

MONMOUTH COTTON COVERLET

Designed and woven by Malynda Allen

Handwoven coverlets similar to this one were commonly found in Colonial America. Most household linens and clothing were woven to be used and worn out, but coverlets added beauty to a home. Made of a plain, natural cotton or linen ground cloth and handspun dyed wool woven throughout to form the pattern, they kept many people warm at night from the 1770s to the 1860s, or about the American Revolution until the Civil War (and beyond in some less industrialized areas of America).

This queen-size coverlet boasts a popular pattern from that era sometimes called "Monmouth." I have woven this one from 100% cotton so that is easier to wash and care for. Two colors give the pattern depth, and I have adjusted the treadling to keep the pattern balanced and in pleasing proportions for the yarns I chose. My coverlet also features a handwoven fringed tape trim, reminiscent of the fringe on traditional coverlets. The tape trim was woven separately on the same loom as the coverlet. A heavy floating selvedge spaced away from the main threads creates a looped fringe that will not unravel. I have allowed one extra yard in the coverlet warp for sampling so you can be assured that your coverlet will turn out well, too.

EQUIPMENT

- 4-shaft loom with at least 36" weaving width—I recommend a 36" Standard Floor Loom
- 8-dent reed
- sectional beam (recommended due to the length of the warp, but not required)
- 3 shuttles and 3 bobbins
- tapestry needle
- heavy smooth yarn or fishing line for additional floating selvedges
- heavy weights (I used one-pound cones of yarn)
- sewing machine (optional)
- sizing solution for the fringe tape warp. I used flax seed and water—see notes in the fringe tape directions.

MATERIALS

COVERLET

Warp: Georgia Yarn Company 8/2 cotton (3360 yds./lb.), 7,000 yds in Natural.

Tabby weft: Georgia Yarn Company 8/2 cotton, 5,000 yds in Natural.

Pattern weft: Valley Cotton 3/2 perle cotton (1260 yds./lb), 3500 yds in Sapphire Blue and 1100 yds in Celestial Blue.

FRINGE TAPE

Warp: Georgia Yarn Company 8/2 cotton, 350 yds in Natural; 8/4 cotton carpet warp or other thick, strong, smooth yarn, 12 yds in any color.

Weft: Georgia Yarn Company 8/2 cotton, 800 yds in Natural; Valley Cotton 3/2 perle cotton, 800 yds in Sapphire Blue.



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PROJECT SPECS

COVERLET

Finished size: 86" wide x 97" long hemmed, excluding fringe tape

Weave structure: overshot

Number of warp ends: 563 ends (includes floating selvages)

Warp length: 12-1/4 yds (includes 36" for sampling and 24" for loom waste)

Width in reed: 35 inches

EPI: 16

PPI: 16 in tabby for hems, 24 in pattern section (12 tabby wefts and 12 pattern wefts)

MAKING THE COVERLET

WARPING

1. Wind a warp of 563 ends 12-1/4 yds. long of 8/2 cotton in Natural. Warp the loom according to your preferred method, using two of the ends as floating selvages and following the draft, threading five repeats of 112 ends plus one thread on shaft 2 for balance. (See note below.) Sley the reed 2 ends per dent in an 8-dent reed.
2. Measure strong, smooth cotton (I recommend 8/4 cotton carpet warp or 3/2 cotton) and sturdy fishing line at least 13 yards long. Tie on at the front of the loom and run along your 8/2 cotton floating selvages, slewing the sturdy yarn and fishing line one dent to the outer edge of the warp from your 8/2 cotton floating selvedge. Weight this sturdy extra floating selvedge heavily off the back of the loom. (I use one-pound cones of yarn as weights). This heavy floating selvedge prevents draw-in so that your seams will be less obvious when you seam the three panels together. When removed later, they will also give a little extra space in the weft loops, which makes seaming the panels together a little easier. The original 8/2 floating selvedge will remain in the coverlet and then function to hold everything in place.

Note on the draft: The very last thread shown on shaft 2 is the balance. Do not repeat this thread for each repeat. Only thread it for the very last repeat to balance the draft. There are 112 warp ends in each pattern repeat.

Note: Only the heavy floating selvages (cotton carpet warp and fishing line) need to be heavily weighted. Weight the 8/2 cotton as you would normally weight a floating selvedge (I recommend using an S hook).

FRINGE TAPE

Finished size (after washing): 3-1/2" x 347" (323" washed fringe tape is needed for the coverlet)

Weave structure: overshot with double tabby

Number of warp ends: 27 plus 2 floating selvages

Warp length: 11 yds.

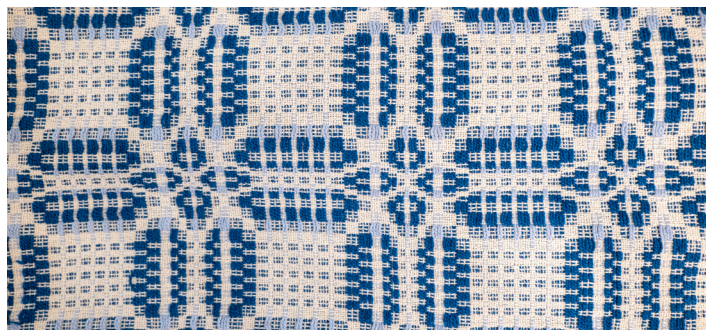
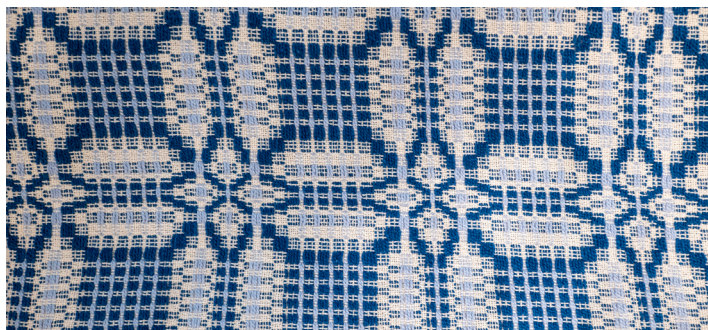
Width in reed: 3-7/8" total (the band is 1-11/16" wide plus 2" fringe)

EPI: 16

PPI: 54 (36 tabby wefts and 18 pattern wefts)

WEAVING

1. Wind one bobbin each of 8/2 cotton in Natural, 3/2 cotton in Sapphire Blue, and 3/2 cotton in Celestial Blue.
2. Weave 32 picks or 2 inches in 8/2 cotton in tabby (plain weave) for a hem. Weave the pattern following the draft, throwing the first pattern pick after Tabby A and before Tabby B. Weave 16 pattern repeats. Then weave 16 picks or 2 inches in Tabby for the hem. Each repeat should measure about 7-1/8", and each panel should measure about 121"-122" long. Weave a couple picks of contrasting yarn to mark a cutting line.
3. Repeat Step 2 to weave the second and third panels. Tip: Use a strip of cash register tape or ribbon to track the repeats for the first panel. Then follow it as a guide for panels 2 and 3. Don't worry if your measurements are slightly off for the repeats in panels 2 and 3; just beat as closely as possible to match your first panel. You should have exactly the same number of picks per panel, and this is what matters.
4. Weave several picks of scrap yarn to secure the weft.
5. Cut the woven fabric from the loom.
6. Zigzag stitch the ends of each panel to secure the weft. Cut the panels apart along the contrasting yarn cutting lines. Carefully remove the heavy floating selvedge yarns and fishing line, leaving the 8/2 yarn floating selvages in place.



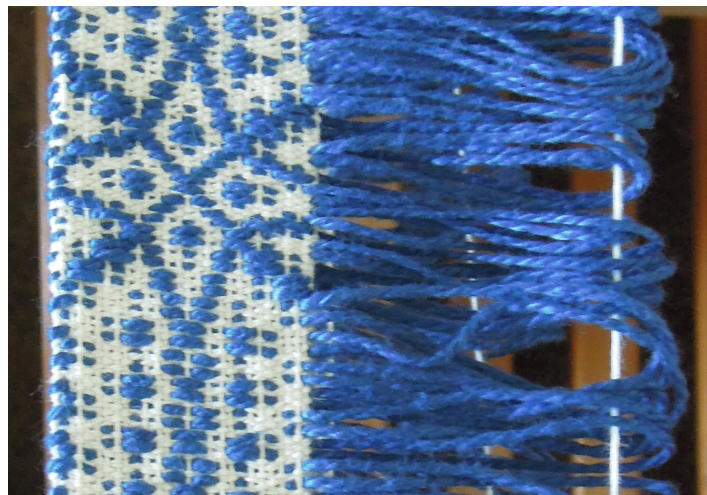
MAKING THE FRINGE TAPE

WARPING

Note on sizing: You will benefit from sizing the fringe trim warp—it greatly reduced the number of broken warp threads I had while weaving the fringe trim band. You may either size it as a warp chain before beaming the warp (let dry before beaming), or brush the sizing on the threads behind the heddles each time you advance the warp (weave wet or dry). I used a sizing recipe of 1/2 tbsp. flax seed and 2 cups of water, boiled and then strained. Store in the refrigerator when not in use. The sizing will keep for a week or two. I brushed the sizing on behind the heddles each time I advanced the warp. If I had planned better, I would have sized the warp chain before beaming it.

1. Wind a warp of 27 ends 11 yards long of 8/2 cotton in Natural. (See note about sizing the warp).
2. Warp the loom using your preferred method (I recommend back to front), spreading the warp to a width of about 6 inches as it is wound onto the back beam. Thread the heddles following the draft. When you sley the reed, center the warp for a weaving width of 3-7/8". Your border will occupy 1-11/16 inches left of center. At the left selvedge, add a floating selvedge of 8/2 cotton. Sley through its own dent and weight off the back of the loom.
3. Measure carpet warp (or other strong, smooth yarn) 12 yards long. To the right of the warp, sley the carpet warp through its own dent 2" from the right edge of the warp. Heavily weight this off the back of the loom as a floating selvedge. I used a one pound cone of yarn as a weight.
4. Weave several inches of 8/2 cotton in plain weave, ignoring the heavy selvedge on the right. This will establish the width of the band.

Note: Only the heavy floating selvedge on the right needs to be heavily weighted. Weight the 8/2 cotton as you would normally weight a floating selvedge (I recommend using an S hook).



WEAVING

Note: Because of the extremely narrow width on a floor loom, the weft packs in very tightly. To square the pattern in the fringe tape, it is necessary to use a double tabby technique. This means that two tabby picks are woven between each pattern pick for the length of the fringe trim. For example: Weave tabby a, tabby b, first pattern pick; tabby a, tabby b, second pattern pick, etc.

1. Weave the fringe tape following the draft. Weave two tabby picks without catching the heavy right floating selvedge. Weave one pattern pick. The pattern pick must pass around the heavy floating selvedge to form the fringe. Both pattern and tabby wefts should pass around the left floating selvedge in 8/2 cotton. Tip: To maintain an even fringe width, beat on an open shed. Always beat gently. Remember that a lot of tension is spread over very few warp threads.
2. Weave the pattern to the end of the warp, finishing with a few inches of tabby alone to secure the weft. I wove about 367". You should have about 24 inches of leftover fringe tape after you've sewn it to the coverlet. This is to allow for sampling and adjustments while getting started weaving the tape or differences in shrinkage for various brands of yarn.

Note: Advance the warp gently by loosening the brake tension and unwinding some of the warp off the warp beam. Then tighten the warp from the front. If you try to advance by pulling the warp from the front, you may have broken warp threads because the warp tension is spread over so few ends.

3. Cut the fringe tape trim from the warp. Secure the cut ends of the fringe by either machine stitching or by tying the warp waste ends in knots to secure the weft of the fringe trim. Remove the heavy floating selvedge from the fringe loops.
4. Machine wash and dry. Press well.

ASSEMBLY

1. Thread a tapestry needle with 8/2 cotton yarn in natural. Carefully pin the first and second panels along the long sides, matching the repeats and pattern picks. Hand sew the panels together, matching the selvedge weft loops pick for pick so that the pattern matches perfectly.
2. Pin the third panel to the second panel along the long edges and sew together as you did for the first two panels.
3. Machine wash the sewn panels as you intend to wash the finished coverlet.
4. Turn up the bottom hem of the coverlet 1-1/2" and press. Turn the raw edge under to meet the fold. Press again. Hand or machine sew the hem in place. Leave the top edge of the coverlet unhemmed for now.
5. Pin the washed and pressed fringe tape, right side down, along one side edge, the bottom edge above the hem (flush with the beginning of the pattern weft), and up the other long side of the coverlet, mitering the corners of the fringe tape as shown in Figure 1.
6. Now that the fringe tape is pinned in place, carefully remove the pattern weft from the fringe tape at the top hem of the coverlet so that the pattern on the fringe tape and the coverlet begin at the same place as shown in Figure 2. Lay the right side of the fringe tape on the right side of the coverlet and whipstitch in place. As you reach each corner, tuck under the excess fringe tape to form a 45-degree line. Pin the two layers of fringe tape in place, as shown in Figure 3.
7. Open out the fringe tape so it lays flat and press. Invisibly sew the corner miters from the right side, catching both layers of fringe tape. Press the miters flat.
8. Press the top hem of the coverlet and fringe tape down 1-1/2" to the wrong side. Turn the raw edge under to meet the fold and press again. Hand or machine sew the top hem in place.

Enjoy your coverlet!

RESOURCES

Bress, Helene. *The Coverlet Book*. Flower Valley Press, Inc., 2003.

Burnham, Dorothy K. and Harold B. *Keep Me Warm One Night: Early Handweaving in Eastern Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 1975.

Estes, Josephine. *Original Miniature Patterns for Handweaving, Part 1*. Private Printing. Draft #14. Found online at https://www2.cs.arizona.edu/patterns/weaving/monographs/eje_min1.pdf

West, Virginia. *Finishing Touches for the Handweaver*. Interweave Press, 1988.



Figure 1: Fold the fringe tape at corners as shown here, with excess tape at the inner edge so the border will lie flat when it's sewn.

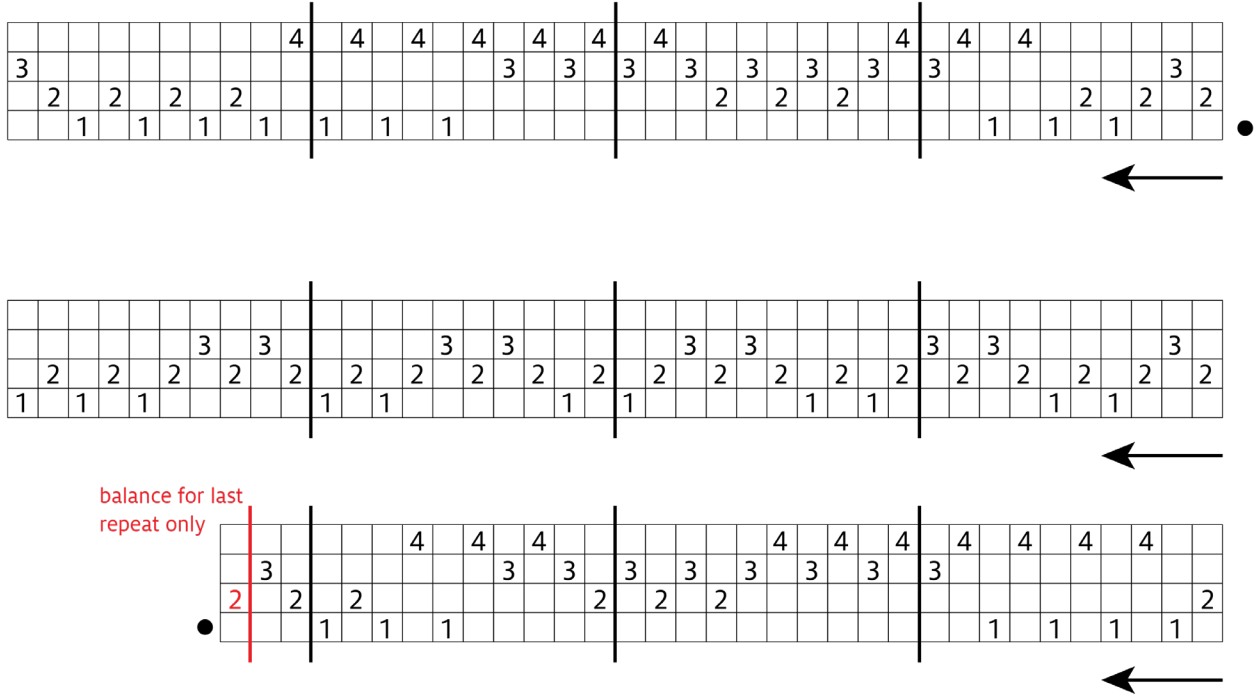


Figure 2: Carefully remove the pattern weft from the fringe tape at the top hem of the coverlet so that the pattern on the fringe tape and the coverlet begin at the same place. (Note: the top hem of the coverlet is shown folded down, while the fringe is not yet.)



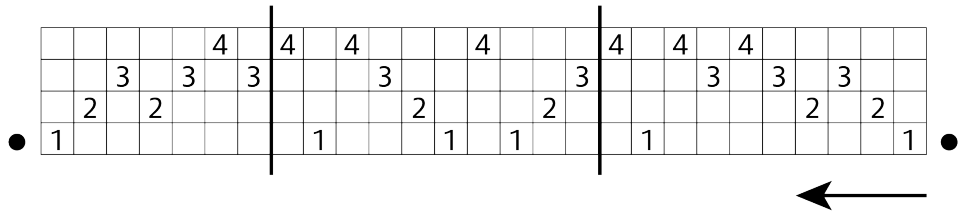
Figure 3: Fold over the excess fringe tape in a diagonal line, with the excess under the fold.

Coverlet Threading



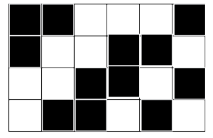
● floating selvedge

Fringe Tape Threading

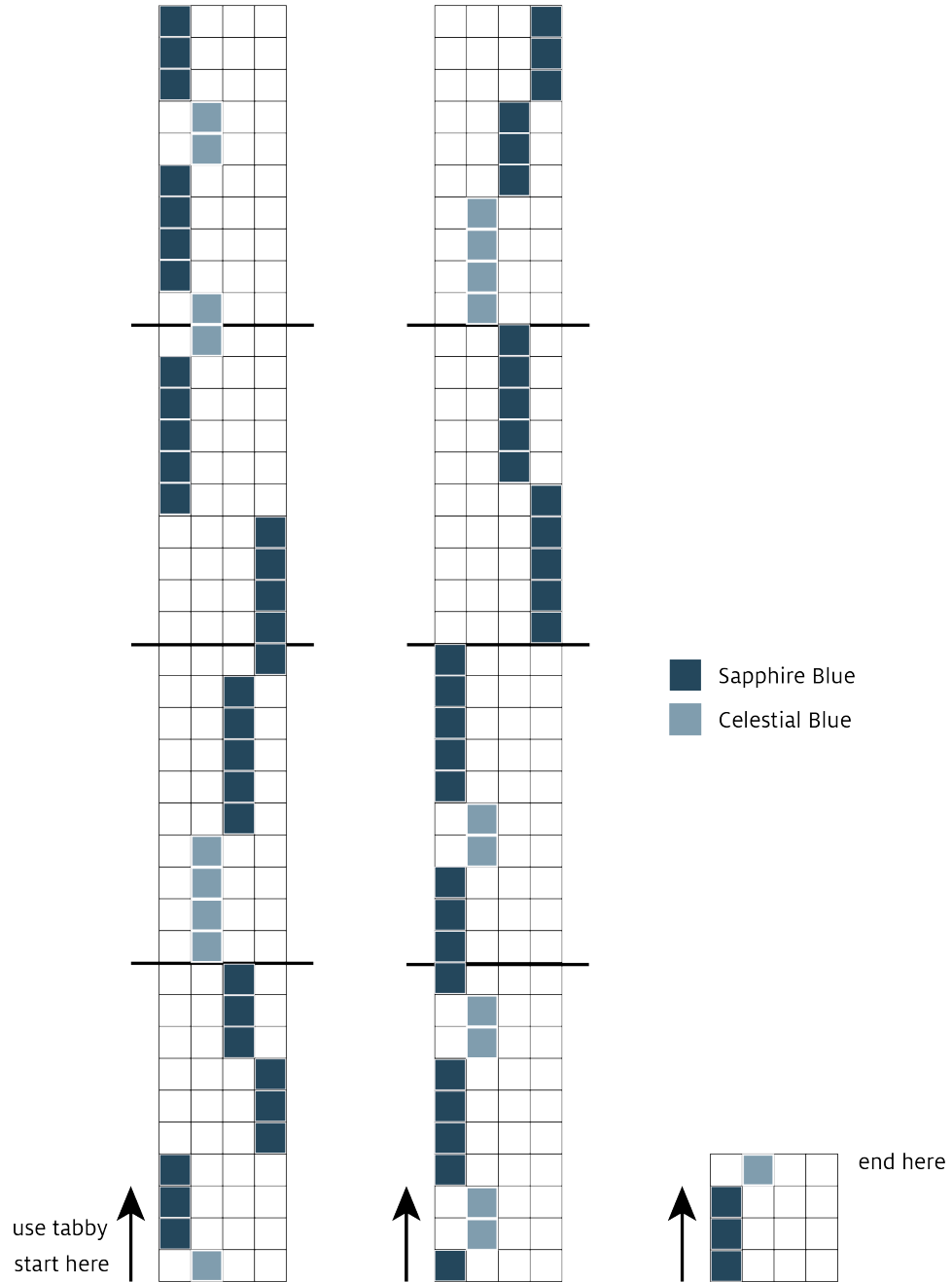


● floating selvedge

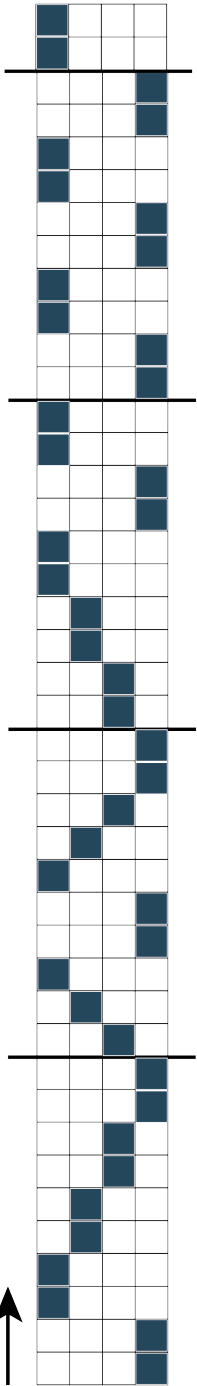
Tie-up for Coverlet and Fringe Tape



Coverlet Treading



Fringe Tape Treading



■ Sapphire Blue
use double tabby

