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SHAKER TEXTILE ARTS

Beverly Gordon

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SHAKER TEXTILE ARTS Beverly Gordon
Today we witness a steadily growing interest in the Shakers and their way of life, especially their crafts. Although Shaker furniture, architecture, and herbs, for example, have been written about repeatedly, there are no other studies in depth of another all-important element in Shaker lives--Shaker textiles. Beverly Gordon, an experienced craftswoman and teacher, presents a comprehensive, illustrated book on the kinds of textiles the Shakers used, how they were produced, and their cultural and economic importance to the communities. She shows how Shaker beliefs were manifested in the actual artifacts and integrates detailed technical information in a way that will appeal to the nonprofessional admirers of these crafts as well as to experts. Professional dealers may use the book to verify the authenticity of a variety of items.

An introductory chapter is followed by sections on the general characteristics of the textiles, their importance in Shaker lives, and the types of textile activities they undertook. Textile production, including fiber preparation, spinning, weaving, dyeing, knitting, crocheting, and sewing, is examined. Detailed descriptions of rugs and floor coverings, chair and seat tapes and cushions, clothing and personal accessories, popular cloth, and fancywork are followed by appendices on original Shaker weaving drafts, analyses of rugs and chair seat tapes, dye recipes, and instructions for knitting and constructing “fancy” items.

This indispensable reference work results in part from the author’s close association with Shaker textiles between 1973 and 1977, when she was a textile interpreter at Hancock Shaker Village. Since then she has had access to artifacts and original manuscripts and documents throughout the country, works that are reflected in her full bibliography. A study from the procurement and processing of materials to the uses of finished products, this is a book of lasting value to collectors and antique dealers, museum curators, home economists, historians, weavers, and fiber artists with related specialties.

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