

A Mlle. St. Jean, of St. Jacques de L'Achigan, who made sashes, went away to Manitoba, about 60 years ago, and there, according to Mme. Napoléon Lord, showed the Indians how to weave sashes; this she told the Achigan people, many years ago, when on a short visit home.

As many of the settlers at L'Achigan and in the neighbourhood are of Acadian origin (including the Lord family, whose grandfather cleared the land there), it has been presumed, but mistakenly, that the craft of sash-making originated in Acadia. There is no evidence to support this theory.

After the writer had invited Mme. Napoléon Lord and her daughter Alice, in 1927, to figure among the folk weavers at the first Quebec Festival, and to give demonstrations of sash-making, Mme. Odilon Vignault, of St. Ambroise de Kildare, who also made fine broad sashes of the best type, was discovered and invited to join Mme. Lord at the second festival. Their activities at the festivals drew the attention of the Department of Agriculture in Quebec, who had supposed, like others, that this old Canadian craft was lost, and from that moment on undertook to help in its preservation. Mme. Lord was later invited by the Ecole des Arts domestiques at Quebec, where she taught finger weaving to five women students. Since, Mme. Lord has taught a few others, just as she had previously, when brought to Montreal, shown the method to Sister Marie-Jeanne.

GARTER WEAVING

Woven garters and bands in French Canada once were made in three different ways: (1) on a small ribbon loom with loose thread heddle controlled by two treadles, of the type preserved at Hôtel-Dieu, Quebec; (2) with a wooden heddle (*grille à tisser*) hand controlled or fixed on a bench, such as are occasionally found in rural Quebec and among the Indians—a woven garter of this type was collected at Island of Orleans (Plate XXIII); (3) by means of finger weaving or braiding, of the kind studied here. The following description of the technique of garter weaving is restricted to this third kind—finger weaving, as illustrated in the garter collection made by the writer for the National Museum of Canada, and as observed and recorded in 1937 with Mme. Alma Tremblay, 61 years old, of St. Joseph des Eboulements, Charlevoix County, Quebec.

The wool, produced on the farm, is prepared at home and dyed in the usual way; Mme. Tremblay's is carded at Onesime Tremblay's mill at Blagousse (in the neighbourhood). It is spun first in single threads, then two (sometimes three) threads are spun into one strand.

When the strands are ready, and rolled in small balls of various colours, they are *ourdies* or mounted in sets or skeins. To do this, two

wooden chairs are placed back to back at a distance from one another that determines the length of the pair of garters. The strand of one colour is first tied in a simple loop (*boucle simple*) to the upright of a chair (*chaise en quenouille*), stretched and wound around the projecting tops of the opposite upright and the first upright as many times as strands of this colour are required, let us say, twelve times if twelve strands of white are needed. At the end of the twelfth, the white strand is tied in a knot to the red strand on the right hand side. This knot is made over the left thumb in a peculiar way.

The strand of the second colour is then wound around as many times as strands of this colour are required—perhaps twelve times, like the first. The strand is tied to the one of the next colour, yellow, orange, or green, in the same way as the first and at the same place, to the right hand on the back of a chair. It does not matter how the colours are placed now as their order can be changed later, but they must be in even numbers on each side. In her demonstration Mme. Tremblay used forty-eight strands in all.

The strands are then cut with scissors close to the upright on the right side first, then on the left, thus separating the coloured strands in two halves out of which the pair of garters are to be woven.

To keep the threads from becoming entangled, one set is loosely tied in a simple knot and placed on the shoulder while the first garter is woven out of the other set. To make this knot, take hold of the set of strands with the two hands at about 6 inches from one another, then draw one end over the fingers of the left hand and pass it inside so as to make a loop.

To weave a garter, one may begin either at one end or at the middle.

(1) BEGINNING THE GARTER AT ONE END

When it is decided to make a fringe 3 inches long, let us say, a woollen thread is passed twice around the set of strands at the place where the fringe is to end and the weaving to begin, and is tied in a loop.

The fringe being upwards or above and the skein held in the left hand, the strands of coloured wool are then picked out with thumb and index of the right hand, according to the weaver's plan. Upon this selection and separation depends the pattern. So many strands of one colour are drawn together and placed on the back of the chair, and so many of another colour; these are to form the half to the right. As many strands, presumably, of the same colours are to be sorted out on the left side. When all the colours are in the right order, the two halves of the strands are held, one in each hand (Figure 3).

The end of the skein at the place where it is tied around (at the inside end of what is to be the fringe) is then fixed firmly by a borer to the top of a table—some weavers, instead, fasten it to their knee with a safety pin (Plate V). The braiding is now begun.

The one half of the strands, in the right hand, consist, let us say, of four white threads, two green, six white, six red, and six yellow. The threads for the other half are laid aside.

A strand is placed above the index of the right hand, and the next, under, another, above, another, under. The index here is used as a heddle to separate the strands, above and under, of the warp. All the strands of the right half are presently divided in two halves, over and under the index.

The thumb of the left hand, then introduced between these two separate sets, or the shed, reaches the first strand to the right (here a white strand), draws it across to the left and brings it to the centre, where it is dropped. When this is done, the thread replaces the index and becomes the first thread of the weft in the right half of the garter.

Then the left hand works in the same way at the other half on its side, the right hand helping; but the coloured strands are placed in the reverse order. When the strands are over and under the left index, the thumb of the right hand pulls the last strand at the left through the shed to the right and brings it to the middle, where it is dropped. This second thread has thus become the first weft thread of the left half of the garter.

It is now the turn of the right side. The strands are alternately separated into two halves again, over and under the index, the warp threads over the finger now being those that previously were under, and the left thumb reaches for the first thread to the right (which at the start was the second), and brings it to the middle, where it is dropped.

The strand drawn from the right is under the thumb; the one from the left, over the thumb. So that now the threads that were on the extreme right and left are in the middle.

The warp strands on the left are then placed alternately over and under the left index, and the right thumb reaches the last strand at the left to bring it across to the middle and drop it.

The two sets, right and left, are kept separate by the last two fingers of each hand.

Before drawing the thread across with the opposite hand, this hand drops the set of strands or the skein. The thumb, when introduced in the shed, presses the weft upwards while the warp is kept rigid, to make the tissue uniformly tight; and the thumb with the index of the left hand

draws the thread from the right to the centre, and, inversely, the right hand from the left; in the same way, the separation of the strands over and under the index is made by the opposite hand.

The complete arrow pattern is produced by the continuation of this process, the last thread brought from the sides to the centre becoming a warp thread, where it interlocks with its neighbour of the opposite half.

Near the end, when weaving reaches the point where the fringe must begin, knots are made to keep the threads firmly in place.

Three strands to the right are held, one in the right hand and two in the left; the strand to the right is passed between the two others, then the three strands are drawn, and a simple knot is made; in the same way the others, in sets of threes. In that case, the strands are not braided. When braids are made instead of knots, the braiding of the strands (three by three or more) is started from the point where the weaving stops; and the knots are made at the end of the braids.

If for some reason the weaver wants to stop working before the garter is finished, the index and middle finger of the left hand are introduced between the two sets of strands (right and left), the two sets are then crossed, and a simple loop is made.

(2) BEGINNING THE GARTER IN THE CENTRE

The chair on which the weaver sits must face the back of the chair to which the skein is tied at one-third of its length by means of a simple knot first and a second, to make sure that the strands are held firmly in place. The feet of the weaver hold the chair in place.

The coloured strands are then sorted out for the half on the right side; let us say, four white strands, two green, six red, six yellow, and six white. And then the braiding begins as described above (No. 1).

When the point is reached where the fringe is to begin, the same method as above is followed.

Then the skein tied to the back of the chair is unfastened, the woven end is fastened in its place in the same way, and the weaving of the second half proceeds. A slit or opening in the middle is the result of this method, but with skill it is possible to restrict its length, which every maker endeavours to achieve.