

# Hudson-Mohawk Weavers' Guild

## NEWSLETTER/Reprint of 2/98



*As we wish everyone happy, successful & innovative weaving in this new year it seems appropriate to reminisce a bit. Margaret McKinley has graciously offered to write a brief history for all the members who ask "How did the Guild get started?" She does so here and gives thanks to Gail Winters for keeping the record together.*

### In the Beginning...

The Hudson-Mohawk Weavers' Guild had its roots in the Schenectady Handweavers which was formed in 1972, by Peggy Wilkins and some of her weaving friends, after a few sessions mulling it over on Peggy's front porch.

An organizational meeting was held February 24, 1972 at the Schenectady County Library. Unfortunately, a list of weavers attending has not survived. About 20 people attended, including several of our current members, and the Schenectady Handweavers was launched. Dues were set at \$3.00

The group thrived and met monthly at various locations including a Bank community room and members' homes, while trying to locate a permanent home.

Meetings were held throughout the summer, with programs on spinning, finishing techniques and natural fibers.

When, in October, the group finally found a home at the Schenectady Historical Society, the meetings had to be changed from the fourth to the second Thursday of the month. Peggy Wilkins, secretary, sent out a notice of change with this exhortation "Because of the meeting date change ... very few of us will have a chance to weave anything ... but at least look up the pattern (monk's belt) and be able to discuss its execution."

The first year ended December 14th with a Christmas party. That is when the famous glögg tradition got started. Kirsten Sharock, a well-known Swedish weaver who had a studio for years in Burnt Hills, and was a member of the group, probably was the instigator of this. The treasury finished the year with \$42.38!

In 1973, meetings were held at the Schenectady Historical Society, and were well attended. The March list of attendees shows 24 members present, for a program on lace weaves. The May election of officers shows Peggy Wilkins still secretary and Sally Quinn, hospitality. Both members are still active in our Guild today. It was decided not to meet in June and a committee to discuss by-laws was set up. The Fall program included Rugs, Plain Weave, Systems of Warping, and of course, the (by now famous) Christmas party and glögg, with gift exchange. I wish I had been present at the September meeting when Charlotte Boucheron demonstrated her "No Tabby Chenille Rugs"! It should be noted that all programs were presented by members.

I joined the Schenectady Handweavers November 8th 1973. Peggy was leading a demonstration and discussion of various warping methods, but lacked a sectional warp beam, so she borrowed my daughter Kate's and invited me to come along. I was impressed by the program and the friendliness of the group, and was asked to join. Though I was not yet a weaver, I was hooked, having already decided to sign up for weaving classes, my daughter having gone off to college, leaving me with an EMPTY loom in the living room. As I told my husband later that evening, not only had I joined the Guild, I had been nominated for Cookie Princess!

In 1974, meetings were held regularly at the Schenectady Historical Society, but as this became unavailable to us the following year, we again had meetings in members' homes.

By September, 1975 the Schenectady Handweavers were meeting at Niskayuna High School, or when this was not available to us, we met at the Price Chopper Community Room on Eastern Parkway. The 1975 Christmas party was held at the McKinleys, and I learned to make glögg in the kitchen, the test of a true weaver!

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Chris Lipo, secretary and an enthusiastic leader of the group since its beginning, started a newsletter, and Gail Winters, another very dedicated member, organized a small display of weavers' work at the Schenectady Public Library in 1976. Chris and Gail's enthusiasm really kept the guild going at this time. Gail hosted the Christmas party at her home in 1976.

By 1977, attendance at meetings had dropped to about the same half-dozen members. In February, we had a program on lace weaves, but attendance was very low. Our March meeting was an enjoyable trip to the Albany Felt Company, but because of poor attendance at meetings, nothing further was scheduled, and we wondered if we should continue as a guild. A meeting was called in May, at my home, to judge if there was still enough interest in the guild. Since there was \$100 in the treasury, we decided to put the money into a one-day workshop which would hopefully rekindle interest and recover some of the old membership. Jan Nyquist was hired to teach Double Weave, and a very successful workshop was held October 22, 1977 at Niskayuna High School, attracting 14 weavers.

In 1978, membership stood at 15, but attendance at meetings was low. Chris Lipo coordinated a workshop on the Theo Moorman technique at Ruth Renzema's, Albany home. There was the usual group of about five or six of us, and we again wondered if it was worth going on as a group. We decided to change our name to the Hudson-Mohawk Weavers' Guild (since it was no longer just Schenectady oriented) and try to revitalize ourselves. In September, 1978, Gail and Chris coordinated a showing of weavers' work (under our new name) at the Schenectady County Library. On October 21, Jan Nyquist presented a well attended workshop on "Summer and Winter" at Niskayuna High School. At Jan's invitation, Sister Ignatius joined us. When she realized that we had no permanent meeting place, she offered us the use of the craft room at Our Lady of Hope Residence as a meeting place (with a view to having us help out with the weaving there). We finally had a home! In the Fall of '78, there was a large influx of new weavers with various levels of expertise and the HMWG was finally on its feet.

In the summer of '79, we said a sad good-bye to Chris Lipo who was leaving the area and raised dues to \$5.00. Gail, as secretary, kept a lively newsletter going and the Guild grew apace. Sue Golba, a new member, suggested we have a sale, having been involved in such at the Ann Arbor Guild. With some trepidation we agreed, though we doubted we had enough weaving to make a good showing. It was suggested that we each have at least ten items for sale. I recall finishing off some Linnay place mats at the last minute. They were still wet at sale time, so I put them aside near a radiator to dry. They didn't! (I'm glad I didn't sell them, for they shrank and lost color horribly in use.)

The sale was held at the Jewish Community Center on Balltown Road, Sunday, November 11. At the time Sue reserved the room, the walls were light colored, but by the day of the sale, they had been painted dark brown! Set up was 8:30-11, sale open 11-5, cleanup 5-7. Tables were provided, and Sister Ignatius generously loaned a large bolt of linen colored cloth for table covers. I will never forget wrestling with that cloth and a pair of humongous dull shears, while weavers stood around asking me, since I was in charge, what they should be doing! I hadn't a clue! Sue was the only one who had any experience with weaving sales, and she was busy unloading and setting up her own wares, having brought her own props. (For the first few sales, we allowed weavers to set up individually, within the group.) Panic finally subsided, we managed to open on time and enjoyed a very successful sale.

No wonder I wrote, as president, in December 1979, "The November sale, our first venture of this kind, netted \$665.53 and was a great learning experience for all who took part. We should get together early next year to discuss the sale: the good and bad points, whether we want to do it again and, above all, whether there is enough real commitment to such a venture..." (You know how I felt!) Little did I realize how big a part the Annual Guild Sale would play in the future!

*...saga to be continued...*

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This article has been reprinted from the February 1998 Newsletter for our new members.

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# Hudson-Mohawk Weavers' Guild

## NEWSLETTER/Winter 1999



### Guild History... Part II

By the beginning of 1980, the Guild had been in existence under the names Schenectady Handweavers and Hudson-Mohawk Weavers' Guild for eight years and was firmly established with 40 members. The next decade would show tremendous growth, both in membership and activities. Peggy Wilkins, who started it all, moved from Scotia to Charlton in 1978 and rapidly expanded her business, Woodside Weavers. Having a local supplier and teacher encouraged more people to take up weaving and membership grew, ultimately leveling off at today's 110-120 members.

The computer age crept up on us in 1979 when Peggy offered the use of her Apple computer to help in keeping business records. Most of us were in awe, never dreaming what a useful tool it would become. In 1982, new member Gwendolyn Watson (Linn) saw the possibilities and with Peg's help she computerized the mailing list, giving each member a permanent number. Gwendolyn then went on to produce newsletters and, in September 1982, we had our first computerized newsletter and mailing system. This was sent to all weavers whom Peggy had come to know through her shop, as well as to current Guild members. It netted a tremendous response: membership jumped to 108 members. We have come a long way since then and the computer has made it possible to keep and up-date Guild records, including a 4000 name mailing list of people attending the annual Show & Sale.

By this time, the Guild had a sizeable collection of weaving books, but no system of cataloging and check-out. Phyllis Woodmansee volunteered to be the Librarian and to order the necessary supplies to get us going. The position of "Librarian" was added to the roster of Board members and Walt Baucom, Jan's husband, made the mobile library case we use today.

The records for the years 1980 to present show a very active Guild. Apart from regular evening meetings at which Guild members presented a fantastic amount of material, there was an average of two workshops a year given by outside nationally known weavers and/or from our own membership, bus trips to museums, yarn warehouses and historic sites and, of course, the well known annual Guild Show & Sale. None of this could have been accomplished without a lot of hard work and the enthusiasm of all members, but especially from those who volunteered their services as Board members.

#### Calendar for 1999

Thursday evening, February 11  
"Summer & Winter"

Thursday evening, March 11  
"Great Endings and Embellishments"

Thursday evening, April 8  
Guest speaker Martha Kaupang  
on her travels in Asia

Thursday evening, May 13  
"Creative Overshot"

2-Day Workshop, May 14 & 15  
"Creative Overshot"

*(See Program Notes for Details)*

### Monthly Meeting Information

- All Guild meetings & workshops are held at Our Lady of Hope Residence (unless otherwise noted), 1 Jeanne Jugan Lane, Latham - approximately 1/2 mile north of Latham Circle on Rte. 9, turn east on Cobbee Road (by Price Chopper). Our Lady of Hope Residence is straight ahead, as Cobbee Road becomes Jeanne Jugan Lane at the flashing light.
- Evening meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month (Sept. through May) and begin at 7:30 pm.
- Social/refreshment time is from 7:00-7:30pm. •Members may sell yarn and small equipment at the Second Chance Table from 7:00-7:30pm. The Guild takes 10% of those sales.



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There have been many excellent workshops but, for me, several stand out as particularly exciting. Anita Luvera Mayer's 1985 lecture and 3-day workshop on loom-shaped clothing was fantastic! In March '88, Clotilde Barrett gave a workshop on "Designing with unusual weave structures" and returned in October '89 to give a workshop on double weave, both great learning experiences. In November '88, Peter Collingwood gave a lecture and slide presentation that was open to the public (as are all our meetings). It was attended by over 100 people, some 21 of whom joined the Guild, giving us an all-time high of close to 140 weavers! Some of us were lucky enough to attend the 3-day workshop that followed. These are only four of the many great workshops we have had over the past 20 years.

In addition to lectures, workshops and study groups, the Guild has held several exhibitions, starting with a month-long invitational at The Unitarian Church in Schenectady in 1981. Later exhibitions have been in Colonie Town Library, Bethlehem Public Library, Guilderland Town Library, Borders Bookshop - to name a few.

In 1983, there developed a good deal of interest in daytime meetings and a group of weavers in the Saratoga County area, mostly mothers with young children, started monthly meetings in their homes. This became known as Guild North. After attending a couple of these meetings, a few of us decided that there were enough weavers in our local (Albany County) area who would like to form a similar daytime study group. We met at my home to study Rep weaves, and Guild South was born. Eventually, Guild North disbanded and Guild South became Day Guild and is still in operation, meeting monthly every fourth Wednesday in weavers' homes. Similarly, a group of us who wanted to concentrate on weaving items for the home started a daytime group, Weaving for Interiors, in 1990. This small group still meets in weavers' homes every third Thursday, September through May. Both welcome new participants.

In 1985, Sister Ignatius, who was an active Guild member and had invited us to use the crafts room at Our Lady of Hope as our permanent meeting place, was transferred to Montreal. The Little Sisters of the Poor, who operate Our Lady of Hope, kindly allowed us to continue meeting at the residence. The character of the home was changing. At one time there were five looms in the crafts room but, weaving interest waned and the looms were removed.

Now that we had "arrived" as a Guild, it was decided we needed a logo. A contest was held in 1985 and the resulting designs were voted on by members. Jan Baucom's design was declared the winner. It has identified the Guild ever since, with computer refinements in 1996 by Carol Hammer.

Our annual November show and sale has continued to play an important part in our Guild's year. So as to save space here, "A Brief History of the Annual Show & Sale" will appear in the next Newsletter.

The Spring 1988 issue of *Weavers'* magazine ran a three-part article titled "Where have all the weavers gone?" In the articles, three well-known people in the business of weaving, Joyce Marquess Carey, Deborah Chandler and Halcyon Schomp discussed the decline of weaving and the notable fall-off in numbers of weaving students in colleges, etc. It is interesting to note that at this time the Hudson-Mohawk Weavers' Guild was actually gaining members. I think this was because we had Woodside Weavers, and Peggy was always there in the background to help us and wasn't afraid of new technology. We were ready for computerized weaving, fine threads and beautiful cloth, after the '70s craze for "Big Hairy Wall-hangings and Granola" had passed.

Last year, we passed our silver anniversary as a Guild. It has been a pleasure for me to look back over the years and recall the great times we've had together. I have compiled these brief notes from the records that have been kept over the years and particularly from Guild newsletters! Gail Winters has been great at preserving the documents and she also wrote the newsletter at several different periods of our existence. Thanks Gail! And thanks to all the other members who have contributed over the years, as presidents, v-ps/program chairs, secretaries, treasurers, membership and hospitality chairs, librarians. And, last but not least, the newsletter editors, who get all that stuff together to keep us informed! And a special thanks to Peggy Wilkins, who started it all and has been involved in each of the above jobs at some point in the 26-year history of the Hudson-Mohawk Weavers' Guild. ...Margaret McKinley

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*Again we wish to thank Margaret McKinley for compiling this outline of our history for us.  
Our new and older members will all help continue this rich tradition, bringing enthusiasm, knowledge, expertise  
and ideas for promoting the art of handweaving.*