

## Donation of the Month

Loom

2011.22.1

Donor: Matt Harper



For centuries women made their families' clothing, rugs and bedcovers by hand or on looms. Wealthier women had loom rooms, rooms dedicated to the large looms on which rugs and coverlets were created. By the 1800's, hand weaving fell out of favor as commercially woven fancy coverlets made in New England became accessible and well made. In addition, the push west caused many women to leave their large bulky looms behind. By the 1920s, a resurgence of interest in hand weaving and other crafts grew; and women in Northwest Arkansas began to re-learn the art of weaving. They formed the Handweavers Guild in the late 1920s; and started the War Eagle Arts and Crafts Fair in the 1950s.

Looms are used to not only create coverlets, but also rag rugs. This skill was also part of the weaving resurgence in the 1920s. Local women created rugs at home, much like those of previous generations, to decorate their homes or to sell and supplement the family income. As the depression deepened, the old-time crafts of canning and weaving began to be more prevalent and important. In Northwest Arkansas, many women belonged to homemaker groups such as the Minervians and the Oak Hill Demonstration Club.

This loom was used to weave many items. It was purchased by Mrs. A.M. Sherrell and used to weave everything from window drapes to purses. Not only did she decorate her own home with her weavings, but also wove items for neighbors and friends. As the image shows many women learned how to operate the loom. Over the years the loom has traveled with the family across the country and has even been used by the donor's mother a few times.

Today, crafts such as weaving are skills only a few women possess. Much of this second loss of interest is due to easier access to commercially made items and a lack of time in our busy schedules. This loom is a great reminder of a by-gone era when women spent hours creating works of art for their homes, as well as practical articles for everyday use.