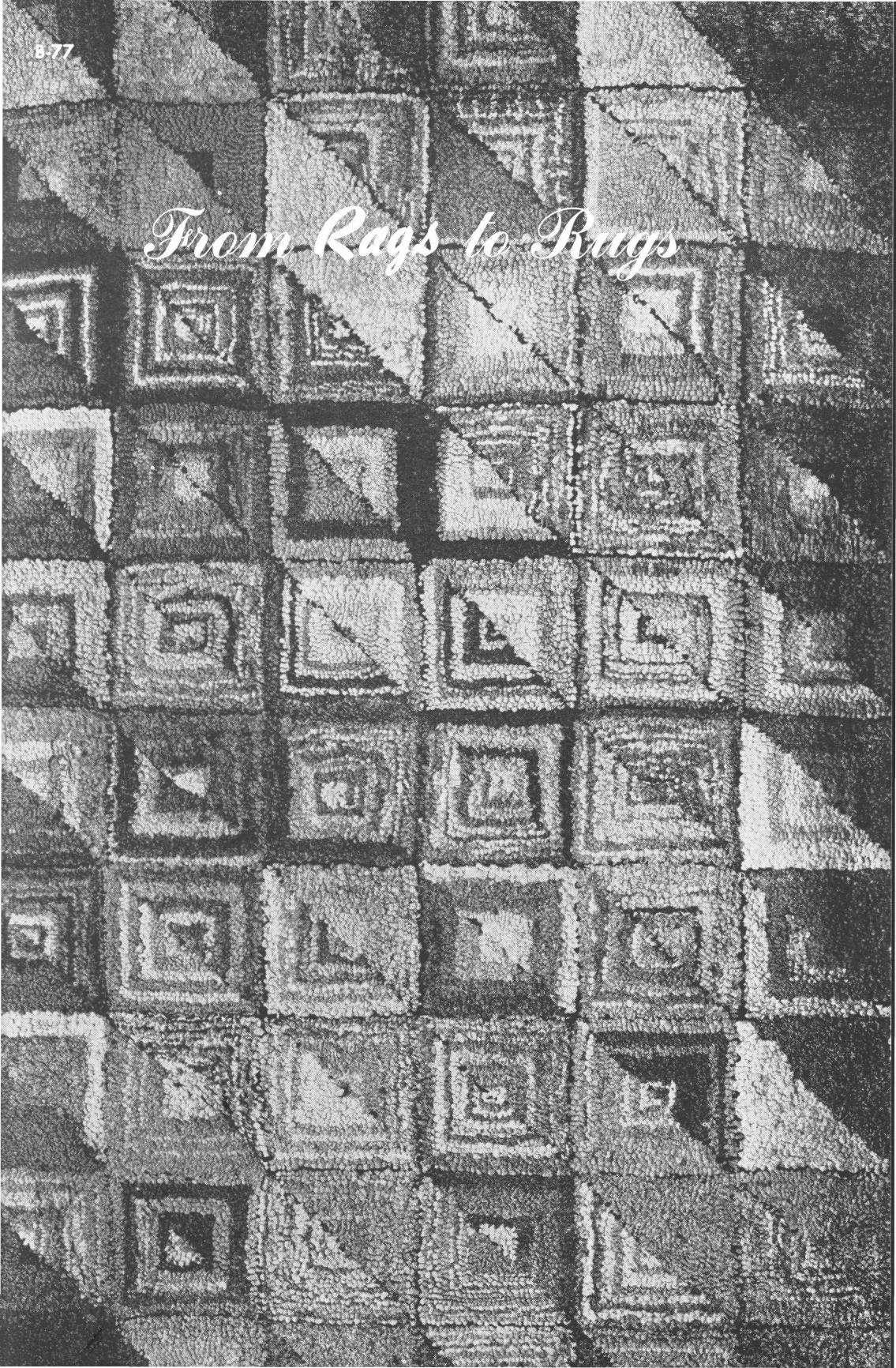


# *From Rags to Rugs*



### **IN THE PICTURE**

**Mrs. Al J. Fraser, home demonstration club woman of El Paso County,  
is shown on page five working on a hooked rug.**

**Issued by  
The Extension Service  
Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas and  
The United States Department of Agriculture  
Ide P. Trotter, Director, College Station, Texas**

# *From Rags to Rugs*

Mrs. Bernice Claytor, Extension Specialist in Home Improvement

When rugs fit in with other furnishings as they should, they add comfort, beauty, and charm to a room. If they are looked upon as a part of the foundation of the room, like the floor, they should be a little darker in tone than the walls. And if the colors of the rugs have been related carefully to the predominant colors of the room and to those of the floor, they give a feeling of unity and restfulness.

Rugs should be of sufficient size that they will not appear as spots on the floor. If well chosen, they will conform to the space where they are used and they will serve a useful purpose.

## **Plan Size, Shape and Color to Suit Use**

For pleasing results in rug making one should determine in advance the size, shape and use of rugs. It should be remembered that the rug used in front of the fireplace should be approximately as long as the hearth. The space beside a bed requires a somewhat larger rug than one to be placed in front of the dresser, while a still smaller rug is suitable for the doorway. As a general rule an oval rug fits

in better with most furnishings than a round one and rectangular rugs are more usable than square ones.

With practical adaptation of the colonial house and its furnishings to present day use have come much interest and enthusiasm for early American arts and crafts and naturally with this trend interest has developed in the rugs of that period. This revival of the popularity of hand made rugs is convenient and very



A rug used in front of a fireplace should be approximately as long as the hearth.



Ruth Garrett of Champion, Nolan County, attended the demonstration on rug making given by the home demonstration agent, and soon had three braided rugs made from scrap material.

economical since the simplest of equipment is required, and household "left overs and cast offs" often provide ample material. Then, too, the sale of home made rugs of good workmanship can sometimes supply money needed for other phases of home improvement.

Either braided or hooked rugs may properly be used in farm homes, cottages and larger houses of the colonial type. They are suitable for

any room of the house provided they harmonize with the other furnishings of the room. Particularly in a bedroom, where a smoothly finished floor with several small rugs is often considered the most practical, these hand-made rugs offer serviceable and distinctive floor coverings.

### Many Materials Make Good Rugs

**W**OOL, cotton, silk and linen materials have all been used for making braided and hooked rugs, but the first is the best. Only material of the same fiber should be used in a rug—that is, all wool or all cotton. No matter what the material is, care should be taken to eliminate those portions which are badly worn, otherwise that part of the rug will soon wear out while the rest is still quite good. Also, regardless of the type of material used, it must be cleaned before it is torn into strips for rug making.

Braided and hooked rugs both may be made of old woolen blankets and garments such as suits, coats and dresses. The more flimsy materials such as challis and wool crepe should be used for hooked rugs only. Corduroy makes a beautiful braided rug but it is not suitable for hooking as it is too hard and its cotton back cannot always be hidden. Knitted garments of wool are



especially pleasing in hooked rugs, but only the heavy, very closely knit materials can be used for braided rugs.

For long wear and the best results, only closely woven cotton materials, of good body and weight should be used in making braided rugs. Avoid the loose, open mesh knitted cotton materials for either braided or hooked rugs. The results will not be satisfactory for the rug; it will be flimsy, and will soon wear out.

Old faded overalls, blue and gray shirts, and a good quality of children's ribbed cotton hose and underwear can be used with pleasing effect in hooked rugs.

### Beauty Depends on Color Combinations

It may be wise for beginners to use only a few colors in a single rug. After some experience it is possible to combine many colors to produce delightful effects.

In choosing colors, it is to be remembered that among the most admired features of the early handmade rugs are the lovely soft, rich shades which have endured through the years. Strong intense colors should be used with the greatest care. Small areas may be made more interesting by the use of an intense color, but this use calls for a neutral effect in the back-

ground to balance the brilliant hue. Because an intense color can be braided in with two strands of a neutral shade, contrast is more often employed in braided rugs to develop design than in hooked rugs.

Makers of rugs can secure help in developing a feeling for combinations of colors by studying beautiful fabrics and the colored pictures used in good magazines.

### Choose Good Dyes to Get Good Colors

**T**INTING the materials to be worked up into rugs is not satisfactory. They must be dyed with fast dyes in order



The beauty of a rug depends to a large extent on the color combinations used. Among the most admired features of the early handmade rugs are the lovely, soft, rich shades.



This shows a rug made by Mrs. Stuart Smith of Smith County, which is placed in front of a dresser. Chair mats and cushions can be made of silk materials braided in the same way as for a rug.

### After Selecting, Cleaning, and Dyeing, Comes Making

**A**SSUME that there is enough material on hand for a braided rug of a desired size; that it has been thoroughly cleaned and all removable spots have been taken out; and that it has been dyed the colors decided upon.

The next step is to cut or tear the material on the straight of the goods into even strips which will work up into a braid about one inch wide. The weight of the material is the guiding factor in deciding on the exact width of the braid to be used in the rug, so it is well to cut a few practice strips in various widths and try braiding them in order to decide if the braid will be what you want.

to secure colors that will wear well. Select a standard quality, all purpose dye and follow the directions to the letter or you will be disappointed in the results.

For success in dyeing be sure to observe these rules:

Use a vessel large enough to allow the dye to cover the material entirely with room to stir it freely. Stir carefully to be sure of even distribution of color in the material. Mix the dye well. Again follow exactly the directions on the package.

Braids which are too small are tedious to sew together into the rug; they are more apt to cup on the floor, and they give a confused color effect in the finished rug. On the other hand if the braids are too large the appearance will be coarse and unattractive, and the rug will be heavy and hard to clean.

After the width has been decided upon and the strips have been cut, fold the raw edges to the center of the under side. Then fold the strips down the center, making a



Rugs made in the form of a long runner are useful in long spaces, as in this room, where rugs of this type are used on each side of the dining room table.

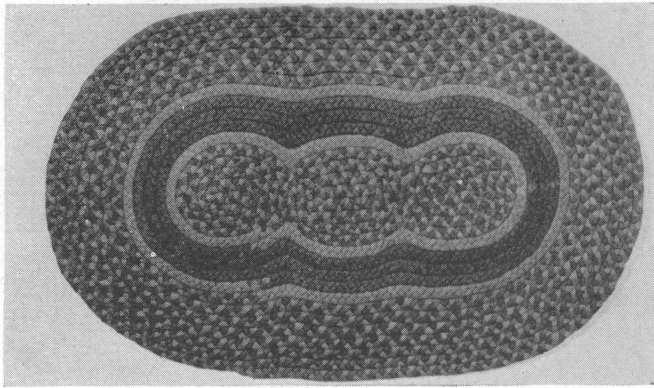
strand of four thicknesses. This will keep the raw edges or ravellings from showing. The folds may be pressed in, or the inexperienced rug maker may find it helpful to baste them. These strands should then be wrapped around heavy card board to keep them smooth and to keep the folds in place. For convenience, each color should be wrapped on a separate card. Avoid wrapping too many strands on the same card.

Begin braiding with strands of different lengths so that no two joinings will occur at

the same place. For ease in handling, strands of about a yard and a half are good. Take three strands, sew the ends together, and fasten firmly to some heavy object so that they may be pulled and held taut while braiding. Turn each strand flat and braid toward yourself to within about four inches of the end of the shortest strand, making sure that the braid is tight, firm and smooth as you work. To join a new strand to the short one open the fold, cut on the true bias just where it will be covered in the braid by another strand and make a smooth flat seam which will not cause the braid to bulge.



A runner is useful in front of a bed as illustrated by this rug.



As a general rule an oval rug fits in better with most furnishings than a round one.

Three strands are easiest to braid and sew into a rug, but any number of strands, from three to eleven can be used.

Narrow strands of soft material work up better in the braids of more than three than do wider strands of heavier materials. A rectangular center may be made of the wide braids by sewing them together in straight lines and adding several rows of the braid put around this piece as a center. It is quite difficult to make an attractive, serviceable rug with wide braids. It should be attempted only by those who have ability in the matter of color combinations and by people who are quite expert in rug making.

After the braids are pressed the work of sewing them together into a rug should be done on a table so that the

weight of the rug will not pull it out of shape and so that it may be held flat at all times. A cupped rug is never satisfactory, and perfect flatness in the finished rug is a mark of good workmanship. By braiding and sewing alternately, it is easier to work out a desired pattern.

Heavy mercerized cotton thread, linen carpet thread, or carpet warp, are suitable for sewing. The color of the thread should be as inconspicuous as possible. If the thread is waxed it is strengthened and is less likely to tangle and knot. A blind or slip stitch is used. Weave the thread back and forth with a short darning needle through the flat edges of the opposite braids, care being taken to catch every strand. This type of sewing makes the rug reversible. The stitches should be drawn tight



enough to secure firmness, but care should be taken not to draw them so tightly as to cause the rug to cup. When finished, the braids should show no open space between them.

For the beginning of a round rug a simple coil of the braid is made. An oval rug is begun by doubling a braid back on itself and sewing it together in a straight piece which should be as long as the difference between the length and the width of the desired rug. For instance if a rug is to be 36 inches long and 24 inches wide, the first 24 inches of the braid should be doubled

and sewed together into a strip 12 inches long—the difference between 36 and 24.

Proceed then to sew the braid round and round, pulling the inner strand of the braid a little at the turn of the oval in order to prevent cupping. When hanging the strand to one of a different color, it is better to do this on the oval curve.

Some rugs are made by cutting the braid at the completion of each row and fastening the end with an invisible seam. This brings out the pattern, helps to keep the rug smooth and flat and is a good



The size of the rug should be in keeping with the furniture with which it is used. A small braided mat is used on the table under the bowl of flowers. This rug was also made by Mrs. Stuart Smith of Smith County. Both rugs made by Mrs. Smith were made of material from suits discarded by her husband and three boys.

method where there is a definite change of color which cannot be woven in gradually, one strand at a time.

When the braids are joined in this way, the seams should be distributed around the rug so that there will be no rough places. Sometimes a smoother, more attractive finish is obtained when the last two or three rows of a rug are fastened in this way.

The design in a braided rug is developed by the arrangement of different colors in the braid. By combining two strands of a darker color with one of a lighter color a characteristic pattern results when the brands are sewed together. Thus the individual charm of a rug is due largely to the

way the design grows out of the structure. Good proportion in spacing and color combination is essential.

Some braided rug designs follow the general scheme of keeping the center in a medium dark color, surrounding it with bands of graduating color or going from darker to lighter; this may be followed by a note of contrast introduced by rows of solid color; then back to darker tones on the edge. There should be the same number of rows on each side of the center strip but for the rest of the rug groups of odd numbers of rows seem to work up into the most interesting designs.

### Small Mats Are Useful Too



Small braided mats offer an excellent opportunity for adding a decorative touch of color or pattern in a room.

**S**MALL braided mats offer an excellent opportunity for adding a decorative touch of color or pattern in a room. At the same time they are useful in protecting polished wood surfaces when placed under such articles as a bowl of flowers or a lamp. They may also be used in chair seats as a flat mat or made into a cushion.

Silk material may be utilized to a good advantage in this way, whereas, it is scarcely durable enough for floor coverings. Knitted silk material such as hosiery works

up with a smooth, even texture and has a beautiful sheen particularly suitable for table mats, while heavier silks work up well for chair seat covers.

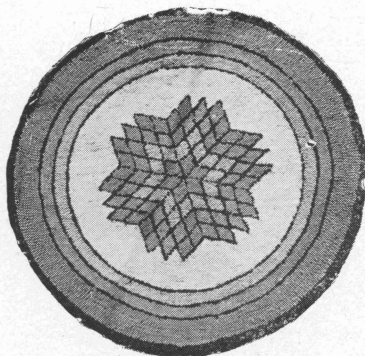
By cutting the knitted material lengthwise and holding the strips taut, the raw edges curl together naturally and can be held in while braiding. In general the method of making the braided mats is the same as that used in making the braided rugs.

Hooked mats made of silk materials are useful in several ways. As table and chair mats and as tops for foot stools, crickets, or chair cushions they may carry out the color scheme of a room or emphasize notes of color when these are needed.

Osnaburg, feed sacks or fairly coarse unbleached cotton goods may be used as a foundation for the making of hooked mats.

### Hooked Rugs Express Individuality

**N**O two hooked rugs are ever exactly alike even when the same design is used. That being the case, the making of a hooked rug offers a real opportunity for the expression of the individual rug maker's sense of beauty, color and proportion. It should be the source of great satisfaction to many persons who have here-

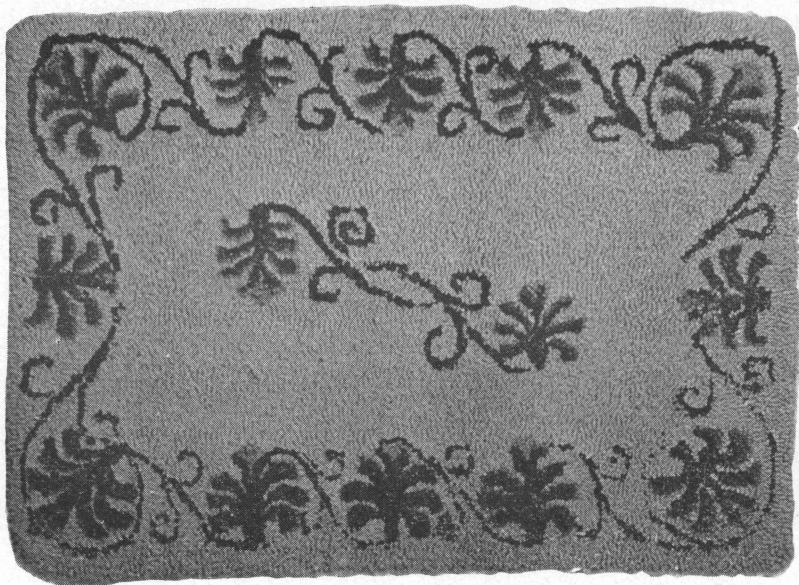


Making of hooked rugs or mats offers a real opportunity for the expression of the individual rug maker's sense of beauty, color and proportion.

tofore failed to find an outlet for their artistic ability.

An amateur should select simple designs and learn all the steps before undertaking the more difficult patterns. Geometric saucer or plate designs can be beautiful if the workmanship is good and if the colors used are soft and rich, giving those faded, blended effects so much admired in the old rugs of this type that have come down to us from our ancestors. Leaf and flower designs of a simple character, scroll designs which may be simple or elaborate, all make for pleasing patterns when colors are used well.

Patterns with realistic birds, animals, baskets of flowers, urns, sail boats, and landscape scenes should be



Simple scroll designs in hooked rugs, such as illustrated here, make pleasing patterns when lovely color blending is achieved.

avoided as a rule. Such realistic designs are likely to be unattractive unless they are done exceptionally well and used carefully.

Many designs are better without a border. A border sometimes has a tendency to make the rug appear to have a frame around it. Furthermore, borders often make rugs look smaller. It is possible for a beautiful rug to be made of several shades of the same dull, rich color arranged in blocks, diamonds, circles, shells, scallops, or rectangles with or without the use of some darker color to outline each figure. Black is too often used for this and should

be avoided as much as possible in the outlining of designs.

The foundation for hooked rugs should be heavy, closely woven burlap—tow or crocker-sacks, or round bale cotton bagging. By the use of large sheets of heavy pencil carbon paper, designs may be traced on the foundation. Use the blunt end of a bone or steel crochet hook for this instead of a pencil which is likely to cut into the paper and to destroy the outline of the pattern. Be careful to keep the straight edge of the pattern in line with the weave of the foundation material. When the rug pattern is traced on the foundation at least three





This interesting design uses circles in which many rich colors and warm, autumnal shades are harmonized.

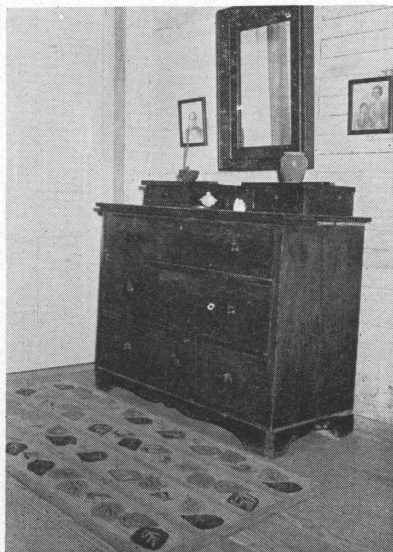
or four inches should be left as a margin beyond the pattern. This will enable the worker to fasten the rug or mat securely into the frame without breaking that part which is needed to form the finished hem.

The foundation should be tightly fastened into the frame by sewing or tacking, and it should be kept taut while work progresses on the rug. Speed and accuracy are largely dependent upon this.

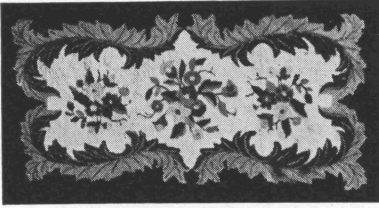
The material should be torn, if possible, into strips one-fourth inch wide or less, de-

pending upon its weight. Such wiry materials as mohair, serge, and wool voiles should be cut on the true bias. This will avoid long bits of thread over the surface, and the material is less likely to work out of the foundation. Knitted materials for rugs should be cut on the up and down. Wool hose should be cut around and around, but as a rule silk hose and underwear should be cut lengthwise.

If possible a variety of materials of the same fiber (all wool or all cotton) should be used in a rug to give an interesting texture. A hooked rug made of only one type



Wool is especially recommended for making good rugs, but only material of the same fiber should be used; that is, all wool or all cotton.



This is a beautiful old pattern in which the scroll design predominates.

of material has a monotonous quality and somewhat misses the hand-made effect.

The old fashioned colonial rug hook is considered by many the best type of needle for making artistic and beautiful rugs. This is the original type of hook used in making rugs and can be purchased for a small sum from most companies which handle rug materials. There are also a number of automatic hooks on the market.

With the colonial type of hook in the right hand, a strip of the rug material held in the left hand on the underside of the foundation, thrust the hook down through the foundation material, catch the strip and draw one-fourth inch loop of it through the foundation. Skip one mesh of the foundation material and put the hook down through the next mesh and draw up another one-fourth inch loop of the strip. This will wedge the first loop so that it will not slip out. After that continue to pull loops of the strip

through every second or third mesh of the foundation following the pattern. The thickness of the loops depends on the weight of the rug material in the strips.

Work from the outside edge to the center of the rug. Work all outlines of design first and then fill in the center or solid effects. This will help to prevent puckering.

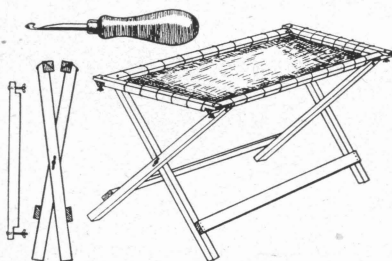
It is well to allow some loops every two or three inches to be larger than one-fourth inch for clipping. This adds interest to the pattern and texture and when sheared down to one-fourth inch will help in the final matting of the wool or felt. When a loose end is left, always begin the new strip by pulling it through the same hole, to wedge it in. Pull a slightly longer loop, and both the loose end and the loop can be clipped later, even if it is an unclipped rug that is being made. When finished, the back of the rug should be completely covered with the material. This is proof of its being hooked closely enough for beauty, strength and durability.

Cotton and woolen rugs are often sheared over the entire surface, but in this case the cotton ones are apt to ravel. Do not clip any part of a rug until it is completed, because in case you decide to change it, pulling out some work does not waste material. It is also

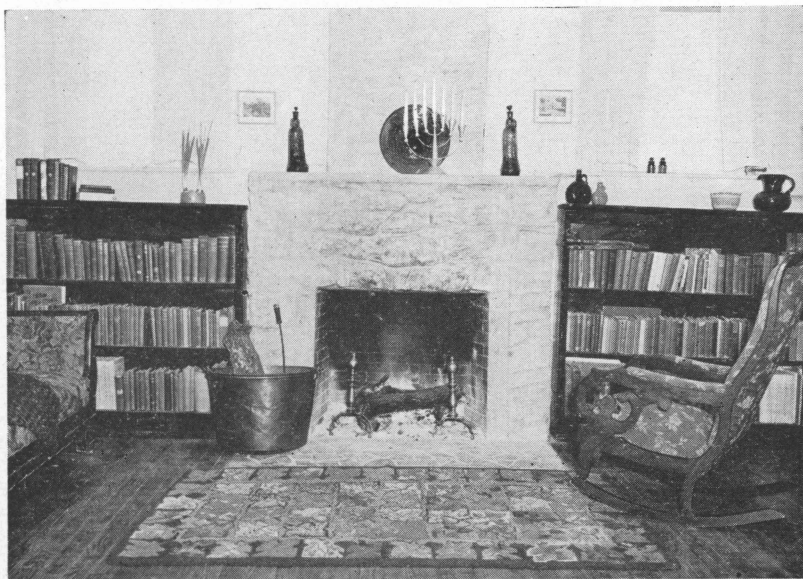
more easily done in the unclipped state. Unclipped rugs are very attractive and seem more characteristic of the old Colonial rugs.

When completed the rug is removed from the frame and a hem is turned down around the edges and finished at least one and one-half inches wide. Mitre diagonally all corners, and whip corners and edges with even stitches of strong cotton thread. Do not "size" the rug. This indicates an inferior article on the market, and one which slips easily on the floor. A slight steaming and pressing of the rug is necessary after hemming.

Place the rug right side down on a very soft surface, cover with a damp cloth and press with a moderately hot iron until the cloth is dry and steam ceases to appear.



Equipment needed for making hooked rugs includes the frame, foundation material, and the colonial type of rug hook.



Rectangular rugs harmonize with most furnishings.

---

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating.  
Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914.  
5-45-25M—Revised