

FROM SHEEP TO SHIRT:  
THE EXPLORATION, PRESERVATION, AND CELEBRATION OF  
TRADITIONAL FIBER ARTS AND CRAFTS PROCESSES

Katje J. Armentrout

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Humanities

Central Michigan University  
Mount Pleasant, Michigan  
May 2014

Copyright by  
Katje Jo Armentrout  
2014

This is dedicated to Jenny –  
Throughout everything, you're still here.  
I am you and you are me.

Also for Walt –  
It's been hard making sense of life since you've been gone.  
This is my attempt at trying to move on.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the members of my thesis committee: Dr. Laura Cochrane, Dr. Tara McCarthy, and Sally Rose. These faculty members have offered constructive feedback, provided ample assistance throughout the writing process, and afforded practical direction beginning with the conceptualization of this project and ending with its completion. The motivation, encouragement, and guidance they provided me are what caused this project to materialize. Their support was vital in the success of this project.

As my thesis committee chairperson, I owe Dr. Cochrane the utmost gratitude as a knowledgeable mentor who has spurred me to be accountable and productive. Thank you for believing in this research and pointing me in the direction of the community at Berea College. I am extremely grateful for your patience and knowledge although allowing me the room to work in my own way. One simply could not wish for a better or friendlier committee chairperson.

Special thanks go out to Ashley Cochrane for putting me in touch with several members of her community of Berea, Kentucky. Without your assistance and connections, this research would have been entirely impossible. Despite the distance, thank you for your kind hospitality, concern, and consideration. Also, I'd like to thank the informants who participated in this study. All of your responses were very beneficial in the outcomes of this research.

Lastly, I would like to recognize several people in my personal life who have inspired me in their own unique ways. I love you all: Dad, Mom, Sarah, Roger, Rose, Grandma A., Grandma L., Aunt Vivian, Danielle K., Jillian B., Larissa M., Melissa C., Katie P., Derek P., Jamie A., Angel R., and the whole Vogel family. Although many of you have questioned why I'm studying this particular discipline, I've valued every one of our conversations on the subject and sincerely thank you!

## ABSTRACT

### FROM SHEEP TO SHIRT: THE EXPLORATION, PRESERVATION, AND CELEBRATION OF TRADITIONAL FIBER ARTS AND CRAFTS PROCESSES

by Katje J. Armentrout

With the onset of the American Industrial Revolution in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, textile production in the United States took a turn from a small, labor intensive cottage industry to have a much larger capacity of quickly mass manufactured goods. Prior to technological advancement in the industry, adequate knowledge of textile production and the various manual skills needed to make cloth at home had existed for centuries. However, the sustainability of these traditional and natural methods began to wane because of innovations that were made throughout the industry's history such as the invention of the power loom and the increase in production at mechanical textile mills. This study of fiber arts and crafts, focusing on the practices of the Central Appalachian region, explores the balance of artistic qualities of traditional goods and the economic pressures of current markets.

From literature research and interviews with community members who practice fiber handicrafts, I piece together a cultural history surrounding fiber crafts in Central Appalachia. By describing the past during the height of textile handicraft production, I seek to determine the viability for applying lessons from the past and practicing traditional techniques today, while encouraging the use of sustainable methods in new alternative and emerging markets in innovative ways. With contemporary approaches toward style, subject matter, aesthetic, and advancement of technology, Central Appalachian craftspeople explore historical and natural practices of fiber arts and crafts within a cultural context. Central Appalachian craftspeople use their location, educational, heritage, and gender influences as a reference to these contexts, and

then use this knowledge to work with or alter their craft. Due in part to the globalization of the textile industry, economic restraints on the Central Appalachian region are included in these contexts.

Traditionalization is a practice that allows a craftspeople to incorporate all that they have accomplished in their discipline with a contemporary expressive approach toward style, subject matter, aesthetic, and technological advancement. By traditionalizing fiber handicrafts contemporary craftspeople of the region are able to explore ways of conserving vital connections between historical heritage, industry, and gender roles. From these influences, contemporary craftspeople have learned to adjust to and cope with harsh economic environments surrounding their communities. Through their conversation and their work, fiber craftspeople in Central Appalachia revitalize the importance of tradition in their craft. Traditionalizing fiber goods and methods that have been passed down through generations has enabled Central Appalachian arts and crafts people to practice sustainability and self-sufficiency, permitting them to thrive in a globalized marketplace.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION TO ARGUMENT AND METHODS .....	1
Research Design .....	9
Chapter Outline.....	11
II. INTRODUCTION TO FIRESIDE INDUSTRIES, SETTLEMENT SCHOOLS, GUILDS, AND ARTISTIC MOVEMENTS OF CENTRAL APPALACHIA .....	13
Berea College .....	16
Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts .....	18
Penland School of Crafts.....	19
Southern Highland Craft Guild.....	20
Southern Craft Revival.....	21
New Deal Projects.....	23
Historical Influences in Contemporary Society.....	24
III. INTRODUCTION TO CENTRAL APPALACHIAN CULTURE AND CRAFT TRADITIONS .....	27
Cultural Heritage and Characteristics .....	28
Gender Study and Informant Influences .....	29
Challenging Tradition in Contemporary Society.....	33
IV. INTRODUCTION TO TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES AND PROCESSES .....	37
Raising Sheep for Wool Production .....	38
Handspinning.....	39
Dyeing with Natural Materials .....	42
Weaving.....	44
Practicing Sustainability in Contemporary Society .....	48
VI. CONCLUSIONS .....	51
Building on Tradition.....	51
Local Fiber Craft Economy .....	52
Limitations and Future Research .....	53
Epilogue.....	55
APPENDICES .....	56
REFERENCES .....	64

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Map of Central Appalachian Region. Illustration by author.....	14
2. Map of Central Appalachian Higher Education Institutions with Cottage Industries Programs. Illustration by author.....	15
3. Diagram of Spinning Wheel Parts. Photograph/Illustration by author.....	41
4. Loom Parts. Photograph/Illustration by author.....	46
5. Warping up the Loom. Photograph by author.....	47
6. Central Appalachian Popular Weaving Patterns. Photographs by author .....	48

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO ARGUMENT AND METHODS

“I’ve always been real interested in weaving an’ I think it’s one of the greatest crafts ever an’ I just *love* makin’ a pattern an’ weaving different things. I want t’get started back. And my daughter wants me t’teach her t’weave all these different designs. She said she wanted me t’do all that while I was able – before I got too old t’do that kind of work. I love t’weave. I think it’s th’most relaxin’ thing you can do. When you watch your pattern grow, t’mee it’s like life, more like living. It’s more like building character than anything else I can describe it with. It’s like teachin’ a child from th’beginnin’ to grow – as your pattern grows’r as your cloth grows, it’s just like a child growin’ up. You weave your life into somethin’ beautiful. That’s the way I see it.” (*Firefox Magazine, Volume 2, 1972, 255*)

The above passage provides insight into Gloria Keener’s life as a weaver in the Central Appalachian region. Just as Keener emphasized, fiber arts and crafts production has been a vital part of the lives of the Central Appalachian people for generations and is a profitable piece of their heritage today. Technical processes such as handspinning, natural dyeing, and weaving are being taught in regional academic institutions such as Berea College, Penland School of Craft, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, and the Southern Highland Craft Guild just as they have been for centuries. These methods have been used to promote sustainability and self-sufficiency in the United States, as well as in harsh economic environments such as Central Appalachia where industries rely on exporting natural resources rather than investing back into the region. In this thesis, I am building on scholars’ fundamental concepts of exploring techniques and manufacturing processes, conserving and celebrating craft production, and recognizing the importance of cultural influences such as ideas about gender. Through my research, I found that the people of the Central Appalachian region work to preserve a balance between the aesthetic qualities of traditional goods and the growing economic pressures of contemporary markets by reinforcing the importance of natural craft process and embracing technological change.

Drawing from literature research and interviews with community members from Berea and Lexington, Kentucky, this thesis offers a close look at how and why the region's fiber arts and crafts have transitioned from traditional to traditionalized. A fitting definition, Jane Becker describes tradition as:

the past, of course, but also to the way in which the past is transmitted; it refers to the passing down of knowledge from generation to generation and implies value and veneration. It represents a lingering of the past in the present, a touchstone with those who have gone before and have left behind some of what they held most important for later generations. (1998, 1)

Tradition is a personal experience, filled with learned skills, customs, rituals, and stories that are maintained and performed through generations of community (J. Becker, 1998, 1).

Traditionalization is a practice that allows a craftsperson to incorporate all that he/she has accomplished in his/her discipline (i.e. technique, material, and pattern) with a contemporary expressive approach toward style, subject matter, aesthetic, and technological advancement thereby, maintaining a culture's heritage traditions (Bauman, 2001, 107). Justifying this definition, Tom Mould (2005) adds, "Traditionalizing valorizes the past in the service of the present...[describing manipulations that] appear culturally authentic or any instance in which performers operate within or reference a particular cultural form or practice." Craftspeople in Central Appalachia produce traditionalized fiber goods to extend their traditional heritage and cultural processes in contemporary markets.

In addition to the evolution of tradition to traditionalization, another shift happens between localization and globalization. Due in part to the collapse of the US textile industry in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>1</sup> handmade fiber crafts have fallen victim to a market that revolves heavily

---

<sup>1</sup> According to Eric Ginsburg, the United States textile industry has marginalized its role in global manufacturing because of "unchecked capitalism...mechanization and computerization."

around the advantages of globalization. According to Lieber and Weisberg (2002, 274), globalization can be described as “the increasing global integration of economies, information technology, the spread of popular culture, and other forms of human action.” Localization accredits customs of a particular region of the world, developing views, products, and ideas for the purposes of marketability, trade, capitalism, and economic benefit within that location (Kriner, 2013). By using historical techniques while incorporating new and innovative technology, current Central Appalachian fiber craftspeople reestablish the importance of localized craft production.

Closely tied with the local market, Jane Becker (1998, 6) defines folk cultures as forming in opposition to a dominant culture normally shaped by capitalism. Spawning from resistance to advancements in technological progress, the folk culture of Central Appalachia has conflicting ideas with industrial textile mills of the organization of rationality, efficiency, and hierarchy of corporate capitalism (J. Becker, 1998, 6). In contemporary Appalachia, creating traditionalized handicrafts and encouraging individuals to manufacture products that have an aesthetic strongly linked to their personal heritage allows an increase in market value for the goods, and as a result minimizes conflicts between the folk and mainstream society.

Craftspeople educated at Central Appalachian schools and guilds are able to identify with personal and rural influences as well as women’s and generational inspirations. Many of my

---

(2011) Once dominating the international textile trade, there has been an abundance of national mill closures which came just a few years after the mills underwent modernization. The significant drop occurs after the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, causing many United States companies to blame unfair trade practices as the culprit. These accusations are “justified by the creation of unfair international agreements which allowed the development of both deplorable working conditions found in their competition’s production facilities and the lax environmental laws in foreign countries giving their domestic producers a cost advantage.” (Bishopric, 2010)

informants expressed that their initial interest in the subject matter was fostered by female family members, such as mothers and grandmothers, who learned these skills out of financial necessity. From these influences, contemporary craftspeople have learned to adapt to and cope with harsh economic environments surrounding the community for decades. Subsequently, Central Appalachian fiber arts and crafts people make connections with natural and cultural processes for financial reasons by promoting sustainability and self-sufficiency. Sustainability is the act of maintaining tradition through generations of people which allows for the continual use and reuse of materials and techniques to ensure the economic value and marketability of a culture's resources (Glotzbach, 2013). Therefore, its practice seeks to improve human welfare by protecting the sources of raw materials used for human needs and ensuring environmental, social, and economic needs are met with respect for future generations (Goodland, 1995, 3). In conjunction with Central Appalachian fiber arts and crafts, applies to the restructuring of a dated economic system towards a new understanding of prosperity and re-localization. Self-sufficiency is a type of personal independence and for economic purposes relates directly to sustainability. However, self-sufficiency does not need to be focused on traditional aspects. In this case, self-sufficiency pertains to a textile craft-making individual relying on one's own resources and abilities to supply for personal need without external assistance (Corner, 2013). Most self-sufficient fiber arts and crafts people support a lifestyle of subsistence, creating textiles for a means of economic value. Central Appalachian fiber arts and crafts people use and reuse materials and techniques to ensure the economic value and marketability of their resources.

Originally developed for their functionality, Central Appalachian textiles survived the Industrial Revolution to emerge as improved forms of innovative craft. Through the improvement of process and mechanical streamlining, traditionalized crafts have undergone

different types of physical design, constructional procedure, or functional change to improve the outcome of the product. The term “craft” can refer to “items, either functional or decorative, created by hand that evolve out of knowledge of the medium” (Alvic, 2013), with a tendency to be taught to future generations to preserve cultural heritage. With this designation, the terms “craft” and “handicraft” are interchangeable. However, skilled craftspeople typically attribute the term handicraft to the traditional sector of the area of craft.

Throughout the global marketplace craftspeople assemble to form guilds, resulting in a hierarchy of skilled individuals. The master craftsperson stands at the top of this order, owning a shop, setting standards, determining designs, and directing subordinates. An apprentice is an unskilled worker learning the teachings of a master craftsperson (C. Anderson et al., 1975, 13). After the apprentice completes the master’s teachings, gaining the title of journeyman, the student normally settles down at a shop with the possibility of becoming a master someday. In the region of Central Appalachia, this procedure of tutelage was generally different. While earlier fiber arts and crafts people still held themselves to the parameters of the guild system’s valued work ethics, the proximity of many instructors to their students was at a distance. Historically, these goods were manufactured in the home when women had free time to practice their craft after their other home duties were completed (Alvic, 2003, 9). Many of these craftspeople already had various skills that would allow them to fabricate goods. Fireside industries are a large contributor to the progression and continuity of traditional practices in fiber arts and crafts. These methods enable craftspeople to participate in an economic enterprise, yet still innovate and preserve their cultural heritage by producing goods at home. Today many traditional textile products are still marketed as “homespun”, which means that every aspect of the process is completed within a domestic setting. As Allen Eaton (1973, 92) writes, homespun

cloth is produced in two basic processes, “first, the spinning of the thread or yarn, and second, weaving it into a web.” These elementary methods have stayed the same since the first cloth was made and earlier than when more complex equipment was developed. Because of the time consuming processes employed in the creation of handicraft fiber articles, it is easy to understand the downfall of these traditional practices among artisans and craftspeople.

Past scholars of Central Appalachia have distributed information documenting the continuance of fiber handicraft processes for future generations. Through these works we find out why the exploration, preservation, and celebration of craft are important to society, as well as how craft impacts cultural heritage. These scholars have unraveled the cultural politics that bind together a complex network of producers, reformers, government officials, industries, and consumers, all of whom help to define Central Appalachian craft production in the context of a national cultural identity.

Allen Eaton’s (1937) study is a comprehensive survey of the Appalachian region’s crafts, marking the beginnings of the Craft Revival and defining its parameters. Eaton argues the historical relevance of traditional techniques on the survival of the Appalachian arts and crafts culture. Garry Barker (1991) makes the transition from the period covered in Eaton’s book to a more modern era, arguing the necessity for updating the information on Appalachian crafts and craftspeople because their work is continuing to flourish. His study involves the Kentucky and Appalachian craft programs in the 1960s to 1980s. Jane S. Becker (1998) introduces critical information regarding the attraction to the traditional and folk culture of the Appalachian region. By defining such large themes as “tradition” and “folk”, Becker argues that we are able to “define what we understand as American culture, what it means to be American” (2). Her work examines the contemporary construction and dissemination of ideas about the Southern

Appalachian craftspeople in the 1930s who were popularly recognized as America's folk (1998, 3). Paralleling these studies, my current work upholds the survival of the Appalachian culture and the traditional fiber crafts that have been integral products of the region's image but also includes voices of 21<sup>st</sup> century craftspeople and the technologies they have developed and incorporated into their current markets.

While there is an abundant amount of scholarly focus on the overall craft history of the region, Philis Alvic (2003) concentrates on the accounts of various regional mountain weaving centers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Outlining the inevitability of teaching craft traditions within a higher education environment, Alvic reinforces the historical influences of craft centers such as Berea College, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Penland School of Crafts, and the Southern Highland Craft Guild. Wendy Kaplan's (1987) study centers on the significance of the American Arts and Crafts movement. She argues that, "The Arts and Crafts ideal was not so much a style as an approach, an attitude toward the making of an object...defined broadly enough to include all those who shared its goals of rationalizing, simplifying, and unifying work and environment" (52). Kaplan notes the impact of the general public's idealization of a rural lifestyle on the appeal of handicrafts to both aesthetic and philanthropic interests. Consequently, this revitalization increased market value for fiber goods and ultimately, aided in the assistance to the Central Appalachian craftspeople during eras of depression and influencing New Deal economic projects.

Kathleen C. Wilson's (2001, 2006) work strengthens my argument by recognizing the importance of culturally and traditionally inherited values that Central Appalachia's fiber crafts embody. Acknowledging a sense of place and individuality, Wilson identifies craftspeople in the region who seek out recognition for their communities that passed traditions from generation to

generation. Wilson (2001) ensures continuity of regional fiber crafts stating, “many southern Appalachian weavers did not put away their looms in the nineteenth century, but made a conscious decision to continue to weave beautiful objects for their own pleasure, as gifts for family members, or in celebration of important events” (x). Another scholar acknowledging the significance of preserving and celebrating craft production on our nation’s cultural and educational environment is Loyal Jones (1975, 1994). Jones (1975) discusses the cultural differences between the Appalachian region’s people and the rest of the country. He argues that the origins, history and experience of Appalachian people hold similar values with early inhabitants of the United States. These strong innate values include individualism, self-reliance, pride, neighborliness and hospitality, a strong sense of family, and a love of place (1994). By explaining the core values of the Appalachian people, Jones expresses optimism towards a culture that is generally judged by a mainstream society surrounded by wealth, power, and accumulation. By incorporating these scholars’ concepts into my topic, I am structuring my argument around the importance in longevity of cultural factors such as gender and education in the region and the acquisition of materials that make the fiber goods in Central Appalachia.

Scholars, such as Frances Goodrich (1931), Karen Casselman (1980), and Rebecca Burgess (2011) investigate the techniques and manufacturing processes necessary for handmade fiber goods to be created. These scholars maintain the importance of natural craft production, creating links with historical influences. Frances Goodrich (1931) documents the technology and processes of traditional mountain fiber arts and crafts, connecting the origins of natural dyeing, handspinning, and weaving with the beginnings of the Southern Craft Revival. Not only does Goodrich outline the procedures of producing traditional fiber crafts, but she also summarizes the beneficial qualities they meant for the people of the Appalachian region. Her writings, like those

of Allen Eaton, are influential background on the subsistence of traditional processes. Embracing the value of handicrafts laid out in Goodrich's study, Karen Casselman (1980) and Rebecca Burgess (2011) impart more updated methods on natural process. Specifically, Rebecca Burgess (2011) introduces the impact of localization on a product and argues for the continuance of natural dyeing methods in a market that is increasingly disappearing. Although her work is not directly focused on my region of study, her argument is based on the same current principles employed in Central Appalachian fiber arts and crafts.

### Research Design

In studying the variations of textile preservation in contemporary Central Appalachian society, I am inspired by my informants' perspectives on the practices of textile arts and crafts. Through this study, I asked questions emphasizing the anthropological, historical, and artistic attributes of traditional fiber techniques, connecting contemporary craft communities with historical groups of Central Appalachia. Also, I explored ways that past and present craftspeople taught/teach their skills to successive generations. Through conversations with my informants, I became especially interested in the continuation of teaching traditional natural fiber processes and their benefits culturally, economically, and environmentally.

I took a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth interviews with six individuals who identified themselves as knowledgeable in fiber arts and crafts of the Central Appalachian region. I found individual in-depth interviewing necessary to allow the participants of this study to articulate their own knowledge of the roles of fiber arts and crafts in their community (Bernard, 2011, 156). Based on the literature review of the history of the Central Appalachian fiber arts and crafts industry, I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix A). This protocol

acted as a guide to initiate discussions in the individual interviews – while some questions developed further probing, other questions were omitted if they weren't relevant to the participants' experiences. While the research questions guided the study by focusing on the continuation of traditional fiber processes, these semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their expertise and identify specific components that they believe are beneficial to the subject matter (Bernard, 2011, 157).

Before beginning the interview protocol, participants were first asked to complete a consent form as prescribed by the IRB (see Appendix B). They were also asked to indicate their role in the fiber arts and crafts community because it may influence the participants' responses. Six individuals from Central Appalachia participated in this study, consisting of four women and two men. Four of these informants are employed at Berea College. Two are directly involved with the Berea College Student Crafts program, and a third is directly involved with the Art program at the college. Three participants are graduates of Berea College, one of whom utilizes his craft experience in his own weaving studio and another employs her craft experience in a variety of guild studios. One participant identifies herself as a weaver, and also as an author of several documents on the history of traditional weaving in the region. The interviews took place at locations selected by the participants.

After conducting and transcribing the interviews, I analyzed 128 pages of written textual interview transcription results, identifying common themes. Looking for key words in context and “pawing and sorting” through the transcriptions, I was able to develop thematic codes that emerged within the data (Cochrane, 2013). I was sensitive to repeated ideas, words and phrases, as well as conflicting statements, expressions, and frustrations (Cochrane, 2013, 117). Therefore,

I was able to evaluate and interpret what each participant contributed to the discussion of traditional fiber arts and crafts practices.

### Chapter Outline

While researching these topics, I found that it was necessary to be knowledgeable both on the historical relevance of the Central Appalachian region and its people, as well as the technical properties attributed to designing the textiles there. Therefore, Chapter II introduces a brief history of various settlement schools, guilds, and artistic movements that have influenced the region. While Berea College is the primary focus of my research, it is necessary to compare and contrast its history with other regional institutions such as Penland School of Crafts, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, and the Southern Highland Craft Guild because all of these locations share connections with a rich fiber craft heritage. Exhibiting the influential importance of the Great Depression on my informants, this chapter strengthens my argument to reinvigorate the importance of localized craft production. In Chapter III, I explore the cultural connections between the heritage of the people, industrialization, and gender roles and household organization, as well as how these traditional textile methods are incorporated into a traditionalized contemporary society. Chapter IV discusses the natural processes and techniques of raising sheep, along with spinning, dyeing, and weaving that have been taught for generations. This chapter is necessary in developing a familiarity of the language and practices used in the sustainability of fiber arts and crafts education and the textile industry. It is also fundamental to understanding the aesthetic attributes pertaining to the fiber goods that the Central Appalachian region currently creates both in production and artistic studios. The continuance of these traditional practices allows craftspeople to support their community while preserving historical

connections with their ancestors, as well as celebrating artistic enterprises that provide economic development.

## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCTION TO FIRESIDE INDUSTRIES, SETTLEMENT SCHOOLS, GUILDS, AND ARTISTIC MOVEMENTS OF CENTRAL APPALACHIA

According to the documentary series *Craft in America* (2009), “the American craft tradition didn’t just appear one day, fully-formed and mature.” Over hundreds of years of history, craft techniques and materials have emerged because of social, political, economic, and technological factors. Master craftspeople have educated apprentices for generations in skills that have been passed down through domestic associations on handicraft goods made in home-based industries. However, industrial globalization, urbanization, and immigration at the end of the nineteenth century brought uncertainty to many regions of the United States, causing many community members to look back to an imagined past. A combination of creative style and conventional comradeship (B. Anderson, 1983, 7), this “imagined past” was an idea of nostalgia playing a major role in the lives of arts and crafts people after the Great Depression. In response to arts and crafts people searching for a more predictable and normal lifestyle, they sought refuge in a lifestyle of familiarity, reaching back to a time when life held less economic and emotional turmoil.

Predominately located within the Blue Ridge Mountains, with portions in the Valley Ridges between the Allegheny Plateau and the Great Appalachian Valley, Central Appalachia (Figure 1) encompasses areas of West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Central Appalachia is a region developed from a unique mixture of cultural, social, and geographical circumstances rising from a distinct tradition of fiber arts and crafts (See Chapter 3). At the end of the nineteenth century and early in the twentieth, while other parts of the country were putting away spinning wheels and looms in favor of synthetic

materials mass-produced in a factory, Central Appalachia was preserving their heritage by continuing local fiber craft traditions. Higher education institutions such as Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, Penland School of Crafts in Penland, North Carolina, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and the Southern Highland Craft Guild in Asheville, North Carolina (Figure 2) stimulated a fresh respect and appreciation for the fiber arts and crafts in the local people of the region. Currently, these schools and guilds, along with historical artistic movements such as the Southern Craft Revival and New Deal projects influence the regeneration of the importance of localized craft production, rather than outsourcing the industry through methods of globalization.



Figure 1. Map of Central Appalachian Region. Illustration by author.

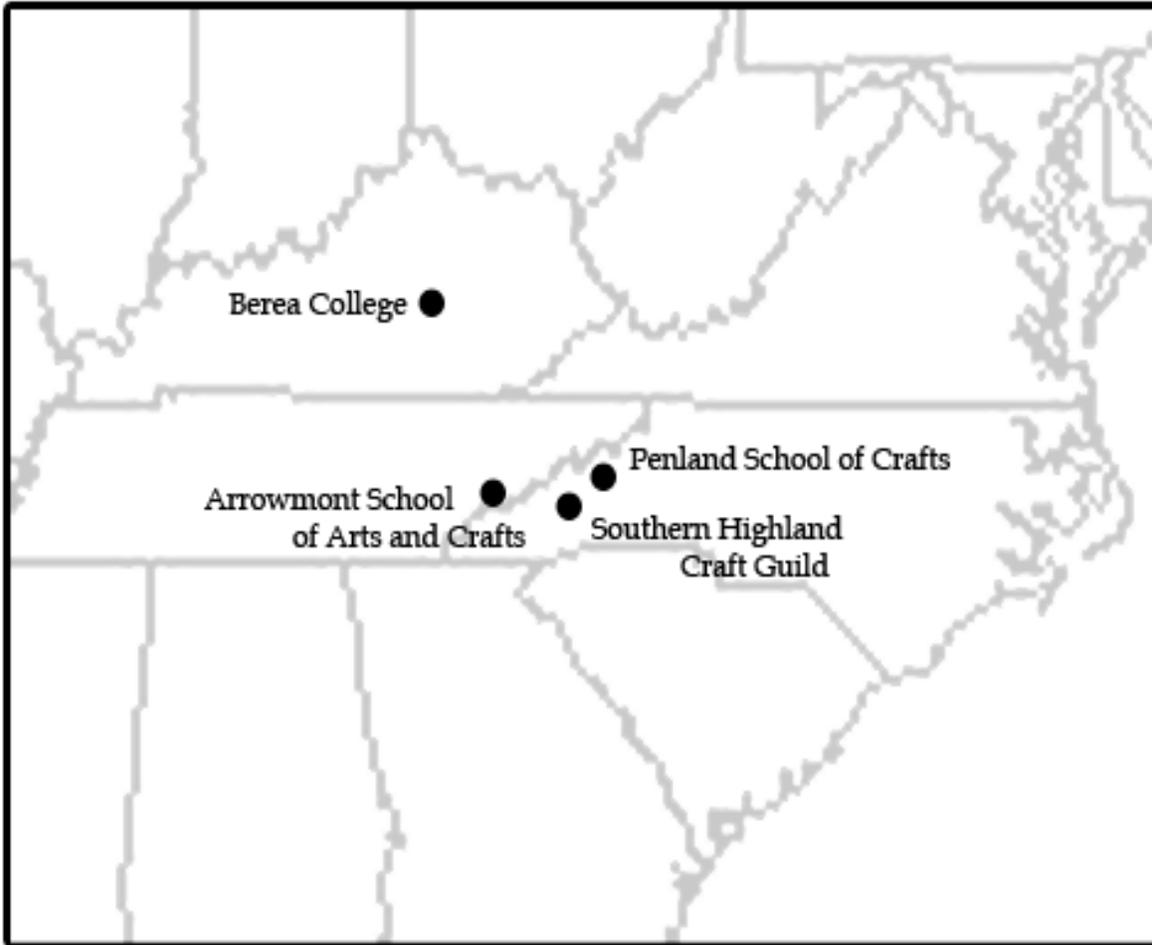


Figure 2. Map of Central Appalachian Higher Education Institutions with Cottage Industries Programs. Illustration by author.

The evolution of the Appalachian schools and craft centers did not spring from a single ideology. Fireside Industries were, and are, a large contributor to the progression and continuity of traditional practices in fiber arts and crafts. Historically, these goods consisted of textiles that were manufactured in the home when women had free time to practice their craft after their other home duties were completed. Many of these craftspeople already had skill levels that would allow them to fabricate goods. As the President of Berea College in 1911, Dr. Frost, explained to the newly appointed director of the Fireside Industries project, “We do not wish to introduce forms of weaving which are new and foreign to the people here but to encourage and develop the

forms which have been handed down by tradition from the old English and Scottish sources” (Berea.edu).

With the introduction of Fireside Industries throughout rural homes in the region, the craft centers coordinated events and marketed goods to be sold within the setting of the institutions. By placing broad parameters on the goods, each craft community created a unique product partial to local support, physical setting, the parent institution, and the personalities of the principal players (Alvic, 2003, 10). Today, according to Amy Judd (2013), the manager of Fireside Industries at Berea College, the workshop continues to thrive in making quality products that are utilizing traditional techniques and producing a different product that brings “new stuff, new color, new excitement” to a localized textile market.

### Berea College

In an area of economic hardship in rural central Kentucky, Berea College was established as a free school for students wishing to pursue a higher education in 1853. All students worked a certain number of hours to cover tuition fees, and either worked additional hours or paid cash for their room and board. Some student employment opportunities included maintenance, clerical duties, and housekeeping to keep the university operational, while other labor options developed skills such as forestry, hotel management, and the craft industries. Major publicity about the university highlighted craftwork – a student seated at a loom made a great impact on monetary gifts from donors (Berea.edu).

Dr. William Goodell Frost, appointed president of the college in 1893, recognized the appeal of traditional bedcovers used in local mountain cabins as a source of revenue for the college (Kaplan, 1987, 309). Dr. Frost, knowing that supporters of the Arts and Crafts movement

preferred textiles that had been woven at home as part of a cottage industry, would often take old coverlets with him on trips to draw funding and publicity for Berea College. Frost made the case for the college very appealing, but always fought against the negative stereotypes of mountain people who lacked the resources to pay for their own education. By focusing the mission of the school on Appalachia, Frost committed himself to raising vast sums of money after seeing the potential in weaving, first as a tool for promoting the college and then as a means of achieving economic development (Alvic, 2003, 54). More donors and larger contributions from patrons were needed to support a growing student body. The weaving and spinning fit in with Frost's scheme for developing education at Berea. The coverlets from Appalachian homes attested to the mastery of complex skills and the ability to work at long difficult tasks.

For the marketing objectives of the college, a continual supply of coverlets was necessary. The college initiated Fireside Industries of Berea, in which traditional fiber practices "were carried on in the mountain homes where mothers with skill of hand spun, wove, and quilted for the sake of the children's education" (Peck, 1955, 116). However, the skills of the rural mountain people had declined because most of the women had put away their looms when commercially woven fabrics became so affordable after the Civil War (Alvic, 2003, 37). Although the memory of weaving still existed, the passing of craft had lapsed between mother and daughter.

Dr. William Goodell Frost deserves credit for seeing the potential in weaving, as a tool for promoting Berea College and also a means of achieving economic development. Weaving and spinning fit in with the educational, economic, and social efforts throughout the mountains surrounding Berea College. Several local women helped convey the economic viability of the products of the loom and also proved the social benefits of the work. Thousands of yards of

fabric and hundreds of different items were made on the looms in and around Berea. The program at Berea College was a prototype for several other programs throughout Appalachia.

#### Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts

Placed on a wooded hillside in the small village of Gatlinburg, Tennessee is the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts. With a history dating back to 1912, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts was originally founded by a women's fraternity, as the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School. These women decided at their 1910 convention to embark on a philanthropic project to provide a remote community an education where formal schooling had been previously unavailable (arrowmont.org). A committee of three Pi Beta Phi women travelled to the Appalachian Mountains to investigate a site for the school. Alvic (2003, 58) outlines the objectives of the project as an "effort to show them how to use their own resources, to develop industries suitable to their environment, and to let them lead more happy healthful lives. We want to help...to educate mountain boys and girls back to their homes instead of away from them." The students of the Gatlinburg settlement school expressed gratitude toward their teachers by bringing handmade gifts made by their parents, which usually consisted of weavings, baskets, and woodcarvings.

Weaving in the Gatlinburg area entered a new phase in 1925 with the arrival of teacher and weaving manager, Winogene Redding, who stands as the most important person in the school's development (Alvic, 2003, 68). Redding rejuvenated the school's weaving program and inspired most of the other teachers to weave after they finished their classroom duties. She established procedures that continued with only slight revisions through the years. Redding would design an item and then teach the necessary skills for weavers to finish the paid

assignment in their homes. The home-based operation maintained quality control and paid workers by the piece, to ensure quick production (Alvic, 2003, 61).

From the beginning, generating goods for sale to visitors, rather than supplying items for local consumption, was the main marketing idea behind opening Arrow Craft Shop (Alvic, 2003, 61). Tourists to the mountains journeyed through Gatlinburg and found their way to this distinctive shop selling handicraft items. Textile pieces were attractive to travelers because they packed easily for the return journey (Alvic, 2003, 61). Although Arrowcraft implied that each purchase helped the community and the school, additional promotion of the goods was not necessary because the items sold were well designed, made from good materials, and skillfully crafted. Due to the popularity of weaving at the settlement school, the rich history of crafts in the region grew. After much success and the increase of enrollment, the Summer Craft Workshop would later be renamed the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in 1968 (Alvic, 2003, 72).

#### Penland School of Crafts

The educational center of Penland School of Crafts is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains in the mountain town of Spruce Pine, North Carolina, but was originally founded in the 1920s and named The Appalachian School ([penland.org](http://penland.org)). At first the teachings of the school revolved around farming and the household arts in addition to regular academic subjects. In 1914, weaving was proposed as an option for girls. The Appalachian School focused its teachings on younger children and employed teachers in leadership roles, such as Lucy Morgan who came to Penland, North Carolina in 1920 after receiving training from the Central Michigan Normal School in Mount Pleasant, Michigan (Alvic, 2003, 76).

In 1923, Morgan spent several months at the Fireside Industries of Berea College learning to weave. After returning to Penland, Morgan formed the association of Penland Weavers, a cottage industry that provided looms and materials to local women and then marketed their hand-woven goods (Alvic, 2003, 77). The Penland Weavers offered economic value to the women of the Penland farms, whose typical day was spent raising children, preserving food, making clothes, and performing other farm chores. Women in the Penland area took up weaving as an opportunity to raise money for their household (Alvic, 2003, 77).

### Southern Highland Craft Guild

The craft heritages of settlement schools in Central Appalachia hold a common connection in the formation of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild. Most ideas for the cooperation of craft agencies were generated by Olive Dame Campbell and Allen Eaton, who were both influential conference speakers on the importance of handicrafts in rural life and development (Southernhighlandguild.org). Originally chartered in 1930 as the Southern Mountain Handicraft Guild, the organization is centrally located in Asheville, North Carolina among various weaving centers that hold common founding principles. By understanding the need to conserve handicrafts from an educational standpoint, the Guild was effective in its effort to become the authority of quality and taste. Each institution involved in the Guild maintained its own control over wages, production methods, and prices while jointly promoting the Guild's image and standards, as well as overcoming production and marketing problems (Alvic, 2003, 22).

Throughout its history, the focus of the Southern Highland Craft Guild's ideology and programs has been on a vital connection between arts and crafts and social reform. Over time,

the Guild has remained a highly efficient training and marketing group with a mission to foster and encourage production of handmade crafts in the Appalachian region. To this day, the Guild endeavors to familiarize people of the region with basic principles of design and ideas of aesthetic beauty. Promoting the social benefits of craftwork, as well as reuniting the labor force to make many craft artifacts, are strategies of the Guild.

### Southern Craft Revival

The Arts and Crafts movement in America originated from the British Arts and Crafts movement in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to the perceived collapse of the individual worker and the fall of morale in human labor, the Arts and Crafts movement was a reaction against the Industrial Revolution (Kaplan, 1978, 208). Based on the refinement of art in everyday life, the majority of arts and crafts enthusiasts were searching for an alternative to the existing option. Arts and crafts people sought to express their personalities through decoration, especially the design and furnishings of their home. Turning to arts and crafts as a reaction to social change, American crafts supporters chose to reject the industrialization, urbanization, and immigration that had a destructive impact on the environment. The handicraft revival that emerged from the efforts of craftspeople epitomized these tensions between valued imagery and reality. In the process of creating a very different future, the leaders of the movement looked to the past and the work that had been created over centuries of learning, emphasizing locally made handwork over mass production.

The Southern Craft Revival shared the nations' broad definition of the reform philosophy of the Arts and Crafts movement – encouraging originality and simplicity of form, utilizing local natural materials, and the prominence of handicraft (Winter, 1975, 36). The worth of crafts in

Central Appalachia did not depend on the understanding of people in the complex and changing world of America, but rather on the invisibility of their way of life. All over Central Appalachia, women instilled modern social and aesthetic values by returning to the production methods that had been passed down through generations. In some small way, they were criticizing technological process by carefully selecting traditions that could nurture their choices reflected the ideological and consumer needs of urban Americans who longed for a connection to the pre-modern world (J. Becker, 1998, 70).

The traditional textile creations of people in Central Appalachia shared an idealization of a pre-industrial and pre-capitalist era with the rest of the nation. Southern Craft revival leaders “encouraged weaving among the grandchildren and great grandchildren of women who had woven out of family necessity” (Alvic, 2003, 2). The revitalization of traditional mountain craftwork obscured the conflict of the reality of mountain life and craft production, endowing the work of the people of Central Appalachia with increased market value. These Central Appalachian settlers had knowledge and equipment for home textile production, but most women had given up the task of textile production with the availability of commercial fabrics. The Southern Craft Revival returned these skills to the region by allowing the women a chance to earn an income, rather than just making goods for personal use. Linking the textile industry with their home life provided women with opportunities to blend social and cultural reform. While pursuing their craft, Central Appalachian women dedicated themselves to improving their domestic environment through goals such as independence, equality, unity, and pursuing the American Dream. Due to these newly developing ideals, a unique women’s presence was found in the traditional techniques of the folk craftwork, creating an alternative to the industrial labor of wage-earning women (J. Becker, 1998, 16).

## New Deal Projects

In work obsessed America, the rebirth of tradition epitomized nostalgia for a romanticized past as the foundation for a healthier national directive. By the First World War, tradition and folk had come to serve important roles in shaping the national culture. The years during and immediately after the war saw the inception of institutions that expressed a homogenous vision of ideal community. The idea of “folk” became the standard vision of national communities, including the Central Appalachian region. During the depression in the 1930s, traditional household practices offered people of the mountain communities a way of life that did not rely on material wealth and provided many restorative aspects such as “uniting body and spirit, nourishing the soul, encouraging self-reliance, and upholding the family” (J. Becker, 1998, 5), all of which were necessary to rebuild a falling nation.

Under the New Deal domestic economic programs following the depression, the potential of handicrafts provided a means of rural revitalization and relief by organizing agencies in Central Appalachia such as the Tennessee Valley Authority [TVA], the U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA] and its Extension Service, and the Works Progress Administration [WPA] (J. Becker, 1998, 93). New Deal programs were designed to bring beneficial development and sensible planning to rural America, striving to heal the nation’s depressed agricultural communities. As part of the plan to preserve the economy of the Appalachian community, administrators in both the TVA and USDA programs offered suggestions to reaffirm the establishment of the industry of handicrafts in the mountain regions. Most government proposals ensured the standardization of workmanship, materials, and products, employing a hierarchical management structure. The success of this scheme decreased the traditional handicraft practices from the hands of women, causing the textile industry to take on androgynous qualities.

Employing men in more domesticated positions allowed textile handicrafts to bridge a gender gap.

Handicrafts also played roles in rural rehabilitation projects sponsored by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration [FERA], the resettlement administration, the Division of Subsistence Homesteads, and the Farm Security Administration because they offered a means of self-sufficiency and promoted technical skills that were useful in employment opportunities (J. Becker, 1998, 96). FERA and the Division of Subsistence Homesteads, by the mid-1930s, established a variety of homestead communities, hoping to foster the development of cooperative industries. As Garry Barker (1991) points out, these homestead industries were encouraged to promote a potential source of income through the practice of localized crafts such as spinning, dyeing, and weaving.

#### Historical Influences in Contemporary Society

Berea College, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Penland School of Craft, and the Southern Highland Craft Guild along with the Southern Craft Revival and the New Deal domestic projects provided Central Appalachian arts and crafts people a chance to champion the substantial reality of material things. Regional fiber craftspeople demonstrated their knowledge of pattern weaving and employed many loom-controlled weave structures (Alvic, 2003, 159). Home furnishings produced from handweaving, homespun yarns, and dyes were all popular traditional craft items. Jane Becker advocates an antimodernist position, stating, “Simple living through handicraft production offered a balanced existence, a recovery from decadence, and regeneration for craftspeople and consumers alike” (1998, 16). Today the history of these

schools, guilds, and movements has influenced contemporary craft producers of the region by emphasizing the importance of localization on their academic life.

All of my contributors studied some form of arts and crafts in college, whether it was art education, fine arts, or participating as a worker in a student craft program. Philis Alvic (2013), art historian and author, is a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She received her degree in Art Education, majoring in weaving. After receiving a full tuition scholarship in her fourth year, she purchased her first loom. However, this focused and linear learning style is not the same for Lisa Kriner who:

Ended up at North Carolina State in their textile technology program...a really interesting school in that it works from everything from design to manufacturing...up through working with NASA, working with car manufacturers, working with really high tech fibers...my degree is a Bachelor of Science in Textile Technology and Design. (2013)

This degree includes polymer chemistry, physics, and working in various chemistry and machine labs, introducing how synthetic fibers are made, giant knitting machines, industrial weaving, and nonwovens. With the inclusion of these technical textile classes, Kriner also added textile design classes, a History minor, and a year of studying art abroad in Italy to her repertoire. Lisa Kriner (2013) teaches a number of art classes at Berea College, ranging from general education courses to more specific topic seminars. Included in these courses is an Appalachian Weaving course and Advanced Fibers courses.

Taking this same interdisciplinary approach toward education, Sarah Broomfield (2013) holds an undergraduate degree in Women's and Gender Studies. However, after graduation Broomfield moved specifically to Berea, Kentucky to study weaving independently rather than academically. She states:

I met some people and was able to get a job with a woman who had formerly been the director of Fireside Weaving, her name was Astra Stroebel. And she was a Latvian

refugee... she'd gone to the Art Institute of Chicago and I got here to Berea after she had finished her working at Berea Fireside Industries and she had her own interior design showroom in Berea, Kentucky and a production handweaving studio. She was based out in the country and I was hired on as a handweaver on the floor looms to do production weaving and production finishing. (2013)

Neil Corner (2013), an independent studio owner and weaver, originally attended Berea College to become a teacher. When he arrived at the college, he ended up weaving at Fireside Industries for his 10 hours of mandatory work. Corner says, "By the end of my senior year, I had decided I'd rather be a weaver. I'd rather be weaving than doing anything else. So, here I am 45 years later, still weaving and going strong" (2013).

Similar to Neil Corner's experience, Amy Judd received her Bachelor's degree from Berea College after working at Fireside Industries as a student. However, instead of developing independent weavings at a personal studio, Judd (2013) now manages the weaving studio where she originally gained knowledge of the craft. She teaches students technique as well as the business aspect of a production studio. In the next chapter, I will emphasize the importance of these schools, guilds, and movements on traditional arts and crafts production in contemporary society.

## CHAPTER III

### INTRODUCTION TO CENTRAL APPALACHIAN CULTURE AND CRAFT TRADITIONS

The Appalachian Mountain Range in eastern North America extends from the island of Newfoundland in Canada southwestward toward central Alabama in the United States. It consists of three major regions: Northern, Central, and Southern. Although these three regions have overlapping cultural characteristics of ethnicity, dialect, religion, music, and folklore, the area of Central Appalachia has an intrinsically distinctive heritage due to the roles of gender within the realms of agriculture and industry. Travelling south across the Ohio River toward Central Appalachia, the Blue Ridge Mountain Range casts a hazy blue color along the horizon from the mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees in the distance. Painted quilt-squares adorn the gable ends of black barns and out buildings, where freshly harvested tobacco hangs to dry in late summer. These acres of land are winding with white plank fences holding in thoroughbred horses that have a long lineage of racing. Dotted the pastoral landscape, studs and mares feed on the grass. This part of the country has a long history of life based off of coal-mining, logging, and subsistence farming. About the permanence of the Appalachian lifestyle, Loyal Jones (1994) writes:

We mountain people are the product of our history and the beliefs and outlook of our foreparents. We are a traditional people, and in our rural setting we valued the things of the past. More than most people, we avoided mainstream life and thus became self-reliant. We sought freedom from entanglements and cherished solitude. (13)

As in the past, cultural heritage and values, traditional gender roles in the household, and the development of rural industry continue to play a major role in the development of contemporary society, especially on the preservation of traditional fiber arts and crafts.

## Cultural Heritage and Characteristics

Centuries ago the Central Appalachian mountain valleys drew migratory descendants from overly-populated areas in eastern Virginia and the Carolinas. Romanticized for their ruggedness and self-sufficiency, Central Appalachian pioneers inhabited areas largely separated from other regions by high mountain ridges and were accustomed to fending for themselves against the geographic and climatic elements. As Thomas (1942, 10) writes, “they were descendants of English, Scotch, and Scotch-Irish who landed along the Atlantic coast at the close of the sixteenth century...when the oppression of the rulers drove them from England, Scotland, and Ireland.” These people settled in the region because of the availability of cheaper land and freedom from religious persecution and many drifted down the Atlantic coast searching for foothills to establish their own settlements (Thomas, 1942, 14). Moreover, west of the Blue Ridge in what is now Central Appalachia, the isolation of people provided unity in thought and purpose. Due to the prosperity of these original migrants, other immigrants facing the same religious persecution began to inhabit the region, including southwestern Germanic people, the Dutch, and the Huguenots (Thomas, 1942, 31).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in rural areas of Central Appalachia, religious organizations established settlement schools (See Chapter 2) as a means of incorporating an agrarian-population that often failed to see a practical need for a formal education (DeYoung, 1983. 322). Struggling from a lack of government funding, the remoteness of many regional communities made it difficult to bring formal instruction into the area. Rural school participation in the region grew during the early-twentieth century, due in part to the decentralized nature of schooling. However, the academic content of schooling was not a primary concern to many participants and

educational attainment beyond the eighth grade was considered exceptional (Shaw, 2004, 308). More recently, pursuing a higher education impacts the persistent problem of poverty.

According to Couto (1995, 102), “Appalachian conditions of poverty and human need are the consequence of economic decision-making by coal companies, textile mills, and the timber industry.” As mechanical progress developed during the Industrial Revolution, making things became a new commercial entity substituting the traditional workshop. The craft of weaving changed drastically during this time period, moving from the privacy of the home to a factory environment with the invention of the steam-powered loom and the wool-combing machine in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the textile industry, crew members were trained in various jobs for different portions of each task needed to create an entire product. Large companies depended on the people of the region as a labor force, but did not redistribute the wealth to their workers. By creating a displacement of the meditative and personal nature of the craft of weaving, new factory methods broke work into small bits changing quality control.

Although traditional craftspeople did not appreciate the mechanical take over, they conformed to ideas of innovation allowing modernization to benefit their technique and increase production. However, it is a common belief that “land and family, place and kinship, are immediately interwoven” (Beaver, 1991, 299). Many laborers sought refuge from economic exploitation within a familial setting. For this reason, most inhabitants of Central Appalachia embody a strong sense of loyalty to family before any other group in society.

### Gender Study and Informant Influences

Vital to the development of the Central Appalachian culture are the significant roles that gender, kinship, and household organization play on the region. The obvious division of labor

between men and women emerge as relevant issues in virtually all chapters of this study. Of the importance of these characteristics on the Central Appalachian economy, Seitz (1995, 32) writes that throughout history, “parents provide land to children and kin share labor, including labor associated with agricultural work, child care, building, and household repairs...[acting] as a barrier to the commodification of scarce resources in poor places.” Along with the region’s farming community, the coalminers and city dwellers have norms established for their trades and domiciles. Stereotypically, each of these jobs takes on a gender-specific role within the nuclear family and creates structural characteristics in regional households. Under this organization, men have been considered the principal “bread winner” for centuries and patriarchal roles have dominated many Central Appalachian homes. Within these parameters, women have been confined to more domestic tasks such as housework and child rearing.

According to Seitz (1995, 72), “young girls were required to fully contribute to the household through the labor of their bodies: taking care of the home [and] the other children... [learning] about the wages of women’s work from the example of their mothers.” Many female tasks included subsistence activities such as growing food in large gardens, raising livestock, selling produce, and other informal domestic work. As Alvic (2003, 195) writes, “Childrearing and household duties dictated how much time women could devote to weaving...The name “Fireside Industries” shared by many of these centers implied the home-based nature of the work. Both managers and weavers assumed that home and family came first.” Typically, men assembled looms and other simple machines for the women of their households, while the women performed the act of creating the handwoven goods. Therefore, as noted by Weiner and Schneider (1989, 21), “women have played a larger role than men in cloth production.” Only since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have these formalized borders been crossed, allowing both men

and women to complement each other, participating in different stages of the production process. Today, however, Berea College's Fireside Industries have moved from a domestic setting to a building on campus and men now play a more substantial role in producing the textiles. During my visit, I witnessed one man working on a woven baby blanket. Like many others in the labor programs at Berea College, for him, "weaving [serves] as a means of securing an education" (Alvic, 2003, 143).

With these traditional gender roles in mind, Tim Glotzbach, the Director of the Student Crafts program at Berea College told me that he grew up on a farm in rural southern Indiana committed to self-sufficiency. He said, "We ate what we grew and we grew what we ate (2013)." Although Glotzbach exemplifies more of the masculine roles of the farm, all of the women in his family are committed to participating in fiber arts and crafts, with younger generations of women learning to quilt and sew from their elders. Glotzbach recalled:

...my aunts, my mother, my grandmother, were all quilters and sewers so that's been a tradition in the family, as well as my mom making a lot of our clothes when we were little and everything else...we have kind of probably spun our backgrounds somehow into our lives. (2013)

Currently self-employed as a designer for custom window treatments and bedding, his wife learned to sew from her mother. Glotzbach strongly believes their background filled with these previously gender-specific traditions have shaped their present career choices.

Similarly, Sarah Broomfield (2013) grew up in the Ohio Valley in a "textile family...surrounded by people that knitted and sewed." Becoming interested in weaving in high school, she visited Berea College; however, she chose to pursue the craft independently, outside of an academic setting. Broomfield learned to weave from a woman who had formerly been the Director of Fireside Weaving at Berea College, hiring on as a floor loom handweaver to do

production weaving and production finishing in her studio. Eventually, Broomfield was employed as a mender at Churchill Weavers, later becoming a designer for the Berea, Kentucky based handicraft business. Different from other textile operations, Broomfield's predecessor at the company was a man. Broomfield was trained by this man and she said:

[they] worked together and I picked his brain to learn what it was like to be in the textile industry from starting on the floor where you've picked and graded and sorted the wool to how to spin and learned design for the power looms you know just a fascinating opportunity. So I picked his brain as he was helping me to adjust to designing for Churchill Weavers. (2013)

Meanwhile, Lisa Kriner, Associate Professor and Director of Visual Arts at Berea College, has familial roots primarily in the Appalachian Range in Pennsylvania. Her grandparents were coal miners and textile mill workers. She stated:

I grew up in North Carolina from about the age five years on. Um, and the region of North Carolina, the North Central region of North Carolina where I grew up is very textile oriented. Burlington Industries, those sorts of things... and so I grew up very much in a textile based community. All of us at some level worked with textiles. Or somebody who worked for textiles. Or you know the community was based around textiles. Certainly now the region has diversified but textiles was really big at the time. (2013)

Neil Cormer (2013) was introduced to weaving by a woman he was friends with at Berea College, whom he helped dismantle a loom. Originally thinking he would become a teacher, he was placed as a student worker in the weaving program at Fireside Industries. He claimed, "By the end of my senior year, I had decided I'd rather be a weaver. I'd rather be weaving than doing anything else. So, here I am 45 years later, still weaving and going strong" (2013). Most of his mentors in the field are women, such as Effie Anglin, a full-time employee at Fireside Industries at the time. Cormer remembers, "She was the one that was present most times when I needed some help at the loom or had a question, because Lena [the then Manager of Fireside Industries] was busy at the time doing other things and Effie was on the loom and I could just talk to her like

that because she was always there” (2013). Corner currently works with his wife designing woven textiles in their personal studio, Weaver’s Bottom Craft Studio in downtown Berea, Kentucky. Like others in the Central Appalachian area building bridges over the gap created by gender specific profiles in the textile industry, Corner emphasizes traditional techniques while embracing contemporary aesthetic styles.

### Challenging Tradition in Contemporary Society

Tradition is a personal experience in which craftspeople perform learned skills and customs that are transmitted from ritualistic practices and knowledge passed down to them from previous generations. With this in mind, I found many of the fiber artisans and craftspeople that I spoke with in contemporary Berea, Kentucky, challenging tradition. As Philis Alvic (2013) points out, “Tradition is anything you do over again...that need not be just replicating. It need not be static. One can bring one’s own creativity to it.” Parallel to this line of thinking, Amy Judd explains how the weaving process has transformed at Berea College’s Fireside Industries:

[The] tradition of weaving will always be the same. I mean, you push your harnesses. You have warp and weft. I think when you look at weaving as a tradition the actual process of weaving is the same. The product is changing because no one wants to buy an overshot. They can appreciate it for what it is but, it doesn’t fit in with today’s décor. People don’t want that look, and you can’t continue selling stuff that is not what people want. (2013)

Although most of my informants feel a strong link to their heritage, many manufacture contemporary products that allow an increase in current market value. In the past, most handmade goods were used with a strict purpose or function without any necessary adornments or styles. Over time, textiles have developed intricate patterns that provide current arts and crafts people the luxury of creating goods that are more pleasing to the eye. With this incorporation of contemporary aesthetics and personal creativity, I find that it may be more appropriate to deem

the fiber products currently made in Central Appalachia as traditionalized rather than simply traditional.

Most of my respondents agree that although they value the methods that I outline in Chapter 4: Introduction to Traditional Techniques and Processes, they experiment with contemporary styles of fiber crafts that have transformed from earlier generations' practices. For instance, Sarah Broomfield's (2013) current work with contemporary coiled basketry and felting are a more three dimensional form than her previous on-loom pieces. She incorporates traditional techniques into her craft with the use of natural fibers. She explains the continuity of "tradition" within her "traditionalized" mode of craft making by saying:

When you're involved in crafts you're living in a more sustainable world especially if you're using the natural fibers...there are people around [Berea] that are raising... their own sheep, do their own spinning, and then do weaving or knitting from that fiber, do their own dyeing...so a student learning about that can go as deep as they want and they can have a sense of a more sustainable lifestyle. (2013)

Another source of practical traditionalization, Neil Corner, constructs traditional items such as dish towels, placemats, table runners, couch throws, and coverlets in traditional patterns like twill and herringbone, but has recently started including fresher materials like recycled plastic bags (2013). While recycling and repurposing a long lasting material in a practical way, unconventional materials such as these allow the traditional processes to enhance marketability for the product in today's society (Corner, 2014). Craftspeople in Central Appalachia push the parameters of their traditionalized handicrafts so that they are able to compete with the big industry textile mills.

Presently, Lisa Kriner (2013) is employed at Berea College as an Associate Professor and Director of Visual Arts, but she grew up in a North Carolina textile manufacturing community. She attended North Carolina State University, enrolling in their textile design and manufacturing

program. Kriner explains that this program teaches the traditional methods of fiber handicrafts, but also focuses a major part of the curriculum on:

really high tech fibers...it's a lot of polymer chemistry, two semesters of physics, lots of...working with machinery, our labs were either all in chemistry labs or in machine labs where the school had sort of built these manufacturing systems so we could see how... synthetic fibers were made, we could see giant knitting machines, we could see industrial weavings, we could do non-wovens. (2013)

After graduating, Kriner entered the textile industry as a designer, working in a large corporation. She tells me that on the textile plant floor, many of the workers were highly skilled with a low level of education (2013). They had the ability to create textiles, but did not have the education to move them forward in the industry. Currently using the knowledge she gained working in this environment as a teaching tool for her students, she imparts the skills that these workers learned through traditional customs and techniques, enabling a gratifying sense of personal achievement.

Sarah Broomfield (2013) also feels a sense of private accomplishment when merging traditional process and technical innovation within her craft. Broomfield believes that the creating process causes a deep connection between the maker and their product. She understands:

We're now in a highly mechanized era and people ...have a yearning for things that have a hand and high touch value to them, that they can see the imprint of the hand on them, that they can see the human spirit expressed in them. There's so much mass produced and shoddy mass produced goods around us... to be able to throw a handwoven scarf around your neck and know that somebody deliberately chose those yarns, possibly spun the yarns, possibly dyed the yarns...knitted them together or wove them together...makes you just feel more in connection with... the creator. (2013)

However, this is not an entirely new concept. Historically, the expansion of these textile fabrication systems has allowed significant global arts and crafts movements such as the Southern Craft Revival and New Deal projects to improve Central Appalachian handicrafts. Relying heavily on the importance of traditionalized arts and crafts production, many

respondents utilize their arts and crafts knowledge to teach the traditional techniques they have learned to a younger generation at Berea College.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTRODUCTION TO TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES AND PROCESSES

The hands of Central Appalachian craftspeople have created a legacy of art, family history, and comfort through the fiber arts processes of weaving, dyeing, and spinning. Passed from generation to generation and eventually through teaching within the home to a broader educational environment, these functional fiber processes have gained appreciation through periods of industrialism and innovation. Although there has been continuous modernization through development of these techniques, some fiber arts and crafts people of Central Appalachia choose to continue the handicraft traditions of their ancestors rather than rely on the fabric created by machines to promote sustainability.<sup>2</sup> These craftspeople create articles by utilizing raw materials that are easily attainable in their surrounding habitat, using affordable home-grown wool and flax, or cotton purchased by the bale, to spin at home. These handspun yarns are then colored at home by collecting natural plant and animal matter. Each traditional step of constructing a textile – dyeing, spinning, and weaving – is a separate process and requires basic knowledge that has been passed down through generations via some form of scholarship, apprenticeship, or guild work. This chapter explores each traditional technique and natural process.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that although the Berea College administration is very conscious about traditional techniques, they are also very interested in finding ways to “help students identify the ways that those can be used in a contemporary vein in terms of design” (Glotzbach, 2013). The traditional processes outlined in this chapter are all taught at Berea College; however, they are not all in practice with current fiber goods in the market there.

<sup>3</sup> Although I will be focusing primarily on the use of wool for the traditional processes of handspinning, dyeing, and weaving, craftspeople in the Central Appalachian region also incorporate other natural materials such as cotton and flax into their handmade goods.

## Raising Sheep for Wool Production

In the Central Appalachian region, most fiber artisans produce their craft from wool because of the material's availability, diversity, and washability (Casselman, 1980, 41). Wool is an ideal fiber because it is warm, fire resistant, and has natural crimp which produces strong, hard-wearing thread easy for spinning, dyeing, and weaving (Walsh, 2006, 48). Unlike cattle and swine, sheep thrive in the most extreme conditions of climate and habitat. They graze easily on noxious weeds in the highest reaches of mountain vegetation. Lisa Kriner (2013) told me that at one time there were sheep on the Berea College farm. However, sheep are a prey species which makes them higher maintenance. They are also more susceptible to disease, making wool a hard commodity to produce (Sheepusa.org). Because of this difficulty in raising sheep, the College has since stopped raising the animals, but local Berea farmers still provide students with the raw wool produced from their livestock (Broomfield, 2013). Most fiber arts and crafts people recognize that the easy washability of wool makes garments and household articles woven from the substance very durable and practical.

With forty-seven breeds of sheep available within the United States (sheepusa.org), numerous varieties have been genetically developed with the sole purpose of wool production. (See Appendix C) Many of these breeds are raised throughout the area of Central Appalachia. Wool quality is determined by the part of the body the fleece comes from. Craftspeople agree that wool must possess certain aspects to produce quality goods. All breeds of sheep produce a different type of wool with unique physiognomies of length and diameter, strength, elasticity, shrinkage, color, luster, and crimp (Simmons, 1977, 7).

As with other livestock, springtime is the busiest season for sheep. Newly born lambs can be heard bleating as they prance through the paddock nibbling at fresh, green grass. Under sun-

drenched, blue skies, the sheep are becoming acquainted. On my first visit to the farm, I recall thinking that the shearing process was an act of hostility and that there was a lack of compassion for the animals. Little did I know then that the easiest way to handle sheep is to lay them flat on their back, between the shearer's legs and that it isn't harmful to the animal. The sheep is normally maneuvered in this position to keep the wool fleece in one large piece while clipping. After the sheep is sheared, the fleece is spread out, then scoured and washed in vats of detergents to remove any impurities, such as dried grass, thistles, dried earth and other natural matter (Sheepusa.org). Various wools are graded for the different processes of "carding" or "combing" after being cleaned and can either be dyed or spun into yarn at this point.

Carding is a time consuming process that untangles, cleans, and mixes the wool to produce an unbroken web suitable for handling in later processes (Goodrich, 2008, 47). To create these webs, small amounts of wool are passed between mechanized surfaces to align the fibers with each other. The most typical of these devices are hand cards, two manufactured "flat pieces of wood, ten inches long by four inches broad, each with a handle and with one side of card set with short, bent, wire teeth to comb the wool" (Goodrich, 2008, 47). A pair of hand cards is used to brush the wool into a bat of uniform quality and weight and then condensed into "rovings" by stretching or drawing them on a series of rollers (Gale, 1968, 11). Ideally, more than one pair of hand cards should be used in preparing the wool. Coarse cards can be used first and then finer cards.

### Handspinning

If carding wool is the most time consuming traditional fiber technique described in this chapter, handspinning yarn is a close second. Handspinning is a solitary, cadenced process that

requires small amounts of equipment. In its simplest form, handspinning results from hand rolling animal hair or plant fiber along the spinner's thigh with one hand and then drawing it out into yarn with the other hand (Simmons, 1977, 87). Mechanical improvements supplied handspinners with a spindle, a straight stick on which yarn is wound after it is twisted (Gale, 1968, 37). Early on in the Central Appalachian region, the top-whorl drop spindle was a popular spinning method in which yarn was produced by rotating the mechanism dropped alongside of the spinner (Alvic, 2003, 104). With this highly portable method, spinners could yield a greater quantity of yarn while still performing other household chores (Alvic, 2003, 104). But, perhaps the most widely recognized technique is the operation of a spinning wheel, which drastically increases the amount of yarn production in comparison to other handspinning methods (Blumenau, 1962, 13). While there are various types of spinning wheels, most traditional wheels share common parts (Figure 3).

It wasn't until much later in life, when I found myself in the comforts of the home of a good friend, Joanne Pittman, that I was actually shown the techniques of spinning wool into yarn. The whirring sound of the drive wheel filled my ears as she began to twist, pull, and push wool into the machine. There was a rhythmic motion as she pushed down on the treadles with her feet, hypnotizing me by the circulation of the wheel. Although at first handspinning appears quite challenging, Pittman (2013) assures me that with practice it is quite relaxing and the end results are more rewarding than purchasing yarns that are commercially available.

There are two basic principles involved in proper handspinning: treadling and spinning (Simmons, 1977, 93). Treadling is the motion caused by tapping foot pressure rhythmically onto the treadle of the spinning wheel (Pittman, 2013). Just like the accelerator of a car, the treadle energizes the drive wheel into repetitious rotation by way of the footman and drive band.

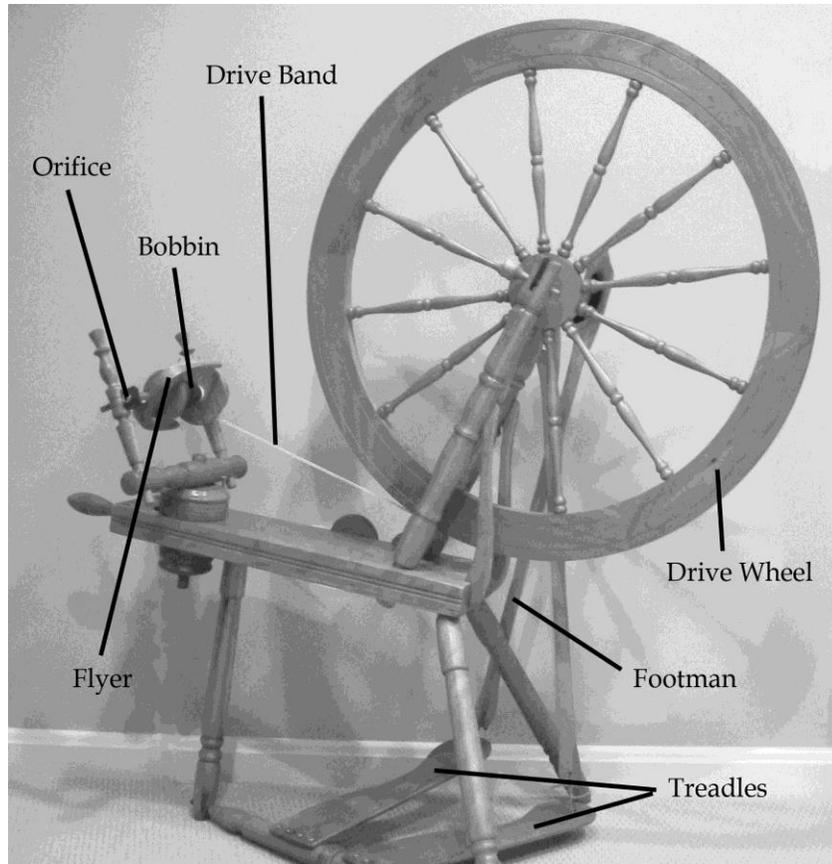


Figure 3. Diagram of Spinning Wheel Parts. Photograph/Illustration by Author.

The drive wheel enables the other parts of the spinning wheel to operate. With continuous motion of the drive wheel, spinning occurs when wool feeds through the orifice at the front of the hook lined flyer and twists evenly to store on the bobbin (Pittman, 2013). To acquire a quantity of yarn, a handspinner treadles the wheel with their feet, while maneuvering the wool with both hands. The wool is held tightly near the orifice between a thumb and index finger to provide traction against the other hand and twisted in different characteristic motions. The drive wheel spins clockwise for Z twist yarns and counterclockwise for S twist yarns, which are typically used for plying two yarns together (Simmons, 1977, 93).

Handspinners have the ability to manufacture unique products by using varying amounts of fibers and different amounts of twist to create one-of-a-kind yarns. Very popular among

handspinners are worsted yarns because of their smoothness and strength (Pittman, 2013). Worsted yarns are “dependent on the type and quality of fleece, length of staple, the thickness of yarns, the degree of twist, and the number of twists per inch in the plying” (Chadwick, 1980, 50). Handspinners can dictate the design of scale, color, and texture of yarns that are otherwise unavailable through commercial spinning (Walsh, 2006, 67). Just like other craftspeople, handspinners resist the standardization of industry trends that impede their craft.

### Dyeing with Natural Materials

Central Appalachian home dyers have developed their craft in a very private, mountainous region. Traditionally, dyeing has been an outdoor activity due to the potency of various chemicals used in the process (Burgess, 2011, vii). Consequently, surrounded with a majestic backdrop, the home dyers of this area are unique in the respect that they have preserved the “traditions of home dyeing with natural materials longer than any other group of dyers in the United States” (Adrosko, 1971, 12). Although commercial dyes are more dependable, natural materials develop nostalgia among dyers from handling vegetable materials and extracting the dye colors from them. Also, by decreasing the output of CO<sub>2</sub>, making and using natural dyes can reduce an impact on the environment (Burgess, 2011, vii). Although none of my respondents actually practiced dyeing with natural materials themselves because of the time-consuming nature of the skills, I was encouraged to hear that the craftspeople of Berea, Kentucky are still interested in the aesthetic properties of natural dyes and the reductive qualities that natural dyes have on a carbon footprint (Kriner, 2013).

According to Robertson (1973, 11), wool can be dyed at many stages of the textile making process, but for the purposes of this brief tutorial, I will be focusing on dyeing at the yarn

phase. The first step to natural dyeing is the acquisition of natural materials. Home dyers in Central Appalachia have the ability to obtain many of these plant materials in the environment surrounding their homes (See Appendix D). A dye is a coloring substance that will sufficiently adhere to a fiber, so that it is not removed by rubbing or washing. Natural dyes are water soluble, sometimes with the aid of organic chemicals, usually salt (Gale, 1968, 177). These dyes are made from plants, animals, minerals, fungus, and lichens. It is important to understand that there is a considerable amount of risk in natural dyeing because of the amount of variables involved. Even with specific instructions, the end result is often unpredictable. According to Adrosko (1971, 62), the range of hues made with natural dyestuffs may seem disappointingly narrow, mainly producing yellows and greens, with a few browns, grays, oranges and reds. Purple and blue are difficult to produce with natural dyes (Adrosko, 1971, 62).

After the dyestuffs have been collected, they are cooked down to create a concentrated dye solution. Natural dyes fall into three categories (Dean, 2010, 3). The easiest of these to apply are the substantive dyes, which adhere within the fiber without the assistance of another substance (Dean, 2010, 3). Substantive dyes are usually rich in tannins, derived from bark, leaves, and fruits of certain trees. The second natural dye category is vat dyes. Vat dyeing is different from other natural dyeing processes and requires some form of fermentation during processing (Dean, 2010, 3). Vat dyestuffs do not react chemically within the fiber the same way as other dye types and usually appear colorless until the dyed matter emerges from the vat, changing only with the exposure to air or light. Natural dyes in the third category are known as adjective dyes and require a mordant for the color to be fully developed and permanently fixed to the yarn (Dean, 2010, 3). The majority of natural dyes within Central Appalachia fall into this third category.

Due to the scientific nature of dyeing, the behavior of each individual dye depends on multiple variables including fiber type, amount of dyestuff, amount of time spent in the dyebath, and type of mordant (Gale, 1968, 178). A mordant is a “substance which has an affinity with both the materials to be dyed and the dyestuff to be applied. It acts as a bond between the two and helps the dye to become permanently fixed to the fibers” (Dean, 2007, 18). Mordants affect the color of the dye on the textile; therefore, different mordants will produce different colors in the same dyebath (Dean, 2007, 18). The most common household mordants to use with natural dyestuffs are alum, ammonia, baking soda, cream of tartar, salt, urine, vinegar, and washing soda (Casselmann, 1980, 23). Mordanting is very important in natural dyeing to provide permanent color for the finished textile. Without the use of a mordant, most natural dyes will soon wash out or the textile will fade (Lesch, 1970, 20).

There are several phases to achieve the best results in the lengthy process of adjective dyeing. First, wool is placed in a water bath to allow the fiber to swell. After this stage, the mordant and the dye are added, allowing the chemicals to attach to the surface of the fiber. Typically, there are multiple mordant baths because of the various colors that can be made with the different applications. Then, heat is added to allow the dye to penetrate the fiber. Lastly, the dye fixes to the fiber by the addition of more salts and acids (Gale, 1968, 178). With the completion of these steps, the natural dyed fiber is removed from the dyebath, rinsed, and then left to dry. After this process is complete, weaving the wool yarns may commence.

### Weaving

When I was beginning to weave, I remember feeling very overwhelmed with the large, cumbersome floor loom sitting in front of me. My instructor had recommended the course on the

introduction to floor looms. However, the class was only offered as an independent study and I had the pleasure of recruiting the three other women enrolled in the class to attend during their free time. We were a very close knit group of friends who all had the same apprehension of the appearance of the daunting device. With some knowledgeable foresight, we had arranged our looms in a clover-shape pattern to permit easy access to all working parts, as well as to provide an ideal manner of conversation. Weaving is a gradual, rhythmic practice and I didn't realize until much later that many weaving firms arrange their looms in a similar fashion to present a friendlier, speedier work environment (Judd, 2013). Although there are many makes and models of looms, we were using foot-powered looms that employed a counter-marche four-harness raising/lowering system (Figure 4), which are also in use at the Fireside Industries of Berea College. Therefore, I will refer to this type of floor loom for the purposes of this section.

Weaving can be defined as the interlacing of two elements crossing at right angles (Alvic, 2003,153). Vertical yarns attached to the loom before the weaving process begins make up the warp (Alvic, 2003, 153). The weft is the horizontal yarns that entwine with the warp to create a piece of fabric (Alvic, 2003, 153). There are a variety of patterns that can be generated with the four-harness loom, but the simplest pattern to achieve is the plain weave, a simple over one-thread and under-one-thread sequence.

The first step to completing any weaving is warp preparation. Warp yarns are measured to equal length on a warping board. A warping board, sometimes referred to as a warping bar, consists of parallel rows of pegs attached to a wall or frame, usually positioned a yard apart (Alvic, 2003, 154). The weaver winds the desired number of warp yarns continuously around the pegs, crossing yarns in sequence. This crossed pattern prevents tangling when individual yarns are threaded. After removal from the warping bar, individual warp ends are threaded through the

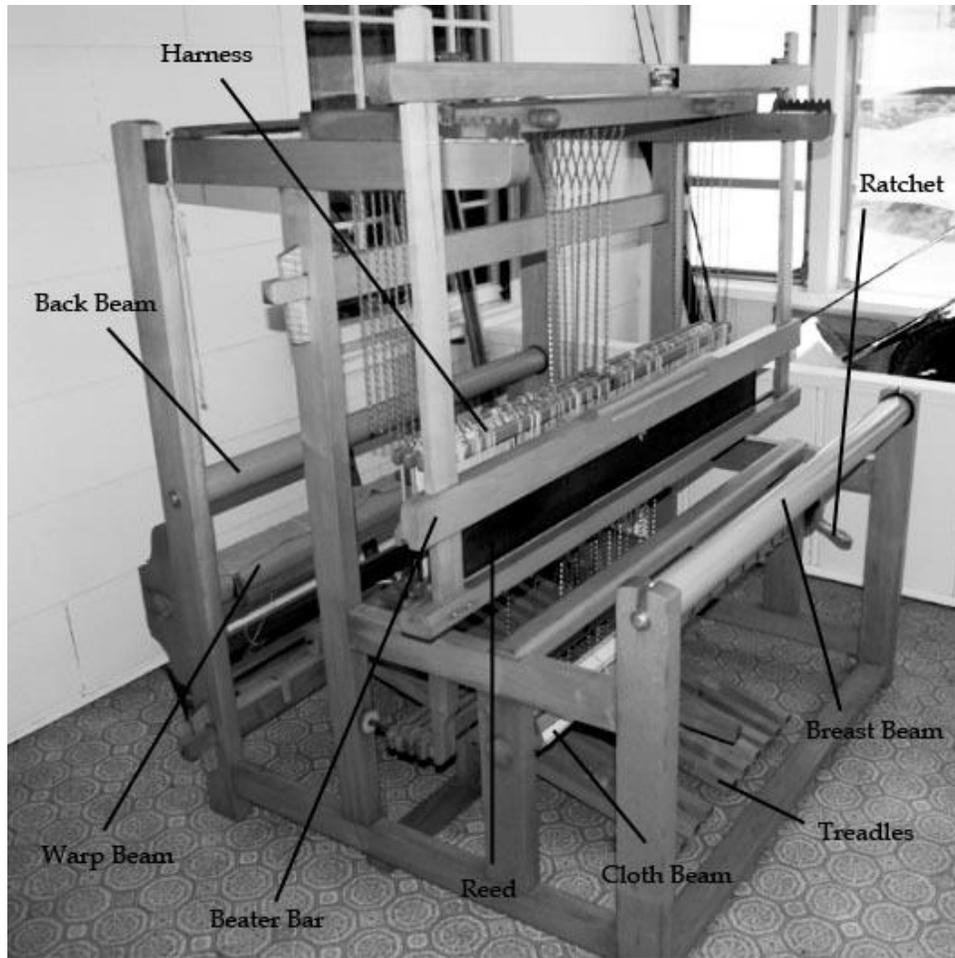


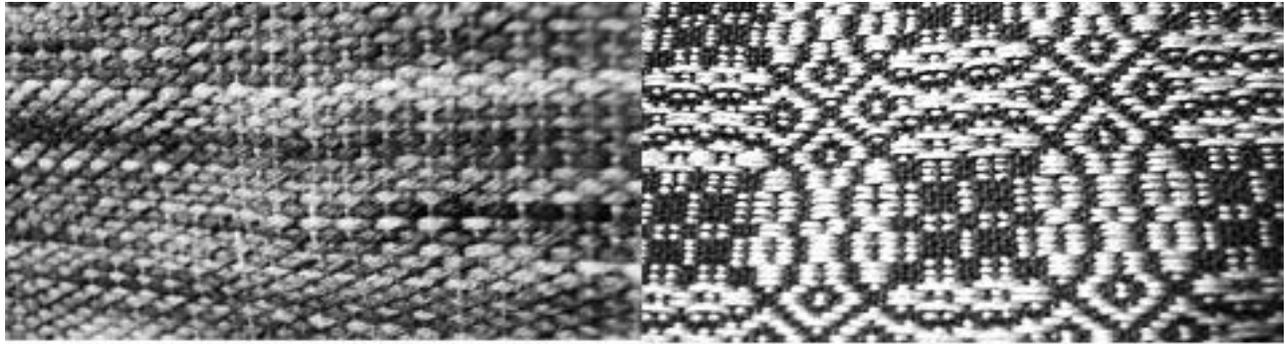
Figure 4. Loom Parts. Photograph/Illustration by author.

reed (Chandler, 1995, 31) and heddles of the loom (Chandler, 1995, 38) from the back (Figure 5), and then tied to the cloth and warp beams, which reinforce the tension of the back and breast beams (Chandler, 1995, 44). After the tie up is complete, the loom ratchet wheels are tightened to create tension on the warp yarns (Chandler, 1995, 49). To create a pattern with the tensioned warp yarns, different combinations of treadles are stepped on, which in turn raise different harnesses (Chandler, 1995, 74). The rising and falling of different warp yarns creates the shed, an opening where the shuttle is thrown, carrying the weft or filling yarn (Chandler, 1995, 79).

For the plain weave pattern (Figure 6), harnesses 1 and 3 raise when treadle 1 depresses for the first pass of the shuttle through the shed. The second pass of the shuttle is just the opposite, harnesses 2 and 4 raise when treadle 2 lowers (Chandler, 1995, 78). This basic pattern is the building block to all patterns that are created with a loom and usually the first that is taught to any beginning weaver. Other traditional pattern designs of the Central Appalachian region include: the overshot weave, the log cabin weave, and the honeycomb weave (Figure 6). After the desired amount of length has been completed, the weaving is removed from the loom (Chandler, 1995, 96). Removing the weaving from the loom relaxes the tension on the warp yarns. The weaving is tied off at the warp ends or sewn to prevent unraveling of the weft. The final steps in the weaving process are fixing any errors that may have occurred in the weaving pattern and washing the textile to finish the fabric (Chandler, 1995, 98).

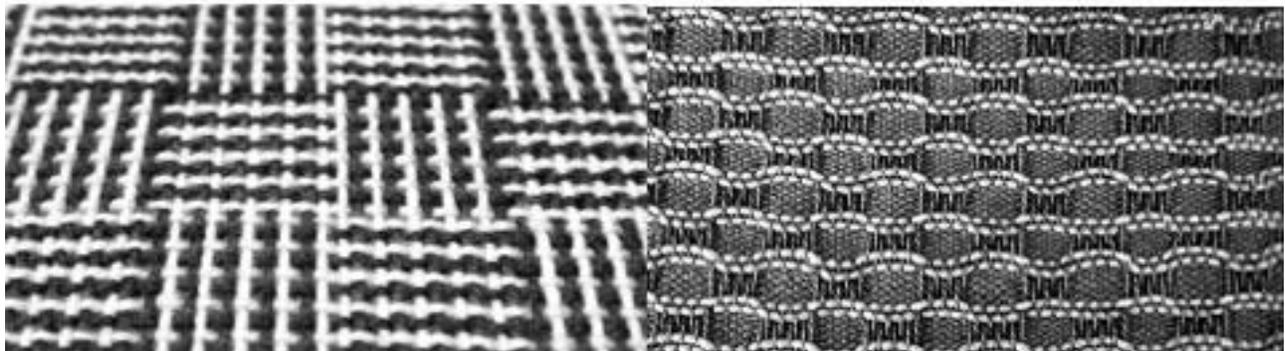


Figure 5. Warping Up the Loom. Photograph by Author.



Plain Weave

Overshot Weave



Log Cabin Weave

Honeycomb Weave

Figure 6. Central Appalachian Popular Weaving Patterns. Photographs by Author.

### Practicing Sustainability in Contemporary Society

Whether I'm in central Michigan or Berea, Kentucky, I've come to realize that the sounds of weaving studios are the same. There is a constant foot stomping on treadles, swishing from rising heddles, clanging from brakes and cranks, whirring from the shuttle being passed back and forth by hand, and always a healthy thwomping of a beater bar pounding against the accumulating textile. Amy Judd (2013) said that there are fifteen students and twenty looms at Berea College's Fireside Industries that are making the sounds that are surrounding me during my visit with her at the production studio. These students represent a highly visible industry which the public has become accustomed to associating with Berea College.

Tim Glotzbach (2013), Director of the Berea College Craft Program, told me that there are many facets to his position, including negotiating new designs that will create revenue through product sales and promoting products that have been manufactured for generations. He said that Berea College's Craft Program has a "primary responsibility to the college to provide an engaged learning experience for the students" (2013). One of the ways that the Craft Program engages their students is by instilling values of sustainability in the methods they use to create their products, as well as in the materials that they use to make them. Glotzbach (2013) told me about one of his past student workers who learned the techniques of weaving who is now selling one of a kind scarves as her occupation, although that wasn't her major while attending Berea College. She is practicing sustainability by utilizing a traditional loom, "but she designs the patterns and weaves them and everything is different for her" (2013).

Sarah Broomfield (2013) said, "When you're involved in crafts, you're living in a more sustainable world, especially if you're using the natural fibers." She continues by saying that craftspeople in the Berea community are going as far back as they can to the source – raising their own sheep, doing their own dyeing, doing their own weaving and knitting from the fiber they have acquired. This sustainable lifestyle ensures that students are learning how to recycle goods rather than disposing them; learning how to mend textiles rather than throwing them away. In fact, Broomfield is so interested in the concept of sustainability that she inquired about marketing an organic cotton product into the textile program at Fireside Industries. Broomfield also focused on a project that revitalized the very first woven product created at Berea College. Lisa Kriner (2013) explains that she teaches a wider variety of textile methods to her students, incorporating more contemporary techniques such as surface design and felting into her curriculum. With the inclusion of these additional processes, students find room to practice

personal aesthetic decisions and produce textiles that are one of a kind, yet still incorporate traditional techniques that are attributed to the region.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

This study of fiber arts and crafts, focusing on the practices of the Central Appalachian region, recognizes the importance of preserving a balance with the artistic qualities of traditional goods and the economic pressures of current markets. As Garry Barker (1991) explains:

People will define and develop the future of Appalachia's crafts: the producers who maintain the traditions, the innovators who expand the forms and techniques...the old missionary effort is largely over, replaced by craft professionals who run the schools, organizations and marketing efforts. And the maintaining of the movement is a more precarious task than was the building. (221)

With contemporary approaches toward style, subject matter, aesthetic, and advancement of technology, Central Appalachian craftspeople explore historical and natural practices of fiber arts and crafts within a cultural context. These craftspeople use their location, education, heritage, and gender influences as a means to comment on these contexts, and then use this knowledge to work with or alter their craft. Due in part to the globalization of the textile industry, economic constraints on the Central Appalachian region are included in these contexts. In addition, challenging definitions of tradition and the sustainability of fiber craft production methods and techniques are part of the ongoing research of this study.

#### Building on Tradition

Vital to the development of Central Appalachian fiber arts and crafts are the significant roles that gender, kinship, and household organization play on the region's culture. As mentioned earlier, through works of such scholars as DeYoung (1983, 322) and Cuoto (1995, 102), past generations of Central Appalachian people struggled from the persistent problem of poverty due to the remoteness of many regional communities. In Berea, Kentucky, many craftspeople and

educators were able to identify ways that they have been influenced both by personal connections with people in their past and by their locale. Additionally, they noted the ways female family members impacted their initial interest in fiber arts and crafts. These female predecessors had in turn learned these skills out of financial necessity because of the isolated rural setting in which they were raising a family.

From these influences, contemporary craftspeople have learned to adapt to and cope with harsh economic environments surrounding the community for decades. Historically in Central Appalachia, raising children and household duties governed the lives of women. With the onset in popularity of “fireside industries”, women were allowed to continue these traditional familial roles while also enabling them to devote more time to fiber arts and crafts (Alvic, 2003, 195). Recognizing these overtly stereotypical roles, men now play a more substantial part in producing textiles – weaving and owning their own studios. Consequently, Central Appalachian fiber arts and crafts people make connections with traditional and natural processes for financial reasons by promoting sustainability and self-sufficiency.

### Local Fiber Craft Economy

Through their conversations and their work, fiber craftspeople in Central Appalachia revitalize the importance of tradition on their craft. Many regional craftspeople continue to manufacture items using practices such as raising sheep, handspinning, natural dyeing, and weaving. Other craftspeople of the region explained the importance of integrating these traditional techniques and practices with contemporary technical advancements. These conflicting viewpoints have developed over decades of resistance to advancements in technological process and the capitalistic ideas of industrial textile mills (J. Becker, 1998, 6).

However, by traditionalizing the fiber goods and methods that have been passed down through generations, Central Appalachian arts and crafts people have been able to practice sustainability and self-sufficiency; therefore, thriving in a globalized market. To apply Bauman's (2001, 107) insights in this study, creating traditionalized handicrafts and encouraging individuals to manufacture products that link historical heritage and traditional identities together with innovations on style, subject matter, aesthetic, and technological advancement signifies growth of the Central Appalachian fiber craft culture.

By using historical techniques while incorporating new and innovative technology, current Central Appalachian fiber craftspeople reestablish the importance of localized craft production. Craft production studios at such astute arts and crafts institutions as Berea College, Penland School of Craft, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, and the Southern Highland Craft Guild are a large contributor to the progression and continuity of traditional practices in fiber arts and crafts. These institutions market their fiber goods as cottage industry productions, enabling them to participate in an economic enterprise, yet still innovate and preserve their cultural heritage. This practice allows an increase in market value for the goods and obscures conflicts between the folk and the mainstream society.

#### Limitations and Future Research

Future research possibilities come from the limitations and the scope of this research. In this study, I decided to focus only on the responses of informants from the Berea, Kentucky area. As a means to expand the research concerning the traditional practices of fiber arts and crafts in general, craftspeople and artisans from other locations, races, and socio-economic backgrounds

could also be sampled. Also, I found *Foxfire Magazine* to be quite educational pertaining to the culture of the region. I would enjoy further study of these historical and practical documents.

Secondly, many of the informants from this study hinted at the relevance of the “art versus craft” controversy while answering my questions. While this topic is briefly touched on in my current study, the personal nature behind the argument doesn’t allow for a satisfactory response without more research. While I don’t know if this topic could ever be answered to full completion, I recognize that I didn’t receive as many responses as I’d hoped. However, asking more direct follow-up questions regarding my proposed subject matter such as “What is your definition of art?”, “How would you define craft?”, and “Do you think there is a difference between art and craft?”, could lead to more intense, future dialogues broaching potential subjects of material usage, visual content, and intent of the maker.

Another possibility for future research concerns occupation versus recreation in the fiber arts and crafts realm. While all of my current informants have a background heavily rooted in this genre, only one of them is a working artist, while the rest are practicing their craft as a secondary aspect of their occupation or as a leisure activity. Many of my responders related stories of other craftspeople, former students, and acquaintances who have knowledge of the traditional arts and crafts processes mentioned in my current study, but who are only practicing their skills on the side. My informants relayed various reasons for this type of practice and I believe that it could be beneficial as future research.

Lastly, I feel that I have only scratched the surface of introducing the Central Appalachian region in Chapters 2 and 3. While completing my secondary research, I found many subtopics that could be interesting for future research such as a more in-depth study of gender roles and household organization in the region, what are the causes of the US textile industry

collapse, and other topics of interest dealing with the creation of Central Appalachian textiles such as class. It became apparent through this study that local workers crafted goods that were functional, traditional, distinctive, and appreciated. The inclusion of the working class had an impact on the revival of handicraft that originated and flourished primarily in the nineteenth century among the educated bourgeoisie (Lears, 1981, 60). Jane Becker writes that, “Bureaucrats tried to reshape tradition as a commodity by preserving its essence within new designs and forms targets to the consuming urban middle class, while streamlining production through the introduction of machinery and the reorganization of labor and marketing” (1998, 94). By reshaping cultural differences, a transformation emerged between the two classes of modern, urban and conservative, rural styles (J. Becker, 1998, 7). For further study, I think it would be beneficial to look into the connections between urban businessmen, who were in need of moral and cultural regeneration, and craftspeople from agrarian backgrounds who often adhered to their traditional skills and resisted modern work styles.

### Epilogue

I first became interested in fiber arts and crafts while studying for my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Central Michigan University. The topic itself originated from my personal understanding of teaching “tradition” and how I have carried on what has been passed to me in my own life. In conducting this study, I have considered the importance of continuing these natural craft-making processes, while also focusing on my personal connections with tradition, localization, sustainability, and self-sufficiency.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview #: \_\_\_\_\_

Tape #: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you originally from this community? If so, do the fiber's arts and crafts you practice allow you to stay in this community? If not, what drew you to this community?
2. At what age did you become interested in learning about fiber arts? Where did you start learning? Who were your mentors?
3. What media form/technique do you prefer?
4. Could you describe to me what you do on an average day with your craft?
5. Can you tell me some of your favorite experiences of working with fibers?
6. Describe what you're teaching/learning/creating in fibers. Are you familiar with the idea of "fibershed"? Are there any particular classes or guilds you recommend to get connected/involved with? Do you think you appreciate your craft more because of the community that surrounds you?
7. What traditional "values", if any, do you think are promoted and preserved by the learning/teaching of fiber arts processes?
8. Why do you think traditional fiber art processes have been able to withstand technological advances and innovation?
9. Do you think there are certain stereotypes placed upon individuals who are sustaining this traditional lifestyle of fiber crafts?
10. How do you utilize your historical craft in contemporary society?
11. How would you define the word "tradition"?
12. How would you define the word "modern"?
13. Is there a difference between the terms "traditional" and "old-fashioned"?

14. Where do you get the materials you make things with?
15. Do you think that there is anything else I should know regarding your work with fiber arts and crafts?

APPENDIX B

ADULT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Study Title: From Sheep to Shirt: The Exploration, Preservation, and Celebration of Traditional Fiber Arts and Crafts Processes

Research Investigators' Names and Departments:

Katje Armentrout, Humanities Department  
Dr. Laura L. Cochrane, Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work Department

Contact information for researcher:

Katje Armentrout, (e-mail) [armen1kj@cmich.edu](mailto:armen1kj@cmich.edu) (phone) 989-954-5032  
Dr. Laura L. Cochrane, (e-mail) [cochr1ll@cmich.edu](mailto:cochr1ll@cmich.edu) (phone) 989-774-7335

Thank you for your participation in this study, details of my research are provided in this consent document. I am available to answer any questions you may have. Through this interview, I will be asking questions in hope to learn about your role in fiber's arts and crafts. I expect the interview session to last approximately one hour, with no foreseeable risk involved. I will be audiotaping your interview and for confidentiality purposes the tapes will only be available to my thesis committee. I will use your name to give you credit, or you may also choose to use a pseudonym, but there will not be any other compensation for the information you provide. By publishing these statements, I will give your words and thoughts greater attention among scholars who are also interested in the arts and crafts of Central Appalachia.

You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty. Your participation will not affect your relationship with the institution(s) involved in this research project.

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the Institutional Review Board by calling 989-774-6777, or addressing a letter to the Institutional Review Board, 251 Foust Hall Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

*My signature below indicates that all my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the project as described above. My signature below indicates that I agree to be audio/videotaped.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

*A copy of this form has been given to me.* \_\_\_\_\_ Subject's Initials

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Responsible Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

APPENDIX C

POPULAR WOOL PRODUCING SHEEP BREEDS  
OF THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR IDENTIFYING TRAITS<sup>4</sup>

Fleece Type	Breed Name	Country of Origination	Wool Length	Common Color	Identifying Fleece Trait
Fine Wool	American Cormo	Tasmania Australia	2 1/2 - 4"	White	dense, fine, very uniform
	Booroola Merino	Australia	3 - 4"	White	dense, fine
	Debouillet	New Mexico	3 - 5"	White Brown Black	high quality, fine
	Delaine-Merino	Spain	2 1/2 - 4"	White Gray	very high quality, fine
	Rambouillet	France Germany	2 1/2 - 4"	White Gray	high quality, fine
Long Wool	Border Leicester	England	5 - 10"	White	lustrous, coarse
	Coopworth	New Zealand	5 - 8"	White	relatively coarse, long length
	Cotswold	England	12 - 15"	White Black	long, stout, lustrous, natural wavy curls
	Lincoln	England	8 - 15"	White Gray	heavy, very coarse, highly crimped, long length and lustrous
	Perendale	New Zealand	4 - 6"	White	medium length, bright, lofty
	Romney	England	5 - 8"	White Gray	coarse, long length
Minor Breeds	Black Welsh Mountain	Wales	3 - 4"	Black	short length, dense and without kemp
	Bluefaced Leicester	England	5 - 6"	White Black	long length, tightly purled, semi-lustrous
	California Variegated Mutant	California	3 - 5"	White Gray	long length, soft, high yielding, uniform

<sup>4</sup> The information provided is a compilation of several sources consisting of: Chadwick (1980), Gale (1968), Goodrich (2008), Simmons (1977), Walsh (2006), and [www.sheepusa.org](http://www.sheepusa.org).

Popular Wool Producing Sheep Breeds of the United States and Their Identifying Traits <sup>5</sup>					
Fleece Type	Breed Name	Country of Origination	Wool Length	Common Color	Identifying Fleece Trait
Minor Breeds Cont.	Clun Forest	England		White	medium length, medium grade
	Gulf Coast	Unknown	2 1/2 - 4"	White	lightweight, medium grade
	Jacob	England	4 - 7"	White Black	medium grade with some kemp
	Scottish Blackface	Scotland	10 - 14"	White	very coarse, long length

---

<sup>5</sup> The information provided is a compilation of several sources consisting of: Chadwick (1980), Gale (1968), Goodrich (2008), Simmons (1977), Walsh (2006), and [www.sheepusa.org](http://www.sheepusa.org).

APPENDIX D

POPULAR NATURAL DYESTUFFS OF CENTRAL APPALACHIA  
AND THE COLORS THEY PRODUCE WITH MORDANT<sup>6</sup>

Common Name	Useable Plant Parts	Mordant	Color
Acorns	Whole Nut	Alum	Tans
Agrimony	Leaves and Stems	Alum	Yellow
		Chrome	Gold
Beets	Root	Alum	Tans
Black Walnut	Walnut Husks	None	Brown
Blackberry	Berries	Alum	Pink
Bloodroot	Root	Alum	Red/Orange
		Tin	Pink
Burley Tobacco	Leaves and Stems	Alum	Tan
Chrysanthemum	Flowers	Alum	Gold
Cockle Burrs	Burs	Alum	Brass
		Chrome	Brown
		Copperas	Dark Green
Coffee	Beans and Grounds	Alum	Tans
Dandelion	Flowers	Alum	Light Yellow
		Tin	Light Yellow
Elder	Berries	Alum	Blue/Purple
	Leaves	Alum	Light Yellow
	Bark	Iron	Gray
Fennel	Leaves and Stems	Iron	Olive
Fern	Plant Top	Alum	Yellow/Green
		Chrome	Lime Green
Fustic	Bark	Alum	Yellow
		Chrome	Green
Goldenrod	Flowers and Stems	Alum	Light Yellow
		Chrome	Gold
		Iron	Yellow/Green
Hickory	Nut hulls, Leaves, Bark	Alum	Tans
Hollyhock	Flowers	Alum	Blue/Green
Horsetail	Whole Plant	Alum	Tans
Huckleberry	Berries	Alum	Purple
Ironweed	Flowers and Leaves	Alum	Soft Green

<sup>6</sup> The information provided is a compilation of several sources consisting of: Adrosko (1971), Burgess (2011), Casselman (1980), Dean (2010), Lesch (1970), and Robertson (1973).

Popular Natural Dyestuffs of Central Appalachia and the Colors They Produce With Mordant <sup>7</sup>			
Common Name	Useable Plant Parts	Mordant	Color
iRONWEED	Leaves and Stems	Alum	Yellow
Japanese Indigo	Leaves and Stems	Baking Soda	Blue
Lily of the Valley	Leaves	Chrome	Gold
Madder Root	Root	Alum	Red
Marigold	Flowers	Alum	Yellow
Nettle	Leaves and Stems	Alum Iron	Yellow/Green Olive
Oak	Bark		Tans/Browns
Pokeberry	Berries	Vinegar Chrome	Dark Red Tan
Queen Anne's Lace	Whole Plant	Alum Chrome	Yellow Tans
Red Onion	Bulb Skins	Tin	Dark Yellow
Rhubarb	Root		Yellow
Sassafras	Whole Plant		Orange
Sheep Sorrel	Whole Plant		Olive
Sumac	Berries	Alum	Brown
Sunflower	Seeds	Alum Copperas	Tans Grays
Sweet Gale	Leaves and Stems	Alum	Yellow
Tea	Leaves and Powder	Alum	Tans
Tickseed Sunflower	Flowers	Alum	Rusty Orange
Tomato	Vines	None Chrome	Brown Tans
Wild Grapes	Fruit	Alum	Purple
Wood	Charcoal	Copperas	Gray
Yellow Onion	Bulb Skins	Alum	Yellow
Zinnias	Flowers	Alum	Yellow

<sup>7</sup> The information provided is a compilation of several sources consisting of: Adrosko (1971), Burgess (2011), Casselman (1980), Dean (2010), Lesch (1970), and Robertson (1973).

## REFERENCES

- “Arrowmont History.” *Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts*. Robin East Design. Web. 17 Aug 2013. <<http://www.arrowmont.org/about-arrowmont/history>>
- “A Very Short History of Penland School of Crafts.” *Penland School of Crafts*. Interactwo. Web. 17 Aug. 2013. <<http://penland.org/about/history.html>>
- Adrosko, Rita J. *Natural Dyes and Home Dyeing*. New York: Dover Publications, 1971. Print.
- Alvic, Philis. *Weavers of the Southern Highlands*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003. Print.
- . Personal Interview. 7 Sept 2013.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983. Print.
- Anderson, Clay, et al. *The Craftsman in America*. Washington, DC: The National Geographic Society, 1975. Print.
- Barker, Garry. *The Handcraft Revival in Southern Appalachia, 1930-1990*. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991. Print.
- Bauman, Richard. “Mediational Performance, Traditionalization, and the Authorization of Discourse.” *Verbal Art Across Cultures: The Aesthetics and Proto-Aesthetics of Communication*. Ed. Hubert Knoblauch and Helga Kotthoff. Tübingen: Narr, 2001. 91-120. Print.
- Beaver, Patricia D. “Family, Land, and Community.” *Appalachia: Social Context Past and Present*. Ed. Bruce Ergood and Bruce Kuhre. Dubuque: Kendall Hunt, 1991. 299-307. Print.
- Becker, Howard S. “Arts and Crafts.” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 83, No. 4, Jan 1995: 862-889. Web. 8 Apr 2014.
- Becker, Jane S. *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998. Print.
- Bernard, H. Russell. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2011. Print.
- Bishopric, Scott. “The Decline of the North Carolina Textile Industry.” *YourVox*. 7 Nov 2010. Web.
- Blumenau, Lili. *The Art and Craft of Hand Weaving: Including Fabric Design*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1962. Print.

Broomfield, Sarah. Personal Interview. 6 Sept. 2013.

Burgess, Rebecca. *Harvesting Color: How to Find Plants and Make Natural Dyes*. New York: Artisan, 2011. Print.

Casselman, Karen. *Craft of the Dyer: Colour from Plants and Lichens of the Northeast*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980. Print.

Chadwick, Eileen. *The Craft of Hand Spinning*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980. Print.

Chandler, Deborah. *Learning to Weave*. Loveland: Interweave Press, 1995. Print.

Cochrane, Laura. 2014. HUM 799: Thesis. Course at Central Michigan University. Mt Pleasant, MI.

---. "Land Degradation, Faith-Based Organizations, and Sustainability in Senegal". *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment*, Vol. 35, No. 2, Dec 2013:112-124. Print.

Corner, Neil. Personal Interview. 6 Sept. 2013.

---. "Weaver's Bottom Craft Studio." *Facebook.com*. 10 Jan 2014. Web. 10 Jan 2014.

Couto, Richard A. "The Spatial Distribution of Wealth and Poverty in Appalachia." *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, Vol.1 No. 1, Fall 1995: 99-120.

Dean, Jenny. *Colours from Nature: A Dyer's Handbook*. 2007. Kent: Search Press, 2010. Print.

DeYoung, Alan J. "The Status of Formal Education in Central Appalachia." *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 10 No. 4, Summer 1983: 321-334. Print.

"Directory of Breeds." *American Sheep Industry Association*. 2013. Web. 15 Oct 2013.  
<[http://www.sheepusa.org/Directory\\_of\\_Breeds](http://www.sheepusa.org/Directory_of_Breeds)>

Eaton, Allen H. *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*. 1937. New York: Dover Publications, 1973. Print.

Gale, Elizabeth. *From Fibres to Fabrics*. London: Compton Printing, 1968. Print.

Glotzbach, Tim. Personal Interview. 5 Sept. 2013.

Goodland, Robert. "The Concept of Environmental Sustainability." *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, Vol. 26, 1995: 1-24. Web 7 Apr 2014.

Goodrich, Frances Louisa. *Mountain Homespun*. 1931. Knoxville, The University of Tennessee Press, 2008. Print.

“Guild History.” *Southern Highland Craft Guild*. Integritive. Web. 17 Aug 2013.  
<<http://www.southernhighlandguild.org/pages/resources/guild-history.php>>

Jones, Loyal. “Appalachian Values.” *Voices From the Hills: Selected Readings of Southern Appalachia*. Ed. Robert J. Higgs and Ambrose N. Manning. New York: Frederick Unger Publishing, 1975. 507-517. Print.

---. *Appalachian Values*. Ashland, KY: 1994. Print.

Judd, Amy. Personal Interview. 6 Sept. 2013.

Kaplan, Wendy. *The Art that is Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987. Print.

Kriner, Lisa. Personal Interview. 4 Sept. 2013.

Lears, T.J. Jackson. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1981. Print.

Lieber, Robert J. and Ruth E. Weisberg. “Globalization, Culture, and Identities in Crisis.” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol 16, No 2, Winter 2002: 273-296. Web. 7 Apr 2014.

Lesch, Alma. *Vegetable Dyeing: 151 Color Recipes for Dyeing Yarns and Fabrics with Natural Materials*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1970. Print.

Mould, Tom. “The Paradox of Traditionalization: Negotiating the Past in Choctaw Prophetic Discourse.” *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 43 No. 3, Set-Dec, 2005: 255-294. Web. 8 Apr 2014.

“Origins.” *Craft in America: A Journey to the Artists, Origins, and Techniques of American Craft*. Wr. Steve Fenton. Dir. Nigel Noble. Craft in America, 2009. DVD.

Peck, Elisabeth S. *Berea's First Century: 1855-1955*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1955. Print.

Pittman, Joanne. Personal Interview. 16 Aug. 2013.

Robertson, Seonaid. *Dyes from Plants*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973. Print.

Seitz, Virginia R. *Women, Development, and Communities for Empowerment in Appalachia*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. Print.

Shaw, Thomas C., Allan J DeYoung, and Eric W. Rademacher. "Educational Attainment in Appalachia." *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3: 307-329. Print.

Simmons, Paula. *Spinning and Weaving with Wool*. 1975. Seattle: Pacific Search Press, 1977. Print.

"Student Crafts: History." *Berea College*. Berea College Web Team, 6 Sept. 2004. Web. 3 Aug. 2013. < <http://www.berea.edu/student-crafts/history/>>

Thomas, Jean. *Blue Ridge Country*. Ed. Erskine Caldwell. New York: Duell, Sloan, & Pearce, 1942. Print.

Walsh, Penny. *The Yarn Book*. London: A & C Black Publishers, 2006. Print.

Weiner, Annette, and Jane Scheinder, eds. *Cloth and Human Experience*. Washington: Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1989. Print.

Wigginton, Eliot, ed. *Foxfire 2*. New York: Anchor Press, 1973. Print.

Wilson, Kathleen C. *Textile Art From Southern Appalachia: The Quiet Work of Women*. Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 2001. Print.

---. "Crafts." *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*. Ed. Rudy Abramson and Jean Haskell. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006. 769-775. Print.

Winter, Robert W. "The Arts and Crafts as a Social Movement." *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University*. Vol. 34, No. 2 Aspects of the Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1975: 36-40.