

“We are the Rug Hooking Capital of the World”: Understanding Chéticamp
Rugs (1927-2017)

by

© Laura Marie Andrea Sanchini

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Abstract

This thesis is the story of how utilitarian material culture was transformed into a cottage industry, and eventually into high art. Chéticamp rug hooking is an artistic practice, one wrapped up in issues of taste, creativity, class and economics. Rug hooking in Chéticamp rose to prominence in the first half of the 20th century when Lillian Burke, a visiting American artist, set up a rug hooking cottage industry in the area. She altered the tradition to suit the tastes of wealthy patrons, who began buying the rugs to outfit their homes. This thesis examines design in rug hooking focusing on Chéticamp-style rugs. Captured within design aesthetics is what the rugs mean to both those who make and consume them. For tourists, the rugs are symbols of a perceived anti-modernism. Through the purchase of a hooked rug, they are able to bring home material reminders of their moment of experience with rural Nova Scotia. For rug hookers, rugs are a symbol of economic need, but also agency and the ability to overcome depressed rural economic conditions. Rug hooking was a way to have a reliable income in an area where much of the labour is dependent on unstable sources, such as natural resources (fishing, lumber, agriculture etc.). This also meant that rug hooking is closely tied to notions of poverty.

The motif-index developed for this thesis by examining several hundred hooked rugs demonstrates that consistent structural elements such as motifs are dependent on context. When used in a comparative manner, it also helps illustrate how often those creating hooked rug designs, whether they were sold commercially as patterns or designs to be used as part of a cottage industry, were sharing and borrowing design ideas throughout North America. The motif-index is a typology and a tool that enables

discussion by standardizing language and terminology which allows for comparative examination of hooked rugs from across a variety of traditions.

Keywords: material culture, craft, Cape Breton, hooked rug, motif, women, economics

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Chapter One: Introduction



Figure 1.1: Sign welcoming visitors to Chéticamp (photo by author)

My introduction to Chéticamp rug hooking came during a visit to the home of a local wood carver. At the time I had been focusing my research efforts on writing a thesis about folk carving in Chéticamp, and hooked rugs had not yet become the focus of my research interests. On the wood carver's living room walls were two hooked rugs. One was a small, framed tapestry of a two-masted schooner signed by the artist Elizabeth Lefort, whom I later learned is arguably the most famously celebrated Chéticamp rug hooker. The other tapestry, also framed, was of a large multi-coloured rooster on a black background. This one caught my eye, as it was distinctly different in tone, colour and theme than many of the hooked rugs I had seen in town. I inquired about it and discovered it was created by the wood carver's cousin, Yvette Muise, a local rug hooker who had recently moved back to Chéticamp after living away for over 30 years.

Later that night, I met Yvette at a party. As is common for Cape Breton get-togethers, all the musicians had gathered in the living room and were playing tunes on

fiddles, guitars, and pianos. I noticed a woman collecting strands of horse hair that were flying off the fiddle bows, and closely examining the musicians' hands as they played. Intrigued, I approached her and introduced myself, hoping to find out what she was doing. She told me that she was a rug hooker; a fibre artist – and was interested in creating a tapestry made from fiddle bow hairs and guitar strings that would depict musicians' hands. It was through this early encounter with Yvette that I became academically and personally interested in the tradition of rug hooking.

The process of choosing a doctoral thesis topic is a daunting one and something I approached full of trepidation and anxiety. I considered many potential topics: Italian foodways in Montreal (which would have been a continuation of my MA thesis), or the Italian communities in industrial Cape Breton – being a Montreal Italian, these topics seemed natural to me. When I set foot in Chéticamp, however, new wheels began to spin, and a new window of local folk art opened up. When debating which thesis topic to focus on – folk carving, folk painting, or rug hooking – the turning point for me was the realization that folk carving and folk painting in Nova Scotia have received more scholarly and popular attention than rug hooking. When I began looking deeper, I noticed that most of the popular folk artists, save for a few, were men, while the overwhelming majority of rug hookers, both historical and contemporary, were women. This pushed me to focus on rug hooking because I had a lot of unanswered questions. Were rug hookers not considered artists in the same ways the folk artists were? Was it because rugs were seen as functional objects and not purely artistic? These questions were the impetus for me to research and write a thesis that highlights the creative expression and economic history of women's craft. This thesis is a study in the

vernacular aesthetics of Chéticamp rug hooking, which encompasses design, social interactions, and hierarchies within the community, as well as the cultural and historical contexts surrounding the tradition.

My first foray into the Chéticamp art scene was in the summer of 2009, when my now-husband invited me to Cape Breton to visit with his family and friends. He took me around the island: visiting its lovely beaches, attending its many square dances, and spending time with his family. I had been hearing about Chéticamp for a while before I even saw a glimpse of it. For almost a year I had been regaled with stories about the distinct dialects, scenery, and people that lived there. It was an Acadian fishing village, which, being a natively bilingual Montrealer was quite appealing. There is much about Chéticamp that makes it stand out from the rest of Cape Breton, geographically, culturally, and linguistically. Nestled at the foothills of the Highlands National Park on the West Coast of Cape Breton Island, it has a rocky, sparse tree line, that combined with its brightly coloured wooden clapboard homes, makes the community more reminiscent of a Newfoundland outpost than most Cape Breton towns. Aesthetic uniqueness aside, Chéticamp also stands apart from much of Cape Breton as a French-speaking, Acadian region.

Perhaps because of how much it reminded me of Newfoundland, where I had completed my MA and PhD coursework in Folklore, I immediately felt at home in Chéticamp, in a way that I have never really felt in the rest of Cape Breton. Though I married into a Cape Breton family and my husband is a scholar of Cape Breton musical

traditions, I wear the badge of an outsider. I am a Come-From-Away (a “CFA¹”) who is distinctly lacking in Gaelic-accented English. In addition, my French is very obviously of the Québécois variety, and even my Mediterranean skin tone stands out. In Chéticamp, however, I felt a little more at home, and in fact, my outsider status served me well. Because I was unfamiliar with local crafting traditions, as well as largely not knowledgeable of Chéticamp Acadianness, people were often willing to explore potentially touchy or controversial subjects surrounding issues of tradition and community history with me without worry. Being an outsider also helped when introducing myself to potential older participants, who were often intrigued at the thought of a young CFA interested in the region’s textile traditions and history.

This thesis was also shaped by my employment as Curator of Craft, Design and Popular Culture at the Canadian Museum of History², which has both a large hooked rug collection, as well as impressive archival holdings related to rug hooking across Canada. Unlimited access to these collections, (both the material culture and the archival) meant that my understanding of Canadian rug hooking was deepened in ways it simply could not have been before I began working there. Marius Barbeau, known as the “grandfather” of Canadian folklore studies, worked at the Museum for many years; his archival fonds is a treasure trove, and I was especially fascinated by his correspondences (B244, f.8, B298, f.6, B298, f.8.) concerning the origin of the hooked rug. In addition, the Museum holds a large fonds dedicated to the John Garrett Company of Nova Scotia

¹ While I first learned of the term while living in St. John’s as a graduate student, it is also used in Cape Breton to denote non-locals who live on the island.

² Formerly the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

(B569-B570), the first Canadian company to design and sell commercial rug hooking patterns, as well as correspondence between researcher Dorothy Eber and Chéticamp rug hooker Catherine Poirier in the 1980s (B830/10-16). Furthermore, our artifact holdings include the largest collection of Grenfell hooked mats in North America. Access to these collections helped me to place the Chéticamp rug hooking tradition within its Canadian and North American contexts in unprecedented ways.

Weaving ethnography with archival and collections research, this thesis brings together the many worlds I inhabit as a folklorist, museum curator, and material culture scholar interested in textile traditions. At its core, it is an examination of design, vernacular aesthetics, method and structure in Chéticamp rug hooking, with an eye to placing Chéticamp hooked rugs within several larger contexts: rug hooking in North America, as well as individual and community cultural expression. When I speak of “vernacular aesthetics” I am speaking of the designs, motifs, and structure that are viewed as acceptable by the Chéticamp community. Vernacular aesthetics are locally defined and influenced by an area’s many cultural and historical contexts. In particular, the vernacular aesthetics of Chéticamp rug hooking has been influenced heavily by the cottage industry started by American artist Lillian Burke (1880-1952) who significantly altered the existing rug hook tradition in the area. This thesis borrows from older styles of material culture research that examined objects solely as texts, in addition to the more contextual ethnographic studies of material culture. Additionally, this thesis fills a gap in Cape Breton scholarship by focusing on a minority ethno-linguistic group, handicraft, and women’s work.

I have heard many terms used to describe hooked rugs. In Cape Breton, the preferred term seems to be “hooked rug,” while in mainland Nova Scotia, I have heard both “hooked rug” and “hooked mat” being used. In Quebec the term *tapis crocheté* or *tapis au crochet* is common, and in fact the latter French term is used by Parks Canada in their object classification system for historical collections (Bernard 1997). In Newfoundland, much like mainland Nova Scotia, “hooked mat” is popularly used. In Chéticamp, when speaking English, the most commonly used term is “hooked rug,” and in French *tapis hooké*³ is used, and rug hookers are called *hookeuses*. This is in contrast to Quebec, and in other French speaking areas, rug hookers are known as *crocheteuses*. For this thesis I use the terms hooked rugs, and rug hooking, because they are the terms my participants used to describe themselves and their work.

1.1 Chapter Outlines

This thesis explores Chéticamp rug hooking and its relationships with vernacular aesthetics, commercial patterns, cottage industry, and handicraft. This thesis is divided into five chapters, summarized below. In this chapter I introduce my thesis topic and theoretical frameworks. In addition, I present a methodological discussion of conducting ethnographic research in Chéticamp. I continue by investigating how folklorists have defined, debated, and examined issues surrounding art. I also examine Cape Breton and Acadian folklore in both academic and popular discourse. Cape Breton has been an

³ The H in *hooké* and *hookeuses* is silent.

important field site for academics; however, research about the island has been highly selective in both topic and genre.

Chapter Two: Early Rug-Making Traditions in Chéticamp examines rug hooking through an archival and historical lens. I begin by introducing the techniques and method of rug hooking and discuss early design and structure in hooked rugs. This chapter also introduces my creation of a Motif-index for hooked rugs. After analyzing several hundred rug designs (both commercial patterns and rugs found in museums, archives and catalogues), I created this index as a tool to examine Chéticamp rugs within a larger geographical context that includes other parts of Canada, as well as the East Coast of the United States. The Motif-index also allows for a deeper study and analysis of motifs for comparative analysis of different rug hooking traditions, as well as for structural analysis of specific rugs. I follow by examining rug making in Chéticamp before the start of the cottage industry in the 1920s with an eye to placing them in a larger Maritime rug hooking tradition of the time. Finally, I conclude the chapter by examining how early rugs were evaluated and discussed by folklorist Marius Barbeau and his various colleagues. These archival documents not only reveal the preoccupations of early folklorists about early hooked rugs, but also shine a light on folkloristics during the early 1940s. They offer an important glimpse into what concerned early folklorists when they studied hooked rugs and reveal how this popular handicraft was eventually shuffled away from the academic gaze, relegating rugs as survivals of the past to be bought by private collectors or acquired by Museums.

Continuing this focus on archival and museological collections, in **Chapter**

Three: Rags to Yarn, The Rise of the Cottage Industry I discuss how American artist

Lillian Burke arrived in Chéticamp and transformed the existing rug hooking tradition. Her arrival and the development of a rug hooking cottage industry had long lasting implications for the style of rug hooking in the area. I trace the origins of the rug hooking industry to the present day, focusing on Lillian Burke's original designs, community history, and the role of this craft in everyday life. The Burke designs that have recently been uncovered offer us an important look at what the rugs of the cottage industry looked like. The designs show a deep understanding of various international artistic movements, as well as an aesthetic relationship with the other rug hooking cottage industries of the time, and of the commercial rug hooking patterns being sold in Canada. I also present designs that were being created and sold commercially at the same time as the Chéticamp rug hooking cottage industry (from the 1920s and onwards) through an examination of patterns and rug designs in the archives and collections of the Canadian Museum of History. I focus on the design of these rugs with attention paid to motif and pattern repetition. I conclude the chapter by presenting a new framework defining a Chéticamp style rug.

Chapter Four: Contemporary Rug Hooking in Chéticamp examines social and cultural hierarchies in current Chéticamp rug hooking, as well as contemporary vernacular aesthetics within the community. I build upon the framework created by Emily Urquhart when she studied mat makers in Newfoundland and apply it to a Chéticamp context by looking at how the triad of “Vocational,” “Hobbyist,” and “Fibre Artist” rug hookers works within the Chéticamp rug hooking community. I examine the ways in which each of the categories affects the design aesthetic, and finally present the life and work of four contemporary Chéticamp rug hookers.

In **Chapter Five: Conclusion**, I bring together the major points of my research and summarize the main findings of this project. Further I focus on potential new directions for this research that fell outside the parameters of this thesis but nonetheless are worthy of further scholarly considerations. As well, I discuss future possible public-sector projects, including potential exhibitions, that may come out of it.

1.2 Research Methodology

This thesis is based on ethnographic and archival research methods. I coupled participant observation, as well as audio-recorded formal interviews, with archival and collections-based research conducted at both the Canadian Museum of History and the Beaton Institute at Cape Breton University. I interviewed ten rug hookers, folk artists, and gallery owners, along with Canadian rug hooking specialists; furthermore, I spoke informally with approximately twenty people on the topic. I interviewed some participants multiple times over the course of several years because I was focused on depth rather than breadth. These interviews were conducted during fieldwork trips ranging from one week to several months between 2011 and 2017. I spent time in Chéticamp, observing and documenting the community in the summer months when tourist season was in full swing, and also by sitting near many home fireplaces, listening to stories while keeping warm during the slow winter months. I began my fieldwork by interviewing William (Bill) and Linda Roach, the owners of the Sunset Art Gallery in Chéticamp, which sells wood carvings, folk paintings, and hooked rugs by local artists. Bill is a well-known wood carver, and a little-known rug hooker with very strong opinions on rug hooking. Speaking with him about the history of rug hooking in the area

before the cottage industry was set up was invaluable to my understanding of the tradition. My method for finding participants has been called the “snowball technique” – people I had interviewed would recommend another rug hooker, and so it went. Some were interested, while others were not.

Bill and Linda were not only the first people I interviewed in Chéticamp, but also they also became my *de facto* Chéticamp parents – letting me stay with them anytime I was in town, introducing me to local artists, and filling me in on local gossip. They also kept me fed, caffeinated, and entertained by the antics of their cat Lily. Their home is a hub for both locals and tourists alike, while their gallery serves as both an art shop and a café for people to gather, eat, and drink while listening to local musicians. I often would set up shop in their outdoor café area with my laptop and notebook and observe how the community interacted in the space. It was there that I met local artists and interested tourists. Because I am also a hobby musician, I also performed at the café with my husband, trading songs for coffee and croissants. Bill and Linda’s home became an important space for me to discuss the history of rug hooking in the area, as well as to debate and share theories and perspectives on the state of the tradition. My relationship with the Roachs also “legitimized” me in the eyes of the locals; they were able to place me as a member of the extended Roach family. Just the act of sitting in their kitchen and drinking coffee allowed me to meet many Chéticampers who dropped by for a visit and who were often keen (and bemused) to chat about hooking.

My experience as an ethnographer in Chéticamp was markedly different from my Montreal field experiences as a master’s student in 2009 when I was researching how the descendants of Italian immigrants developed and maintained hybrid Italian-Quebec-

Canadian identities. For that research, in many ways, I was studying my own folk group, and could bring much of my personal and familial experiences into my work because my own story was so intertwined as well. With my doctoral work being focused on a craft I did not (at first) practice, as well as in a community I was not a member of, I was positioned differently: initially, I was not as personally invested in the topic (though this changed as my research progressed), and in many ways, it was a welcome shift from examining my own community under an academic microscope. While conducting my fieldwork and writing this thesis, I often recalled my Advanced Ethnography graduate course with Dr. Diane Goldstein and have practiced her advice of finding a balance of having an insider's understanding while offering an outsider's analysis.

When I first began my fieldwork in Chéticamp, I looked to the local institutions which supported rug hooking. The *Co-op Artisanale* was quick to respond to my requests, offering me an interview with their General Manager, Diane, as well as offering to introduce me to their rug hookers. The co-op was a well-known institution and easy to locate. Initially the co-op seemed like a simple way for me to meet potential participants. After I interviewed their general manager, she agreed to send my contact information through their network; however, before that happened, the co-op closed – dealing a hard blow to rug hooking in the area. The loss of the co-op to my research was palpable, and without their institutional support and approval, finding rug hookers to speak with became more challenging. I also tried another institution *Les Trois Pignons*, a museum devoted to rug hooking and the cultural history of Chéticamp, and although I met with the manager, our meeting did not lead to any new interviews. Initially my experiences with both the co-op and *Les Trois Pignons* seemed like setbacks but as they say, doors close

and doors open, and indeed I found my way. I conducted fieldwork in Chéticamp over several years, and developed relationships with artists and local residents during that time.

Although I found my way into the community, and even though Chéticamp is known for rugs, I nevertheless had a difficult time finding rug hookers. Certainly, Chéticamp is no longer teeming with rug hookers as it once was, and I have heard from many rug hookers that they are a dying group. There were not very many rug hookers when I started researching it in 2011 – at that time there were maybe a few dozen rug hookers. When I concluded my fieldwork in 2017, many people I interviewed believed there were only a dozen hookers left. It is hard to know what the exact number of rug hookers in Chéticamp is for several reasons: the social component of rug hooking in Chéticamp is largely absent and hookers generally hook alone at home, there is no rug hooking guild with a membership list in the area, and most hookers do not sign their rugs.

In addition to my ethnographic fieldwork in Chéticamp, I also conducted archival and collections-based research at the Beaton Institute, as well as the archives and artifact collections at the Canadian Museum of History. At the Beaton Institute (Cape Breton University) I examined and analyzed over 100 rug designs by Lillian Burke, the founder of the Chéticamp rug hooking cottage industry. At the Museum's archives, I worked with several large fonds relating to rug hooking including the Marius Barbeau fonds where I found letters and research notes on his theories about the origin of rug hooking, as well as the John Garrett fonds, which contained correspondence, advertisements, patterns and financial records of both John Garrett and the Garrett

Company, which sold popular rug hooking patterns. In addition, I found postcards, notes and interviews conducted with Chéticamp rug hooker Catherine Poirier from the late 1980s. In the Museum's artifact collections, I examined over 600 hooked rugs from across Canada belonging to both rug hooking cottage industries as well as home handicrafts. These archival and collections-based discoveries pushed this thesis into a different path than I had originally envisioned.

While I had initially anticipated that my archival and collections research would supplement my ethnographic research, it became quickly obvious that what I was finding in the archives was unique and rare. Deciding to follow where the data took me, I combined both an archival and collections-based research methodology with my ethnographic research to better understand Chéticamp rugs over time. This thesis is a chronological examination of rug hooking over the course of the 20th century that relies on archival and collections research when discussing older rugs where ethnography was not possible and couples this with an ethnographic approach for contemporary rug hooking in the area. In a larger sense, this thesis also seeks to argue that it is important to study crafting traditions in both their micro and macro contexts because while many of them, such as rug hooking, have highly local and distinct variants, it is only in examining them in larger contexts that we can begin to see the fuller picture of the tradition.

1.2.1 Meet the Rug Hookers

Yvette Muise, who was born and raised in Chéticamp, was taught how to hook as a small child by her mother, who was also a rug hooker. She quickly fell in love with it

and began rug hooking professionally at 15 years-old. After moving away to live in Montreal for several decades, she moved back to Chéticamp in 2011, buying the home she was born in. Yvette's detailed and complex rugs, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 4, have allowed her to become known within the larger rug hooking community in the Maritimes. My relationship with Yvette has transcended this thesis, and over the past seven years we have become friends. Every time I am in Chéticamp, I drive up her steep gravel driveway for a visit and to catch up on the rugs she is working on. It is often the highlight of my trip

Lola LeLièvre owns and operates Jean's Gift Shop (recently re-named Lola's Rugs) and lives on Chéticamp Island, a small island that faces downtown Chéticamp and is accessible by a long, narrow causeway. She learned to hook as a teenager with her mother, so the family would be able to make a living. I interviewed her along with her sister-in-law, Yvette LeLièvre, whose mother had been a well-known rug hooker but who no longer hooks due to ill health and dementia. Yvette's mother was one of very few women who practiced raised rug hooking, in which certain motifs in the rug were hooked in a higher pile and then carved into three dimensions with specific scissors. Lola's Rugs is one of a few shops in Chéticamp that sells hooked rugs, but it is the only shop which exclusively sells locally-made hooked rugs.

Annie Mae Camus, born in 1945, started rug hooking when she was around seven years old with her mother. She described her whole family, including her uncle who lived in their home, as having hooked together in order to shore up the family's finances. She moved to Toronto as an adult and only returned to Chéticamp when she and her husband William retired in 2007. While in Toronto, she rarely hooked, but began again after

moving to Chéticamp. She sells her rugs now at *Le P'tit Chady*, the local general store owned by her daughter, and gives them away as gifts to family and friends.

Bill (William) Roach is a folk artist and painter whose wife Linda owns and operates the Sunset Art Gallery in Chéticamp. When he was a child he learned to hook, carve and draw. His mother created art out of driftwood and sold her hooked rugs as a side income. His father was a bootlegger for most of Bill's younger years. At 17 he left Chéticamp and moved to London, Ontario, where he worked a series of physically demanding, but low-paying jobs. After he married Linda in 1974 and they moved back to Chéticamp, he began carving and painting again as a way to cope with a lifelong struggle with alcohol addiction. In 1990, Bill and Linda opened the Sunset Gallery, selling local and handmade carvings, paintings, hooked rugs and small gifts.

1.3 Theoretical Frameworks

With the hooked rug as my focus, this thesis is at the intersection of Cape Breton folklife, as well as issues surrounding the concepts of craft, art, and women's work.

Since this thesis is both ethnographic and a structural material culture study, I use several theoretical frameworks, largely structuralist, to study the rugs themselves and I also employ a feminist lens for my ethnographic approach. In many ways, I was loosely inspired by the approaches of Formalism, specifically Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968) when examining design in rug hooking. Morphology, the study of the component parts of a larger whole, can be applied to sciences such as botany, humanities and social sciences, such as the study of folktales, and material culture pieces such as rugs. While Propp deconstructs folktales into categories and themes, I examine

rugs with an eye to structure (categories), and motif (themes). We can define a hooked rug as the aggregate of sets of motifs and structures not unlike the way we discuss a folktale as a sequence of motifs. In this way, I examined several hundred rugs and rug patterns to ascertain both the various structures found in hooked rugs, as well as the diverse types of motifs being used by rug hookers when creating their rugs.

My study of design and motif in rug hooking is inherently formalist-structuralist in approach. After studying patterns and hand drawn rugs, I developed a motif-index for hooked rugs that identifies the most widely used motifs in rug hooking. By breaking down rug design into motifs, I argue that, while rug hooking traditions in Canada vary – be they commercial ventures, cottage industries, or home crafts-the motifs employed by rug hookers are largely stable. Rug hookers work within familiar patterns, creatively selecting from a range of widely-used possibilities. The rugs they create fit both their personal and creative tastes, as well as those of their wider rug hooking community. Simply put, I am discussing the “grammar” of hooked rugs. Rug hookers work within sets of implicitly recognized rules and structures (even if these are not expressly articulated). In many ways this echoes (in a craft context) what scholars of epic poetry such as Albert Lord and Parry Milman have said about traditional performers implicitly storing a pool of song and poem formulas that they could mix and match during performances (Lord 1960; Parry 1930).

Within this larger structuralist approach to material culture, I look at the varying ways in which we can tease out contexts from material artifacts such as rugs; Henry Glassie discusses this in terms of “master classes of context” (Glassie 1999), which are simply three different ways we can approach material culture. His focus on the triunal

contexts of creation, communication, and consumption as methods of analysis are highly useful when examining handmade material handicrafts such as hooked rugs. When we consider material culture objects, specifically handmade objects, we first look to the object (the text), focusing on composition, design, and technique. By putting the objects in connection and in comparative association with others, we begin to see meaning. Text and context, form, and structure are all linked to meaning and function.

My research is also informed by ethnographic studies of gender (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Mills 1993; Kousaleos 1999). They have been beneficial lenses for me to when studying crafting traditions. Specifically, my research has been shaped by works on the role of women in vernacular settings such as Diane Tye's *Baking as Biography* (2010), Kayla Carroll's study of women's housework in Newfoundland (2015), as well as Elaine Lawless' work on feminist reciprocal ethnography (1991; 2000). Feminists have argued that while gender is an important category of experience (Babcock 1987), feminist folkloristics creates a space for the study of women's lives without claiming a universal female culture.

When it came to considering this thesis through a feminist lens, I thought of Glassie's words in *Material Culture* (1999). He asks us to reorder what is considered significant to study. When we use and apply Western notions of art, largely examining media such as sculpture and painting, our focus has been such that we have largely been studying men's art. By categorizing art in terms of utility versus function (i.e.: art is aesthetic while craft is functional) we have been privileging art that is judged only on aesthetic value. I carried this with me as I began writing this thesis, keeping in mind that

popular notions of art exclude most rug hookers in much the same way that notions of history still largely omit many peoples' experiences.

The story of Chéticamp rug hooking is in almost all ways a story of women – one steeped in women's artistic expression, economic struggles, and local identity. Folklorist Claire Farrer (1975) argued that while women's genres have been downplayed by our discipline, the women's genres being studied were based on cultural expectations of women as domestic and nurturing. In Chéticamp, rug hooking was an important way in which women contributed financially to their households. As we have seen in the works of scholars such as Teri Klassen (2009) and Talena Atfield (2016) handicraft can play a significant role in how female practitioners identity themselves and their communities. This is especially true when talking about handicrafts by women from minority groups, such as indigenous women and splint basketry (Atfield), and African-American women and quilting (Klassen). Atfield argues that the motifs woven into splint baskets sold to non-Indigenous tourists by Haudenosaunee women were a form of resistance to colonialism; a way for women to weave their community's stories and narratives into products largely being consumed by settler communities. Klassen instead looks at the evolving role African-American quilt making has had, noting that it was not until the late 20th century that African American quilts were seen as valuable forms of expressive culture and that the increasingly visible discourses surrounding African-American quilts paved the way for their eventual acceptance into mainstream quilt making traditions. (Klassen 2009, 328).

Finally, I found a strong association between rug hooking and Peter Narváez's concept of the folk-pop culture continuum (Narváez and Laba 1986). Rug hooking in

Canada has been a blending of folk culture, popular culture, and “high” culture, both in terms of transmission and aesthetics. Folk designs that had been present in other textile traditions or that were used vernacularly blend with designs and styles that were learned through commercial rug hooking patterns sold in department stores and popular magazines, as well as with aesthetics that were appropriated from European “high” art traditions. In return, many commercially-sold patterns also borrowed from vernacular designs when creating and mass marketing their patterns, with both folk and pop culture aspects in a reciprocal relationship.

1.4 Studies on Hooked Rugs

A thesis about rug hooking is also a study of material culture and craft, subjects that folklorists have a long history with. This thesis builds on the few folkloristic studies on hooked rugs, notably the works of Marius Barbeau (1942), Emily Urquhart (2008), Gerald Pocius (1979), and Lynn Marie MacDonald (1988). In Barbeau’s case, while I was sifting through his personal fonds at the Museum after reading his article on the origin of the hooked rug (1942), I came across several pages of handwritten notes detailing motifs that appeared on hooked rugs that he was either acquiring for the Museum’s collections, or rugs that he was coming across in his fieldwork. While this small stack of handwritten notes did not make it into any larger published works, it nonetheless inspired me to continue detailing motifs in the hooked rugs I was coming across in my field and archival research. This is what formed the basic idea for the motif-index I later developed for this thesis. Although Barbeau was only interested in

documenting French-Canadian rugs, I enlarged my scope to include both Canadian and American rug designs.

In terms of previous works on hooked rugs, Chéticamp is a bit of an outlier. Lynn Marie MacDonald's work on hooked mats in Nova Scotia (1988) focuses on hooking guilds and personal aesthetics; however, the social context of hooking is drastically different in Chéticamp due to the close and important relationship between rugs and economics. Pocius's 1979 article about rug design and social structure in Newfoundland offered an intriguing framework for my discussion on vernacular aesthetics in Chéticamp. He argues that there are two major rug design styles for hookers to choose from – one is an older style based on repetitive geometric patterns, while the other is more inventive and based outside the community's repertoire, whether that be from commercial patterns or original compositions (Pocius 1979, 274).

He extends his argument to include both the function of rugs within the home as well as to Newfoundland society as a whole, arguing that the older repeating rug styles were found in the informal kitchen space and reflected an egalitarian social structure, while the more innovative rugs were found in the formal parlour, and represented the hierarchical aspects of Newfoundland society (278). This framework interested me in terms of how it could be applied to rug design and social structure in Chéticamp. While Pocius' thoughts on rug design were useful, Chéticamp rug hooking's distinct history means that the social structures Pocius discusses relating to how different styles of rugs are spatially placed within the home do not apply. The older, geometric patterned rugs are largely non-existent in Chéticamp, with the rug tradition having been significantly altered at the hands of Lillian Burke while she developed her cottage industry. The role

and status of rugs in Chéticamp also means that, in all the Chéticamp homes I have entered over the past nine years, I have never seen a hooked rug on the floor. I found that the framework of social hierarchies developed by Emily Urquhart (2008) was useful and applicable in the Chéticamp context today because it allowed me to investigate contemporary rug hooking through a social context and build upon it by including a discussion of design and aesthetics. Her work will be addressed and developed in Chapter 4.

1.5 You Can't Spell Craft, Without A R T (Art!)

Gerald Pocius, in his discussion of the historic and contemporary concept of art, notes that art, much like folklore, is a contentious topic for scholars since it has both academic and popular definitions that are not necessarily complementary. Within the popular mindset, art is most often “subtly associated with class, or money, or a particular historical period, and perhaps with categories of writing, performances or objects (1995, 413). These popular labels create firmly rooted cultural stereotypes around the popular concept of art. As folklorists, however, art is central to our understanding of a particular culture; we view it as something that is both a universal phenomenon and culturally specific (Pocius 1995, 414). If we broadened our definition of art to include more vernacular concepts of creation, a few questions arise: Who is an artist? What nomenclature do we use to describe everyday objects with artistic values? Art, especially within folklore and material culture, brings with it specific nomenclature associated with vernacular and everyday art. After examining how folklorists have grappled with these concepts, how in turn can they be applied in my study of Chéticamp rug hooking?

“Craft is a word to start an argument with,” writes archaeologist Alexander Landlands in his popular 2017 book *Cræft*. Indeed, the ways in which folklorists have debated concepts such as folk art, craft and art mirror in many ways, the conversations rug hookers in Chéticamp have about these same concepts. So, while I discuss the academic discussions surrounding these concepts in this chapter, a greater discussion of art and craft *in situ* occurs in Chapter 4. In his book, *The Spirit of Folk Art* (1989), Glassie explains that “folk art and fine art can be separated by characteristic tendencies, but in this way they are the same: both are created by people who have mastered traditions” (1989, 84). This underscores the importance of skill and mastery in the creation of art. One of the foundational aspects of art is therefore skilled behavior (Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin 1987). While Glassie may argue for their similarities, let us examine terms such as “folk art,” “craft,” “traditional arts” and “artifacts” by looking at their uses within material culture studies. I have tended to use the terms art, craft and traditional art interchangeably in my hooked rug research and in my museum work because I want to work toward breaking down the silos that exists amongst these definitions. As well, I wanted to work to dismantle the pejorative undertones that have long plagued words such as craft and traditional arts while they have simultaneously worked to uphold the hegemony and perceived superiority of art.

The problems associated with such qualifiers are found in the introduction to the book *Plain Painters* (1988), where John Vlach discusses the difficulties in the historical definition of folk art and the challenges that come from folk art being described in increasingly contradictory terms; unsophisticated and skilled, equal to fine art but also an artistic regression, virtuosic but flawed. To side-step the issue of folk art (or in his case,

folk paintings), Vlach instead chooses to utilize the term “plain painting,” which was not yet burdened with the pejorative undertone found in many of the art-based terminologies that have plagued terms like folk art and handicraft.

This discussion speaks to the opposition between folk and fine art that permeates our discussion of art. When we utilize a qualifier in front of the word art, be it folk, traditional, primitive, or otherwise, we are creating a distinction between two categories; one is seen as quaint and rustic while the other as polished and intellectual. This distinction of taste is discussed at length by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and is seen as being based largely on issues of hegemony, social class and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). On the other hand, Willard Moore sees this as an issue that is less polarized. He puts forth the argument that there has always been an interpenetration of folk and fine arts with each category freely borrowing from the other, making the distinction between the two difficult and inadequate. He notes that the interweaving has centered on the manipulation of form, function and meaning (1999, 73).

The term “tourist art” has been used in recent decades to discuss and subsequently dismiss art styles sold to tourists. Roger Mitchell points out that the term is “often used pejoratively to connote the inauthentic and inferior arts that comes to replace the traditional ones” (1989, 321). Nelson Graburn’s book, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts* (1976) focuses specifically on art forms and their relationship to commercialization and commodification in developing countries. He is concerned with the implication that so called “tourist art” is unimportant. He notes that within minority ethnic groups arts are “made for and used by peoples within their own groups and have important functions in maintaining group identity and social structure” (Graburn 1976, 4). When we speak of

rug hooking, especially within a Chéticamp context, selling to tourists and outsiders has long been part of the tradition and in fact, has been a continuing factor in the rugs' success and longevity. Indeed, while the rugs are largely made for the consumption of outsiders, this does not preclude them from being meaningful markers and symbols of group, community and individual identities.

Culture is dynamic and the aspects of culture that change over time will continue to find new functions even through through these contemporary art forms, those who participate are maintaining contact with their past history, culture, and identity (Mitchell 1989, 322). As such, if traditional art forms become divorced from their original function, we should not dismiss them as invalid and unworthy of study. These works, along with Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (1982) are part of an important trend in studying art that is concerned with the commodification and consumption of art. This raises the issue of whether or not an object or tradition can ever be truly de-contextualised or simply always re-contextualised. It is true that tourist art is not the same as "authentic," vernacular forms of art. It is different and speaks to many different issues; financial concerns, local perceptions of tourists and assumptions about taste (Jones 1972) and aesthetics (Jones 1971). Michael Owen Jones, in his 1995 Archer Taylor Memorial Lecture entitled "Why Make (Folk) Art," explains that folk art creations often suggest history, and that "we label them 'folk' or 'traditional' because they are based on models from the past or evince continuities in ideas, attitudes and beliefs through time" (1995, 260).

While initially these early discussions of art and material culture may seem to be overly broad, as these ideas have developed over time, an explicit framing of some of sub-categories of material culture have grown into implicit discussions of art. By

discussing the various definitions of art I am implicitly engaging in such a definition by who and what I choose to include and exclude from my discussion. I prefer a broad definition of art; it is a product or behavior that requires skill and is associated with personal aesthetics and taste. In many ways, rug hooking in Chéticamp is a folk art, based on models from its past. However, it is also a craft, a utilitarian object infused with aesthetic expression, knowledge and skilled behavior. Inarguable, rug hooking in Chéticamp can also be viewed as tourist art as well, communicating meaning to both the insiders that create them and to the outsiders who consume them.

1.5.1 The Folk Art-Craft-Art Continuum

When discussing what constitutes folk art, craft, and high art, I have found an emphasis on both transmission method and function. The differences between folk art, craft, and high art, broadly understood, are that folk art relies on a lack of formal, institutional education while high art relies on the opposite. In terms of function, high art is understood to have a largely aesthetic function, while craft vacillates between utilitarian and aesthetic. There is a further distinction between what is sometimes called handicraft and fine craft: handicraft being viewed as craft that is learned in informal setting while fine craft is learned through institutional channels. When thinking about Chéticamp rug hooking and what it tells us about the craft-art continuum, I envisioned a discussion that considers both transmission and function, and thus developed the matrix below (see figure 1.1.2) to help visualize the concept of this continuum.

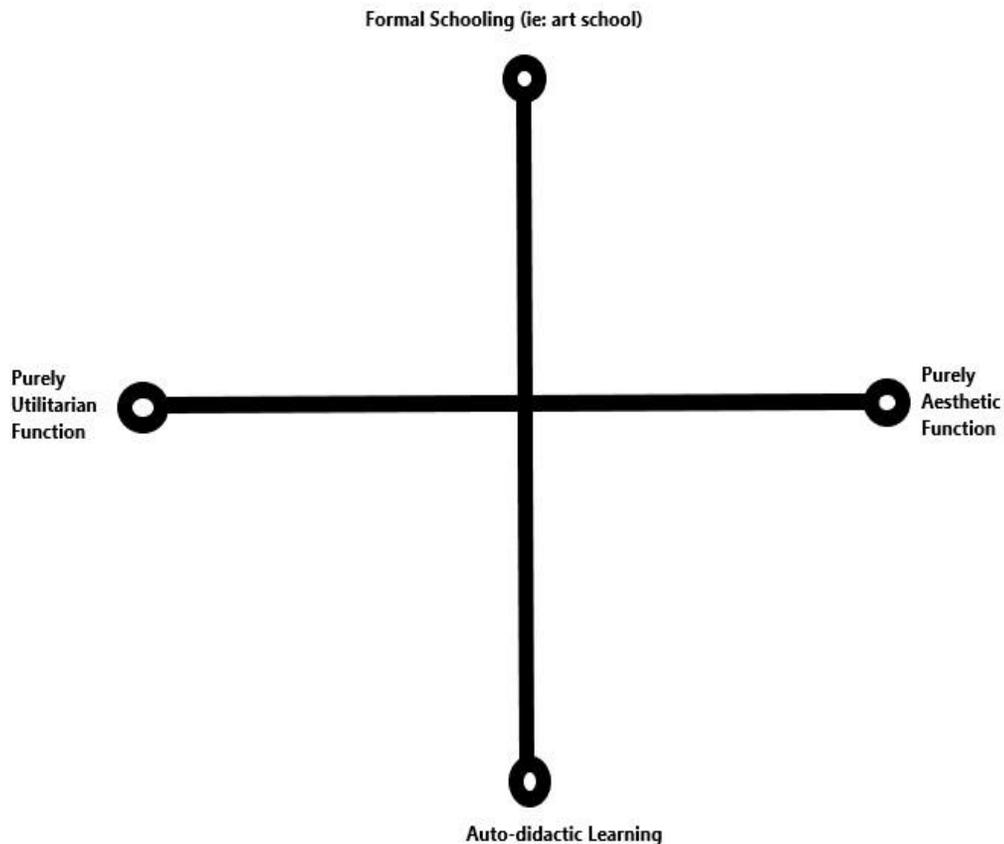


Figure 1.1.2: Matrix depicting both transmission and function in folk art-craft-art continuum (graph by author 2018).

I believe conceptualizing the various artistic practices in this visual way helps highlight the idea that neither folk art, nor craft, nor high art, is as removed from the other as is often believed. The transmission continuum creates a large space between formal, institutional schooling such as art school, and between auto-didactic learning. Popularly, folk art is understood as art that is created by those who have no formal schooling in art; however, completely auto-didactic folk artists are not the majority, as many learn in informal settings or through apprenticeships. Folk art is not devoid of formal schooling either. An example of this would be the St-Jean-Port-Joli movement of folk art in

Quebec. Médard Bourgault, a fisherman and carver began a studio with his brothers Jean-Julien, and André and began teaching their unique style of folk carving to others. Their studio school also received funding from the Quebec government. Conversely, Vincent Van Gogh, though he did undertake some apprenticeships, was also largely self-taught but is never discussed in terms of folk art.

When it comes to Chéticamp rug hooking, it occupies a similarly nuanced place in this multi-planed matrix Chéticamp rug hookers have historically learned through informal settings, taught by their mothers or other community members. However, Chéticamp rugs, though they are still called rugs, have largely lost their utilitarian function and are sold as wall or table coverings. If I populate the matrix (see figure 1.1.3), Chéticamp rug hooking, based on methods of transmission and function, is a folk art. However, you will notice that I rarely use the term folk art to describe Chéticamp rugs. This is because in Chéticamp, the term folk art is locally used to describe wood carvings, thus it would be inappropriate in this context. Since my participants used the terms art, craft and handicraft to describe their rugs, these are the terms I choose to use as well.

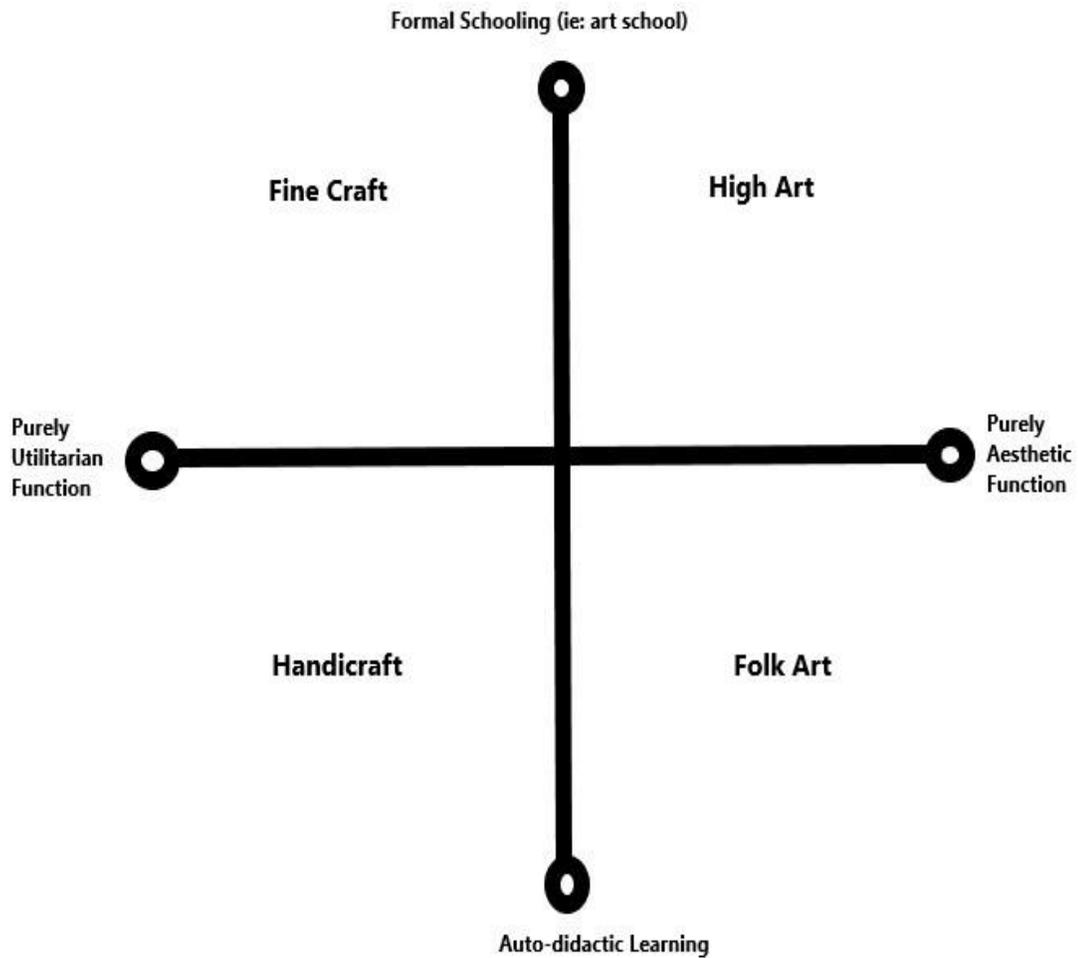


Figure 1.1.3: Folk Art-Craft-Art matrix populated (graph by author 2018).

1.6 Stepping into Material Culture

This thesis is inspired by several types of material culture studies. I have combined structural analysis with ethnography to better understand design and aesthetics in Chéticamp rug hooking. Earlier material culture studies, such as Glassie’s *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (1976) and Deetz’s *In Small Things Forgotten* (1977) were

focused on the art objects themselves, describing and analyzing them as text. Glassie's *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* is based on the collected data of 383 buildings in Louisa and Goochland counties in Virginia and is focused on the fact that old homes represent not only the architecture of past buildings but also of past thoughts. This work was an early lightbulb moment for me when I began thinking about hooked rugs and the possibility of using structuralism in this thesis. While his book developed a scheme of mathematical descriptors for housing patterns, not unlike the mathematical descriptors developed by Propp when discussing folk tales, I decided to stay away from such overtly mathematical systems of typology because I largely found that the excessively technical language and typology did not apply outside of a vernacular architecture context.

Glassie explains that this book is a structural analysis of homes because, as he argues it, structuralist methods allow the researcher to situate an unanticipated amount of information in unobtrusive objects that exist free from their context (1976, 41). What Glassie is advocating here is the reading of objects as texts, meaning they act as direct sources for explaining behavior, thought and culture. He repeatedly asserts that the object is the text and thus, his work tends to focus on objects as wordless language. For Glassie, the object, or artifact is as important to a person as language and that artifacts bring forth feelings, thoughts, and experiences that language cannot communicate (Glassie 1999, 46). The first context Glassie discusses is the particularist context, which is the observable setting of an expression of culture. This means that the objects being studied (the homes) need to be considered as part of the farm surrounding it, the community which surrounds the farm, and the landscape which surrounds the community until the "universe gathers its own into order" (Glassie 1976, 114). The second context, the

abstracted context, as its name would imply, is more conceptual. This context uses portions of the particularist context while including unobservable settings that affect design. This would include relating the object being composed in the “designing mind to the maker’s view of himself and to human, natural and supernatural forces that exist beyond him... The structure of the abstracted context is internal, in mind, but it binds the objects to such external variables as the materials available in nature or the expectations of the maker’s group” (Glassie 1976, 116). Glassie is hinting at the importance of context without fully realizing its potential. He laments that the abstracted context is rarely attempted by scholars, even though it is more easily described than the particularist context. In his more recent works, Glassie has embraced the shift in material culture studies towards more contextualist, ethnographically-based research (which will be discussed later in this chapter); however, I believe his earlier works are excellent examples of the historical, text-based research that used to dominate material culture studies. While there are several strengths to textual studies of material culture, the study of objects without the presence of ethnography, of people, especially in contemporary contexts means that potential layers of added contexts, meaning and knowledge are excluded from the analysis. This is a weakness that this thesis seeks to address by coupling textual research and ethnography.

Although these studies provide a blueprint for how to examine vernacular material objects, they can lack the social and cultural context provided by ethnography. Michael Owen Jones’ book *The Hand Made Object and Its Maker* (1975), shows a shift beginning to take place within the study of material culture from text to context, from history to ethnography. This book was a departure from the other art-based studies of its time

because it focused not only on the objects but also on the lives of the artists. He argues that the dichotomies of art versus folk art and artist versus craftsman are simply “value judgments generated by the investigator to help him describe which producer he personally thinks is more imaginative or innovative than another” (Jones 1975, 203). These dichotomies are most often based on the idea that art is relegated to certain media serving an aesthetic purpose. Jones is not simply suggesting that art forms with utilitarian functions are the exclusive realm of folk art; most art, Jones believes, serves multiple intentions, both aesthetic and utilitarian, though this fact is sometimes ignored and neglected in the study of more vernacular art forms (1975, 203). Jones advocates that the study of material culture be based around the study of objects, their makers and those who use them.

This book, which chronicle the work of chairmaker Chester Cornett (called “Charley” in the *Hand Made Object*) hold as its thesis that “chairs owe their traits and features to the tools, materials and techniques used in construction; to designs learned from other chairmakers, to preferences and expectation of customers” (Jones 1989, 11). These books point to Jones’ argument that individuals play a central role in cultural matters and that everyday objects are imbued with aesthetic and artistic qualities. What first struck me about *The Hand Made Object* was the fact that it is written in handwritten script. This form, though difficult to follow at times (especially when my eyes were tired from reading all day) was a deliberate and involved way to possibly emphasize the ethnographic aspect of the book by recalling the appearance of a field notebook. What stood out most for me, however, was Jones’ willingness to allow Chester and the other chairmakers to speak for themselves and to present their art to the readers through their

worldviews while resisting the need to sugar coat Chester's life, personality and struggles. In this way Chester is portrayed as a whole person – artistic, visionary, abusive and unhappy. *Craftsmen of the Cumberlands* is one of the most intriguing, evocative and disturbing ethnographies to come out of material culture studies. By looking at the context in which Chester creates art; through his poverty, family struggles, his deliberate mountain-man appearance and his impulsive but brilliant thought process, Jones gains insight and access to a deeper understanding of Chester's chairs. This speaks to some of the strengths of a context-based approach, as it does not leave much to conjecture, assumptions and speculation. I have used his work as a model for my ethnographic research in Chéticamp, looking not only at design in contemporary rug hooking, but also the social, and economic struggles rug hookers face.

More recently, Gerald Pocius has written about the concept of belonging within the cultural and material landscape of Calvert, Newfoundland. Pocius notes that, “belonging in Calvert, I finally realized, means maintaining a series of spaces that are created again and again in certain ways, and are filled with the appropriate objects for specific kinds of behaviors” (2007, 25). In their use of space, the people of Calvert undoubtedly express artistic behaviors. They use their homes and the spaces within their houses to enhance community expression. As Pocius explains, “people in Calvert ultimately have found ways to avoid the constraints of the housing forms with which they come in contact: they still do not use front doors, they change the standard locations of the walls, and they make careful choices from the myriad of plans available to them” (2007, 225). The yard, for example, becomes an instrument for personal history and commentary; objects are often placed in the yard to signify a close connection, or a

personal memory. What the Calvert community shows is that through objects, behavior and space, small communities can co-exist with modernity without the wholesale loss of individual artistic expression.

Pocius' contribution to the study of the connection between space, community and material culture notwithstanding, I felt that he could have more thoroughly addressed gender in this book. While Pocius frames it as a study of the town of Calvert, it is largely a study of male spaces in Calvert. He devotes a chapter to landscape and gender; however, most of the book is then devoted to spaces and landscapes he assesses to be dominated by men in the community. When discussing gender, I was notably left with a sense of questioning where the women were. What does their knowledge offer the community? This was a feeling I had several times reading through the seminal folkloristic works on material culture.

Pravina Shukla's several works on body art, dress, and costuming in India extends the concept of art to include arts of the body, as well as material art as performance art (2008). Her focus on the performance of body art and textiles highlight the individual in the "social moment of creativity. Creation is understood by attending at once to individuals and their circumstances, looping standards and acts of desire with the forces of consumption and social response" (Shukla 2008, 386). Shukla's work is a study of both object and creator; she recognizes that in order to study the creative act, we must focus our attention on both the object (form, technology and processes) and contexts of production, creation (2008, 386) and consumption (2008, 164). Her study of the creation, communication and consumption of saris in India was particularly insightful as it discussed both gender, power and artistic impulse. Her focus on the role of consumers

and their impact (or lack thereof) on the textile artists, as well as her questioning of who in fact holds the power of creation, offered a nuanced perspective on topics that I had not considered. As such, I began thinking about Chéticamp rug hooking in new ways and brought these questions into my research as well.

The concept of space is taken up by Richard MacKinnon in his work on company housing in Cape Breton. When Sydney, Nova Scotia, quickly industrialized in the 19th century, and became home to a large steel industry, small, innocuous company-built housing sprang up for employees. The homes themselves were bland and unremarkable; however, the residents found ways in which to personalize and transform the space over time (MacKinnon 2009, 118). While changes on the exteriors of these homes seem to have taken place after the company sold them to private homeowners, the interiors were a space for the creation and assertion of individuality. The front room (the parlour) was often used for very different purposes than the standard Victorian-era parlour. It was sometimes used as a storage room of sorts, and other times as a spare bedroom. This was a far cry from the genteel notion of the front parlour as the room housing the home's most beautiful furniture and artifacts. Another way the residents displayed their creativity was in the living room where they often showcased family photographs and pictures of their hometowns.

The context of rug hooking deals with space, albeit in a different way than Pocius and MacKinnon discuss. Whether hooked with strips of rags or fine wool yarn, from a purchased pattern or self-designed, the space occupied by hooked rugs communicates meaning and value. I am not just talking about floor (utilitarian) or the home wall (aesthetic), but also the gallery space, where rugs are mounted, displayed, and sold as

“high” art pieces, looking to distinguish them through taste and perceptions of class (Bourdieu 1984).

1.7 Chéticamp, the (Acadian) Rug-Hooking Capital of the World

Chéticamp, a French-speaking Acadian fishing village, is located on the West Coast of Cape Breton Island. It is not my intent to write a comprehensive history of Chéticamp here, but simply to place the area in its appropriate historical context⁴. Robert Morgan notes that Chéticamp played an important role in the French economy as a land base for the cod fishery until the fall of Louisbourg in 1758 (Morgan 2008, 108). Though there is no record of permanent settlement in the area before 1782, it is believed to have been a popular temporary fishing station for both European and Mi'kmaq peoples. The first European families to live in Chéticamp were two Acadian fishing families that appear in the historical records in 1782 (Morgan 2008, 83). By 1790, Acadian families, totaling 26, from Prince Edward Island and St. Pierre and Miquelon, were living and fishing in the area. After the *Grand Derangement*⁵ and the subsequent return of Acadian families to the Maritimes, many were encouraged to settle in areas such as Chéticamp after having spent nearly a decade in exile.

That Chéticamp was first settled as a fishing station is not surprising. Its rocky and mountainous soil indicate that agriculture could never be the main industry in the area. The fishing industry in Chéticamp was largely controlled, not by local fisherman,

⁴ For a more detailed look at Chéticamp's history within the wider Cape Breton story, please see: Robert Morgan, *Rise Again!: The Story of Cape Breton Island* (Sydney; Breton Books, 2008)

⁵ The Expulsion of the Acadians from 1755–1764. This was the removal by the British of Acadians from what are the current provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island.

but by “the Jerseys,” the Charles Robin Company (Morgan 2008, 108). The Jerseys, or “Jerseymen,” were thus called because of their close connection to the Channel Island of Jersey. The Jerseys, of the Charles Robin Company protected their business interests in the local fishing industry (Ross 1992, 104). They had a near-complete monopoly on every aspect of the fishing industry in the area: boats, and fishing equipment belonged to them and fishermen were not paid a monetized salary. Rather, they were paid in supplies or credit at the company store. It is perhaps because of the history of this type of exploitative business practice that the cooperative movement (also called the Antigonish Movement) took a very strong hold in Chéticamp in the first decades of the 20th century (Neal 1998, 112). The Catholic Church and Catholic clergy were major proponents of the cooperative movement in Cape Breton. The idea was to remove the exploiters and empower the workers to essentially own the industry in which they worked. This would in turn ensure that fair wages and safe working conditions became the norm. Though the cooperative movement began with the fishing industry in Chéticamp, it later played a role in the rug hooking cottage industry. The cooperative movement changed the landscape of Chéticamp business practices and offered fishermen, farmers and eventually rug hookers, a way to safeguard against what was deemed unfair and exploitative business models, and to assert some control over their respective industries (Neal 1998, 117).

Chéticamp is a largely Acadian place; road signs announce it as the Acadian region of Chéticamp, so while rug hooking is not an Acadian specific tradition, in Chéticamp rug hooking enjoys a close connection to the local Acadian identity. There remains a gap in the literature regarding Acadian folkloristics of the island. One of the

few examples is Elizabeth Beaton-Planetta's work on sorcery beliefs in Chéticamp. Through local oral traditions, Beaton-Planetta examines the link between information about *sorcerie* and the historical values of the community (1980, 159). In her discussion of sorcery beliefs, Beaton-Planetta discovers that all of the *Chéticantins* (Chéticampers) who were accused of practicing sorcery embodied characteristics that the community disapproved of. She writes that it was through allegations of sorcery that *Chéticantins* defined their feelings towards those who did not conform to the Chéticamp way of life and were considered outsiders and outcasts. While I did not come across any sorcery beliefs during my fieldwork, a few of my participants march to the beat of their own drum and expressed sadness at having been treated as outsiders because they did not conform to the behaviors and beliefs that were considered acceptable for community members. In a sense, the Acadians in Chéticamp are also left out as being non-Scots on an island which prides itself on its Scottishness.

From a broader Acadian perspective, folklorists (Labelle 2008; Arsenault 2004; Leblanc 1993) have written about Acadian dance, belief, and narrative traditions in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Ronald Labelle's work (2008) on witchcraft beliefs among Acadian, anglophone, and Indigenous communities in the Maritimes and Newfoundland offer a comparative lens on supernatural beliefs of three distinct cultural groups. He demonstrates that since first contact there have been traditions of distrust and suspicion between those communities which were sometimes manifested in the belief that each possessed malevolent supernatural powers (Labelle 2008, 148).

Of course, there are many popular publications that focus on Acadian heritage and folklore in both Cape Breton and Nova Scotia. *Acadian Lives*, by Ronald Caplan

(2004) is such an example. It is a community book, compiled by the former editor of *Cape Breton Magazine*, mostly from pieces previously published in earlier issues of the magazine. It features short articles on 22 Acadian men and women from around Cape Breton Island. Popular sources such as these were important to me at the beginning of my research as they offered me insight into how the communities in question view themselves and their history. While they are not academic sources, they were nevertheless important to read and absorb because these were the books being read, sold and disseminated in Cape Breton gift shops and as such, I thought it was necessary to be familiar with them.

Many times, over the course of my fieldwork, after I approached a rug hooker for an interview, I was asked if I had read “the Père Anselme book” because “everything was in there already.” While I am slightly paraphrasing here, this was the general first response to all of my inquiries into rug hooking. This book has really played into how people understand rug hooking within Chéticamp. It is a popular book, and many people own it. What is popularly known and shared about rug hooking in Chéticamp seems to stem from Chiasson’s 1986 book, *The Story of the Hooked Rugs of Chéticamp and their Artisans*. The author, Père Anselme Chiasson, a priest and teacher, was a lay expert in Acadian history and culture in the Maritimes. Though born in Chéticamp, he spent most of his adult life in New Brunswick. Forever fascinated by his Acadian heritage, he is often described as having traveled across the Maritimes, recorder in hand, to document the stories, songs and music of Acadian communities in eastern Canada from New Brunswick, to Chéticamp, and into the Magdalen Islands (Labelle 2004). In addition to his many books on Acadian cultural practices, he wrote two books on Chéticamp: one, a

local history of Chéticamp and the other a community history of rug hooking in the area (Chiasson 1986). His rug hooking book is held up in Chéticamp as the single most important work written on the tradition. In many ways, it is, as there has been little scholarly attention paid to Chéticamp rugs until recently (Langille 2012; Langille 2015).

The book is found in many homes in Chéticamp and is sold in tourist shops across Nova Scotia. It presents a specific view on the tradition and has no doubt played an important role in the ways in which the tradition has been remembered and memorialised. Because of Chiasson's celebrity as a historian and amateur folklorist, his book on rug hooking is viewed locally as an academic and learned book, with all of the authority implied in such a publication. However, the book contains no bibliography or citations, and while it is structured as though he interviewed many local rug hookers, there is no list of interviews conducted. Chiasson focused the book mostly on the rise of the Chéticamp rug hooking cottage industry, which took place in the early mid-20th century. Most of the women who were active during the years of the cottage industry have died or are elderly, meaning that the history and experience of the cottage industry has become more and more centered around Chiasson's book. With many rug hookers quoting the book and viewing it as the last word on the history of Chéticamp rugs, there was a challenge in acknowledging a flawed book without being somehow critical of my participants. In the end, I chose to encourage participants to speak of their own experiences rather than the general history of rugs in Chéticamp, which meant that they mentioned the book less frequently and started thinking about the tradition on their own terms and less coloured by what the book stated.

As I am discussing Acadianness here, I want to stress that there are several identity layers within Chéticamp rug hooking. The rug hookers are Acadian, and hooking is part of this identity. Additionally, Chéticamp is economically underdeveloped and this is also part of the rug hooking story of the area. Power relations, as being both displaced peoples and non-Scottish, also influence and add complexity to the identities in the area. Being a Chéticamper is engaging with the larger contexts of living in Cape Breton, the ethno-cultural politics of being Acadian, and labour in both Cape Breton and Chéticamp economics.

1.8 Cape Breton Folkloristics

While this thesis focuses on the Chéticamp rug hooking tradition, it is also a study of Cape Breton folklife. Cape Breton has a long-standing history of being an ethnographic fieldsite for folklorists, historians and anthropologists. However, ethnographic research about the island has been selective in both topic and genre. Namely, research has predominantly focused on areas such as Scottish identity and the Gaelic language (Doherty 1996; Graham 2006; Sparling 2008), as well as fiddle music, song and storytelling (Feintuch 2004; Hayes 2015). Due to this seemingly narrow research window, issues surrounding labour history, material culture, and minority ethnic groups of Cape Breton are a burgeoning area (MacKinnon 2009; Brodie 2017). This thesis intersects thematically with many of the areas previous folklore studies of Cape Breton have touched upon (as discussed below): tartanization and cultural revival movements, cultural politics and identity, as well as economics and labour. The tartanization of Nova Scotia, a term put forward by historian Ian McKay in *The Quest of*

the Folk (1994), happened under the premiership of Angus L. MacDonald in the 1930s. He supported symbols of a Scottish identity for the province (such as bagpiping, fiddling, kilts, etc.), insisting on a romanticised vision for Nova Scotia that rested firmly on its rurality and Scottishness.

1.8.1 Tartanization and Cultural Revival

Folklorist Richard MacKinnon writes,

Folklore is often used to present an image of this region's culture to both outsiders and local residents alike. Governments choose folkloric symbols for tourism brochures, museums select representative items of culture for display, and novelists choose particular aspects of culture to incorporate into their plots, thereby giving reverence and importance to certain folkloric items. Like a sculptor shaping a piece of clay, an image is created in this process; sometimes it is accurate, other times, it is a shallow simulation of the realities of everyday life. (2009, 167)

Although Cape Breton is a predominantly Scottish area, its history involves many other ethnic groups. Cape Breton, previously known as Île Royale, was a French colony until the 1763 Treaty of Paris in which France ceded the island to Britain. The 19th century Highland Clearances saw the arrival of large numbers Scottish immigrants in Cape Breton, bringing with them their Gaelic language and its traditions. At the turn of the 20th century, Cape Breton became a hub of industry for the whole East Coast, which in turn attracted many ethnic groups such as Italians, Chinese, Russians, Hungarians, Poles, Jews, and freed African-American slaves. Many of these immigrants settled in the Sydney area, which then became quite multicultural and diverse (Migliore 1999;

MacKinnon 2009). Historically, non-Scottish minority groups have faced discrimination and prejudice (Migliore 1999).

Ian McKay (1994) cites several reasons for the rise and embrace of tartanism. First, the tartanist agenda of Premier Angus L. MacDonald (from 1933 – 1940) did much to solidify the belief that Nova Scotia was a Scottish haven in Canada (McKay 1994). Second, the folklore collections of the early 20th century helped categorize Cape Breton as a rural Gaelic, and Scottish island. Ian McKay cites Helen Creighton as a fundamental figure in the creation of this tartanized and nostalgic Nova Scotian culture. He argues that she helped disseminate the idea of a rural, romanticized Other that represents an essentialized and authentic Nova Scotian identity. This is in part because Creighton was not only a folklore collector but also a popularizer of these traditions through her extensive popular publications (1932; 1950; 1957; 1964). He argues that her work lacked contextual analysis while also being highly selective and editorial of what was published, and as such, created a romanticized view of Nova Scotia. Creighton's romantic portrayal of Nova Scotia was informed by her experiences through class and gender as an urban, educated, and wealthy woman.

McKay raises many valuable points in relation to the romanticized Nova Scotia as a frame in popular imagination; however, there are also a number of reasons to critique his work. On the whole, his top-down, Marxist approach leaves no room for individual free thought, individual agency or interpretation. I also disagree with his approach to the issue of identity. Approaching identity without accepting that it is a subjective issue is problematic because identity is fluid and changing. McKay makes no attempt to recognize that identity is constructed and imagined by individuals. A given identity may

be invented, but this does not preclude it from being adopted by a community and becoming meaningful to them. But whereas McKay focuses on the negative aspects of romanticisation, Ray Cashman turns this notion on its head and argues that critical nostalgia can be a useful vehicle for knowledge. He writes that, “nostalgia can be critical in an analytical sense for instantiating informed evaluation of the present through contrast with the past. Nostalgia can also be critical, in the sense of being vitally important, for inspiring action” (Cashman 2006, 138). An example of this would be the Gaelic revival in Cape Breton – in recent decades there has been a grassroots movement to re-invigorate the Gaelic language among Cape Bretoners of Scottish descent. These revivalists label themselves as “Gaels,” whether their families were Gaelic speaking or not, sometimes they are not even of Scottish Highland ancestry, and yet describe the language as being both part of their birthright and bloodlines. As ethnicity is not genetic, and many of these Gaels are generations removed from the last Gaelic speaker in their families, this identity of “Gael” may be imagined, but it is also deeply meaningful to those who identify as such (Sparling 2005).

1.8.2 Cultural Politics and Identity

Cape Breton is often branded as being “more Scottish than Scotland” through its language, music, and dance. Academic discussions of music and dance (Thompson 2003, Dembling 2005, Ivakhiv 2005, Hayes 2015) and Gaelic (MacDonald 1986; Sparling 2005) have examined the multiple contexts in which these cultural expressions develop, negotiate, and maintain various identities (Scottish, Gaelic, Celtic, etc.). Heather Sparling’s examination of cultural capital within the Gaelic revivalist

community explores the power-negotiations surrounding Gaelic politics. As such, Gaelic serves as a means for communities and individuals to negotiate their Cape Breton identity. The loss of Gaelic as part of everyday life has moved it toward a symbolic usage (at milling frolics, on stage, in tourist marketing) where, ironically, it has been endowed with much more cultural capital than it had when it was a living and thriving everyday language.

Ethnomusicologist Liz Doherty (1996) also delves into the issue of Cape Breton fiddle music and its relationship to Scotland. As part of the Scottish diaspora, Cape Breton fiddlers view themselves as musically connected to Scotland. Doherty emphasizes the dynamic, contextualized, and ever-evolving nature of tradition that is constantly being negotiated, and changed by its practitioners. This is a notion that is seen not only in intangible aspects of culture such as fiddling and song, but also in material traditions such as rug hooking where hookers are constantly re-negotiating the changing context of their tradition.

In contrast to the substantial number of academic works on Scottish identity markers in Cape Breton, such as fiddle music, Gaelic revivalism, and step dance, published works on minority groups in Cape Breton have generally been community based popular books, for example *Italian Lives: Cape Breton Memories* by Sam Migliore and Evo Di Pierro. As the introduction notes, this is a “community-oriented project that attempts to cross certain boundaries, and to dissolve a number of stereotypes” (1999, 11). With a focus on bringing to light the various experiences Italian families have had in Cape Breton, *Italian Lives* is an important book for those studying minority groups in Cape Breton as it explicitly tries to show a side of the island that is

rarely shown to outsiders. Migliore offers that the tartanization of Cape Breton's heritage is a cultural and political construction and that "the image of Cape Breton this representation creates tends to mask and devalue the contributions of the Mi'kmaq and that of later arrivals (such as the Acadian, Afro-Caribbean, Irish, Italian, Lebanese, South Asian, Ukrainians and many others) to the social and cultural fabric of the island" (Migliore 1999, 11). The book tries to provide a snapshot of Italians living in Cape Breton both historically and contemporarily. To that end, the book not only celebrates, but also includes the difficult aspects of the Italian experience by including examples of racism, and highlights that Italians often worked in the most horrible and dangerous positions along with the African Nova Scotians (in some instances being called the same derogatory names as well).

Other community-based books on minority ethnic groups such as the African Nova Scotian community and the Acadians, by authors such as Joan Weeks (2007) and the previously discussed book by Anselme Chiasson (1986) provide a valuable service to both the general public and the academic community. With such a void in contemporary folklore works on minority groups such as the Italians, Acadians, and Mi'kmaq, community groups satisfy the need by publishing these books on their cultural practices and history. Often these books are made up entirely of transcribed interviews with tradition bearers, which are very valuable for the scholarly community; however, they lack the in-depth analysis that comes from academic study.

Ethnomusicologist, Gordon Smith's examination of Cape Breton Mi'kmaq fiddler Lee Cremo argues that he is seen by some as the personification of the struggle for contested identities in the Maritimes. In this context, Lee's indigeneity is not simply

an aspect of Mi'kmaq identity but is also representative of the struggles for cultural survival by other Cape Breton minority groups (Smith 1994, 551). Cremo himself often felt looked down upon by the Scottish majority for playing what they considered to be “their” music. He explained during an interview that,

I've always been a bit nervous playing in competitions with the others [non-Natives]. They don't say or do anything exactly – sometimes they just look at me and I guess they are wondering what this little Indian guy is doing playing ‘their’ music. If that is what they are thinking then I would just like to say that it's my music too. I grew up with it like they did, and besides, I play it my own way. People don't own this music. (Smith 1994, 546)

Folklorist Ian Brodie has been working on the folklife of post-industrial Cape Breton and his work offers new perspectives on Cape Breton identity. His projects have touched on local foodways, humour, song, and graffiti, all topics rich and ripe for folklorists to study. To date, only his research on humour and foodways have been published but I have seen him present on all these topics at FSAC (Folklore Studies Association of Canada) and AFS (American Folklore Society) meetings due to the fact that we often find ourselves on the same Cape Breton-themed panels at conferences.

Brodie's most recent work focuses on the Dishpan Parade, a radio program broadcast throughout Cape Breton (and some parts of Newfoundland) from 1948 to 1952. The program was hosted by Lloyd MacInnis and Bill Loeb (or “Teo and “Jarge”) and was largely built by listener correspondence (Brodie 2017). Due to the program's broadcast time in the mornings, the show was regarded as women's radio to offer entertainment to housewives while they perform their daily chores (hence the name dishpan). Their Cape Breton Song Contests form the basis of Brodie's research. These

songs were written by listeners about current issues and set to popular melodies. They were recoded and played by local musicians for the program. As Brodie notes, the song texts often discuss issues surrounding Cape Breton's urban settings, discomfort with modernisation, and Cape Breton's relatively marginalized place in Canada. He further concludes that the song entries were often safe opportunities for women to express cultural critiques in coded and acceptable ways that they would have been unable to express outside of the songwriting context (Brodie 2017).

1.8.3 Labour and Economics

As I discuss throughout this thesis, Chéticamp rug hooking is largely a tradition based on economics. The style of rug hooking practiced by women in Chéticamp was consciously created to appeal to the tastes of wealthy outsiders. Academics have explored the role economics and labour have played in the cultural history of Cape Breton in terms of both exploitation (McKinnon 1989) and resistance (Feintuch 2004; MacSween 2004).

Ian McKinnon's work on the progression of Cape Breton fiddle albums examines the earliest recordings made in the 1920s by large American record companies like Decca and Columbia that were marketed as part of the "ethnic" music market. During this time fiddlers were largely motivated by the increase in status that recording an album would offer. There was not much money to be made from these recordings, something that was only multiplied by the fact that the record companies often withheld royalties from the fiddlers. McKinnon notes that during the 1970s, fiddlers began to move towards independently recorded albums. This allowed fiddlers to manage their own finances, to distribute their own records, and have ultimate control over their representation. In a

broader sense, McKinnon is discussing the idea of outsiders affecting a local tradition within Cape Breton and seemingly taking advantage of tradition bearers. This is something also seen in the Chéticamp rug hooking tradition. The economic aspect of the tradition was imposed by outsiders who set themselves up as “middlemen” – as brokers between the wealthy purchasers and the Chéticamp hookers.

Burt Feintuch builds on the work done by McKinnon by writing about the economic and social context of Cape Breton fiddle music. He explains that as the island’s fisheries and mining industries declined, Cape Breton became an economically marginalized place (Feintuch 2004). Due to this economic situation, the local fiddling style has taken on an important role in tourism, with tourism replacing other once-thriving industries. The fiddle has taken on multiple symbolic identities as an immigrant tradition reaching back to the 18th century. Feintuch argues that the music provides a sense of cultural vitality in the face of poor economic conditions. In many ways, rug hooking has always played an important economic role in the life of Chéticamp. Women were able to keep food on their family’s table during bad fishing seasons because of rug hooking (Poirier interview 1988; Muise interview 2015). The cottage industry began at around the same time as the mining and fisheries began to decline, and at the same time as tourism began to increase in the area. In many ways, this selling of culture that Feintuch talks about can be extended to rug hooking in Chéticamp.

Marie MacSween’s work (2004) focuses on the narratives of four women in Glace Bay whose husbands had lost their jobs in the coal mine in the late 1990s to early 2000s. She discusses the many ways in which the women bore the brunt of the burden when their husbands lost their jobs. MacSween found two different types of resistance

among the women she spoke to. Some women practiced quiet resistance by going back to school and taking on multiple jobs to keep the family from having financial difficulties, while others took a more public form of resistance taking on the mining companies, demanding better compensation and severance packages for miners (2004, 85).

Richard MacKinnon's research on labour and protest song asserts that on "Cape Breton island, where coal mining and steel-making were once an essential part of the region's culture and economy, protest song and verse are found in abundance" (2008, 33). His work shows that a vibrant occupational folksong tradition was alive in the first half of the 20th century. By examining archival material, newspapers and magazines, he is able to trace the hardships endured by the workers as they struggled towards solidarity and unionization. MacKinnon puts forth a possible reason for the lack of popularity of labour songs. He writes that, "the songs composed during labour struggles, strikes, or particularly difficult times may lose their meaning for the people when the events surrounding their composition are long forgotten" (2008, 43). MacKinnon has also published studies on the material culture of industrial Cape Breton, something that has been largely ignored by folklorists. His work on company housing, log architecture and cooperative housing are all topics that have been under limited examination by other scholars.

1.9 Conclusion

This thesis is an ethnographic and archival study of Chéticamp hooked rugs. It utilizes structuralism to analyze the design of these artistic pieces of material culture. I

also use structuralism to discuss the social contexts which create this art, specifically relating to issues such as social structure, economics, gender and Acadianness. I examine Chéticamp's hooked rugs chronologically and how design was used and changed depending on consumption and context. This chapter began by introducing the subject of this thesis and placed my study in both larger theoretical and methodological contexts. I continued by presenting a review of the ways in which folklorists have studied and written about material culture, art and craft, as well as hooked rugs. Following this, I examined how studies of Cape Breton folklore and heritage has been studied in scholarly literature with an eye to demonstrating why this thesis fills an important gap in the literature. In the following chapter, I focus on early rug making traditions in Chéticamp before the cottage industry was set up in the late 1920s. I also present a structural analysis of different rug types and discuss the creation and application of my motif-index for hooked rugs.

Chapter Two: Early Rug-Making Traditions in Chéticamp

History tells us that when Adam was accused of having stolen the apple from the tree he immediately ‘passed the buck’ and blamed it on Eve, and that she, to retaliate, swiped his best Sunday suit, cut it up into small strips, and worked it into a Hooked Rug.
(Cecil Garrett, 1927)⁶

2.1 Yarn

The package comes less than a week after I order it. I am excited but hesitant. It is smaller and softer than I was expecting. I am about to put several years of active listening in the field to the test. Every rug hooker I know is several provinces away, the only helpers I can count on are my three cats who are currently waiting for me to empty the package, so they can crawl inside. I reach into the package and remove a large piece of burlap which will be soon stamped with a design of my choosing and hooked into a small rug. The cats crawl into the discarded package and I hunt around my sewing box for the yarn and fabrics strips I have been saving for this project – varying shades of blue and green: black wool yarn, and fluffy white cotton. It occurs to me that I have no idea how to hook fluffy cotton, only fabric strips, or threads of wool. Even then, it’s not so much that I “know” how to hook them in a practical way, but more that I understand it, in theory. But the leap from theory to practice is a big one. I am about to hook my first rug.

⁶ Cecil Garrett, the son of John Garrett, was the successor to his father’s company, The John Garrett Company. Also referred to as the Garrett Bluenose Company, it was the first Canadian company to sell commercially designed hooked rug patterns.

The burlap is stretched across my cheery yellow frame, ready for me to begin. I start by holding a strip of baby blue cloth under the burlap and using my hook, bring a small loop of the cloth through a hole in the burlap. My first loop. I am very proud of this first, perfect loop. The next few loops come up easily, then I tug a bit too hard and accidentally unravel the whole line of carefully hooked loops. I begin again. Over and over, again and again, I unravel lines of loops or pull my hook too aggressively through the burlap, making the hole too big to properly hold a loop. Constantly fixing mistakes, I am happy no one is around to see this.

2.2 Searching for Rugs in Chéticamp

Chéticamp hooked rugs, like all handmade crafts, are shared amongst people who are often mediating differences. They move from maker to seller; from gallery owner to consumer; from smaller rural areas to larger, urban ones, and finally, from Acadian spaces to non-Acadian ones. I begin this chapter by looking at early rugs broadly, examining how folklorists such as Marius Barbeau were writing and thinking about hooked rugs. Throughout the chapter, I intersperse discussions on motif and design with archival correspondence between Barbeau and other scholars from the 1940s. These discussions, while they happened later in the 20th century, were reflections on rugs that were made in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and offer us a glimpse into how folklorists and others viewed craft at the time, especially women's crafts. I argue that once Barbeau and others realized they would not be able to pinpoint where rug hooking originated, they largely lost interest in studying it from an academic perspective. This demonstrates that for those who were interested in rug hooking, its perceived value was

largely in proving that it was a cultural survival, brought to North America from another country, not that rug hooking was an inherently valuable topic of study unto itself. This, of course, highlights not only the ways in which women's crafts were perceived and studied by academics, but also the general folkloristic preoccupations at the time of finding the origin of what was being studied. While Barbeau's search for origins was in line with the academic trends of the time, it is important to note that he and his correspondents were using the vocabulary of design, motif and technique as evidence within their discussions.

Further, I present ways to understand the structure and design of these early rugs, namely through the use of morphology and structural analysis. I then narrow my lens and focus on the early rug traditions in Chéticamp that preceded the beginning of the cottage industry in the mid-1920s. Following Glassie's model of analysis of material culture (1999), I examine the production, communication and consumption of these early rugs. Within the creation and communication of early rugs, I also examine rug structure and design with an eye to pattern and motif which culminated in my creation of a motif-index for hooked rugs. Using the motif-index I discuss the earliest commercially-sold patterns of Edward Frost and John Garrett, demonstrating how they use motif and design to communicate meaning to those who purchase and consume them. Design and motif are structural elements within hooked rugs that allow rug hookers to creatively use variations within pre-determined structures. In addition, they provide meaning to both the creator and consumer. Finally, I look at the ways in which these early rugs were consumed – both in terms of economic consumption of the rugs, as well as social consumption.

2.3 Rug Hooking 101

Whether they are hooked with strips of rags cut from old clothes or using fine wool, the basic method of rug hooking is the same. For me, part of the experience of researching and writing this thesis also included learning how to hook rugs; it was important to understand the tradition as a practitioner as well as an academic. Initially, there was only so much I could understand when my participants described the physicality of creating a hooked rug – it was not until I had hunched over my frame for hours uninterrupted trying to finish a rug, pulling small loops of wool yarn up through barely-perceptible holes in the burlap with my awl-like hook that I understood why hooking, while a pleasurable hobby, was also physically punishing for women who had (and have) to do it every day to feed themselves and their families.

Essentially, rug hooking entails pulling loops of wool, or strips of rags or cloths, through holes in a stiffer base, either linen, burlap, or jute (see Figure 2.1). The backing is usually stretched onto a frame to stabilize the material. Many rug hookers use frames made for needlepoint and embroidery work as their hooking frames. In Chéticamp, the frames I have most often seen are very large, in order to accommodate rolls of burlap on either side of the frame (see Figure 2.2). My first frames were old round ones I had previously used for cross-stitching, but I found them to lose their effectiveness with larger rugs; the middle parts of the burlap sagged from lack of tension and made hooking difficult. I eventually purchased a wooden tabletop frame which allows me to affix my burlap to the frame using small nails at my desired tension while also having the benefit of keeping my hands free from having to hold the frame.

Prior to hooking the cloth, it is customary to draw your design on the burlap. In Chéticamp, rug hookers call this “stamping.” To pull the material through the backing, a hook that resembles a crochet hook is used (see Figure 2.3). The hooks can be made specifically for rug hooking or can be as simple as a bent nail (I have seen both). While the basic method of rug hooking is easy to learn, it is difficult to master. The challenge often lies in finding the proper balance when it comes to the tension of the loops: too tight and the loops disappear through the bottom of the burlap, too loose and the results are amateurish at best with uneven textures and wide gaps between loops.

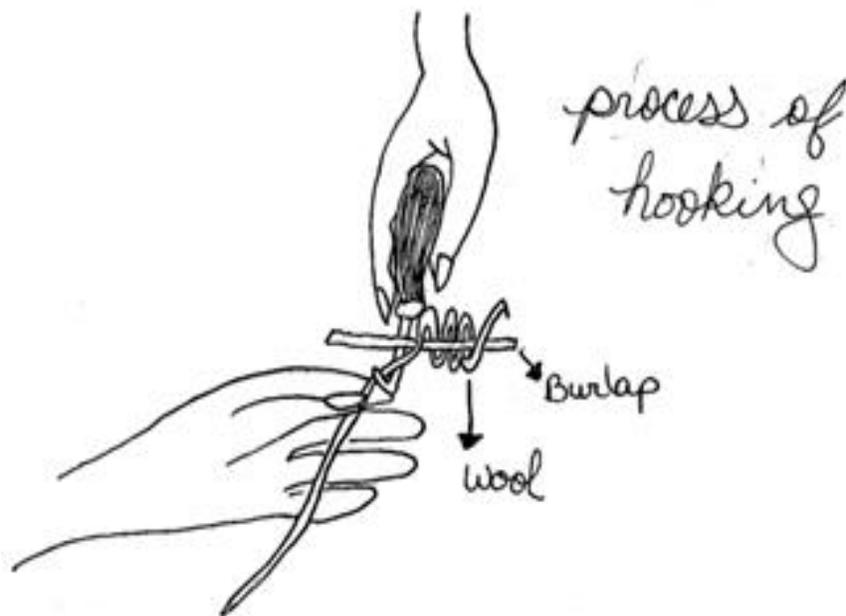


Figure 2.1: How to hook a rug. (field note by author, 2012)

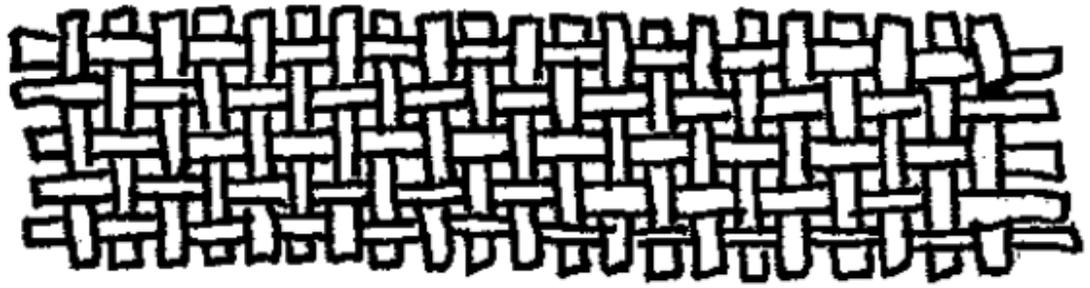


Figure 2.2: Burlap weave (field note by author, 2012)

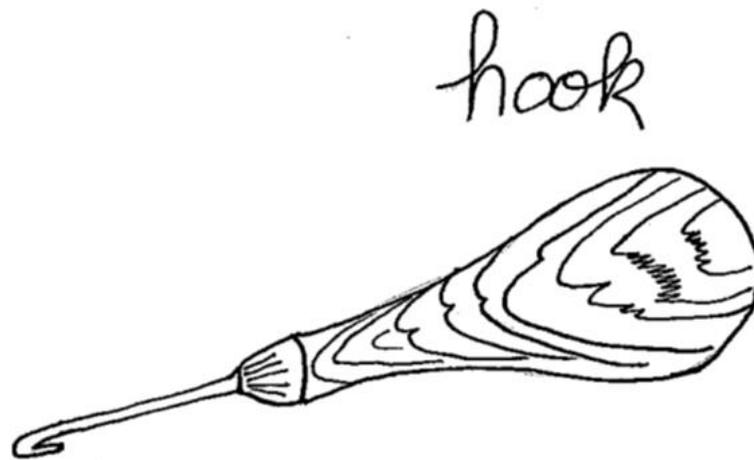


Figure 2.3: Hook used for rug hooking (field note by author, 2012)

2.4 Origin (Theories) of the Hooked Rug

William Morris, the textile designer who championed the Arts and Crafts Movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, urged scholars to “cease thinking of art as the rarefied expression of a mystically talented few, or as the peculiar possession of rich men. He argued that work is the mother of art, directing our study to carpets as well as paintings, axes as well as statues” (Glassie 1999, 70). The increased attention to rug hooking from scholars such as folklorist Marius Barbeau came at a time where academics

of many disciplines were becoming interested in types of art that had previously not been considered as such, making the hooked rug an ideal research area. Rug hooking is most often referred to as a handicraft, distinct from high art forms as well as separate from the definition of fine craft employed by galleries and museums. Fine craft is often the designated term for artists formally educated in their craft form such as ceramics, weaving, jewelry-making (and calling their work craft as opposed to art because it suits a utilitarian purpose as well as an artistic one), while handicraft is the domain of women's domestic work such as quilting, rug hooking, and lace-making. Where and when rug hooking originated was the focus of an intense search by rug hooking enthusiasts and scholars in the first half of the 20th century (Kent 1930; Barbeau 1942; Traquair 1943). Searching for the first, the beginning, the origin, was a common preoccupation of early folklorists.

Based primarily on archival documents and personal correspondence in the Marius Barbeau fonds at the Canadian Museum of History, the letters I found in the Barbeau fonds were generally one-sided, meaning that they were letters sent to Barbeau in response to letters he had sent but in most cases I did not have the chance to see the original letter. In many ways my relationship to Barbeau is multi-faceted – as a MUN graduate student, I am not really part of his academic lineage (that distinction would be largely reserved for Université Laval students); however, in terms of Canadian folklore study in general, and my professional career at the Canadian Museum of History, I am part of his legacy, as well as steward of his collections. When I began searching his research fonds for material on hooked rugs, I was hoping to find some interviews with rug hookers; unfortunately, I could not find any. This surprised me because Barbeau was

a skilled fieldworker and his fonds contain important interviews and field recordings of Indigenous stories and French-Canadian folksongs. I was disappointed that the rug hookers' voices were nowhere to be found. Furthermore, most of his correspondence about rug hooking is with other male academics (and largely from disciplines other than folkloristics), and the few letters from women were in response to Barbeau's requests to buy specific old rugs they have in their possession.

The search for the origin of the hooked rug reflects in many ways the current academic trends of the early 20th century. Within folkloristics, one of these was the Historic-Geographic Method. A cornerstone of our disciplinary history, it was an attempt to set up a valid scientific methodology within the study of folklore. At its core was a belief in monogenesis (Goldberg 1984, 2): that a cultural artifact has one sole origin, ignoring the possibility that there could be multiple, separate and independent beginnings. It was also a very etic examination, as the focus was not to develop an emic understanding of the tradition within its relevant cultural context, but to provide outside "expert" legitimacy to one tradition while downplaying others. The search for the origin of the hooked rug in North America (and more generally, folklore studies prior to the 1950s) mirrors many of the sentiments found within the Historic-Geographic Method. Within these theories is an ideological undercurrent that undermines human creativity.

The most active early rug hooking scholars and enthusiasts, such as Marius Barbeau, Ramsay Traquair, and Winthrop Kent mostly claimed the rugs originated from their own heritage and national identities, perhaps reflecting personal political motivations. For example, Marius Barbeau, a French Canadian, believed that rug hooking originated in French textile traditions. My own belief is that the search for an original rug

is missing the point of studying this craft form. Even if we stumbled upon the first ever hooked rug, what more could it tell us about the function and meaning of the handicraft? Perhaps what the Historic-Geographic Method can offer rug hooking scholars is a deeper understanding of how far and wide the tradition was been disseminated and diffused, and the ways in which communities and artists have altered it to suit their changing needs. With that rather large caveat, I present the most widely discussed, critiqued and accepted theories that swirled around rug hooking guilds, craft councils, universities, and popular magazines in the early to mid-20th century.

William Winthrop Kent, a noted American architect and scholar, became interested in hooked rugs in the early decades of the 20th century and wrote several publications on them. His book, entitled *The Hooked Rug: A Record of Its Ancient Origin, Modern Development, Methods of Making, Sources of Design, Values as a Handicraft, The Growth of Collections, Probable Future in America, and Other Data* (Kent 1930), became a popular book for rug hookers and rug hooking enthusiasts looking for an authoritative voice on the subject of rug hooking. In the book, Kent lays out his origin theories in which he strongly contends that rug hooking began in the 6th century. He based this argument on an examination of embroidery from the Copts. He found that they had used wool looped through woven cloth and believed this was the original method of rug hooking.

Although he attempts to develop an origin theory, Kent argues that the craft was then brought to Spain via the Moors, eventually making its way to North America (46). However, his research found that the art form was seemingly abandoned in Spain after the 1830s. Kent also argued that there was evidence of an English predecessor to the

North American hooked rug dating to the early 17th century found in the weaving industry in Yorkshire. He believed that mill workers brought home discarded textiles – mostly wool pieces – called “thrum” to create bedding and carpets by looping the thrums through fabric. This was linked to the importation of Indian jute into Scotland for the production of linen in the 1820s which eventually led to the development of jute weaving (Kent 44).

Kent also theorized that rugs could have been made in Scandinavia for at least 400 years before the tradition was imported to the British Isles and that early examples of hooked rugs had been found in ancient Norwegian tombs. While Kent argued that rug hooking was perhaps much older than was previously believed, he also acknowledged that in North America, the tradition had truly blossomed. He wrote that, “it is certainly true that the origin was European, yet it is a fact that the art was taken up more widely and developed more artistically in America than elsewhere, so that to this continent and the islands belongs much credit for its advancement” (Kent 46).

Kent also was interested in figuring out how to date rugs and devised a classification system based on designs. The first grouping in this classification are the Antique rugs, which were created between 1775 and 1825. While there are few (and dubiously dated) rugs from this era, the one that Kent points to features a “particular form of the eagle from our early coins and the discs taken from early Dutch paintings on Pennsylvania barns” (Kent 95). He classified the Early Period as dating from 1825 to 1875, the Late Period from 1875 to 1900 and the Modern Era from 1900 to 1923. He also worked on identifying the major designs and patterns of rugs from these eras.

The Copt, Scandinavian, and UK textile samples that Kent speaks of, and illustrates in his book, seem to bear little resemblance to the hooked rugs of North America (Kent 1930, 46). While they may share some geometric designs, the techniques and methods are different. In fact, scholars such as Marius Barbeau long argued that rug hooking is a distinctly North American art form based on French embroidery (Barbeau 1943). He devoted himself to tracing the origins of the hooked rug in the hopes of uncovering the earliest rug hooking techniques, patterns and fabrics. Barbeau was in semi-regular contact with Ramsay Traquair, a Scottish-born architect who lived in Guysborough, Nova Scotia and took a special interest in maritime rug hooking. Both men expressed a desire to uncover the origin of the hooked rug but found themselves at a puzzling stand-still: the same languish at which other scholars seeking out the roots of rug hooking had also found themselves. Traquair writes to Barbeau,

In the U.S.A. where they have a cult of hooked rugs, I understand that no rug has been definitely traced to before the Civil War – 1860. Here in the Maritimes many of the people came from the New England states either after the Revolution or in the beginning of the nineteenth century, but I have been able to trace no hooked rug earlier than about the same time. (Traquair, Barbeau Fonds, 1942)

He was correct about the lack of early Canadian rug examples, something that made searching for the origins of these rugs very complicated. As it stands, the earliest dated Canadian hooked rug was created around 1860 in New Maryland, New Brunswick, by Abigail Smith. Smith used linen as a base for her rug before burlap became the ubiquitous base for hooked rugs, linen and hemp were most commonly used (Kopp 45). When burlap was introduced to North America in the mid-1800s rug hooking became

more widespread; burlap was cheap, tough, and plentiful, and its loose weave, certainly looser than linen or hemp, meant that hooking a rug was more effective and faster (MacDonald 2001). In fact, early collectors used the base of the rug to date it: rugs with a base of linen or hemp were generally thought to have been created pre-1860, while burlap rugs would have been an almost certain indication of a post-1850s creation date.

Historian Sharon MacDonald, a former research fellow at the Canadian Museum of History who focused on our hooked rug collection, notes that the use of linen or hemp as a base for these early rugs is a sign that the women who were hooking were of a higher socio-economic standing.

The most widely held belief was that the hooked rug had originated in New England and that Canadian hooked rugs were either simply the products of an imported American tradition used to sell crafts to tourists, or the inevitable consequence of the American Revolution, which saw Loyalists and their rug hooking tradition arriving in the Maritimes (Traquair 1943). Traquair was Barbeau's academic sounding board on matters pertaining to hooked rugs. In his letters to Barbeau, he espouses this belief and writes that, "all of the old traditions here, and I have traced them back to 1850, state that the art of hooked rugs came to the Maritimes with the Loyalists, about 1783 or so" (Traquair 1943). However, there is no further mention of how Traquair went about tracing these traditions back to the United States. This discussion highlights some of the issues that arise when scholars approach culture in a non-ethnographic way.

As an architect, Traquair only published once on hooked rugs, in the Canadian Geographic Society's proceedings, where he formally laid out his theories on the origin of the hooked rug. He writes that, "It had been thought that hooked rugs in Quebec were

quite modern, an art introduced to meet the tourist trade, and this view had the support that today, in Quebec, hooked rugs are predominantly a tourist trade” (Traquair 1943, 245). Likewise, Traquair believed that most of the culture and what he calls the “old” traditions found in the Maritimes were Loyalist-imported adaptations, as he believed that, “the whole folk-culture of this part of Canada is of New England. Neither the Highland Scot, nor the French Acadian seem to have contributed much” (Traquair 1943). Here again, Traquair’s writings bely several problematic challenges; in none of his writings about the traditions in the area does he ever discuss what they are, and most importantly how he has come to such conclusions.

Barbeau challenged the belief that rug hooking was an American art form that had been transplanted into Canada. While there were a few contested and debated theories about rug hooking originating in the UK, or in the New England states, Barbeau seemed to be the sole proponent of a theory that strongly believed there was a French-Canadian origin story that had been long neglected by academics. He writes that, “We have been apt, in Canada, to accept without questioning the presumption that hooked-rug making is an intrusive handicraft more at home in the Maritimes and in New England than along the St. Lawrence. Its recent mushroom growth, moreover, had tended to leave us under the impression that it had been initiated in our generation, at some point close to the frontiers.” (Barbeau 1942, 30).

Barbeau’s work attempted to problematize this belief by examining some of the earliest textiles in Quebec. By detailing embroidery, tapestries and designs by early French-Canadian religious orders such as the Ursuline nuns from the 17th and 18th century, Barbeau created a repertoire of commonly-used designs that later became

popular in textile traditions across French Canada. As noted by historian Thomas Lackey, Barbeau was an historian and folklorist of French Canadian folklife looking to demonstrate that many of the designs and patterns found on hooked rugs were rooted in the earliest textiles of the area (Lackey 4). While these designs had been used by religious orders, Barbeau noted that they had later become widely accepted, used and transformed by surrounding communities. Indeed, the designs had become vernacular forms; used, transmitted and disseminated by people in everyday settings.

Through his examination of these early French textiles, he noted several repeating designs. They included: patterns for ten animals, 23 floral patterns, 11 geometrical designs, as well as patterns depicting Algonquin bark and bead decorations (Lackey 4). Through his research into rug designs, Barbeau was attempting to deviate from the narrative that rug hooking had originated in the United States and posited a much broader origin story. Barbeau's theory of a French origin did not gain much traction among scholars, but it did present yet another potential origin story for the tradition.

Murray Gibbon dismissed Barbeau's theory concerning the influence of Ursuline textile traditions. He notes that, "I find it hard to believe that the French Canadians of the St. Lawrence got any of their technique in this craft from the Ursuline nuns. They are much more likely to have picked it up in New England, which is now the home of a very large number of French Canadians, and they may quite well have brought back hooked rugs with them when they came on visits to their old families in Quebec" (Gibbon, Barbeau Fonds, 1943). Gibbon, who was a publicity agent for the Canadian Pacific Railroad, believed that hooked rugs originated in New England and had been imported by French Canadians who were visiting relatives in New England. In a separate letter dating

to January 5th, 1943, Gibbon notes that while visiting an exhibition in New York he became convinced that, “there is no question that there is a hooked rug tradition in the United States which has no relation to French Canada. It is, of course, only natural the French Canadians should use their own traditional patterns, although recently, of course, they have had a mania for doing landscapes by Clarence Gagnon” (Gibbon, Barbeau Fonds, 1943). Clarence Gagnon, a Quebec artist, was the chief designer for the rug hooking cottage industry in Charlevoix. Doubling down on his beliefs, Gibbon asserts in another letter to Barbeau that he had recently read and enjoyed an article which claimed that the hooking used in rug hooking was a “direct descendant of the tambour needle of Jacobean England and that the tradition came from Scotland, Wales and Spain” (Gibbon, Barbeau Fonds, 1942). I surmise that the letters from Gibbon about this were a reaction to Barbeau’s article on his origin theory (Barbeau 1942), which explains why Gibbon repeatedly mentioned and downplayed a potential connection between the hooked rug and French Canada.

In many ways, Barbeau and those he was corresponding with view hooked rugs as symbolic of folk purity and authenticity which reflect a romanticised belief in folkloristics about the people being studied (Bendix 1997, 17). When it comes to the rug makers and their rugs, it is clear that the groups Barbeau were discussing (Loyalists, Acadian, British etc) use and view rugs in different ways, but Barbeau and his correspondents discuss these groups without differentiation, but each group engages in folklore for different reasons and these rugs likely served different functions that were culturally specific.

2.5 Early Designs and Patterns

During one of my many visits to the archives at the Museum, I began flipping through some notes Barbeau had written. At first, they seemed to be illegible scribbles on scraps of paper; however, it soon dawned on me that these were his field notes attempting to document designs and patterns he was coming across as he collected and examined rugs from various regions in Quebec. Discussions of design and pattern were not extensive in his personal correspondence and he only published one article on rugs, unsurprisingly about the origin of rug hooking, so I spent several days looking through his notes and wondering what he envisioned using them for. His notes on design list several motifs under four larger categories with numbers listed with each category:

- Realistic (2): pitcher, basket
- Animal (10): sitting cat (2), duck, dog, fish, hen, rabbit, beaver, dove, bird
- Geometrical (11): stars, diamonds, lozenges, etc.
- Renaissance (11): sprays, s-designs, barred, S, etc. (Barbeau fonds, undated).

There is no accompanying information on which rugs these motifs are from, or what he was looking for by detailing them, but it is clear that Barbeau had a burgeoning interest in rug designs. However, I suspect he was detailing motifs in an effort to determine which types of motifs were also found in Ursuline textiles. Traquair, in a letter to Barbeau on December 27th, 1942, wrote about designs he had come across in Nova Scotian rugs. He notes that, “the patterns here are either geometrical – easily designed by anyone, or floral, adaptations of the Aubusson carpet patterns of the mid nineteenth century. There are a few highly individual patterns and of course a lot of Department Store designs as well” (Traquair, Barbeau Fonds, 1942). While both Barbeau and

Traquair briefly discussed design and motif, the only dedicated academic design discussion is found in the Barbeau article, in which he details Ursuline embroidery motifs.

Barbeau notes that most of the rugs he has seen have been rugs designed for the tourist trade, a term he uses to support his choice to dismiss any further research into these types of rugs and their cottage industries. He writes that “large numbers of rugs have passed under my eyes and been dismissed, as they are now nearly all of the tourist type, the patterns being naturalistic scenes, landscapes, and houses, mostly borrowed from coloured calendars, other pictures, or from illustrated catalogues” (Barbeau 1942, 26). The only designs he claims as authentic are those which he has ascertained to be descendant from French embroidery and textile traditions. As he argues it, the floral designs found in rug hooking were originally French and designs based on nature, flora and fauna, as well as pictorial designs came from elsewhere. He further elucidates that these floral designs, found on both hooked rugs as well as indigenous beading and baskets in the Northeast, were all originally from the same French sources, and that “these various floral and leaf designs were so common in New France, both in current use, in the trade and in school-teaching, that the Northeastern Woodland Indians slowly absorbed them and, in the course of more than two or three hundred years of the white man’s influence over them, finally made them their own to the point of forgetting their origin” (Barbeau 1942, 26).

Barbeau is here extending his argument about rug hooking to indigenous embroidery by stating that their origins are French and brought over by Ursuline nuns. While there is no denying that the Ursulines and other religious orders brought and taught

embroidery to many, attributing beading to them is contentious as scholars have pointed out similarities between beading, weaving (both textile and basket weaving) and bitten bark traditions (Atfield 2017). So, while some embroidery techniques may have been integrated, they were being incorporated into existing handicraft traditions. There is also no question that indigenous beading developed into its own handicraft, with its own set of regional styles, local variants and vernacular aesthetics.

In the years since Barbeau, folklore as a discipline has moved away from preoccupations with origin because it offers little in terms of understanding a tradition, and in effect these searches for the origin of the hooked rug put them in a disadvantaged position for further academic research. With the study of rug traditions across Canada focused solely on their origin story, serious ethnographic fieldwork was not actively conducted among rug hookers until much later (Pocius 1979; Eber 1994), meaning that the cultural context for the rugs, the rug hookers and their communities has been lost. This realization was troubling to me, as both a scholar of handicraft and as a curator. For museum collections, this has meant that early rugs were generally not properly contextualized and with poor provenance. At the Canadian Museum of History, Barbeau only collected 14 rugs during his tenure, all from Quebec, only one of the rug hookers is named – a Mrs. Chamberland from Tadoussac, none have much provenance or contextual information from Barbeau (though more information was later added to most of these records by research associate Sharon MacDonald).

As I puzzle over these approaches, I looked at the Assomption sashes collected by Barbeau for the Museum, and it is quickly revealed that the sashes he collected have more contextual information, more provenance, and more named artists and collectors.

Assomption sashes, or *Ceinture fléchée*, were a tightly woven sash or belt made by voyageurs, Métis, and Indigenous peoples to wear over their winter coats. Assomption sashes feature varying designs and motifs which are dependent on cultural background and region. Clearly a symbol of identity, both in the larger context of the French fur trade history, but also of smaller group identity.

I am using Assomption sashes as a comparison to rugs because they were also textile handicrafts that greatly interested Barbeau. As well, there are several sashes that were purchased from commercial stores, which is telling, as Barbeau and Traquair continuously dismiss rugs made from commercial designs. Rugs that were still handmade but based on commercial designs were dismissed; however, sashes made and sold commercially were still seen as valuable enough for inclusion in a national museum collection. A possible explanation is that the sashes, while mostly made by women, were (and largely still are) associated with the men who most often wore them.

2.6 Early (Pre-1920s) Rugs in Chéticamp

Chéticamp hooked rugs occupy an almost legendary place in the Cape Breton cultural pantheon. For a time, upon entering Chéticamp, visitors were greeted by a sign that declares the fishing village to be the “Rug Hooking Capital of the World.” This statement is well supported by the numerous folk art galleries that dot the landscape selling locally-hooked rugs. Beyond these more grassroots initiatives, the tradition receives institutional recognition through a rug hooking museum, *Les Trois Pignons*, and a now-defunct rug hooker’s cooperative, *Le Co-op Artisanale*, which was started in 1963.

The hooked rug cottage industry in Chéticamp has had far reaching consequences for the economic and cultural life of the village.

On a wet and grey February morning, rug hooker Yvette Muise and I decide to spend some time at the *Trois Pignons*. The museum is run by the Society Saint-Pierre, the Acadian association in the area. That the rug hooking museum is operated by an Acadian group is a statement to how close the two identities are linked by the community. Chéticamp rug hooking is valued as a regional Acadian tradition here, much like *fricot* or *Mi-Carême*. *Fricot* is a meat (often chicken or rabbit) stew made with potatoes, onions and dumplings, and *Mi-Carême*⁷, French for “mid-Lent” is a folk-custom in which people dress up to disguise their identity and visit friends and neighbors who guess their identity.

Lisette Aucoin Bourgeois, the Executive Director, invites us in and explains that she had to turn the heat on in the exhibition room for us that morning, as the heat is turned off in October when the museum closes until the summer months. The museum houses some of Chéticamp’s oldest and most unique rugs and traces the tradition from its earliest rugs through to more contemporary hooked tapestries by popular hooker Elizabeth Lefort, highlighting the methods, techniques, and aesthetics unique to Chéticamp hooking. It is one of these visits to the *Trois Pignons* Museum that inspired me to look more closely at design and motif, which are the focus of this chapter.

While the Chéticamp cottage industry is often referred to as the brainchild of an American artist named Lillian Burke, there had been an active rug tradition in the area

⁷ For a more in-depth look at Acadian Mi-Carême in Canada, please see: George Arsenault, 2009. *Acadian Mi-Carême: Masks and Merrymaking*. Acorn Press.

well before she arrived. Lillian Burke's contributions to Chéticamp rug hooking will be examined in detail in the following chapter. As with many other East Coast communities, rugs made from used clothing were found warming the floors of many Chéticamp homes. Père Anselme Chiasson, whose 1985 book on Chéticamp rug hooking provides an excellent community history on the subject, notes that there were four types of commonly made rugs before Lillian Burke arrived in Chéticamp. The earliest rugs found in Chéticamp were the *defaisure*, braided, rosette, and *breillon* style rugs. The *defaisure* rug (from the French verb *defaire*, to take apart) were rugs created from wool clothing cut into strips, sewn onto a jute backing and then frayed to create a velvet-like texture (Chiasson 4). Braided rugs were created, as the name implies, by braiding large strips of fabric. Rosette rugs utilized circles of fabric sewn alongside each other and superimposed in ever decreasing circles resulting in a rosette shape. *Breillon* rugs, called rag rugs in much of the English-speaking rug hooking world, are hooked rugs created by cutting used clothing into strips and hooking them through a jute base. The *breillon* rugs featured designs stamped on the canvas.

These four types of rugs, once common and popular in Chéticamp, have almost entirely been replaced by the techniques and methods brought to Chéticamp by Lillian Burke in the first half of the 20th century. In fact, during my fieldwork and throughout my many conversations about Chéticamp rug hooking, I heard of only one woman who was still hooking rag rugs. It is quite difficult to discuss exactly what these pre-Burke rugs looked like in terms of design, methods, and colour usage because not many (if any) survive, thus most of the information we have is through community memory and oral

history. Both decorative and functional in nature, these early rugs have been described as colourful and geometric in vivid colours.

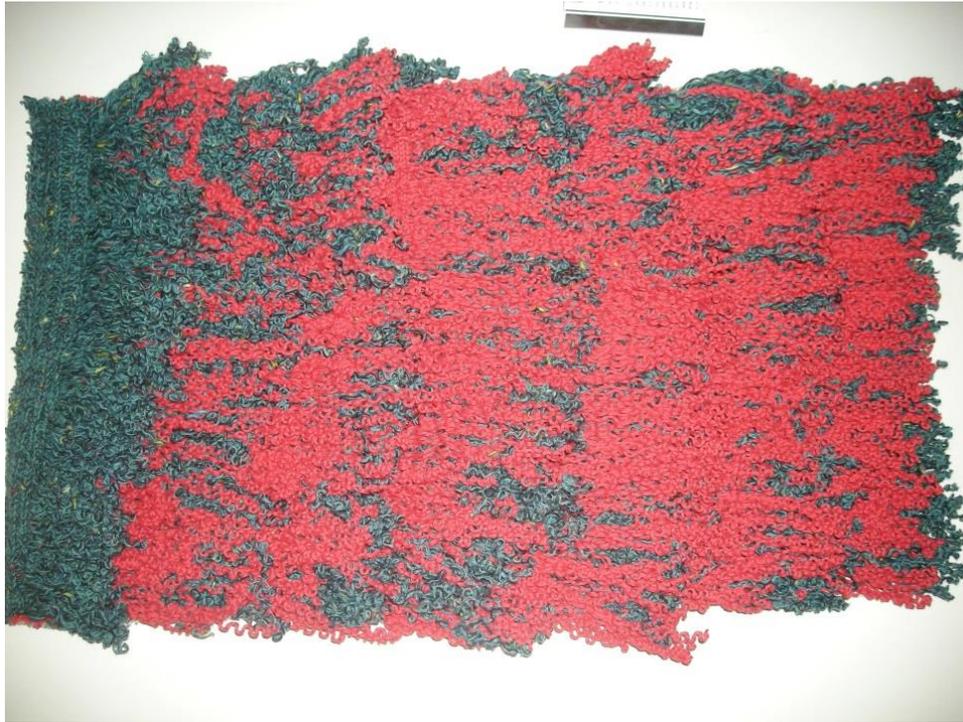


Figure 2.4: *Defaisure* rug, Trois Pignon Museum (photo by Author, 2016)



Figure 2.4.1: Braided Rug. Trois Pignons Museum (photo by author 2016)



Figure 2.4.2: *Breillon* rug, Trois Pignons Museum (photo by author, 2016)

2.6.1 A Possible Maritime Origin

Buried within his discussions of early hooked rugs, Barbeau has several correspondences concerning the potential Maritime origin of hooked rugs. Discussions he had about rug hooking in the area highlight the ways in which Nova Scotia, and specifically Cape Breton rugs were being discussed, and the role the region's rugs played in the larger context of the study of hooked rugs. A surprising letter in Barbeau's fonds was an unassuming, typed, French letter from Père Anselme Chiasson, who had not yet become the local expert on Chéticamp rugs. Alluding to a recent conversation about local legends and rugs in Cape Breton, Chiasson attempts to respond to Barbeau's inquiry into the origin of hooked rugs in Cape Breton. To answer this request, Chiasson turns to a book written by photographer Clara Dennis called *Cape Breton Over* (1942), in which rug making in Baddeck Cape Breton is described as an industry credited to Mrs. Bell (wife of Alexander Graham Bell), who started Cape Breton Home Industries to help alleviate poverty in the area. It was the first and only time I found Cape Breton rug hooking mentioned in Barbeau's letters. Dennis describes that,

She [Mrs Bell] hired a woman to come down from Washington to teach us to make rug-mats we call them. Mrs Bell altogether revolutionized the colours and designs we had been using. She bought the mats from us when finished, and as more of them were made, she took them back to Washington with her and sold them to friends. Today we sell our rugs right here in Baddek, our customers are mostly tourists. (Dennis 1942, 215)

This paragraph quoted by Chiasson is perplexing. The woman that Mrs. Bell brings up from Washington was none other than Lillian Burke, though she is not mentioned by name in the description. It was Burke who later founded the Chéticamp rug

hooking cottage industry. Lillian Burke's first attempts at creating a rug cottage industry were in Baddeck; however, her attempts were unsuccessful. Although the description above credits Mrs. Bell with being the woman who revolutionized rug hooking in Cape Breton, that distinction belongs to Lillian Burke. In addition, in Baddeck, unlike Chéticamp, there was no such successful overhauling of rug making techniques.

As for Chéticamp, Chiasson notes that Dennis also credits Mrs. Bell with the rug hooking industry, though that was certainly the brainchild of Lillian Burke as well. As I discuss in the following chapter, Lillian Burke, following in the Bells' *noblesse oblige*, was a wealthy American artist who was in tune with the tastes of the social classes she was selling Chéticamp rugs to. In the letter, he never mentions Lillian Burke by name, nor does he go into any detail about the rug hooking industry there, which at that point had been thriving for several decades. Traquair at least once mentioned Cape Breton rugs in his March 23rd, 1943 letter to Barbeau. Here he writes that, "the existing hooked rug industry in Baddeck is an American Tourist trade, founded by Mrs Bell and making, mainly copies of old New England rugs. The rugs are hooked, you can see them at the Canadian Handicrafts Guild Shops" (Traquair, Barbeau Fonds 1943).

He continues, "Whether the Cape Breton people made hooked rugs before Mrs Bell began, I do not know. Probably they did. But the population of Cape Breton is very largely Acadian French and Highland Scot and the New England element, which in my opinion brought the hooked rug into the Maritimes, is very weak here" (Traquair, Barbeau Fonds, 1943). Mrs. Bell founded the Young Ladies Club of Baddeck in 1891, and both local oral history, such as Chiasson's book, as well as existing rugs show that there was a rug making tradition in Cape Breton before the turn of the 20th century.

Traquair notes that all, “through the Maritimes we find the finest hooked rugs in the loyalist districts of New Brunswick, round Fredericton, and in Western Nova Scotia. As we move eastward, the rugs are fewer, smaller and not so finely worked. Here in Guysborough I have found many nice rugs, but Guysborough is originally a Loyalist and Army, colony” (Traquair, Barbeau Fonds, 1943). In the years since I began researching this thesis, I have encountered over a thousand rugs. Based on these examples, I believe that Traquair is false in his assertions about rugs becoming smaller, fewer and less finely worked as one moves eastwards throughout the Canadian Maritimes. As will be discussed in the following chapters, Chéticamp rugs during the cottage industry, in fact, were widely known for their size, intricacy and uniformity.

Perhaps the most colourful origin theory was espoused by Elizabeth Waugh and Edith Foley in their popular 1927 book *Collecting Hooked Rugs*, which focused on giving potential collectors tips and useful information about how to start a hooked rug collection. Their theory, essentially, was that hooked rugs originated in North America with male sailors. Their reasoning was threefold. First, sailors were known to braid rugs and enjoy creating with their hands. Second, they believed that the earliest hooked rugs came from maritime settlements, and third, they saw a resemblance between the marlinspike sailors used to rug hooks, though even they admit that, “the only difference is the small barb at the end” (Waugh 1927, 8), meaning that the spike resembled a hook in all ways apart from being an actual hook.

There is no doubt that men hooked. In Chéticamp specifically, men and children were expected to join their female family members at the frame in the off season to help hook rugs. However, assigning men as originator of the tradition is an erasure of female

agency and creativity, especially with little to no proof supporting this theory. In January 1943, Murray Gibbon received a letter from Blanche Hume at Ryerson Press. In the letter, which is a response to one Gibbon had previously sent, she writes a recommendation for Waugh's book, and shares her theory on the origin of the hooked rug. She writes,

Mats made by sailors were many and varied, but not hooked. In a remote part of Ireland however, we once saw what might easily be the missing link between the rope mat of the sailor and the hooked rug of the sailor's wife. It had been made by a sailor, probably with a marlinspike, and consisted of raveled burlap drawn through a rough linen ground. Revelled [*sic*] burlap is sometimes used to-day in Canada as filling for hooked rugs. It looks as though it had been hooked, but on examination the hemp was seen to be knotted into the linen ground instead of being simply hooked through it in loops as in a hooked rug. The step is short however, between the two processes. (Hume, Barbeau Fonds, 1943)

In a letter sent to both Ramsay Traquair and Marius Barbeau on January 9th, 1943, Gibbon supports Waugh and Foley's theory that male sailors were the originator of the hooked rug. He writes that, "The suggestion that this is really a sailor technique explains the prevalence of hooked rugs in the Maritime Provinces" (Gibbon, Barbeau Fonds, 1943). The theory that hooked rugs originated in the Maritimes with sailors never gained much traction (I have only found it discussed in the Barbeau fonds, and in Waugh's book), it nonetheless demonstrates how invested people were in finding the origin of the hooked rug. In this case, the fact that hooked rugs are attributed to men could be read in two different but not mutually exclusive ways. My first reaction was to view it as an erasure of women within the craft's history, however, it may have also been because

assigning a male origin may have been seen as lending authority to this Maritime origin claim.

2.7 Structure Matters – How Rugs Communicate

In his 2007 article on game morphology, Simon Bronner notes that structural analyses such as morphology should be applied to folklore genres outside of folktales. He argues that pieces of material culture such as quilt designs could be defined in a structural way to reveal a relatively small and stable number of patterns underlying seemingly diverse forms (Bronner 2007, 161). I endeavor to do just that. I will discuss these concepts in terms of hooked rugs as a whole (largely using the Canadian Museum of History's rug collection as visual aids) with the eye to discussing Chéticamp rug design aesthetics more specifically in the next two chapters.

If we look at hooked rugs as texts to be read and interpreted, we can analyse them for structure, form and meaning in order to better understand them as culturally-specific artifacts. In addition, I employ the language of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics when discussing meaning making, specifically his examination of sign and object using the triad signifiers of icon, index and symbol (Burkes 1958). His theoretical language is a useful aid for understanding how motif and design in rugs create and communicate meaning through signs. In semiotics, a sign is anything that is perceived by an observer calling to mind something else (the object). When a sign is observed by someone, it becomes a vehicle for the object or idea which delivers the meaning of the sign-object relationship to the observer. An icon is a way in which people create the connection

between sign and what it stands for. Through resemblance, an object such as the drawing of a cat recalls an actual cat. An index connects a sign and object by experiencing them together in the way smoke is an index of fire. On the other hand, a symbol is a sign-object relationship through language and linguistic definition (Turino 2007, 10).

Over the past three years I studied several hundred hooked rug designs from the late 19th century to the present day, that originated from both vernacular and commercial settings, and broke them down into motifs – small repeating patterns found in hooked rugs across region and style. Using Stith Thompson’s Motif Index as a model, I have created a motif index for hooked rugs (See Appendix 1 for index). Rugs that feature repeating geometric patterns can be structurally analysed using the language of symmetry and I present several of these geometric designs in this chapter. Finally, I discuss motif and form in the commercial rug patterns of John Garrett and Edward Frost, who sold some of the earliest and most successful rug hooking patterns in North America.

2.7.1 The Hooked Rug Motif-index

The motif-index for hooked rugs that I developed is inspired by the Stith Thompson Motif-Index for narratives. My intention was to develop a typology which could be used to discuss the small repeated forms in hooked rugs, as well as larger design structures. It makes space for discussion by standardizing terminology to allow for comparative analysis. Based on handwritten notes on rug designs that I found in the Marius Barbeau archival fonds at the Canadian Museum of History, I decided to expand on his interest in design and develop the index. The index can help researchers track the use of motifs within different rug hooking traditions, and the shifts in rug design over the

past century. In previous academic studies of the hooked rug, scholars examined rug hooking design and style only within highly specific regional contexts. I argue that while looking at specific regional contexts is important, so is stepping back and looking at the wider picture. This allows us to get a better, and broader, sense of the structure and design of hooked rugs in Canada. In this way, micro studies can inform the macro, and vice versa.

I looked at nearly a thousand rugs and several hundred rug patterns and designs and was surprised by how often certain motifs occurred, regardless of who the designer was or where the design originated. Though I examined a large number of rugs and designs, I noticed an overwhelming, repeated use of florals, certain animals (such as lions, dogs, cats, and waterfowl), geometric designs similar to some found in quilting, and border scrolls. These motifs are more or less recurrent depending on the general rug design, meaning that the general structure of the rug often seems to dictate the design content (motifs) that are used within. I noticed three main categories of rug design structure: repeating wallpaper structured rugs (see figure 2.5 for template), carpet structured rugs (see figure 2.5.2 for template), and pictorial structured rugs (see figure 2.5.1 for template). Repeating wallpaper structured rugs feature small repeating motifs patterned throughout the rug. I discuss these in this chapter in terms of their symmetry. Carpet design structured rugs are inspired by earlier European, Turkish or Persian floor covering traditions, while the general structure of pictorial designed rugs feature a person, animal or landscape in the centre surrounded by a border (either geometric or scrolled). Within these larger rug design structures, I found that motifs were largely stable and recurrent.

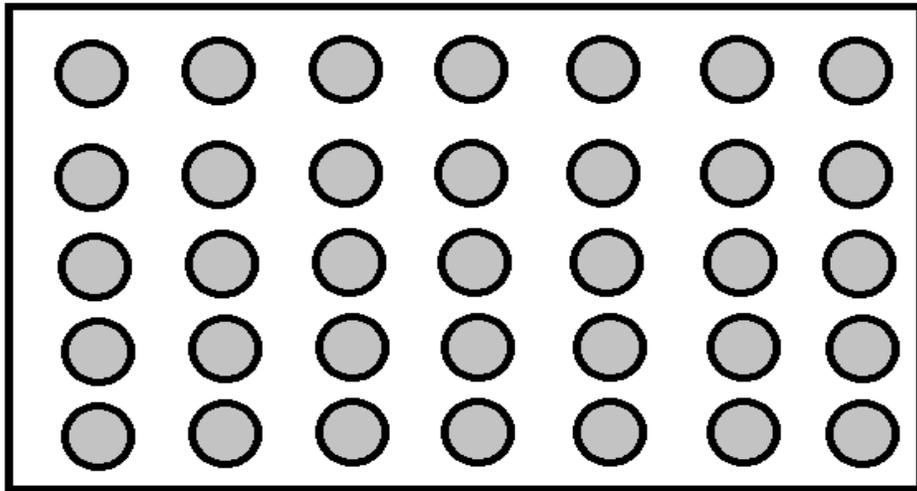


Figure 2.5: Basic structure of a wallpaper type hooked rug. The circles represent repeating motifs (diagram by author)

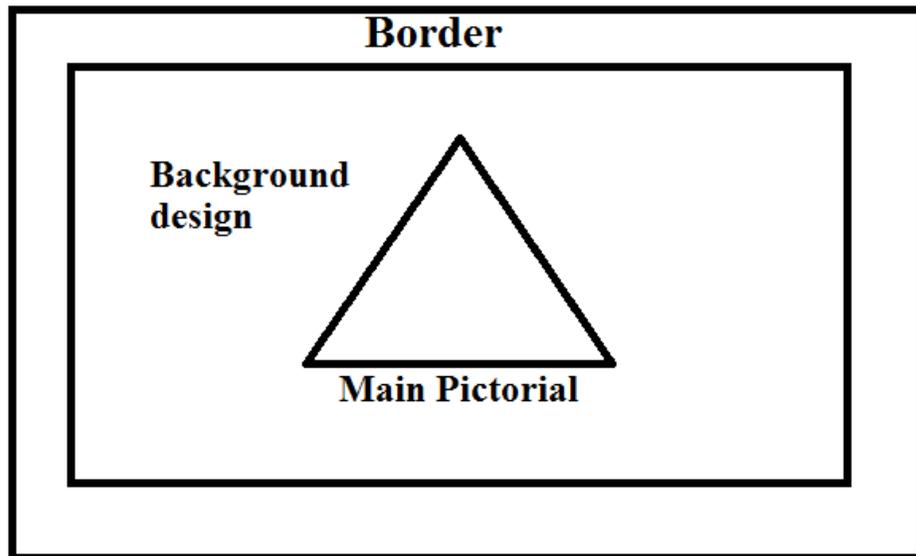


Figure 2.5.1: Basic structure of a pictorial type hooked rug (diagram by author)

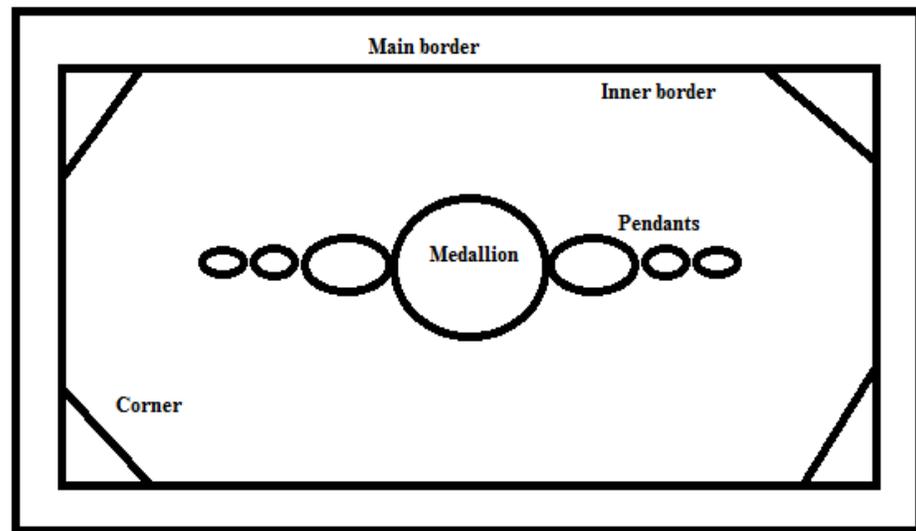


Figure 2.5.2: Basic structure of a carpet type hooked rug (diagram by author)

The Motif-index can be applied to commercially-designed rugs, vernacular designs, and designs from rug hooking cottage industries from Labrador, Chéticamp, and Charlevoix, Quebec. I have broken the Motif-index down into two main sections: A) Curvilinear motifs, and B) Rectilinear motifs. Under each of these main sections are several smaller sub-sections:

A. Curvilinear motifs:

- A.1 Trees
- A.2 Florals
- A.3 Scrolls
- A.4 Curvilinear pictorial motifs

B. Rectilinear motifs:

- B.1 Geometric shapes
- B.2 Geometric scrolls

Each sub-section is then divided even further to sub-sub sections. Curvilinear motifs which are not linear, nor geometric, include flowers, rounded scrolls, leaves, animals, and human figures. Rectilinear motifs include shapes such as diamonds, flags, and building structures that are largely geometric in nature.

While the motif-index for hooked rugs could certainly be applied to other textiles such as quilts, I created it using only hooked rugs and rug hooking patterns as frames of motif references. Many of the motifs discussed, and indeed many of the designs of early hooked rugs, are similar to geometric quilting patterns. There are many similarities between rug hooking and quilting, so it is not surprising. Floral designs on rugs were certainly not unique to rug hooking and are also found on woven rugs and carpets. There are several different types of rug constructions, for non-hooked rugs: Tufted rugs are created with loops of yarn pulled through backing material. The loops are then sheared to create a smooth cut-pile surface. Flat-woven rugs are made by hand or loom by weaving vertical yarns (warps) through the horizontal yarns (wefts). Knotted rugs are made by tying individual knots to the warp yarns that make up the length of the rug. These knots form the pile of the rug. Braided rugs are created by braiding together strips of fabric and sewing them together. As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, braided rugs and tufted rugs (called *defaisure* in Chéticamp) were seen in Chéticamp alongside early hooked rugs. The motif-index is in Appendix I and is a good accompaniment to my discussions of motif in this and the following chapters.

2.7.2 Symmetry in Early Rug Design

A portion of my index is about geometry, and geometric patterns generally have fewer motifs, but the way geometric motifs are repeated is of as much significance as the motif itself. Repeating geometric motifs are usually found in wallpaper structured rugs, with small motifs repeated continuously across the rug. Symmetry analysis, an archeological framework used to discuss repetitive patterns in everything from ceramics, basketry, textiles and architecture, looks at the repeating patterns in a piece of material culture and theorises that within the symmetry patterns are metaphors that share social and cultural ideas to members of the group. It is not my intent to analyse rug designs using symmetry analysis but following in Bronner's idea to apply structuralist theory to material culture, the vocabulary of symmetry is useful here. What interested me most about the language of symmetry was that it not only discussed designs on a piece of material culture, but also how the designs were moving and repeated as well. Symmetry and structure are valued tools when examining wallpaper structured rug types; however, the main reason this thesis does not utilise symmetry as a main framework is that Chéticamp rugs are not largely wallpaper structured rugs. Instead they are overwhelmingly carpet structured or pictorial type rugs.

Below is an illustration (see figure 2.6) depicting the four main motions that a repeating figure can have on the same one-dimensional plane, which works especially well for textiles. There are three general categories used to describe symmetrical patterns for plane figure designs: finite, one-dimensional, and two-dimensional. There are four motion classes that characterize the motions that are possible: reflection, translation, rotation, and glide reflection. A figure can be finite (like a circle) which means it can only

be rotated or reflected. A figure like a string of footprints can be translated in only one direction (and its opposite) and is called one-dimensional. The four motions are: a rotation about a given point by a given angle; translation in a given direction by a given distance; reflection in a line; and glide reflection, which is reflection followed by translation in a line parallel to the reflection line.

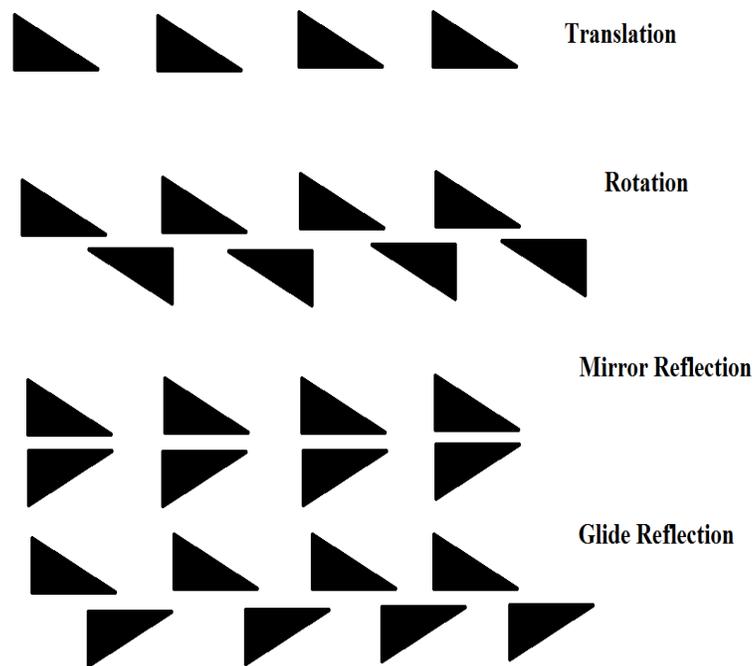


Figure 2.6: The four motions of a repeating pattern in a one-dimensional plane⁸

On a hooked rug design, there may be one-dimensional patterns, where a motif can be translated into only one dimension (and its opposite), and there can be two-dimensional patterns, where a motif can be translated into two directions. For one-

⁸ For a more detailed look at symmetry analysis, please read: Washburn, D. and Crowe, D. 2004. *Symmetry Comes of Age*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

dimensional patterns, the four motions mentioned above offer seven distinct pattern types. These include all seven possible combinations of the four motions described above. Each of the motions may be present or absent in any given one-dimensional pattern (see Appendix 2). For two-dimensional repeating patterns, where a figure admits translation in two or more directions, there are seventeen possible patterns. The seventeen patterns are based on the fact that any pattern that can be translated into two or more directions (two-dimensional patterns), the only possible rotations can be at 60, 90, 120, or 180 degrees. This limits the pattern possibilities to seventeen when factoring in all the different possibilities when it comes to rotations and reflections.

These seventeen patterns are sometimes called “wallpaper patterns” because they represent the base patterns of many wallpaper designs. These patterns are found in many textiles such as quilts, and to some extent, hooked rugs. My discussion of these patterns, both one-dimensional and two-dimensional, is simply to offer an already in-use typology when it comes to repeating motifs. While a thorough symmetry analysis is much more complicated than what I am presenting here, I have found these typologies useful when it comes to the study and analysis of hooked rug designs. It helps show that the basic patterns being discussed in symmetry analysis are also seen in rug hooking, especially in rugs featuring geometric designs.

2.7.3 Examples of Symmetry Patterns in Hooked Rugs

Some common designs for hooked rugs are the basket weave design (see figure 2.6.2 and figure 2.6.3) which coincides with symmetry type pgg (see figure 2.6.1), the log cabin design (see figure 2.8), which is a form of symmetry type $p4g$ (see figure 2.7.1),

and the shell design (see figure 2.7.1), which coincides with symmetry pattern $p1$ (see figure 2.7). These symmetry types are two-dimensional and woven continuously that allows for translation in multiple directions. The basket weave design, as it is known to rug hookers and quilters, depending on the exact design can be several symmetry types. Symmetry pattern $p4g$ features a 90-degree rotation, and a reflection of the motif. This design style is characterized by squares filled with stripes positioned at right angles to each other, giving the rug a look that is reminiscent of, as the name would imply, a basket's weave. In terms of motifs, the basket weave is motif B.3.2 in my index, as it features rectilinear shapes. When discussing this early design style, rug hooking instructor Pearl McGown notes that this style may have, "been the result of having little or nothing to work with, yet, who knows, perhaps it was after all just good taste to use the simplest design with their pine furniture and wide board floors" (McGown 1949, 22). Pattern pgg contains two rotation centres of 180 and glide reflections in two perpendicular directions. Figure 2.6.2 is another example of a pgg basket weave symmetry pattern in a hooked rug.

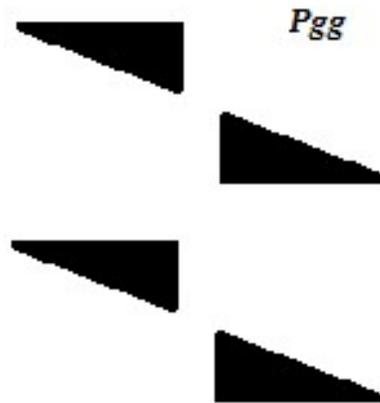


Figure 2.6.1: *Pgg* symmetry pattern (drawing by author)



Figure 2.6.2: Basket weave hooked rug, c. 1900, Canadian Museum of History, B-197 (used with permission)



Figure 2.6.3: Chéticamp basket weave rug. *Les Trois Pignons* Museum (Photo by author)

Pattern type *p1* features no rotation and no type of reflection either (see figure 2.7). This pattern type, when repeated across a hooked rug, was identified by Kent as the shell design, which was popular in the American and Canadian Maritimes. As the name implies, the design consists of repeating clam silhouettes and was used as both a pattern and background on early rugs in Maine, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island (PEI). Kent writes that he was informed by a PEI rug hooker that an English clergyman brought the shell pattern to the island. Other commonly used designs noted by Kent in his important work on the subject are repetitive patterns of stars, circles, squares, and diamonds. The curvilinear shell motif is motif A.4.6E1 in my Index. In addition to the shell design, another other rug that fulfils the *p1* pattern is the diamond rug below. The pattern is a simple diamond on the horizontal, translated repeatedly. The repeated diamond is motif B.1.5 (“diamond, horizontal”).

P1

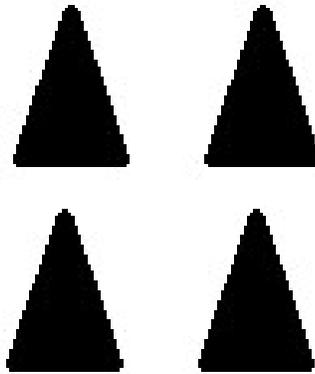


Figure 2.7: *P1* symmetry pattern (drawing by author)



Figure 2.7.1: Shell pattern hooked rug, c.1900, Canadian Museum of History B-210 (used with permission)



Figure 2.7.2: Diamond pattern hooked rug, Cecile Simard & Cecile Fortin, Canadian Museum of History 81-356 (used with permission)

Shared by both hooking and quilting, log-cabin hooked rugs (see figure 2.8) feature a square centre, called the “fire of the cabin” by some artists, which is usually a contrasting colour, and then rectangular strips that interlock and spiral out around it, getting progressively longer as the block grows. It also takes the form of repeating circle-like motifs with an apparent wood grain running through them. Both the geometric and curvilinear variants of the log cabin design are $p4$ pattern types featuring a 90-degree rotation and no reflection (see figure 2.8.1).

While the specific measurements, proportions, size and number of these pieces in the block can change, the basic design and component of each block remains the same (see figure 2.8.2). What gives the log-cabin style quilts their geometric aesthetics is dependent on the overall pattern of the blocks. This can lead to an impressive amount of variation within the style as the design is also predicated on the contrast between light and dark fabrics used in each block. Log cabin motif is composite motif B.3.3.

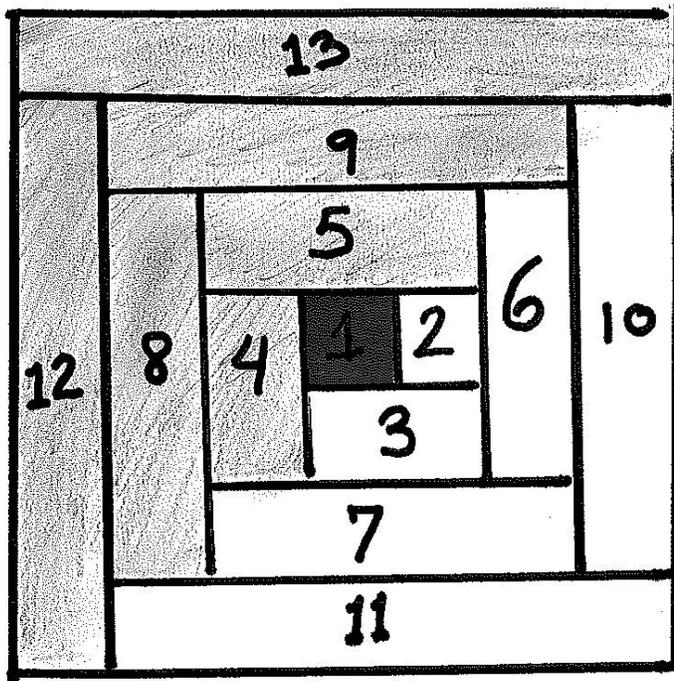


Figure 2.8: Basic log cabin design (field note by author, 2016)

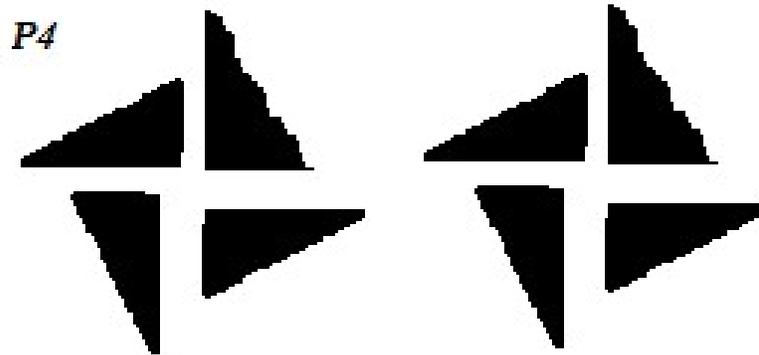


Figure 2.8.1: *P4* symmetry pattern (drawing by author)



Figure 2.8.2: Log Cabin design hooked rug, Canadian Museum of History S84-4222 (used with permission)

2.8 Early Commercial Designs and Consumption

A great deal of Persian, Turkish, and other European woven carpet design is found in hooked rugs, both in terms of pattern use and motif repetition. Certainly, rug hooking at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries was situated within a specific textile context. It was likely influenced by a number of different textile traditions such as quilting, and weaving, as well as a number of different design aesthetics such as the Neo-Colonial and Arts and Crafts movements. When early commercial hooked rugs designs began increasing in popularity at the end of the 19th and 20th centuries, the general aesthetic of the hooked rug began to change, essentially slowly moving away from repeating motifs across the rug to repeating motifs as scrolls, or background with a medallion, bringing hooked rugs closer in layout to other European or Persian carpet traditions. By this I mean, the use of a border, a medallion in the centre as well as

symmetrical pendants which surround the medallion on each side (see figure of template). This basic Persian carpet design template is not limited to carpets, it is also found on book covers and book illuminations from the 15th century (Ford, 1981). Of course, neither is this basic template limited to Persian carpets and is also found in Aubusson, Savonnerie and some Turkish carpet designs (Glassie 1993). Aubusson tapestry, a woven, large-scale tapestry style, dates to the 17th century from the Creuse region of France. Savonnerie tapestries in contrast, were woven, knotted-pile rugs made from silk and wool that date to the 17th century. Most likely, early rug hooking designers such as Frost and Garrett, were not only looking to what contemporary rug hookers were creating, but also looking to pre-existing woven carpet designs for inspiration, whether that be vernacular designs (as Persian carpet designs tend to be), or consciously artistic (Savonnerie).

Through an examination of rug hooking designs, we can see how aesthetics in rug hooking were created, shaped, and molded by commercial patterns, other textile traditions, and individual artistic vision. Designs for hooked rugs did not emerge in a vacuum, they were influenced by local aesthetics, known commercial rug hooking patterns, knowledge of other textile traditions, as well as personal creativity. This discussion will be very useful when we turn our attention to Burke's personal rug aesthetics. There were a few very prominent early pattern makers whose designs became quite popular amongst rug hookers. In the United States, these were Pearl McGown and Edward Frost, while in Canada, the Garrett Company of Nova Scotia was designing what would become ubiquitous rug patterns. It is generally acknowledged that these early pattern designers each offered similar patterns – some were exact copies, others were slight variations on the same theme. The re-use of themes is probably an indication that

they hold certain cultural significance as symbols; however, I am not able to say this with certainty. My intent here is not to engage in the issue of who copied whom, but to present their patterns in a way that will help contextualise what was happening in Chéticamp at the same time in the first few decades of the 20th century.

Locating catalogues for both the Frost and Garrett patterns is difficult as neither business is still in existence; however, I was able to uncover a pattern catalogue of Frost's designs as well as a large number of the Garrett patterns at the Canadian Museum of History. Using design analysis to discuss these early commercial patterns allows us to understand the aesthetic context in which the Chéticamp rug hooking tradition found itself, as well as the artistic context and inspiration that would have been surrounding Lillian Burke when she began designing rug patterns for the Chéticamp hookers.

According to rug hooking instructor Pearl McGown, Edward Frost was arguably the first person to commercialize rug hooking patterns in 1868. He was a tin peddler from Biddeford, Maine who supplied families in the area with necessary tin wares for their homes. Travelling peddlers often bartered with customers for goods and it is in written accounts of these travels that we find some of the first references to his interest in rug hooking. He was said to often gather up rags and old copper boilers from customers in exchange for his wares. Reminiscent of discussions had by Barbeau, Kent, and Traquair about the artistic value of hooked rugs they encountered, Frost was noted as saying that he often found many of the rugs he encountered in the homes of his customers to be crude and unappealing.

In speaking to various women, he noticed that there was a virtual lack of available designs for rug hookers to choose from. Thus, combining his business acumen

with his latent artistic skills he began to create designs himself (McGown 1949, 60). He began by sketching designs on burlap for his wife and was almost immediately asked by neighbours to design for them as well. In order to save time and make more money he began to create design stencils out of old iron and copper wash boilers. He writes that, “after fitting myself out with tools I began making small stencils of single flowers, scrolls, leaves, buds etc., each one on a small plate; then I could with a stencil brush print in ink in plain figures much faster than I could sketch. Thus, I had reduced ten hours’ labour to two and a half hours” (Frost 1970, 12). Eventually Frost created what was essentially a printing press for rug patterns, which he would also colour in, if requested. Eventually he sold his tin peddling business and took up designing rug patterns full time. Frost patterns were widely recognized as the earliest and most popular rug designs of the late 19th century (McGown 1949).

I was lucky enough to find a rare Frost pattern catalogue in the Museum’s archives. Initially published in 1970 by the Greenfield Village Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan, the book contains several dozen illustrations of Frost’s patterns. According to the book, Frost’s patterns fall into five main sections: birds and beasts, garden delights, early geometrics, odds and ends, and Turkish treasures. Indeed, these are broad categories found in hooked rugs across region and style. I will be discussing Frost’s floral patterns in relation to Burke’s Chéticamp floral rugs in Chapter 4 so here I will discuss his patterns in a general way. Frost’s geometric patterns build on the repeating pattern styles I discussed earlier in this chapter. These are patterns that seem to have been borrowed from quilting and other textiles traditions featuring hit and miss patterns, and repeating diamond designs. I am including below two examples of his

animal patterns (see figures 2.9 and 2.9.2), which along with his florals, were his most popular. His animal patterns are roughly divided into birds (motif A.4.1B, “bird”) including the eagle, chicken (motif A.4.1B6), duck (motif A.4.1B9), and mammal patterns, which include the lion (motif A.4.1A13), deer (motif A.4.1A10), dog (motif A.4.1A4), cat (motif A.4.1A1), and horse (motif A.4.1A6). Preoccupations with the natural world (specifically flora and fauna) was a common and popular interest for the Victorian era, so the popularity of these motifs is expected as reflecting the tastes and aesthetics of the late 19th century.

While each of these patterns features an animal or two as the medallion of the rug, each has a repeating border of flowers, scrolls or geometric shapes. In Frost’s patterns, the most commonly used animals are cats (wild and domestic), dogs, and horses. While Frost’s designs and the motifs he uses in them are largely similar to other commercial rug hooking patterns such as those from the Garrett company, he does use specific motifs such as the eagle, and vexillogical motifs (stars and stripes), as American symbols of fraternal orders such as The Knights of Pythias, a fraternal secret order founded in Washington DC in the 19th century, that are undeniably American.

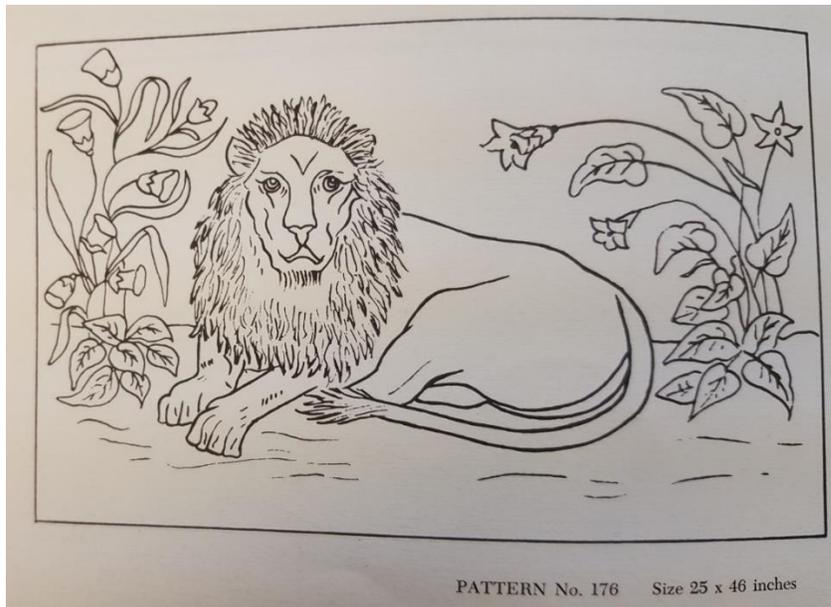


Figure 2.9: Edward Frost pattern #176



Figure 2.9.1: Hooked Rug, Mrs. McKee, c. 1860-1880, from Frost pattern #176
Canadian Museum of History, 79-1673

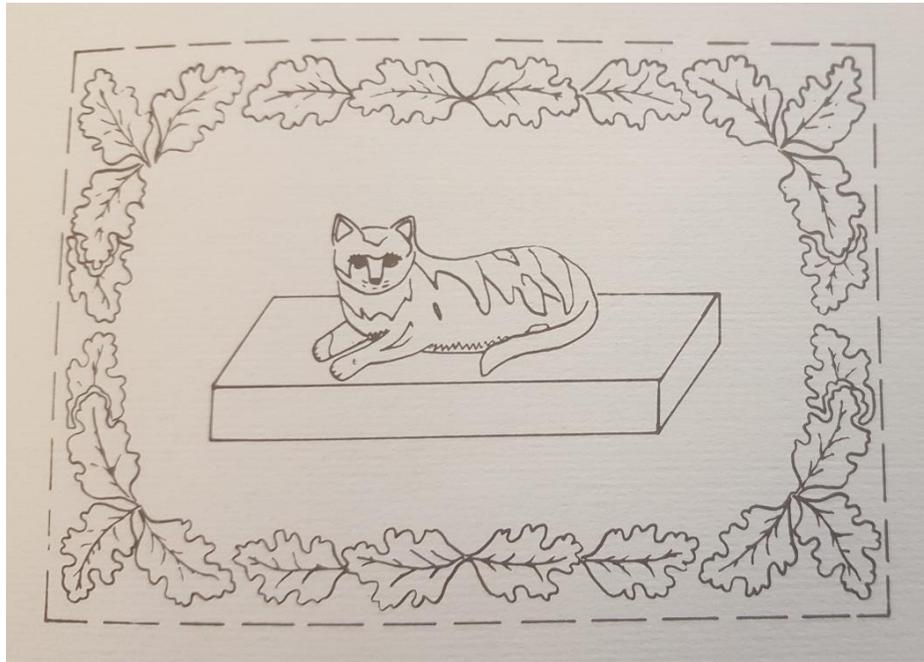


Figure 2.9.2: Edward Frost pattern #49



Figure 2.9.3: Hooked Rug, Joseph Longpré, c. early 1900s, from Frost pattern #49
Canadian Museum of History, Nettie M. Sharpe Collection, 78-465 (used with permission)

In the first rug (see figure 2.9.2), the lion (motif A.4.1A12) and his floral background (motifs: A.1.1A “branch”, A.1.3E “leaf, wide – smooth”, and A.2.14 “flower, unidentifiable”) were hooked rather faithfully to the pattern. The only alteration done to the pattern is the addition of a geometric border (A.3.7 “scroll, straight”) and the autumnal colour ground on which the lion reclines. The second pattern (see figure 2.9.2), Frost #49, features a cat (motif A.4.1A1 “cat, single”) lounging on a box surrounded by a scrolled leaf pattern (motif A.1.3D “leaf – lobed” that is both translated and mirrored at the top and bottom border, coupled with the same motif in the corners that is rotated 90 degrees in both directions). The rug example (see figure 2.9.3) illustrates the common practice of altering commercial patterns and features a red wavy border line as well as an entirely new border scroll (motifs: A.3.1A “looped scroll, translated” as well as A.1.3A “leaf” with both vertical and horizontal reflection).

In 1892, around the same time Edward Frost was designing and creating commercially available rug hooking patterns in New England, a young businessman in Nova Scotia was also developing a successful pattern business, which would significantly alter both the technique and fabrics used for rug hooking in Canada. John E. Garrett worked at a store on Brunswick Street in Halifax that sold some rug patterns. While the shop owners had been dubious that the patterns would sell at all, they were the first items to sell out. Garrett was sent to pick up more patterns for the shop. Instead of picking up the required patterns, Garrett decided he would attempt to create them himself, and “when he arrived home, he jig-sawed a scroll out of basswood, rolled an ink roller over it, and placing a piece of burlap on it, rolled it with a metal roller for a weight, and it was a success” (Garrett, 1926).

Previously, hooking patterns came in the form of stencils that women needed to draw onto the burlap themselves before hooking, but John decided that stamping the stencils directly onto the burlap would save hookers time, and adding colour to the design would also make the whole process simpler and easier. Thus John Garrett created what could be described as the first “hook by numbers” business where hookers could buy burlap already stamped (in colour no less) with their chosen design. These types of kits are still sold today by some rug hooking artist-entrepreneurs like Deanne Fitzpatrick. They would simply need to buy the corresponding coloured yarn or cut appropriately colored rags. As Cecil Garrett, John’s son describes,

The rubber stamp from which the patterns are printed is made by stencilling the design desired on it, and then carving it according to the design. This rubber stamp is put in a home-made printing press, and the burlap is run through between this rubber stamp and a heavy metal roller and printed in rolls of about seventy mats to the roll. These mats are cut up in lengths and are now ready to be colored by hand, by the girls who are trained for this purpose. (Garrett, 1926)

As with Frost’s patterns, Garrett’s designs similarly fall under the same broad groupings. He was fond of branches (motifs A.1.1 – A.1.2G) leaves (motifs: A.1.3 – A.1.3J) scrolls (motifs: A.31 – A.1.311, and B.2 – B.3.4), roses (motif A.2.3 “five petal flower”) and other florals (motifs A.2.1 – A.2.14). Garrett had the maddening habit of re-numbering patterns in different catalogues so this slightly complicates our discussion of Garrett patterns; however, when able, I have located original Garrett pattern catalogue photos and, where possible, give the different pattern numbers for each design discussed. While Garrett’s patterns were functionally different than Frost’s (Frost’s were essentially coloured stencils, while Garrett’s were stamped directly on the burlap), Garrett’s patterns

certainly echo, and in many cases are flat out identical to, Frost's design. This suggests that both companies were heavily influenced by each other's works, and that they were both at least somewhat comfortable with the similarities of their wares. Garrett's patterns are generally similar to Frost's. He mostly designed carpet type and pictorial type structured rugs. In terms of design and motif, his rugs diverged from Frost and other commercial rug patterns in instances where Garrett represented specifically Canadian symbols, such as motifs relating to the monarchy, vexillogical symbols such as the maple leaf, beavers, and the schooner, *Bluenose*. I believe that while copyright and trademark issues were likely quite different in the early 20th century, the bigger factor is that both Frost and Garrett borrowed many motifs and design ideas from pre-existing motifs that were already in use. An example of this would be Garrett pattern 4003, found in his 1936-1937 catalogue (see figure 2.9.4). It features repeating large geometric squares, two repeating floral designs and multi-coloured smaller squares that alternate with black squares in what is called a "hit and miss" pattern. This is a very popular quilting pattern that would have been frequently used by women in their everyday quilting designs and illustrates how much Garrett and other early commercial rug hooking designers relied on existing vernacular aesthetics in textile design for their companies.

While Garrett's designs generally reflected the rug hooking design aesthetics of the time, I found a few of his designs that would have set his company apart from any others. These designs are namely the Crown pattern 941 (see figure 2.9.5), and the Bluenose pattern 2024, and B-100 (see figure 2.9.6). The crown design (motif A.4.4B "Crown/Tiara"), depicts a crown similar to one sported by King George VI on his

inauguration in 1937 to commemorate the Royal visit of King George and his wife Queen Elizabeth in 1939.

Garrett patterns 2024 and B-100 is the Bluenose schooner (motif A.4.6C “Sailing Vessel”). *Bluenose* was a two-masted schooner built by the famous naval architect, William James Roué. In 1920, Canada and the USA began a yearly fishing schooner race known as the International Fishermen’s Trophy. After the American team won in 1920, the Canadian team asked Roué to design the team’s schooner for the following year’s race. The Roué -designed *Bluenose* won the next race and kept winning until its final race in 1938. The schooner then represented Canada at the Chicago World’s Fair and at the Silver Jubilee of King George V. (Ryan 1995). Since 1937, *Bluenose* has figured on the Canadian dime, and within Nova Scotia, many colloquially refer to themselves as “Bluenosers”, though the expression predates the schooner. Figure 2.9.7 is a copy of the original Garrett Bluenose pattern, while figure 2.9.7is a hand drawn version of the pattern. It has been vertically flipped into a mirror image of the original and omits the waves and wind designs.

The inclusion of these two designs in Garrett’s catalogues demonstrates that Garrett was engaging not only with trendy aesthetics of the time, but also with a larger popular culture by dabbling with royal commemorative motifs and local history. Indeed, designs such as *Bluenose* are not only invoking Nova Scotian history, but they are symbols of identity for Canadians and Maritimers.



Figure 2.9.4: Hooked Rug, Irene Auger, Les Petites Mains, 1942, hooked on Garrett pattern #4003. Canadian Museum of History, 84-355 (used with permission)



Figure 2.9.5: Hooked Rug Pattern, John E. Garrett Ltd, c. 1939 Canadian Museum of History, 85-1930 (used with permission)

Date Designed	Dec 1938	Design No.	2024
Designed By	F.W.G.		
Sizes Perforated	24x36, 24x40, 32x57		
Remarks	for Woolworth made 21x30 - Oct-1940 for Chetivamp		
Electros	Date of Last entry on this sheet.		
Used by	in S I Z E S		Seasons

Figure 2.9.6: Garrett “Bluenose” pattern #2024, Canadian Museum of History Archives (used with permission)



Figure 2.9.7: Rug hooked from Garrett pattern #2024. Canadian Museum of History 77-319 (used with permission)

Frost and Garrett rug patterns demonstrate a shift in early rugs. From earlier home-designed repeating motifs to commercially-available design, aesthetic change here is linked to taste and social class. Taste is a means of distinguishing yourself from other social groups. Taste and consumption can be symbolic of who we are, and more importantly, how we want others to perceive us. Bourdieu writes that taste is not arbitrary but based on power and social status (Bourdieu 1984, 15). In the catalogues for Frost and Garrett, nestled among the regional and national symbols of identities are designs which consciously link to notions of class distinctions, such as the patterns which explicitly reference older European and Persian textile traditions. Class and cultural capital is linked to our consumptive tastes; Mozart may be seen by some as intellectually stimulating by some, but pretentious by others.

Early hooked rugs in Chéticamp were largely created and consumed in the home because they were most often made from rags and used clothing. These rugs were functional rugs. Created and used by the family to keep bare floors warm, early rugs were largely made from recycled clothing. The necessity of rugs on the floors of a Chéticamp home speaks to a certain level of poverty. Recycling used clothing to make rugs for the floor was not a leisurely pastime in the way it can be today. It was a way to inject beauty and creativity into the functional, the necessary.

Searching through archives, museum and personal collections I have not been able to find instances of inclusion of commercial patterns in the rugs of the area; however, this is probably because of the scarcity of these older (pre-1920s) rugs in Chéticamp, not that rug hookers were unfamiliar with the commercially sold patterns. While early rugs were largely created for the family and used by the family, it was these

early rugs that began attracting pedlars and salesmen to Chéticamp in the late 1910s. Chiasson notes that these pedlars, who were viewed as outsiders, from non-Acadian backgrounds, were called “Arabs” and “Jews” by the locals (Chiasson 23), denoting a perceived middle Eastern ethnicity and highlights the suspicion and othering often foisted upon outsiders when visiting small, tight-knit communities such as Chéticamp. It is not known if these pedlars were actually Jewish or Arab, however there was a history of Jewish pedlars in Canada. Although not much has been written about the Cape Breton Jewish community, there were small Jewish communities in the Sydney area (most notably in Glace Bay, New Waterford and Whitney Pier) that began to take shape in the late 19th century. While there were four synagogues in operation at that time, now there is only one, the Temple Sons of Israel in Sydney.

Chiasson, who is writing about these men over fifty years after their arrival in Chéticamp in the 1980s, uses mostly negative language to discuss the foreigners. Described as suspicious outsiders who grifted the women of Chéticamp of their hand-made rugs, they snatched them up in exchange for cheap linoleum, and sold them for an impressive markup to wealthy mainlanders. Rug hooker Catherine Poirier noted about the pedlars from her childhood, “in the winter, mother and I hooked, we’d put them on the floor. Then after some Jews went by and they’d give us clothes, like a nice dress, so we’d give him a rug for that. The pedlars, we called them” (Poirier interview 1988). The specific nomenclature used to describe the pedlars, calling them “Jews” or “Arabs” was likely not only an act of casual racism but also a way to denote them as outsiders to the community, which would have been rather homogenously made up of French-speaking, Catholic Acadians.

I asked about the peddlars in each interview I conducted. Most women remembered stories about mainland peddlars trading goods for local rugs. Yvette LeLièvre further explained to me that,

there are a lot of people who would have come into this region. They were from Sydney, Halifax and they would take things at the lowest price in the cities, smoked, damaged goods, liquidation sales, and then they would start knocking on people's doors. So, if you could trade in your rugs, rag rugs. They were rag rugs, not yarn. If you could trade that in for linoleum, and dishes, and winter coats and perfume. I don't know if you call it an equal bargain.
(LeLièvre, Interview 2016)

The peddlars seemed to even be active in the years after the cottage industry was set up – hooker Yvette Muise explained that she distinctly remembered her mother exchanging whatever she needed for rugs when the peddlars came to town. She notes that her mother would “get whatever she needed from them. A pot for the kitchen, pans for Dad, whatever” (Muise interview, 2016). William Roach, a local wood carver and hobbyist rug hooker mentioned that while women would trade their rugs unfairly for cheap linoleum, they would often turn around and hook rugs with designs copied off this very same linoleum to exchange further with the visiting peddlars (Bill Roach interview, 2016). It would seem that the linoleum designs were seen as modern, contemporary and exciting, and thus appropriated into the vernacular of local rug hooking. These early rugs, created by women for their function and bartered for other necessities are symbols of a class that relied on their increasing value to outsiders.

2.8.1 Hooked Handicrafts and the Rug Hunters

While pedlars were making their way to Chéticamp and other towns in the Maritimes to purchase rugs for re-sale, it was also becoming a popular practice for American collectors to visit Atlantic Canada in search of inexpensive hooked rugs. Winthrop Kent, whose views on the origin of the hooked rug I discussed earlier in this thesis, often travelled across North America searching for rugs to acquire for his private collection. In his writings, he detailed a visit to Canada on a rug-buying mission with a friend. He described driving from farm to farm through rural New Brunswick and finding many women willing to rip their rugs off the floor and hand them over to him. By the end of this rug hunt – which historian Sharon MacDonald notes is written about using terms similarly used for big game hunting – Kent’s car is loaded down with rugs. He repeatedly writes that the car groans under the weight of his continually growing cache of tapestries. He writes,

Here, far from the American restlessness of modern life, almost out of the modern world but of it, as far as education and observation count, old-world breeding was kept alive [...] Then too there was a feeling that except for Indian life this part of the world is still much as it was before the American Revolution and before the Loyalists fled from ‘The States,’ in fact it presents a likeness of New England conditions in those earlier days, conditions that the mind of to-day cannot easily visualize. Perhaps such a journey is of greater interest than the object of it and a walking trip in certain parts of Canada would surely be as delightful to some men as were George Borrow’s Pèreginations in Spain or Wild Wales, even with the adventures and hazards that a journey afoot always brings. (Kent 148-156)

This type of travel into Canada to search for handicrafts was commonplace in the early 20th century. Wealthy American rug collectors would often come to Canada on a

“rug hunt” to accumulate as many rugs as they could find. It mirrored what was happening with the visiting pedlars in Chéticamp, who would trade goods for rugs and sell them to interested buyers. This was the height of the Colonial-style interior decorating in which handmade crafts were valued and sought out because they stood in opposition to an industrial, commercial, and mass-produced economic business model that was slowly taking over industry. As historian Thomas Lackey suggests, the making of handicrafts became a uniting point for many perceived societal ills; from a romantic response to the inescapable standardization of industrialization, to an economic lifeline for families during the Great Depression (Lackey 1).

Harkening back to the pre-Industrial Revolution, this obsession with rural, handmade objects created by seemingly simple country folk who were more in tune with nature and culture was reminiscent of Romantic Nationalism (Pocius 1994). A 1940 issue of *Canadian Home and Garden* featured an article stating that rural artists were inhabitants of unspoiled countryside where men and women are described as carvers and weavers, and where their love of beauty spills into their needlework. Further they describe the folk song as growing out of the worker’s sense of well-being as he labours creatively to supply his daily needs” (Lackey, 17).

Labour historian Sharon MacDonald identified several main reasons for this mat mania. She writes that the socio-cultural phenomena that contributed to the obsession with rugs were the arts and crafts movement, first-wave feminism, social and religious reform impulses, and tourism (MacDonald 2001, 60). Certainly, a fair amount of romanticization of perceived rural, country life as was found in the rhetoric of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in Montreal, founded by Alice Peck and Mary Philips.

Supporters of Canadian handicrafts, they saw the potential in promoting Canada's history to sell crafts to visiting tourists. In 1934 they issued letters to rug hookers in Quebec with orders on which designs and colours were to be hooked for sale in the Guild's Montreal shop. Over the next five years, the Guild sent rug hookers portfolios filled with rug designs in an attempt to focus the designs away from floral and geometric rugs, to pictorial rugs depicting Quebec life (Lackey 13). Wealthy outsiders going to Nova Scotia to consume culture was not new and still ongoing. This trend holds true for tourists, antique hunters such as Kent, peddlers and even Lillian Burke. They are all examples of outsiders consuming and altering local culture for their purposes. Like the pedlars in Chéticamp, rug hunters seemed to have been searching out pieces of romanticised folk culture to collect and sell. A means to an end, their collections of hooked rugs from rural Nova Scotia existed not only because they were interested in hooked rugs, but because they were seen as a status symbol to own.

2.9 Conclusion

The search for the origin of the hooked rug was eventually abandoned once it became obvious that there was no clear-cut answer to the question of where hooked rugs came from. Examining these competing origin theories, however, allows us to better understand how scholars viewed rugs and hints at why there has been such little academic interest in hooked rugs, especially in Chéticamp rugs, which is notable when you consider how important rugs were economically and artistically to communities in Quebec, the Maritimes, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Barbeau notes in his article on

hooked rugs that “the problem of origin remains open, with the issue more clearly defined for further research” (Barbeau 1942, 31). However, this further research did not come, at least not academically. Popular books about hooked rugs continued to be published detailing varied methods, design styles, and techniques for creating rugs (McGowan 1949, Kopp 1975). This demonstrates that scholarly interest in rug hooking was limited to its perceived value as a survival and remnant of European textile traditions and innovations. Its value lay exclusively in being provably old and European. The theories espoused by Winthrop, Traquair and Barbeau leaned heavily on the notion that handicrafts are conservative, lacking dynamism (Toelken 1979) and innovation. While Waugh’s theory minimised women’s creative agency and ownership of rug making by attributing it to men. Although assigning a male origin to the tradition may have been a way to legitimize rug hooking in some way.

The lack of very old examples of hooked rugs is likely one of the reasons the search for their origin preoccupied so many academics. Traquair’s letters to Barbeau offer a hint as to why both men believed no pre-1860s rug existed in Canada. He writes that, “One obvious reason is that hooked rugs (1) were not valued, (2) wear out easily. So it comes to this that we have no really old rugs. One rug even that could be dated with certainty to 1800 would settle the question but farmers wives do not date their rugs and do not keep them when they are old” (Traquair, Barbeau Fonds, 1942). James Kopp, an American hooked rug scholar, argues that the making of hooked rugs in the 19th century was thought of as less important than other forms of needlecraft such as quilting or needlepoint. The fact that it was seen as a country craft meant that it was not viewed as

suitable for a fashionable Victorian home, and thus there was very little written about hooked rugs at that time (Kopp 45).

“Mat mania,” a phenomena named and discussed by Sharon MacDonald (2001), whereby Americans would enter Canada on rug hunting expedition to find and acquire old rugs (largely in Quebec and the Maritimes) meant that in all likelihood, many of Canada’s earliest rugs were brought to the US during these “hunting” trips, a trend which continued with cottage industries in Labrador and Chéticamp. Specifically, with Chéticamp rugs, selling to wealthy Americans has meant that very few important older rugs are in Canada.

The burgeoning tourist trade in the early 20th century and its effect on hooked rugs was one dismissed by both Traquair and Barbeau. In effect, it would certainly seem that both chose to overlook rug hooking traditions which they deemed part of the tourist trade. Their search for older rugs in an effort to find the origin, meant that they only looked in places where they deemed rugs to be authentic, that is rugs that they believed were representative of the original tradition, unspoiled by wanting to appeal to the taste of tourists. “Authentic” in this case for Barbeau and Traquair, seems to be a context outside of commercial purposes. This creates a bit of a catch-22: hooked rugs became an important source of income for many women (MacDonald 2001) either through cottage industries or through selling directly to visiting pedlars and in many ways, kept rug hooking alive and thriving in parts of Canada.

In this chapter, I have examined the ways in which early scholars such as Marius Barbeau discussed rug hooking and more importantly, what this meant for rug hooking at the time. Barbeau’s focus on origin was not unlike the preoccupations of other folklorists

of the time. Searching for origins was then seen as an important part of the scholar's job. However, I also argue that when scholars felt they could not locate the origin of the hooked rug, they simply put the subject aside and did not continue their research. This could have been for several reasons – that their interest in hooked rugs was simply a fleeting hobby, or perhaps because the only value they saw in hooked rugs was its potentially important origins. In the end, the search for the beginning led scholars down a blind pathway and has been left largely unresolved.

While I have questioned Barbeau's letters and preoccupations with the origin of the hooked rug, like him, I also find it useful to consider rug design. With hooked rugs being artistic creations, design and motifs are important lenses through which to study larger themes of creativity, labour, and community aesthetics. When considering early hooked rugs, in Chéticamp and in other parts of the Canada, we can see certain trends. Early rug designs, those which pre-date commercial patterns, seem to be based on other textile traditions such as quilting or needlepoint. This means that many early rugs employ repeating geometric patterns. These repeating motif patterns can be analyzed using several methods such as symmetry analysis, or structural analysis such as morphology, which is the method I have used in this chapter and will continue to use throughout this thesis.

Looking at early rug designs both in and outside of Chéticamp, we start seeing several shifts. In terms of design; from repeating patterns to other design styles which start to showcase motifs symbolic of regional, ethnic and national identities. Early rug design or at least pre-commercial rug designs seemed often to borrow from other textile traditions such as quilting in both motif, symmetry and design repetition. When the first

commercial hooked rug designers began to sell their patterns, they borrowed from existing motifs used by rug hookers in the creation of their rugs, as well as from woven carpet designs such as Persian rugs. Finally, not only did the pattern designers borrow motifs, they also borrowed designs from each other. Rug hookers who utilized these patterns often also borrowed freely from them in creating their own original designs. In terms of function, rugs made for utilitarian purposes in the home began to give way to rugs made from commercially-available patterns which were sold or bartered. Finally, the consumption of rugs began to change as they became commodified and sought out by peddlers in Chéticamp, as well as wealthy rug hunters looking to add pieces of Nova Scotia's rural cultures to their collections.

In this chapter we have examined motif, symmetry, and design in both vernacular and commercial rug patterns. In the following chapter I examine the rise of the hooked rug cottage industry in Chéticamp, looking specifically at production, design and consumption. I present the designs created by Lillian Burke, who founded the hooked rug cottage industry in Chéticamp and discuss them in a comparative way, demonstrating that although Burke's designs were at once radically different than what Chéticamp women had been hooking; nevertheless, that they were in line with other rug hooking traditions, including older textile traditions and artistic movements.

Chapter Three: Rags to Yarn, The Rise of The Cottage Industry

“Lillian Burke made hooked rugs into art. She took them off the floor and put them on the wall.” (Diane Poirier, Interview 2012)

3.1 Design

I decide that the design of this first rug of mine should be a cat, in honor of my deep love for them. As a bonus, cats seem easier to hook than other animals for some reason. I draw a simple cat's face inside a thick straight border. It is a simple design; no shading, no repeating patterns. Nothing to write home about, but the complicated swirls of carefully shaded florals, or the rich and nuanced tapestries I have seen others create are not beginner-friendly. I considered buying a pattern for this but eventually decided to try my hand at designing my own. Loop by loop the rug takes shape. Even though the design is simple, I make choices that add character and expression to the simple figure; deep eggplant for the background, teal and pink for the face, forest green for the whiskers. I decide that my rug hooking style may veer towards folk art more than realism.

3.2 The Rise of Rug Hooking Cottage Industries

Commercially-sold rug hooking patterns were not the only shifts in the history of Canadian rug hooking. The change of intention, from function to purposely and commercially aesthetic, is also seen in the rug hooking cottage industries that sprang up across Canada. In Charlevoix (QC), Labrador, and Chéticamp cottage industries, all started by community outsiders, were developed around the same time; Labrador's

Grenfell Industries were set up in the 1910s, Chéticamp's in the mid-1920s, and Charlevoix in 1925. The fact that the Chéticamp rug hooking industry, which effected great change to the design, aesthetic and technique of rugs in the area, was not unique allows us to examine these changes with a comparative eye.

In this chapter, I will focus on the cottage industry in Chéticamp with the aim of understanding the aesthetic and technical changes which affected the rug hooking traditions in the area. As well, I examine the ways in which these rugs were produced and consumed. With the rise of these three (Chéticamp, Labrador, and Charlevoix) cottage industries, local rug hooking underwent several dramatic shifts as the aesthetics demanded by the commercial and commodifying nature of the cottage industries heavily influenced both the look and function of rugs. The Grenfell mats are some of the most widely-recognized Canadian hooked rugs. That the cottage industry was so successful during the first half of the 20th century was in no small part related to the “mat mania” discussed earlier in this thesis (MacDonald 2001), the perceived exoticism of these Labrador rugs, and the added philanthropic dimension of helping to lift rural communities out of poverty. With regard to Chéticamp, I will present several hand-painted rug designs created by Lillian Burke, the American artist who developed the cottage industry in Chéticamp. With the evidence I present, one can conclude the following: that the transmission and sharing of design ideas was free-flowing and mutual; that local vernacular traditions were dramatically altered to suit the tastes of the consumer; that the main consumer of rugs went from familiar and local to foreign; that the function of hooked rugs changed from utilitarian and necessary to status symbol for

the wealthy; that outsiders with formal schooling in the arts were brought in with their social and cultural capital to influence the tradition.

3.3 Lillian Burke and Chéticamp

The story of Chéticamp's rug hooking cottage industry, a story of cultural and economic change, can be traced back to the family of inventor and scientist, Alexander Graham Bell. His wife, Mabel Hubbard Bell, had been trying, rather unsuccessfully to create a thriving cottage industry based on handicrafts to help the women of Cape Breton, especially those near their home in Baddeck. The Bells, whose main home was in Washington D.C. had built their magnificent Cape Breton residence, named *Beinn Bhreagh* ("beautiful mountain" in Scottish Gaelic), near Baddeck. In 1891, Mabel had already formed the Young Ladies Club (later named the Bell Club), a club formed in the relation to the women's club movement of the late 19th century (Macdonald 1995, 51), in which women were given opportunities to affect social, cultural and intellectual growth. Mrs. Bell's club focused on education initiatives in the area, including setting up a public library and the first parent-teacher association in Canada (MacDonald 57). Eventually, the interests of Mrs. Bell and her daughter, Marian Fairchild, turned to handicraft and their Cape Breton Home Industries, a cottage industry designed to alleviate local poverty through the sale of handicrafts. Though local women were taught lace-making by Mabel Bell, Anselme Chiasson notes that the intended consumers (mainly tourists) were turned off by high prices of the handmade lace (Chiasson 36). While Mabel Bell passed away in 1922, her daughter, Marian Fairchild, took up her mother's charitable causes. She encouraged her acquaintance, an American artist named

Lillian Burke to visit them in Cape Breton and to help her fledgling Cape Breton Home Industries. The Bell women and Lillian Burke, well-educated women of comfortable financial means, viewed their social roles in Cape Breton as that of helping those less fortunate. Historian Edward Langille, a professor of Modern Languages at St Francis Xavier University, who is writing a biography of Lillian Burke, explained to me that,

Bell's philosophy was kind of a top-down philosophy where rich people made it their business to help poor people. And there were many cottage industries in America and also in the UK that were sponsored by, basically, rich people. And Eleanor Roosevelt was one of them. I mean, she had Val Kill Industries in New York State, which was identical to Cape Breton Home Industries except that she wasn't doing textiles she was doing furniture and metalwork and basket weaving and stuff like that. But it was all the same philosophy of helping rural people, and especially women, make money. So it wasn't unique. (Langille, Interview, 2016)

Once in Baddeck, Lillian Burke became interested in the local tradition of rug hooking, where women created warm floor coverings by hooking strips of old clothing into a burlap backing. Burke saw an artistic potential in this craft and attempted to convince the women of Baddeck to alter their methods – to change everything from the materials they used to the designs they hooked – in order to appeal to the wealthy Americans Burke envisioned selling their creations to (McKay 1994, 203). Burke found no receptive audience for these alterations to the tradition in Baddeck. Ian McKay notes that Burke's interest in the urban appropriation of handicraft and the "invention of rural folkways" (McKay 203), was in the same vein as that of Mary Black, who became known as a craft revivalist in mainland Nova Scotia in the 1930s and 1940s. Black's ideology of craft was based on a romantic reverence for the rural past where existing,

highly localised, and often marginalised crafts were re-invented to both appeal to wealthy, urban tastes while pushing an idealised view of the tradition.

Yvette LeLièvre mentioned that the history of pedlars in Chéticamp meant that the women were likely more receptive to Burke than elsewhere in Cape Breton. She notes that, “Mrs. Bell was very interested in helping the people of Cape Breton. Not just Chéticamp, but Cape Breton, with a cottage industry. She tried tanning in Baddeck, and Chinese lace, but it was overwhelming, and they couldn’t do it. But, they didn’t see the pedlars so hence they didn’t see the importance of making rugs to trade or sell” (LeLièvre interview 2016). When the women in Baddeck were not receptive to Burke’s vision (Chiasson 37), she made her way to Chéticamp and found the women there were open and willing to test out her new methods, designs and patterns. As Langille explained to me, “They [the women in Chéticamp] were extremely receptive to the styles and motifs and the whole concept of the hooked rug that Lillian Burke introduced, and the proof of that is that she left the business, or Chéticamp, around 1940 and they carried on with that tradition until this day. They did not radically depart from it” (Langille, Interview, 2016).

Burke was quick to make changes to the rug hooking tradition in the area. These vast changes reflected her knowledge of the genteel taste of wealthy New Englanders who would be her main market and highlighted the then-current trends of outfitting American homes in neo-colonial, Victorian styles, she replaced the *breillon* rugs, the rug hooked from recycled old clothing, with fine 2-ply wool. Gone were the bright colours, now replaced with soft muted pastels that she insisted the women dye themselves (Caplan, 1978). She even changed the way women hooked, and since she was looking to

employ a large number of women in Chéticamp, they acquiesced her demands. Instead of hooking in straight lines, or in whatever ways each woman had learned, the women were instructed to hook in squares. This gave texture to the rugs and created a trademark of sorts for Chéticamp rugs. Burke insisted on a mastery of shading. Dyeing the wool required for rugs with lots of shading was a painstaking process. But this insistence on shading helped give the rugs the look of tapestries and paintings that belonged on the floors and walls of wealthy homes instead of the handicrafts created with ripped old clothing that used to adorn the floors of the Chéticamp home. From 1927 to the late 1930s, Burke designed and marketed Chéticamp hooked rugs in New York City where she worked in conjunction with interior designers, and architects to outfit wealthy American homes with Chéticamp rugs (Langille 2015, 2). Hundreds of Chéticamp women were employed by Burke to hook rugs of varying sizes that were either sold in her shop in Baddeck, or sent off to adorn American homes (Chiasson 53), until a combination of a “hooker’s revolt” (discussed later in this chapter) as well as a wartime restriction on burlap (Langille 2012; Ryan 1995, 15) caused Burke to abandon the rug industry she had created and managed.

In 1930s Nova Scotia, the Antigonish Movement, also known as the co-operative movement⁹ was becoming widespread. It was started by Catholic priests in an attempt to blend adult education, co-operatives, microfinancing and rural community development into a whole movement that would aid Maritime Canada, and help rural Maritimers

⁹ Daniel MacInnes presents an in-depth look at the Antigonish Movement and Identity in Nova Scotia in his doctoral thesis. MacInnes, Daniel William, 1978. *Clerics, Fishermen, Farmers and Workers: The Antigonish Movement and Identity in Eastern Nova Scotia, 1928-1939*. Doctoral Thesis, McMaster University.

improve their economic circumstances (MacInnes, 1978). Study clubs were started around the province and co-operatives were developed in areas related to farming, food, and banking. The women who had been employed by Burke were influenced by these co-operative ideals to demand better wages from Burke (Neal 1995, 122). When she refused a group of women broke away from her and started a competing industry. Community history says that Burke was never seen again after the hooker's revolt in 1936/1937 but this has been recently disputed by records uncovered by Langille (2012).

The portrayal of Lillian Burke in Chiasson's book, as well as in the works of McKay and Neal, as someone who took advantage of her workforce has become something Langille seeks to address in an upcoming biography he is writing about Burke. Wishing to rehabilitate the image he believes has been tarred by the revisionist history presented in Anselme Chiasson's book on Chéticamp rugs, as well in the writings of McKay, he points to two stories that present Burke in an unflattering light. One, that she made enormous profits off the cottage industry, and two, that she went to court against two local instigators of the hooker's revolt (Langille 2012, 74). When we spoke, Langille noted that he had found some interesting new revelations while digging through various archives that show that Burke found herself in trouble with Customs due to undervaluing the rugs, which may have caused her to end her relationship with the cottage industry. He explained that,

I also have discovered, and I can share this with you, in the Library of Congress, an extremely upsetting series of documents, but nonetheless they will be part of the story once I actually tease it all out—it's very clear that Lillian Burke and Marian Fairchild were undervaluing the carpets when they were importing them to the United States for reasons of Customs. And they were caught, they were actually caught in 1938 and

challenged. And that was basically the end of Lillian's involvement. They were misrepresenting the cost considerably in order to avoid paying duty, import duty, into the United States. And it's not a nice thing to discover but it also, it also says that their profit margins were just so slight that they had to resort to any way they could to keep the business going. (Langille, Interview, 2016).

In 1936, after a decade of the cottage industry, several rug hookers, perhaps inspired by local cooperative organiser Alexandre Boudreau, demanded their wages be increased to a dollar per square foot (Chiasson 70). The reasons for Burke's refusal to meet their demands are currently unknown but as I mentioned previously, Langille explained that it was possible that her profit margins were much thinner than was believed. Nevertheless, the rug hooking community was then divided between Burke (and her Chéticamp agent Mrs. Willie Aucoin), and Mrs. Marie (Charlie) Aucoin. Burke was said to have taken two locals to court as they had been meeting with her workers and encouraging their increasing demands. The case was dismissed and never made it to court, but Langille argued that the damage to her reputation was done (Langille 75).

During my time spent in the field in Chéticamp, I never did get the sense that rug hookers viewed Burke in an overly negative light, certainly not in the same ways she is depicted by McKay or Chiasson. Women spoke of her in terms of gratitude (Muisse Interview 2011, LeLièvre Interview 2016) and discussed the fact that she was known to be rather picky and fussy in assessing the final products (LeLièvre, Interview 2016). Women often stressed that Burke was a wealthy, educated American. When discussing rug hookers demanding better wages, women often brought up the fact that the rug hookers were successful in their demands for better wages with pride (Camus, Interview

2016). Even Chiasson, whose book Langille points to as the roots of the negative image of Burke, discusses her as kind-hearted and with a happy personality (Chiasson 49).

While Langille argues that “latter-day historians have characterised Lillian Burke as a mean-spirited carpet bagger” (2012, 8), and frames it as a failing of oral history and memory, I think the story is more nuanced than that. The Chéticamp area has had a long history of being mis-treated by those in power; its very foundation was the result of small numbers of Acadians eventually being allowed to return to Cape Breton after their expulsion in the 1750s. The area was then under the control of influential and powerful fish merchants. Following this, in 1939, the nearby village of Cap Rouge was expropriated, and the residents (all Acadian families) were forcibly re-settled to Chéticamp proper due to the creation of the Highlands National Park, even though neighboring Scottish communities such as Pleasant Bay were spared and still exist to this day. In the shadow of this history, that local women stood up to what they perceived as unfair labour practices and won fits into a narrative of taking back power from those who had long exerted control and dominance. The local credit union and the cooperative general store were developed around this same time, each fulfilling a role in removing economic influence from powerful outsiders and returning it to locals. That locals at the time and later have framed Burke’s departure in these similar terms is unsurprising, and I would argue an important part of the way Chéticampers view themselves and their history.

This is perhaps one of those situations in which folklorists and historians will diverge in their preoccupations. As a folklorist, I believe that the ways in which she is discussed and remembered by the community is important. Whether her legacy has been

influenced by others such as Chiasson and McKay is less important than why they choose to remember her in these ways. The memory of Burke as a wealthy outsider, an educated American who had relationships with important and influential architects and interior designers, and who paid her rug hookers less than they felt entitled to is a choice that upholds a local narrative and identity. She had the social and economic capital that Chéticampers historically have often lacked; therefore, to view her as a Goliath to the rug hooker's David by the community is not a stretch. The cottage industry continued and thrived after Burke left. Mrs. Willie Aucoin and Mrs. Marie (Charlie) Aucoin remained the leaders of the divided groups (Chiasson 75). They had access to Burke's designs and her careful notes and beliefs about style. The networks between the rug hookers and the American buyers were already formed and entrenched. The women just continued to build on the frameworks that Burke had set up.

There are few photos of Burke in Chéticamp, usually outdoors alongside rug hookers at work on some extremely large rugs. But apart from a few pictures and some scant oral histories (largely in Chiasson's book and a few in the Museum's archives), we do not really know what the majority of Burke's designs looked like. We know there were floral designs and some faunal designs. These types of post-colonial, Victorian designs were found in rug hooking magazines, as well the earliest commercial rug hooking patterns of Edward Frost in the US, and the John Garrett Company in Nova Scotia. In fact, floral designs have, since Burke's departure from Chéticamp, become the *de facto* symbol of Chéticamp rug hooking. I posit that this happened for a few reasons, chiefly that the main photographs we have of Burke's rugs are of the floral designs. In absence of any other depictions of her work, the floral designs became solidified in

people's mind as the symbolic representation of both Burke's legacy, and of the Chéticamp rug tradition.

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, rug hookers and rug hooking enthusiasts often discuss her extensive use of floral design. This sense of understanding of her designs have been cemented and memorialised throughout the years in Chéticamp, which means that when her watercolour designs were found, those who were interested in digging through them were generally surprised and maybe slightly shocked at what they contained. These designs have not been studied much by academics before this thesis, and have featured only once, in an article written by historian Edward Langille (2015).

3.4 Lillian Burke's Designs

During a winter visit to Chéticamp to conduct some fieldwork, Yvette Muise and I are sitting in her cozy living room, drinking tea, and watching her wood stove belch out waves of heat. She tells me that she recently had the chance to see the recently discovered Burke designs. As she tells me more about the designs – I am intrigued by her descriptions. Most of Burke's original rugs left Canada in the 1920s to reside in the homes of wealthy Americans; they were mostly unsigned and unmarked. There are a few of her rugs at the Bell home at *Beinn Bhreagh*, their Cape Breton residence where Burke was first introduced to the island, but for the most part if you are truly interested in the corpus of her works you just have to make do with photographs, some designs archived at *Les Trois Pignons*, and the collective memories of some of the older women

in the area. These designs were then fundamentally important to anyone wanting to study the impact of Burke's personal aesthetics on Chéticamp rug hooking. After contacting the Beaton Institute at Cape Breton University, where Professor Langille had donated the designs, they finally arrived, as nifty little JPEGs in my inbox.

Before this moment, I had only seen Lillian Burke-designed rugs in archival pictures: black and white photographs often depicting large groups of women outdoors, hooking her largest, most well-known creations (see figure 3.1). On top of that, the sense I had previously gotten from speaking to community members was that Burke's preferred aesthetic was floral motifs. Certainly, the early photographs of her rugs supported that theory. Before these designs were made public, not much was known about Lillian Burke's design aesthetics – most of the rugs she designed were sold to wealthy New Englanders and were not signed so are generally impossible to locate. The designs present a much more nuanced and complex personal aesthetic than what is often presented and shared about Burke's works in Chéticamp these days. An interview with Langille in the following weeks validates my surprise. He told me that,

They're very varied and, one of the things that I think I can say without any reservation is that the style of the Chéticamp hooked rug became bastardized—is a loaded word—but it certainly became much narrower and much more, kind of, fixated on floral motifs in the years after Lillian Burke left the industry. She really was extremely eclectic and did all kinds of things, including floral. And of course there's a lot of, there's, there are many very curious motifs. She references art deco styles very, very much. And those are interesting, very highly stylized art deco styles. I think that she certainly copied motifs from magazines or art books but she had a great interest in traditional styles and not only European also Middle Eastern and Asiatic as well, Chinese and so forth. So, it's difficult actually to know who her clients were and how the designs were generated, whether people came to her with precise ideas

that they wanted or whether she came with ideas and I'm sure that it worked both ways. In the interior decorating business I'm sure there are people who had extremely precise ideas of what they wanted and other people who didn't. But her eclectic—her eclecticism—is certainly extraordinary and that's something that the designs bring out. (Langille, Interview, 2016)

The hand-painted designs are accompanied by several cards which feature newspaper clippings about the Chéticamp rug hooking cottage industry (see figure 3.1). In particular, figure 3.1 illustrates local news interest in what the community dubbed “the largest hooked rug in the world.” This note card also effectively demonstrates the sheer size of some of the rugs Chéticamp rug hookers were producing under Burke. Other note cards include photos of cross-stitch patterns (see figure 3.1.2) and photos of other textile traditions, such a Coptic weaving (see figure 3.1.3) which we can deduce Burke was using for inspiration.

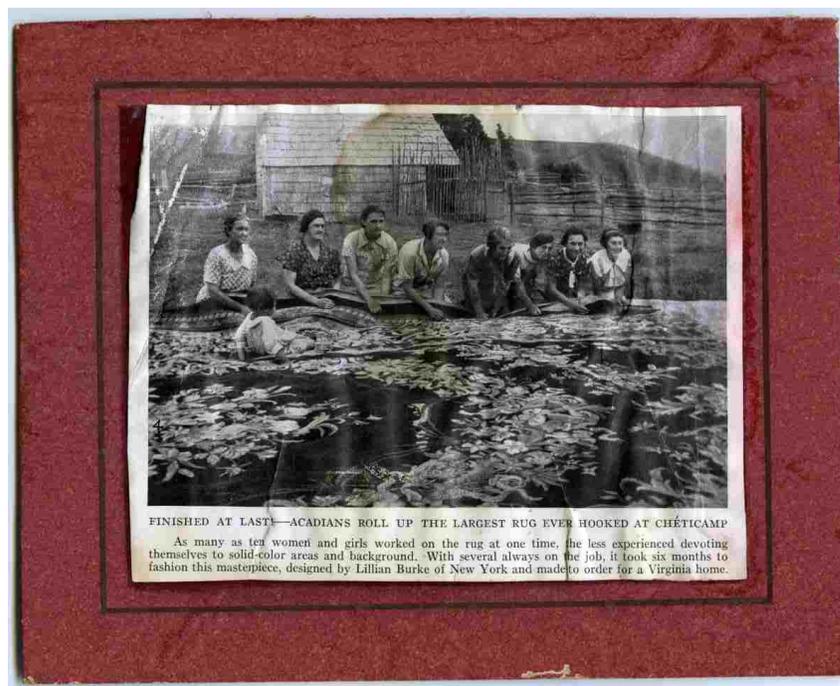


Figure 3.1 Largest Rug. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)



Figure 3.1.2: Cross stitch designs. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)



Figure 3.1.3: Coptic Tapestries. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)

Turning our attention to the designs themselves, they show that Burke had her finger on the pulse of various artistic movements that demonstrate an eclectic personal aesthetic. Certainly, there are many florals (motifs A.2.1 – A.2.13) to be found among Burke’s designs. Unsurprisingly, florals were also the main design type amongst the Frost and Garrett patterns, perhaps underscoring a neo-colonialist aesthetic preference amongst buyers of that time. Figure 3.1.4 is the typical floral design that I mentioned earlier. The design is of a circular rug featuring pastel blue and green backgrounds with light pink shaded flowers scrolling around the outer edge. A large eight-petal pastel pink flower is the center focus of the design. On the lower right hand corner, someone, presumably Burke, has scribbled “soft colors” as well as notes on the scale of the rug. This insistence of a muted colour palette is seen throughout her designs, with notes referring to colours and shading scribbled on many of her designs. While the shaded eight petal flower in the center of the rug (motif A.2.7.2 “flower, misc number of petals, with shading and leaf”) is not a common motif, the larger design of the rug encompasses several smaller motifs that are notably popular rug hooking motifs.

First is the scroll on the outer edge of the rug. This is motif A.3.1 “looped scroll” as well as A.3.10 “scroll, with flower” translated and mirror reflected on the horizontal plane. One of the types of floral designs Burke is most remembered for is the five-petal flower, and while it was often discussed by women I spoke to, there were few examples of the five-petal flower in her designs. Most notably, they seemed to feature prominently in what look to be practice sketches for larger rugs as you can see in figure 3.1.5.

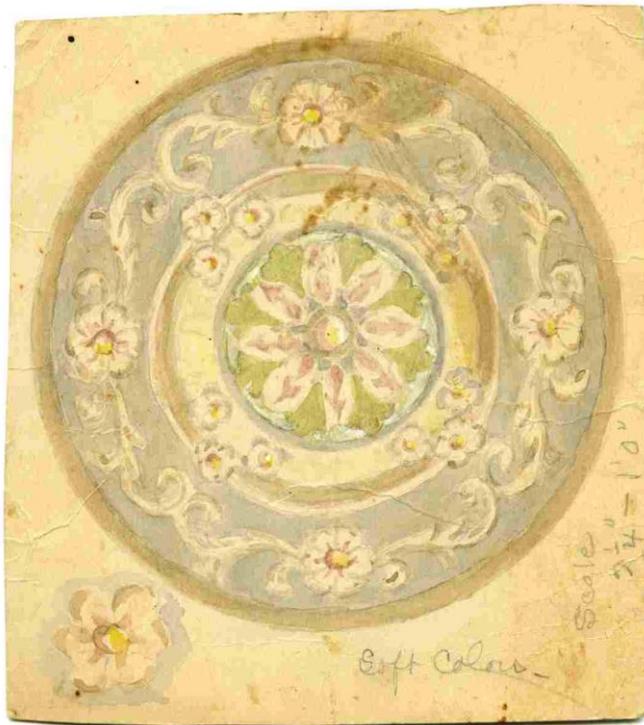


Figure 3.1.4: Stylized floral rug design by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)



Figure 3.1.5: Stylized flower by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)

Each of these practice flowers was painted on cardboard that is irregularly shaped and features no other design element. There are eleven such practice flowers amongst the designs and while these types of flowers (mostly geraniums, roses and tulips) are not represented directly in any larger rug design, these general flower types are found scattered throughout many of her floral designs. Nestled among her floral designs (see figure 3.2) is one striking design featuring calla lilies. This is a flower I had never encountered in Chéticamp rugs before. It is a rectangular rug with a light green border, and six white calla lilies stand at the center of the rug, surrounded by green leaves and vines. The background is a shockingly dark navy blue. Notes inscribed on the design include a reference to size (2x4) and the word “navy” on the lower right hand corner. This design features leafs (motif A.1.3A) that are translated (motif A.1.3A2) and rotated (motif A.1.3A4), as well as the floral motif of calla lilies (motif A.2.14A) translated (motif A.2.1B) and mirror reflected horizontally (motif A.2.1D). This design is a stark contrast to Burke’s other shaded and muted florals.

The designs also reflect Burke’s knowledge and appreciation of high art styles of the time. They demonstrate her knowledge of culture though class-based cultural capital, meaning that these designs are meant to be symbols of the cultures and class-based assumptions they invoke. She includes some Savonnerie style designs, such as the one below featuring a dark blue background and intricate brown/orange scrolls and leaf motives. Originally, Savonnerie carpets were created in Paris during the early 17th century and featured many intricate, French-style designs that seem to broadly mimic Persian carpets – scrolls, medallions, dense flowers masses, and leaves atop dark backgrounds. Savonnerie carpets, like Persian rugs, were knotted, not hooked. The

design of figure 3.3, as well as the rug(s) that were created using it, feature a rectilinear scroll border (motif B.2.1A), geometric shapes (motif B.1.3 “rectangle”), as well as curvilinear florals (motif A.2.8H “flower with stem, shading, leaf, no shading”), leaves (motif A.1.3E “leaf, wide – simple”), stems (motif A.1.2E “stem, with leaf”, motif A.1.2F “stem with flower”). The original Burke design, as we can see is only half completed, as the entire design is then mirror reflected horizontally.

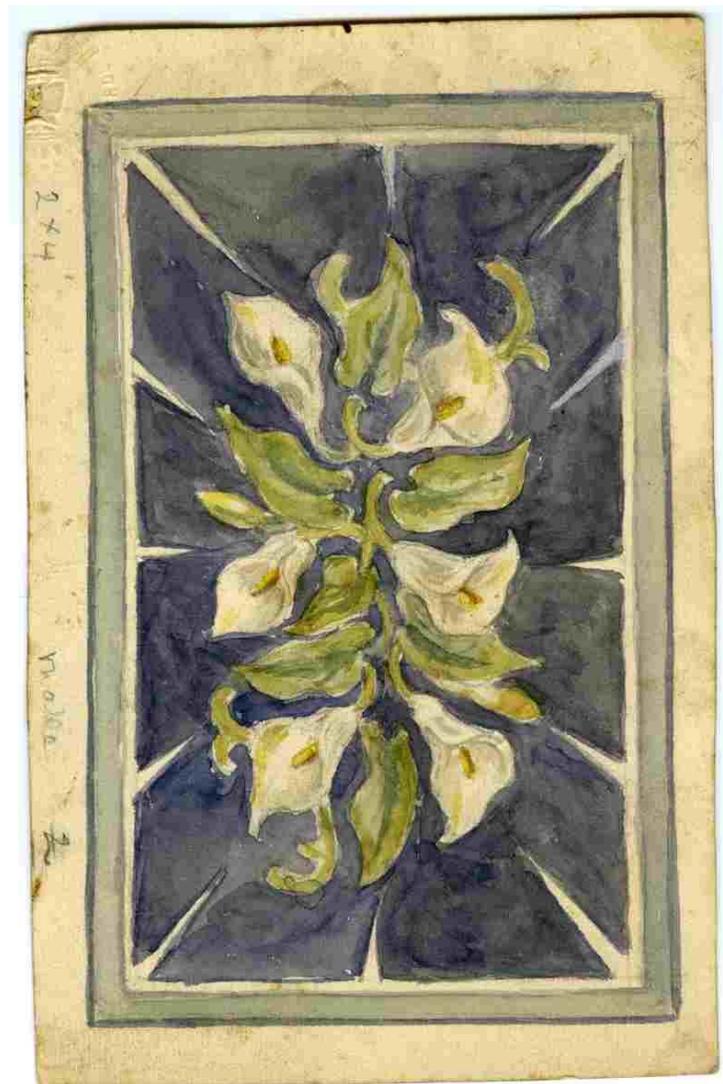


Figure 3.2: Calla lilies rug design by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)



Figure 3.3: Geometric rug design by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)

Burke's artistic aesthetics also reflected design trends of the time. To wit, quite a few Art Deco-inspired rug designs are found in the watercolour designs. Art Deco was a visual art and architecture style that was internationally recognized from the 1920s until the end of the Second World War. Art Deco decorative arts often intentionally combined craft aesthetics and motifs with modern, industrial materials. It is noted by art historian Bevis Hillier that, as a modern style, it was more concerned with symmetry than asymmetry, and leaned to the rectilinear rather than the curvilinear. It was a movement in response to mechanization and mass production (Hillier, 1968). Art Deco often emphasized symmetric and geometric shapes which are seen in Burke's Deco-influenced designs. Figure 3.3.1 is particularly representative of Deco designs of the time. It features a bold black colour scheme standing in stark contrast to the white borders, and bold geometric shapes (motif B.2.1A "straight line, border" and motif B.1.3 "rectangle") while also maintaining the floral motif (motif A.2.2A "four petal flower") popular in the traditional craft. Figure 3.3.1 is another Deco inspired design that more prominently includes florals, though this one features geometric diamonds and starkly contrasting colours. The Deco designs found in Burke's drawings suggest not only that she was aware of trendy art styles but also had an understanding of their basic concepts and motifs, and was able to transfer these decorative and architectural elements into the Chéticamp rug tradition.



Figure 3.3.1: Black and white stylized flower design by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)

Going beyond simply demonstrating an understanding of contemporary art style, Burke's watercolour designs also acknowledge and show an appreciation for older decorative art aesthetics. In particular, her use of Chinoiserie¹⁰ and Japonist/Anglo-Japanese style¹¹ elements are noteworthy. Both styles find their roots in European Orientalist views of Asia in the 17th through 19th centuries. They are both European adaptations and imitations of perceived Chinese or Japanese aesthetics. Chinoiserie first appeared in the 17th century but became popular in the 18th century when European trade with China increased. Chinoiserie is characterised by symbols and motifs of things believed to be "Chinese": pagodas, colorful birds, exotic locales, and had a heavy feeling of asymmetry. Chinoiserie-inspired elements were found in everything from architecture to porcelain, from outdoor gardens to wallpaper. Burke has a few designs that encompass Chinoiserie elements – most notably they feature birds and swooping floral elements (see figures 3.4, 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). The first is rectangular patterns (motif B.1.3 "rectangle") with two stylized birds (motif A.4.1B1 "bird, misc., single") perched on scrolls. Between the birds is a stylized tulip (motif A.2.5G "tulip with stem, shading, leaf"). Along the bottom of the design are chevrons (motif B.16 "Triangle") in alternating greens and greys. The second design echoes both the bird and tulip element as the first but the background is not coloured in and the design features brighter colors and no geometric elements.

¹⁰ For a more detailed look at Chinoiserie, read: Hugh Honour, 1961. *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay*. London: John Murray.

¹¹ For a more detailed look at Japonism, read: Toshio Yokoyama, 1987. *Japan in the Victorian mind: a study of stereotyped images of a nation, 1850–80*, London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Chinoiserie and Japonist motifs are an orientalist exoticization of an “other” (Said 1978), but in this context, their inclusion is more complicated than that. They invoke a simple folksiness of the “other” while also inciting and imbuing a certain worldliness to the consumer.



Figure 3.3.2: Floral design with triangles and lozenges by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)



Figure 3.4: Rug design with two stylised birds by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)

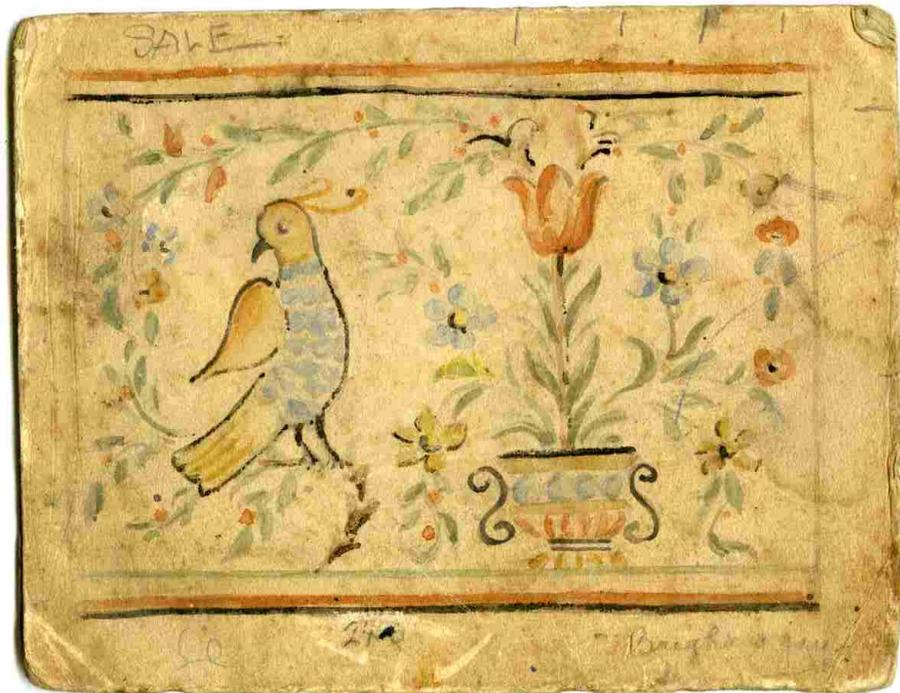


Figure 3.4.1: Rug design with stylized bird and potted tulip by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)



Figure 3.4.2: Rug design with birds and border by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)

Burke's Orientalist designs also feature Japonist motifs such as cherry blossoms and koi fish, both representations and appropriations of Japanese culture (cherry blossoms are the national flower of Japan). Figure 3.5 is an underwater scene of a carp koi fish (motif A.4.1C "fish") surrounded by underwater flora and fauna. Burke's designs also include appropriated motifs from plains Indigenous traditions, as seen in figure 3.5.1 featuring bison designs (motif A.4.1A14 "bison/buffalo") as well as geometrical plains textile shapes such as the Morningstar (see figure 3.5.2) cross symbol in the centre of the diamond in the second pattern. This design includes a chevron border (motif B.16 "triangle"), diamond shapes (B.1.4 "diamond, vertical") and geometric shapes (motif B.1 "geometric shapes") and stands out among Burke's design since it not only reflects a shift in design but also colour choice. Most of Burke's designs are coloured in pastels and muted colours. This design utilises a bright and bold colour palette, similar to the types of

colours used in latch-hooked rugs that were created in the Canadian Prairies by indigenous rug-makers such as this one, found in the collection of the Canadian Museum of History, made by The Sioux Handcraft Co-operative Limited on the Standing Buffalo Reserve (see figure 3.5.3) , near Fort Qu'Appelle in Saskatchewan.



Figure 3.5: Rug design with stylized green koi fish by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)

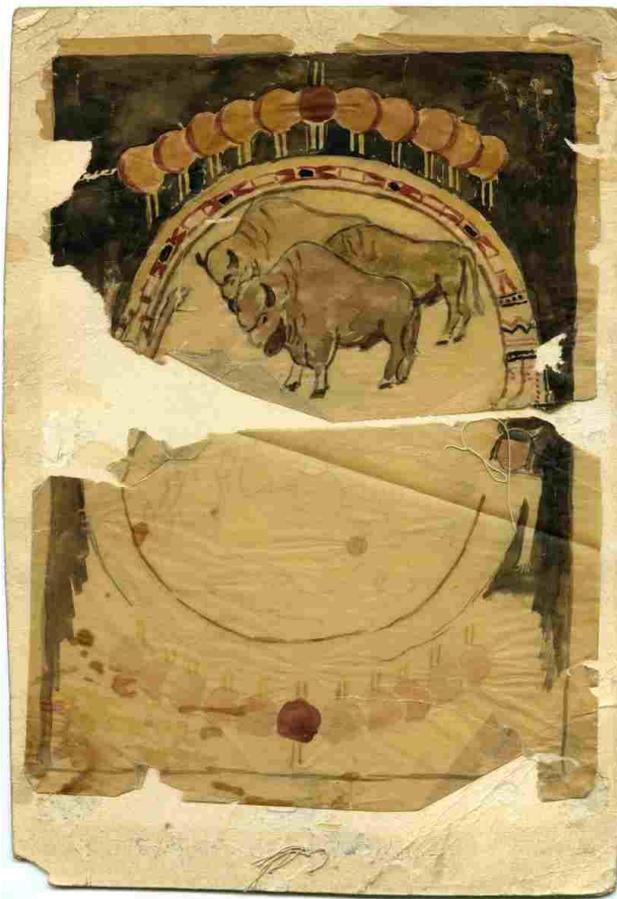


Figure 3.5.1: Rug design with bison. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4.
Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)

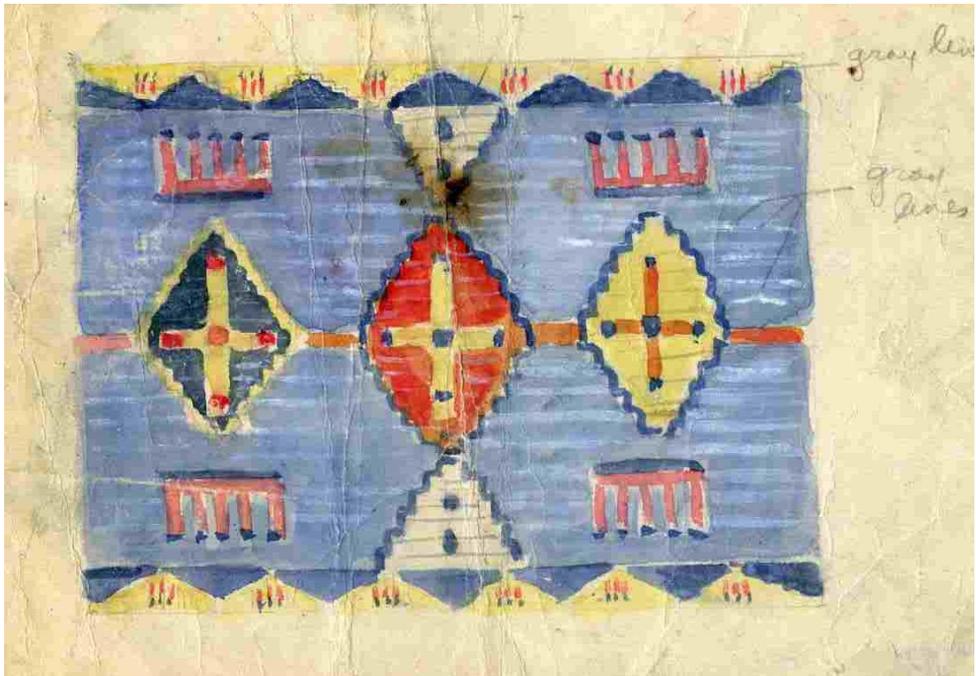


Figure 3.5.2: Rug design with geometric pattern by Lillian Burke. Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University (used with permission)



Figure 3.5.3: Latch-hooked rug with geometric pattern, Rose Buffalo & Catherine Good Feather, Canadian Museum of History, V-E-301 (used with permission)

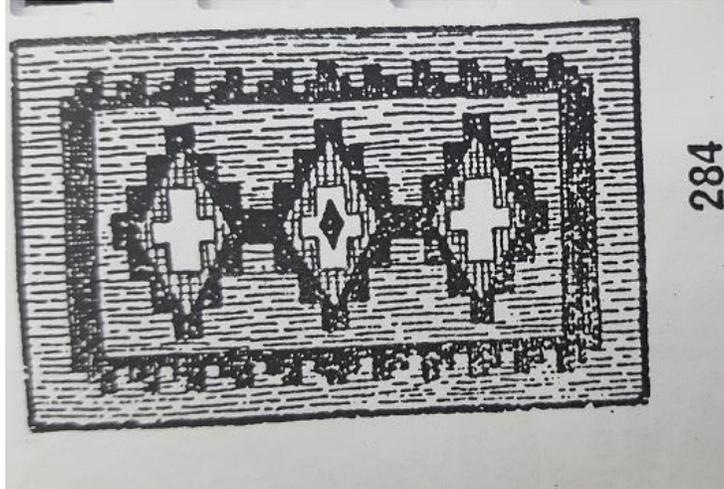


Figure 3.5.4: Garrett pattern #284 (Garrett Fonds, Canadian Museum of History)

Apart from a shift in colour and pattern, this Burke design is one that I found, as a near identical variant, amongst Garrett's commercial patterns (see figure 3.5.4). They each feature three vertical diamonds with morningstar crosses in the center of each diamond, as well as a geometric border running the entire edge of the design, though the exact border motif differs in each – the Burke design is a chevron, while the Garrett features squares. Since Garrett had a tendency to re-number his patterns and since there is no exact date associated with either the Burke or the Garrett version, it is hard to know which came first; however, what this does demonstrate is how closely rug designers were watching each other and other textile traditions and how easily and freely ideas were being borrowed.

While Burke is credited by many (Muisse Interview 2011; 2016; Chiasson 1986; Poirier Interview 2012; LeLièvre Interview 2016) as being responsible for turning Chéticamp rugs into wall art no longer meant for the floor, the rugs Burke designed were meant to be used as floor coverings. When I first began fieldwork in Chéticamp and was

told that Burke had turned their rugs into art I had interpreted this in the literal sense; that her rugs had been designed to be tapestries. However, it soon became clear that while her rugs were intended and used as floor coverings, for rug hookers in Chéticamp, they had been transformed from a utilitarian object to a piece of art. This meant that hooked rugs started being seen as something to display on the wall, not to be used on the floor.

3.5 Burke's Aesthetic, Defined

Burke's realised vision for Chéticamp rugs meant that the rug hooking tradition in the area was drastically altered under her tenure. While the changes she brought to the design of Chéticamp rugs are evident in the photographs I have shared in this chapter, some of the biggest changes she effected were to the production of the rugs, many of which are still practiced to this day, some 90 years after she first arrived in Chéticamp. Burke's rug hooking aesthetic is not only related to design but also to technique and method. Choices in each of these areas combine to create the Chéticamp-style rug that Burke's favoured. These aesthetics are:

1) hooking in squares. That women in Chéticamp hook their rugs in small squares is something that can be attributed to Lillian Burke (see figure 3.6). This technique has become as identifying of Chéticamp rugs as horizontal hooking was to Grenfell rugs. It is one of the easiest ways to identify if a rug was made by a Chéticamp-style hooker. I have seen some rugs that feature squares hooked from the outside in (see drawing A in figure 3.6.1), and squares hooked in four smaller triangles (see drawing B in figure 3.6.1).



Figure 3.6: Detail of square hooking of a Chéticamp rug at the Trois Pignons Museum (Photo by author 2016).

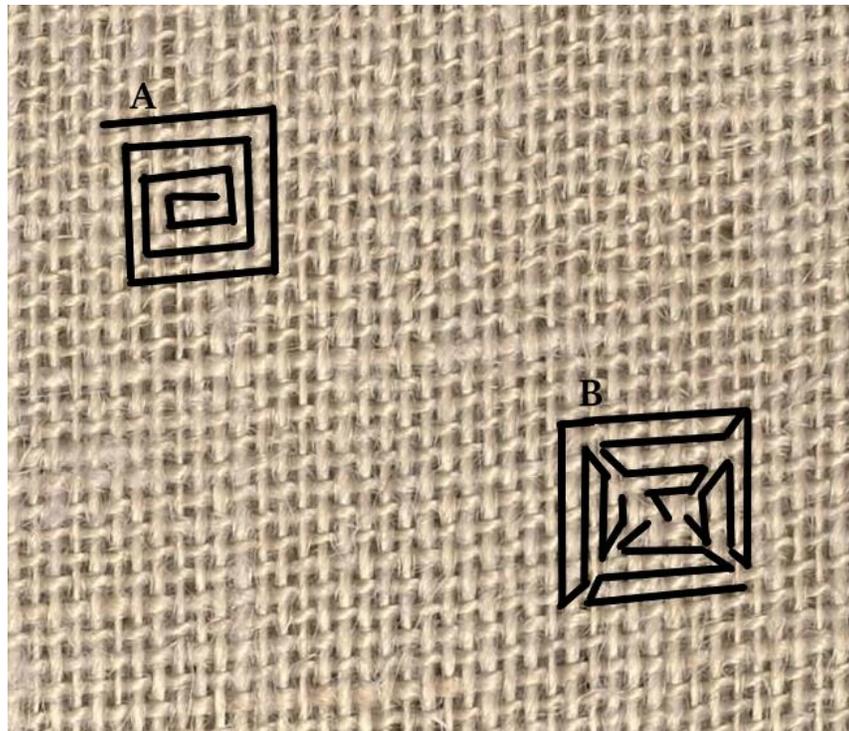


Figure 3.6.1: Variants of hooking in squares (Field note by author 2016)

2) Uniform loops hooked in every hole of the burlap. Hooked rugs in Chéticamp under Burke were made to look like tapestries or finely-made woven carpets. One of the ways this was achieved was through the use of uniform loops hooked through every hole in the burlap. Uniform loops, in both height and width, gave the rugs a very low pile and a full look. This also created a good amount of tension between the loops for added sturdiness. Hooking every hole also allows the front and the back of the rug to be similar in appearance. This echoes something Yvette Muise always told me – that Chéticamp rugs are meant to look the same from the back as in the front. Not that the goal was reversibility, but that the hooking was neat and orderly, enough as to almost make the viewer question if it had been made by a human hand. Below are two photos of hooked rugs. One (see figure 3.6.2) is hooked by a Chéticamp rug hooker using many of Burke's aesthetics. The other (see figure 3.6.3) is hooked by Deanne Fitzpatrick, who is an artist from Newfoundland now living in Nova Scotia. Deanne uses a variety of loop heights and widths to give her rug texture and movement, a technique that is generally lacking in Chéticamp rugs.



Figure 3.6.2: Rug from Chéticamp with basket weave pattern, private collection (Photo by author 2018)



Figure 3.6.3: Rug by Deanne Fitzpatrick, private collection (Photo by author 2018)

3) The use of 2-ply fine wool yarn. Chéticamp rug hooking is often held up as unique for its use of 2-ply fine wool as the main hooking material. Burke insisted that hookers switch from recycled fabric to fine wool yarn for the creation of her rugs. Wool allows for smaller loops which meant that rugs could include very fine details because every, single hole in the burlap is stitched – something that just cannot be done with strips of rags. The use of wool is often maintained by the community as one of the most important, unique and identifying aspects of the Chéticamp tradition.

Paralleling the shift from rags to yarn that was happening in Chéticamp under Lillian Burke, the Garrett Company also began pushing the creation of yarn rugs in the 1920s. At the same time as Burke's changes were taking root in the hooking tradition in Chéticamp, the Garrett Company invented, patented and sold the Bluenose Rug Hooking Machine which promised to speed up rug hooking by half the time. The Bluenose Hooker was created in 1926 to allow for faster and more consistent hooking. Apart from its speediness and evenness, what the Bluenose Hooker really changed was the materials used in rug hooking. Garrett advertisements show a concerted effort to promote yarn rugs; professing that yarn was easier to work with and produced a superior product to rags. Contrary to an ordinary hook, which pulls fabric from underneath the burlap, the Bluenose Hooker looped fabric through the top of the burlap, giving hookers more control over their work. The Garrett Company began marketing the rugs that were being created by the Bluenose Hooker as “modern Bluenose rugs” as opposed to what they termed the “old-fashioned” rugs that were made from strips of miscellaneous fabric rags. As Garrett was based in Halifax and Burke travelled between the United States and Cape Breton, it would not be wildly imaginative to think that Burke would have been familiar

with the Rug Hooking Machine as she began to develop the Chéticamp cottage industry and began altering the local rug hooking methods to adapt to her style of rugs she was interested in selling.

4) A mastery of shading. As an artist, Burke demonstrated an appreciation for subtle shading and colour theory. Her use of shading in her designs is particularly unique within rug hooking traditions in Canada. Since the women in Chéticamp had to dye their own wool, achieving the subtle gradations in colour needed for the shading Burke required was no easy feat. The result of Burke's insistence on mastering shading is that Chéticamp rugs took on the look of painted pieces. An example of Burke's shading is seen in figure 3.7. Hooked by Elizabeth Lefort, arguably Chéticamp's most well-known rug hooker.

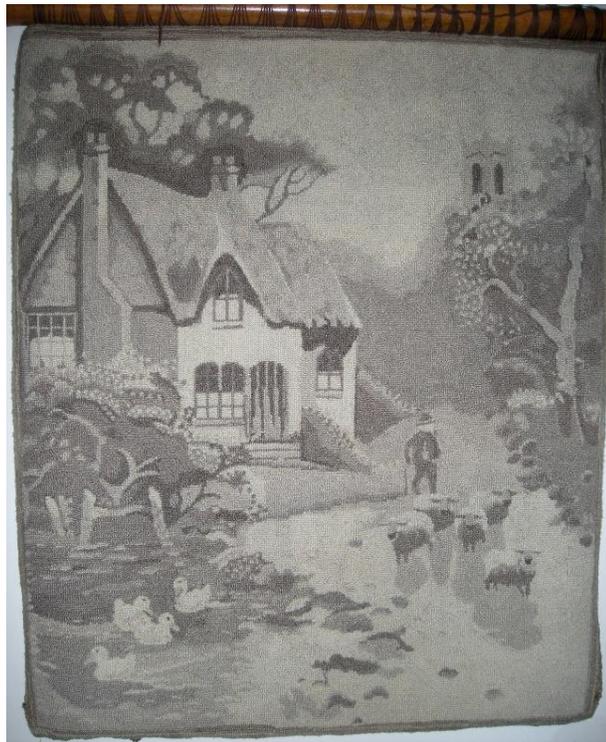


Figure 3.7: Rug by Elizabeth Lefort, *Trois Pignon Museum* (Photo by author 2013)

The uniformity of the hooking technique was similarly influenced by the cottage industry. One Burke's larger rugs, with so many women hooking at the same time, it would have been paramount that their hooking technique was uniform enough so as to not be able to tell where one hooker's work begins, and another's ends. Chéticamp technique became culturally ingrained into the tradition, and with it a very strong sense of what constitutes "Chéticamp" hooking – what is correct, accepted, and valued, and what is not. The women I spoke to had very specific beliefs about what a Chéticamp rug was, what techniques could be employed to create it, and what designs were acceptable. Many, if not most of these beliefs are directly tied to, and descended from the changes Lillian Burke made to the local rug hooking tradition.

3.6 The Cottage Industries in Labrador and Charlevoix

Chéticamp was not unique in having a cottage industry built around rug hooking and handicrafts. In both Labrador and Quebec, cottage industries focused on hooked rugs flourished. In Labrador, Grenfell industries set up by British doctor Wilfrid Grenfell set out to help impoverished Labradoreans through the sale of handicrafts. In Charlevoix, painters Clarence Gagnon and Georges-Edouard Tremblay opened studios where local rug hookers made rugs from their designs. Much like Chéticamp, these industries were set up by outsiders who built up a new industry around existing craft traditions and altered them to appeal to the specific tastes of potential consumers.

Wilfred Grenfell, a British doctor arrived in Labrador around 1892 after a co-worker had informed him of the terrible living conditions he had found there. With no doctors or nurses in Labrador medical situations for residents were bleak. In 1906,

Grenfell created The Industrial, a cottage industry focused on handicrafts whose mission was to alleviate the poverty and hardships of the communities with whom he was working. As Paula Lavery notes, “The hooked mats are an art born out of necessity, originally used for warmth and decoration and appealing to the sense of ‘waste not, want not’ but then becoming a real means of securing necessary clothing, food and medicine” (Lavery xx). Grenfell partnered with Jessie Luther, an early occupational therapist from the United States, who was a proponent of the handicrafts movement as a counter to industrialization (Lavery 7). Luther was a disciple and follower of Helen Albee, who argued that philanthropy had, for too long, only focused on the needs of the poor and sick, and needed instead to focus additionally on healthy, able-bodied rural youth (Rompkey 1991). Instead, Albee was a proponent of profitable philanthropy which encouraged the selling of handmade objects to increase wealth in poverty-stricken areas.

Following in Albee’s footsteps and inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement, Luther’s primary aim was to establish weaving as the primary handicraft of the Industrial with an eye to eventually branching out to basket weaving and pottery (Lavery 12). However, weaving was not a locally-practiced craft – this, coupled with the size of a weaver’s loom meant that it was a difficult handicraft to impose on the women in Labrador. It was not until 1908 that Luther began encouraging local women to hook mats (the term “mat” is used more commonly in Newfoundland and Labrador than “rug”) for the Industrial instead of weaving. At first glance, Luther seemed to have been unimpressed with the mats women had long been making and trading with Dr. Grenfell for medical services. She wrote that the mats featured, “ugly designs in glaring and inharmonious colours” (Lavery 12). Perhaps inspired by the successful rug hooking

cottage industry her mentor Helen Albee had earlier set up in New Hampshire, Luther began to work with Dr. Grenfell to organize classes in which to teach local women how to hook rugs in ways they deemed more pleasing.

Mat hooking in Labrador, much like in Chéticamp, was a local craft that was most often practiced during the winter months. Grenfell rugs were quickly homogenised; they featured northern scenes and motifs with little to no shading, a very distinct straight border and horizontal hooking. After 1926 and the arrival of Mae Alice Pressley-Smith to replace Luther, recycled silk stocking strips shipped to the Industrial became the main material used to hook Grenfell mats (Lavery 19). Manufacture was standardized: the hookers received “mat bundles” containing burlap backing with a pattern stencilled on, a coloured drawing of how the mat should look, and the necessary dyed fabric strips to hook into the burlap. The mats were hooked from many types of fabric, but silk stocking mats became a common and popular type, with the pre-ripped silk stocking provided to the hookers by the Industrial. Grenfell mats were known for their almost universal use of clearly defined horizontal straight-line hooking, and for hooking fabric in every hole of the backing, which gave these mats the look of a needlepoint tapestry (Lavery 68). Early mats were made to be reversible by hooking through the hem rather than turning the edge under. This meant that a mat could be flipped and used on both sides to extend its life. Grenfell mats also employed the technique of tufting, where certain sections were hooked higher than others, and then clipped to create a fuzzy texture. This would be used especially when designs called for furry animals or fur coats to be represented on a mat.

The austerity of the Second World War, coupled with the governmental relief after Confederation in 1949, meant that Grenfell's Industrial shifted gears from a cottage industry designed to lift communities out of poverty, to occupational craft therapy in hospitals. Largely left to flounder, Grenfell handicrafts shifted focus away from mats to long wall hangings featuring three designs: two of Newfoundland flowers, and one of puffins sitting on pilings. Only the designs were hooked, leaving the rest of the hanging bare, and giving the wall hangings the semblance of cross-stitching. The only mats being sold through Grenfell were now small coasters featuring floral patterns, or young children dubbed "Eskimo Babies" (Lavery 58). These coaster mats, unlike the original Grenfell mats, were hooked with wool yarn. Paula Lavery notes that a few Grenfell mats are still being produced based on the original Grenfell patterns and using wool yarn as the material.

While Grenfell's Industrial was thriving in the 1920s, a different but similar story was playing out in Charlevoix, Quebec. Painters Georges-Edouard Tremblay and Clarence Gagnon, began using their paintings as designs for hooked rugs. Tremblay opened a textile studio in 1930 for women to hook rugs using these designs. In order to appeal to tourists' notions of Quebec history and heritage, Tremblay focused his designs on nostalgic scenes such as horse-drawn carriages, maple sugaring, one room school houses and general winter landscapes (Blanchette 2014, 82). He moved to include more wool yarn, chiffon and cotton into the rugs produced at his studio. His studio, which eventually became a school in 1942, finally closed its doors in 1968.

The handicraft revival's effect on rug hooking was felt all along Canada's eastern coast. Thomas Lackey notes that Quebec found itself caught up in the handicrafts revival

in a unique way as it became a particular focus for collectors because of its perceived cultural and ethnic uniqueness. The “American Colonial style” of interior decorating saw the hooked rug as a, “lovely bit of early Americana, made in odd moments by women of bygone generations” (Lackey 20). Within the handicraft movement, especially when relating to the hooked rug, was a nationalistic sense that the craft was distinctly American; however, many American collectors looked to Canada to supply their demand for rugs. Within the hooked mat mania, Quebec’s cultural and linguistic differences defined the province, and by extension the rugs produced in the province, as exotic. As Lackey writes, “Maritime Canada was rural and produced rugs. But it lacked the mystery and allure of a genuinely distinct culture” (Lackey 7). American collectors could now easily own a foreign, exotic handicraft without having to step foot outside North America.

Prior to the Depression, sales of hooked rugs to visiting tourists were high but the 1930s brought rough waters to Quebec rug hookers. In order to cultivate more American buyers, the designs of Quebec rugs were altered – instead of the more common floral or geometric rugs, pictorial rugs depicting the Quebec landscape and countryside became more popular. Jean-Francois Blanchette, ethnologist and former curator of Quebec folk art at the Canadian Museum of History, writes that the main market for the Charlevoix hooked rugs are visiting tourists of comfortable means with the social capital to recognize the value in them as tapestries (Blanchette 2014, 83). As James Overton notes, the discomfort of present life engenders a search for the seemingly more stable and secure world of the past (Overton 1984, 85). For the consumers of the Charlevoix rugs, this nostalgia was linked not only to the past, but to a romanticised Quebec past.

While the Charlevoix rugs were sold as tapestries, to be mounted on walls, rugs from the Grenfell Industrial and from Burke's cottage industry were sold as floor rugs. However, each industry relied on consumers who possessed enough cultural capital to understand their values as commodities, and as symbols for nostalgic pasts. For Grenfell rugs, the nostalgia lay in the presentation of Arctic life to outsiders in ways that minimised the very struggles of those who inhabited the Big Land. In Charlevoix, Tremblay and Gagnon relied of symbols of Quebec's history that would elicit strong associations with the province's most well-known heritage. Burke on the other hand, relied on nostalgia of a genteel past in her designs. All three cottage industries were run with an understanding of what tourists were looking for: an elusive search for authenticity in a commercial world (MacCannell 1999).



Figure 3.8: Hooked rug from the Charlevoix Incorporé cottage industry, Lucienne Harvey & Lucienne Bouchard, Canadian Museum of History, 80-234 (used with permission)



Figure 3.8.1: Hooked rug from the Charlevoix Incorporé cottage industry, Canadian Museum of History Collection 80-219 (used with permission)

Much like the Charlevoix cottage industry, to set their rugs apart Grenfell rugs generally relied on recognizably Northern landscapes, flora, and fauna to capitalise on their cultural capital as unique and distinct. However, Grenfell rugs were not created in a vacuum and much like Burke, Garrett and Frost's rug designs, there are several motifs in existing Grenfell rugs that are shared with other rug hooking contexts. In browsing through Burke's designs, I was struck with a few that eerily resembled Grenfell rugs; they feature the same stark, dark border, lack of shading and scenes of the Arctic, (and in Burke's case Antarctic scenes as well). While the Grenfell rugs depict puffins (see figure 3.8.2 and 3.8.3), a symbol for Newfoundland and Labrador identity, Burke's depict penguins (see figures 3.8.4 and 3.8.5). Understandably, penguins do not feature

prominently in Grenfell rugs; however, Lavery notes that at least one rug, created around 1939, features two penguins and an Inuit hunter. She notes that the penguins were likely related to the increased interest in penguins after the 1939 New York World's Fair. The Fair featured Admiral Byrd's Penguin Island, which celebrated his trip to Antarctica. After the World Fair, penguins became popularly featured on Grenfell Christmas cards. The Burke penguin rugs certainly pre-date the 1939 World's Fair, but it is possible she was inspired by penguins in popular culture such as the 1914 silent Vaudeville film *Home of the Blizzard*, which depicted penguins as comedians.

The designs of the Grenfell mats often reflected Northern life but also drew in influences from other rug hooking traditions. Hunting scenes, as well as animals such as puffins (motif A.4.1B7 "bird, puffin"), geese (motif A.4.1B4 "bird, goose") and bears (motif A.4.1A15.1 "polar bear"), were commonly used designs. The puffin (see figure 3.8.3), in particular, captured the attention of wealthy patrons. As penguins had long been popular designs on handicrafts, the puffin became the Grenfell mat's response to this demand. In addition to scenes depicting the fauna of Labrador life, some designs such as the log cabin design discussed earlier as well as floral prints similar to mats found across North America found themselves into the Grenfell pantheon. Rarely, the Grenfell mats employed designs more commonly found in First Nations beadwork and embroidery. The finished floor mats, chair mats, purse covers, and other textile items were sold in Grenfell shops in the US, Canada, and Great Britain. These characteristics make Grenfell rugs instantly recognizable by design, material and technique. Grenfell rugs tell the story of Newfoundland and Labrador in the early years of the 20th century:

behind the placid calm of their graphics lies the desperation of the conditions their creation was meant to help alleviate.



Figure 3.8.2: Hooked rug with puffin design, Paula and William Lavery Collection, Canadian Museum of History 2003.35.2 (used with permission)



Figure 3.8.3: Hooked rug bag with puffin design, Paula and William Lavery Collection, Canadian Museum of History 2013.50.29 (used with permission)

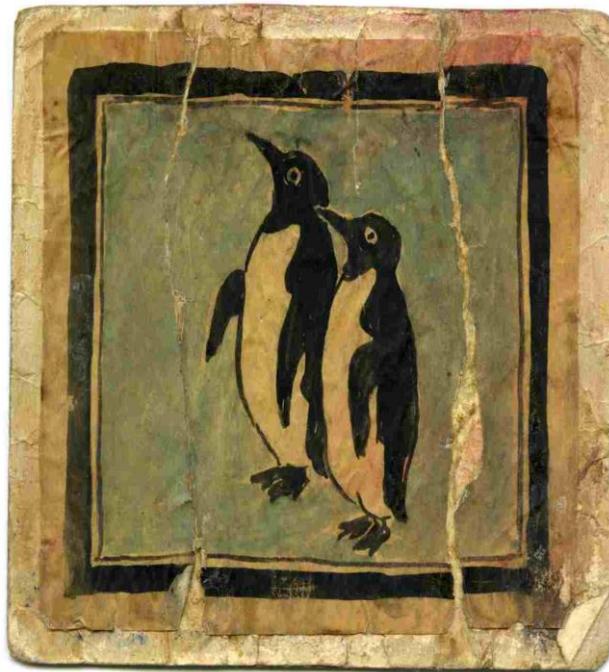


Figure 3.8.4: Penguin rug design by Lillian Burke, Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University

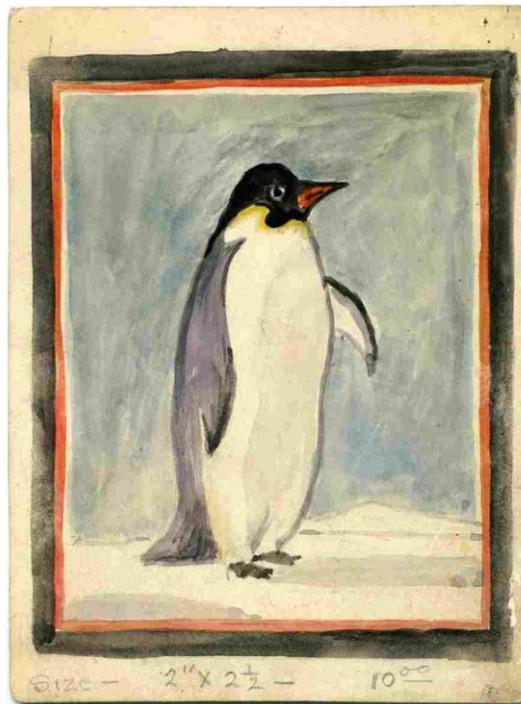


Figure 3.8.5: Penguin rug design by Lillian Burke, Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University

The Twinflowers mat (see figure 3.9) utilizes both a floral and geometric pattern, something that does not seem to occur often in hooked rug design. The twin flower blooms are attached to a geometric stem with geometric leaves. It is certainly unusual for a hooked rug, and especially for a Grenfell rug, and intrigued me at first glance. This uniqueness of the geometric and floral combination is paralleled in one of each of Burke and Garrett's designs as well. Garrett pattern 644 (see figure 3.9.1), designed in 1931 and featured in the 1933 Eaton's catalogue, also features geometric flower blooms, on geometric stems, accompanied by geometric leaves. Burke's variant (see figure 3.9.2) of this unique combination features three different types of flower blooms as well as geometric stems linking the blooms, along with colour swatches on the right side.

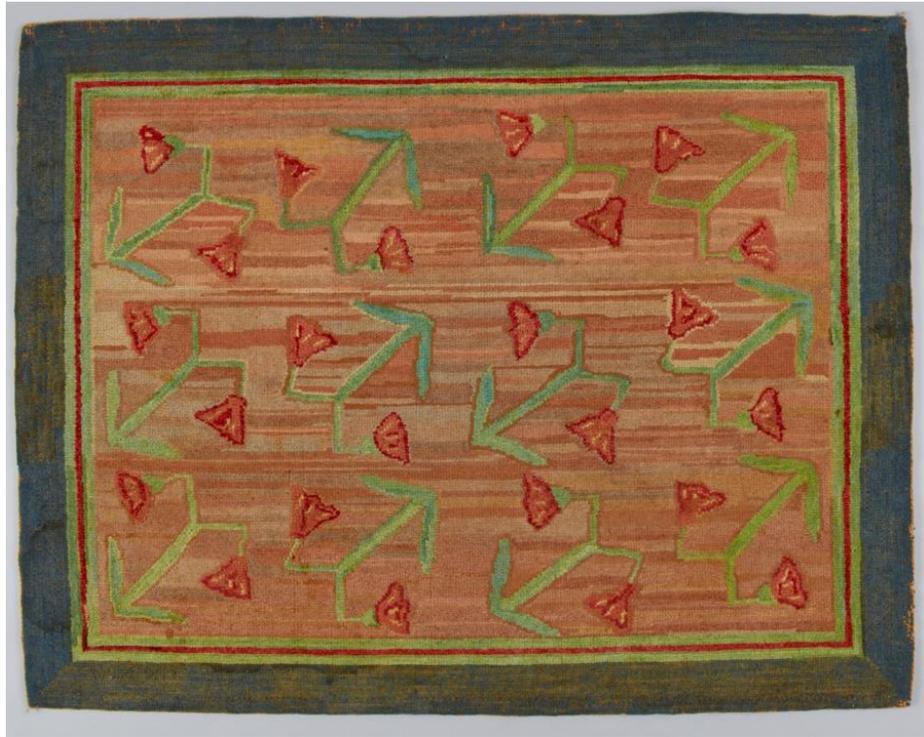


Figure 3.9: Hooked rug with geometric twin flower design, Paula and William Laverty Collection Canadian Museum of History 2013.50.7 (used with permission)

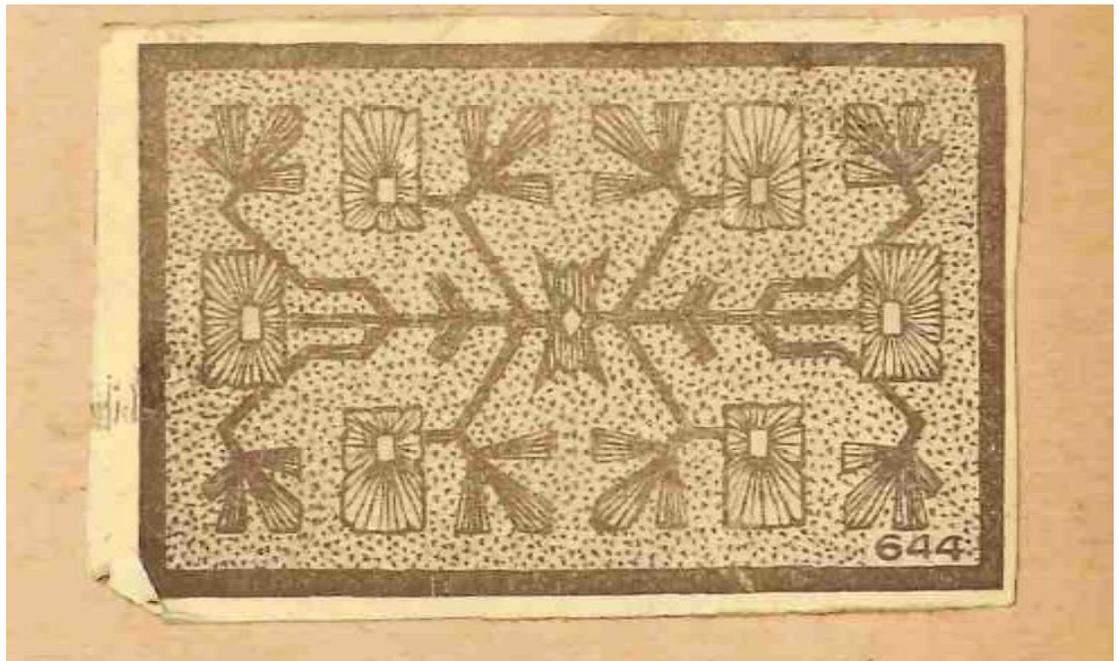


Figure 3.9.1: Garrett rug design 644, Canadian Museum of History Garrett Fonds



Figure 3.9.2: Rug design with geometric floral pattern by Lillian Burke Mary Lillian Burke Collection. MG 21.4. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the rise of the cottage industry in Chéticamp by focusing on Burke's design and aesthetics. Chéticamp was not unique in Canada to have a cottage industry built around an existing rug hooking tradition; cottage industries were also set up by the Grenfell Mission in Labrador, and by artists such as Georges-Edouard Tremblay in Charlevoix Quebec. These cottage industries were set up by wealthy individuals as an attempt to help locals out of poverty. Burke's designs illustrate a reciprocal familiarity with those of the Grenfell Industrial. There was clearly quite a bit of sharing and transmission happening between the various hooked rug traditions in terms of design, motif and pattern.

In order to sell Chéticamp's rugs, Burke enforced a specific aesthetic into the community's rugs. Not only limited to design choices, her aesthetic vision extended to technique and method to ensure that Chéticamp rugs became popular pieces of material culture sought after by wealthy Americans as a way to outfit their homes with the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement of the time. The rugs were also a way to purchase a piece of an imagined, and nostalgic Chéticamp past. The shift from rag rugs to yarn rugs centred on the changing function and meaning of hooked rugs: rag rugs, cut from old clothing, bedding and stockings were often used as floor covering in the homes, while yarn rugs, which would have been more much expensive to produce became status symbols. From necessity to commodity; from home requirement to luxury item.

The next chapter will examine Chéticamp rug hooking in the years since the cottage industry waned. Paying special attention to design and social hierarchies among the shrinking number of rug hookers in contemporary Chéticamp, I look at both the

kinds of rug hookers currently working in Chéticamp, as well as the types of rugs they are creating.

Chapter Four – Vernacular Aesthetics Today

“Now we’re in Petit Etang, now it’s Cap le-Moine
It’s pretty, oh so pretty, to see the land and sand
But we are in a hurry, a hurry, a hurry
To reach our well-ploughed land
It’s a long way; it’s day after day,
But happy, oh it’s happy, to be in Chéticamp”
(Catherine Poirier, Interview, 1988)

4.1 Rug

My rug is hooked partially with fabric strips and partially with wool yarn because the rag strips were quick to fray and difficult to keep looking tidy. I tried to hook my background in small squares like the women in Chéticamp do, but the rag strips made it challenging. To hook in squares properly you need to be able to hook every hole, which is nearly impossible with the thicker fabric strips. So, after a few failed attempts at hooking in squares I gave up on that idea. After trimming and sewing the edges the rug is complete. Much to my dismay, it’s too small to be an actual floor rug, and I worry that the cats will decide it is their new favourite toy and destroy all my carefully hooked loops. The last thing I want to do after putting in so many hours of work to create this rug is to put it on the floor.

4.2 Chéticamp Since Lillian Burke

My previous chapter discussed the Chéticamp cottage industry created by Lillian Burke. It also presented some of her newly-discovered rug patterns to create a better understanding of both local aesthetics as well as the types of designs and techniques that became codified and came to represent the Chéticamp style. It also examined

Chéticamp's cottage industry in relation to other rug hooking cottage industries in Labrador and Quebec.

The creation of the Chéticamp style of rug hooking is an example of what Jane Becker calls "selling tradition" as a stop measure gap to prevent out migration, ensure local jobs and provide a steady cash flow to families dependent on seasonal labour. When Lillian Burke was no longer designing new rugs for the women to hook, many of her designs began to be recycled and re-used. This is consistent with the commercial practices of the time. Pattern companies such as Frost and Garrett were also regularly adapting each other's patterns as well. This chapter examines Chéticamp rug hooking in the years since the cottage industry Lillian Burke created ended, with a focus on design, vernacular aesthetics, social relationships and consumption. I first examine contemporary rug styles with an eye on design, then I look at the types of rug hookers who are currently working in Chéticamp, examining their social hierarchies and vernacular aesthetics. Throughout, I discuss how contemporary Chéticamp rugs are consumed by locals and tourists. In contrast to previous chapters, where archival and collections-based research took precedence, this chapter is highly ethnographic. This is because it was impossible to conduct ethnographic research with rug hookers from nearly 100 years ago, so I relied more heavily on other forms of primary source materials.

After Burke left Chéticamp and the cottage industry began to fade in the 1950s and 1960s, in its place was a rapidly growing market of buyers: tourists. As I have previously discussed, cultural tourism became an important industry in Cape Breton during and after Premier Angus L. MacDonald's "tartanization" of the Nova Scotia

(McKay 1994). This tartanized image of Cape Breton was slightly different than the reality, as Cape Breton was home to a multitude of cultural groups including the Mi'kmaq, the Acadians, as well as African Nova Scotian, Italian, Ukrainian, and Jewish communities who had been drawn to the island to work in the many mines, quarries, and steel plants that dotted the landscape. The anti-modern sentiment and rhetoric that was used by Premier MacDonald meant that tourists who came to Cape Breton were looking to find simple rural folks, interact with them and perhaps purchase a piece of their culture. In this way, coming to Chéticamp to interact with the inhabitants and to consume aspects of their culture, whether it be intangible, such as fiddle music, or tangible, such as hooked rugs, tourism offers a way for outsiders to interact with, consume, and own parts of an imagined cultural past.

So, while the rug hooking cottage industry limped to an end, the visiting tourist market became the main area for hookers to sell their wares. The middleman broker system that had begun with the early pedlars and continued under Lillian Burke remained in place, with folk art galleries, tourist shops and a hooker's cooperative selling Chéticamp rugs to visitors. The "middleman broker system," is the type of system where hookers sell their rugs through a middleman who then sells them to galleries and tourists. This was and is still very much practiced in Chéticamp. There still are very few hookers who have direct control over how much their rugs sell for. This essentially means that many rug hookers do not have full agency over their rugs. Agency is power, particularly in relation to art and creativity. Thoughts surrounding agency, control and creativity followed me throughout my fieldwork and I worked to unpack

how rug hookers felt about, what I perceived as, a lack of control over their artistic creations.

In the years after Lillian Burke's departure in the late 1920s from Chéticamp, the cottage industry was continued by women such as Marie Charlie Aucoin, who had led a group of rug hookers away from Lillian Burke during the time of the hooker's revolt, and stepped into her role as "middleman" to ship rugs to the mainland. After turning her home into a shop, she began selling rugs to visiting tourists. Chiasson notes that she not only acted as a broker for the rug hookers; she designed, stamped, and prepped the burlap for each of her rug hookers (Chiasson 77). Stamping is the term used by Chéticamp rug hookers to describe drawing a design on the burlap before hooking it. I have not been able to find the proper etymology of the term but I suspect it comes from the fact that the earliest rug hooking pattern companies (such as Edward Frost and John Garrett) often literally stamped their designs onto the burlap.

Marie Charlie Aucoin was also able to build upon Burke's relationships with outside networks such as the Canadian Handicraft Guild and Canadian Steamship Lines to sell rugs produced by her team of rug hookers. Yet, more and more gift shops began to pop up in the area, many selling hooked rugs and thus in the mid-1960s Marie Charlie Aucoin closed her business and shop. Around the same time, in 1963, the rug hooking cooperative was founded. To join the co-op as members, women had to be active rug hookers. The co-op itself featured not only a rug hooking store, but also a restaurant where Chéticamp Acadian food was served, and a small museum about the culture of the region. In the early 2000s, the co-op began to experience financial difficulties, which were largely attributed to mismanagement and the rapidly declining number of rug

hookers. A few members called for the membership list to be opened to all local artisans; however, the co-op closed its doors in 2013.

Inspired by Neil Rosenberg's study of repertoire choice in bluegrass (1986) and building on the model of social hierarchy that Emily Urquhart (2008) discovered while researching mat hookers on the Great Northern Peninsula, I examine how the types of rug hookers in Chéticamp today are reflected in the types of rugs they create. Urquhart's triadic framework of Hobbyist, Vocational and Fibre Artist rug hookers is one that applied itself well to the current scene in Chéticamp rug hooking. I take this framework one step further by examining how these social hierarchies also correspond with how a rug hooker chooses to design their rugs, meaning that certain types of designs are common to certain types of rug hookers.

The Hobbyist rug hookers may sell their own works, but this is not the goal. They may stamp, or design and draw their own patterns, or they may not. They have control over what they create, when they create and how. The Vocational rug hookers are those most directly affiliated with selling their works through a local gallery. They represent the institutionalization of the tradition and enforce a standardized set of designs, patterns and sizes. Individual creativity in rug hooking is overlooked in favor of the touristic preferences. The Vocational rug hookers are upheld both by insiders and outsiders as the tradition bearers. Finally, the Fiber Artists stamp, dye, use non-traditional techniques, media and patterns. They sell tapestries internationally and even experiment with stretching rug hooking into new forms such as handbags, yoga mat bags, and clothing. They see themselves as an evolution of the Chéticamp rug hooking tradition, while they may be perceived by outsiders as outright rejecting it. In terms of

function and economics, it can be argued that the more professional (i.e.: Vocational and Fibre Artist) a rug hooker, the more the rug functions as a commodity and a means to make a living. However, there is a real tension between people working and making art; Vocational rug hookers tend to hook for a broader, more mainstream market, while Fiber Artists sell fewer rugs for more money.

Although most rug hooking traditions eventually made their way from floor to wall, that is, from functional, utilitarian rug to ornamental tapestry, the “Chéticamp rug hooking style” never had this trajectory. The specific aesthetics that were insisted upon by Lillian Burke, such as 100% 2-ply wool, specific hooking techniques, and muted colour palette, had the far-reaching effect of inventing a new rug hooking tradition in Chéticamp in the mid-20th century, that was always self-consciously artistic. Thus, Hobbyist, Vocational and Fibre Artist rug hookers are all expressing different variations of this invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1983). The Chéticamp style has grown to include these separate types of hookers, each with their own sense of tradition, aesthetic acceptability and method.

When I started my fieldwork, I was very interested in the rug hookers who did not follow the seemingly most-accepted Chéticamp aesthetic, I wanted to know how they interacted with the tradition, and how they positioned themselves within the community. Chéticamp rug hooking today is varied and nuanced, much like Burke’s original design sketches, and much in the same way her designs were memorialised in narrow ways, the tradition is often spoken of in very specific ways, denoting a proper way for a Chéticamp rug to look but in fact there are several different accepted aesthetics that co-exist within the tradition.

One of the first interviews I was able to secure was with Diane Poirier, the General Manager of the rug hooking cooperative, *Le Co-operatif Artisanale*. After our hour-long interview, my thoughts on rug hooking were already shifting. I had thought that women who hooked as members of the co-op found a social aspect to the tradition, partially because of the history of group hooking with Lillian Burke and also because of the concept of cooperatives being formed around groups. Instead, I found the opposite. The women who hooked for the co-op (and for many of the other local galleries and shops) seemed to work in the shadows. Their work was never signed, their designs were pre-determined by the co-op (who based their orders on what sold in their shop), they were virtually nameless and creatively powerless. This discovery was shocking to me as I had previously assumed they worked in similar ways to the wood carvers and folk artists I had been interviewing in the earlier part of my fieldwork, who had seemed more autonomous; they signed their work and created what they wanted, while often maintaining a balance with what they wished to express creatively and what was selling well.

When I mentioned this surprising information to rug hooker Yvette Muise and asked her why the rug hookers seemed to be treated more like factory workers than artists, she carefully explained that I would likely face challenges when talking about art to rug hookers. She explained that “I expect you’re gonna get a lot of blank faces; they’re not really gonna know what you’re talking about. That’s what I expect. And I think a lot of them are gonna be very grateful that, “oh my God, no, I would never have any idea!” I lot of them say, “I don’t know how to stamp” (Muise, Interview, 2012). This underscores that rug hookers seem to equate artistry with agency and independence.

In fact, what Yvette was implicitly trying to convey, and what I would come to discover, is that many women who hook in Chéticamp do not consider themselves artists at all. This was a conversation that came up anytime I spoke to rug hookers: all but one, Yvette Muise, did not see themselves as artists. So, I began asking women I saw hooking, mostly at the *Trois Pignons* Museum as this was the most public place women could hook, if they would like to speak to me about their art form.

Overwhelmingly, the response was that while they would be open to speaking about rug hooking, they were not artists: they did not dye their own wool, nor did they stamp their own burlap. At first, this was not something I understood. As a folklorist, my understanding of “art” can be broadly summed up as “creative expression.” As Gerald Pocius notes, “What we realise in our struggle against this Western elitist view of art is the potential that quite ordinary things might be considered under the rubric of art. Our own assumptions about art – is it a product exceptional or is it ordinary – have been shaped by how the concept developed without our Western intellectual tradition” (Pocius 2003, 414). To me, the women were artists, expressing their creativity through the medium of the hooked rug. However, it was soon made clear to me that local understanding of what constitutes an artist was vastly different than both my personal and disciplinary views. This debate is centered on discussions I had with three of the most prolific and well-known rug hookers in Chéticamp today: Yvette Muise, Lola LeLièvre and Yvette LeLièvre. They each have vastly different styles of hooking and represent different types of rug hookers within the Chéticamp rug hooking social hierarchy. Unsurprisingly, they each had different perspectives on what constitutes art within the rug hooking tradition, and what qualities and characteristics elevate a rug

hooker to artist. These perceptions seem to be a mix of local beliefs surrounding art, personal experiences in the art world and individual perceptions of artistic expression.

Local perceptions of what constitutes an artist were something I had come across previously when interviewing folk carvers in Chéticamp; some had expressed frustration that folk art was not seen on the same level locally as fine art. It was not until a carver became more well-known and recognized outside Chéticamp that they felt recognized as artists within their own community. Yvette Muise explained that locally, an artist has to,

produce something that looks like a photograph. If you carve something and it looks so much like a tree that it blows your mind, then they'll call you an artist. But if you make a folk art tree that's all, that's very creative, shows extreme imagination but it doesn't really look like a tree, they think it's garbage. It's about reproducing what you see. Reproducing it to, there are a few, maybe a half a dozen painters in town. One of them is in town, she was the only one who showed interest in learning to hook here. And uh, she will, she does paintings that are, it looks like a photo. There are a few others that do that, and they're artists. But someone who just takes a paintbrush and will do something, some kind of house that you look at it and you go, "oh my God, look at that! And wow!" It'll blow your mind because who would have thought of doing that! To them [people in Chéticamp] that's like, "this is stupid." They don't even talk about it, it's like, "oh God, that's just garbage." (Muise, Interview, 2012)

In this description Yvette is not only touching on community opinions about art, but she is also implicitly discussing distinctions between an icon and a symbol, between interpretation and meaning. While Yvette was explaining the local beliefs surrounding art in a general sense, when it comes to rug hooking, local understandings of art are not the only factor at play. This view was again taken up by rug hookers Lola LeLièvre and Yvette LeLièvre when I interviewed them at Lola's home one blustery March afternoon. As we discussed the history of rug hooking in the area, Lola took a sip of tea and announced, "I'm not an artist and I stay primitive" (LeLièvre, Interview, 2016). She

continued, “I don’t really come up with stuff on my own, I just see things and—” (Lola LeLièvre, 2016). Yvette LeLièvre disagreed with this and countered that,

most rug hookers do that, they’re inspired by a calendar – there’s – I think I might be inspired by work that I have seen by Jacques Tremblay from Quebec with the scenery I made. If I was inspired – if you can take a form and transfer it on your own burlap and hook you should call yourself an artist. Inspiration doesn’t need to come from within, it’s something – all inspirations come from what you’ve seen already. You didn’t take the picture and lay it over your burlap and you didn’t trace it. You saw something and you were able to – you were inspired by other, but you are the artist that drew it on the burlap. I just think it’s wrong for her not to think that she’s an artist after what she’s doing. I mean to take your inspirations are from, maybe somewhere else but you still are able to take your talent and put it on to your burlap. Draw it. Draw it nicely and still come up with your colours, and still want to sell it – and still be able to sell it. (LeLièvre, Interview, 2016)

When Lola speaks of “primitive” style rug hooking, she is taking up terminology used by contemporary rug hookers across Canada and North America. At rug hooking conferences, in magazines and online, rug hookers use the term “primitive” to refer to rugs that are usually made with rag strips (often wide cut strips) and feature simple designs which are often geometric in nature. There is often limited shading used. As you can see in the photos below (figure 4.1 and figure 4.1.2), primitive rugs, especially those which are contemporary, consciously evoke an unspecified past and harken to an imagined simpler time. Lola’s folk art primitive rugs, while they may share commonalities with primitive rugs from across Canada, are distinct because of the Chéticamp aesthetics infused in her methods, techniques and designs.



Figure 4.1: Primitive style hooked rug, Canadian Museum of History collection 75-37 (used with permission)



Figure 4.1.2: Primitive style hooked rug, Canadian Museum of History collection 2001.188.779 (used with permission)

Annie Mae Camus, a rug hooker who hooks purely for pleasure, explained to me that while people often comment on her rugs positively and sometimes call her an artist, she does not feel what she produces is art. She notes that, “nowadays, people come and tell me that I’m a good artist. Don’t call me an artist! I call Elizabeth Lefort an artist. I just hook ordinary things. Elizabeth and Yvette Muise, and another one who is now dead, they make extraordinary things. I couldn’t do it [translated by author] (Camus, Interview, 2016).”¹²

Lola and Yvette’s assertions about art stand in opposition to the experiences Yvette Muise shared with me about art in Chéticamp. On one hand, it seems that local perceptions about art are centred on the execution and the perfection of a visual medium in a way that most aligns with Western notions of “high art,” while for the rug hookers, notions of what constitutes art and what make someone an artist were much more culturally specific. Pocius asserts this when he explains that the products of culture, “what might be considered as art and what might not – can only be properly explained with the help of participants from the culture itself. While art is universal, it cannot be defined except as it is perceived by those who create and experience it” (Pocius 414). Leaving aside the wider Chéticamp’s perceptions of art, there was no consensus among rug hookers as to what made one woman an artist, and another simply a rug hooker. For Yvette Muise, art is creativity; art is agency; art is an expression of self and as long as

¹² « Asteure le monde vient là pis y disent : « T’es une bonne artiste. » Moa m’appelle pas une artiste, j’appelle Élizabeth LeFort une artiste. [Interview : Pourquoi? C’est quoi la différence pour toi?] Ben, pour moa, j’fais juste du hookage ordinaire. Comme Élizabeth LeFort pis Yvette Muise, pis y n’a un autre, est morte... la femme à Louis-Léo. Elles y font de quoi d’extraordinaire, y font des visages pis... moa j’pouvais pas faire ça. »

someone is freely expressing their truth, they are artists. For Yvette LeLièvre, true artistry was to be found in the ability to stamp the burlap, whether the stamping was done in a style that more closely resembles what some consider fine art or folk art was irrelevant. Lola, on the other hand, perceived an artist as someone whose designs were original.

The first time I stepped into a gift shop in Chéticamp that advertised hooked rugs, I was surprised to find that the large, intricately designed rugs I had seen in archival photographs dating back to Lillian Burke and the cottage industry had been largely replaced with rather small (coaster-to-placemat sized) rugs that heavily featured repetitive designs such as the aforementioned flowers and birds. I was interested in the role of the co-op in the maintenance and innovation of this traditional art form. Diane Poirier, the General Manager, is the first person who made me aware of the divide between the Vocational and Hobbyist rug hookers and the more professional Fiber Artists. She estimated the number of rug hookers in Chéticamp to be approximately 150. In the few short years since this interview, the estimated number of rug hookers in Chéticamp has decreased to several dozen due to many elderly rug hookers passing away or no longer being able to hook. Diane explained it in this way,

It's still fairly popular, but only among the older generation. Women often take up hooking again after they retire. We tried to offer a class last year to the young women but there was only one person interested. We keep saying that in 10 – 15 years there will be no rug hookers but we've been saying that for 20 years now, so I don't really know anymore. (Poirier, Interview, 2012)

Indeed, the age bracket of current rug hookers in Chéticamp skews towards an older demographic. The younger rug hookers were in their 50s and the oldest in their

late 80s. All of them had learned how to hook in their youth, those who had not pursued a career in art had come back to rug hooking after retirement. Many women who actively hook have taken it up since retirement and may or may not sell their works. If there were any hobbyist rug hookers in Chéticamp, they were hard to find.

What began as a cooperative for rug hookers to receive fair compensation for their work became more of a community business where rug hookers were hired to provide locally made rugs for tourists. They also sold wool to rug hookers, pre-made rugs to visitors and rug hooking starter kits to those interested in trying the craft themselves. Diane noted that they “get women from away, Canada and the rest, some women get excited and say things like ‘my mom used to do this!’ and buy the kits but I’d like to see how many of these kits are actually ever finished. Hookers from away come and compare techniques, styles, and sometimes take some of the tips home with them but they don’t affect the style here, it’s very ingrained” (Poirier 2012).

Pre-set designs and patterns are used by all the hookers employed by the co-op. As one participant stated, the co-op became “a factory, it’s a factory. Whatever sells, that’s what the co-op will do” (Muisse 2012). This becomes apparent as I peruse the co-op’s hooked rugs on sale in their craft store. Most are small, the largest being twice the size of a coaster, the most popular patterns include flowers, Acadian flags and nautical anchors. Most puzzling, and something that finds its way into my field notes are the Scotch thistle rugs, and the rugs with purple lupines with the word *Fàilte* stitched across the top. *Fàilte*, Scottish Gaelic for welcome, is an incongruous sight in a setting that in so many other ways emphasize Acadian identity. The name of the co-op is French, the town is largely French, and next door (also run by the co-op) stands a restaurant

specializing in Acadian food where waitress serve you dressed in romanticized 18th century Acadian dress, and yet the only word to be found stitched into the rugs, created by local Acadian women, reflects the larger Scottish Cape Breton majority and plays into the often repeated Nova Scotia tourism slogan “*Ciad Mille Fáilte*,” one hundred thousand welcomes.

4.3 Contemporary Chéticamp Rug Styles

Discussions surrounding art amongst rug hookers is also closely tied to style. When it comes to aesthetics and design, Chéticamp rugs fall under three fairly distinct categories: Folk art or “primitive” rugs, tapestries, and Burke-inspired rugs. In much the same way that career stage affects a musician’s repertoire (Rosenberg 1986), rug styles often coincide with the type of hookers their creator self-identifies as. Hobbyist rug hookers often create Burke-inspired rugs, though as I present further in this chapter, Catherine Poirier, who was a Hobbyist rug hooker, tended towards more primitive, folk art styles. Vocational rug hookers, those who hook professionally, often work between Burke-inspired and primitive, folk art styles to appeal to tourist tastes for specific designs. Fiber Artists largely create tapestry-style rugs.

Burke-inspired rugs (see figure 4.2) are, as noted, rugs with designs and patterns that reflect the way Chéticamp has memorialised Burke’s aesthetic. These rugs often feature flowers (five petal flowers being most popular, as well as thistles and lupins), birds, and pastel colors. These types of rugs are most often found in gift shops in the Chéticamp area and in many ways have come to symbolise the Chéticamp tradition.

Rug hooker Yvette Muise often calls this style of hooking the “little doily style” referencing its use of creamy pastels and scrolling florals that resemble lacework. I interview Annie Mae, an elderly rug hooker who prefers this style in her home in early March. During the interview she pulls out a small bag which includes all of her designs – most of them are cut outs from postcards, holiday cards or magazines. They overwhelmingly depict flowers, birds, and small boats. She takes me to see her frame, which she has been working on all winter. On it are dozens of small rugs; some are coasters featuring lighthouses, and Acadian flags. Others feature muted and well-shaded flowers.



Figure 4.2: Floral Burke-inspired rug by Yvette Muise (Photo by Author)

Folk art rugs (see figure 4.2.1), often also called “primitive” rug by local hookers, is a general style found across the Maritimes. Folk art rugs often feature bright colours with less use of shading, featuring scenes that depict rural maritime life such as fishermen, laundry flapping in the wind on a clothesline, Acadian flags, and colorful landscapes. This style of rug design is not unique to Chéticamp: rug hooking artists such as Deanne Fitzpatrick of Amherst, Nova Scotia (though originally from Placentia Bay, Newfoundland) is well known for this style. These types of rugs are found across Atlantic Canada and into New England and reflect a wider folk-art aesthetic of bright primary colours and largely geometric designs.



Figure 4.2.1: Folk art rug by Catherine Poirier, *Les Trois Pignons* (photo by author)

Tapestry rugs (see figure 4.2.2) are much rarer in Chéticamp. Tapestry-style rugs are much rarer in Chéticamp these days. Elizabeth Lefort and Yvette Muise are the two best known tapestry-style rug hookers. This rug style often features portraits, intricately designed landscapes, or reproductions of famous paintings. Tapestries also tend to be larger than either the primitive or Burke-inspired rugs. Elizabeth Lefort, who hooked in the middle decades of the 20th century before passing away in 2005, is perhaps the best-known tapestry-style rug hooker from the area. Eschewing the bold, primary colours of the folk art, primitive rugs, and the small size of the Burke-inspired rugs, tapestry rugs are consciously made to invoke high art and often look like painted pieces from afar.



Figure 4.2.2: Tapestry rug by Elizabeth Lefort with rug hooker Yvette Muise, *Les Trois Pignons* (photo by author)

As you can see from the photo, Lefort's rugs could be rather large and detailed with rather complex and intricate use of shading. From afar, it is hard to even tell this is a rug and not an elaborate painting.

4.4 Social Hierarchies

With the social hierarchies described by Emily Urquhart in her examination of rug hooking in the Great Northern Peninsula in Newfoundland in mind, I sought to find out if Chéticamp's rug hooking tradition was also home to the triad of Hobbyist hookers, Vocational hookers and Fibre Artists. As the community is small and shrinking, what I found during the course of my fieldwork is surely different than what was present ten years ago, or what will be present in several years.

When I speak of the triad framework of Hobbyist, Vocational, and Fibre Artist and discuss their separate styles, I am speaking of them within a Chéticamp context, meaning that the style of rugs created by Vocational rug hookers in Chéticamp is likely rather different in terms of design and aesthetic from Vocational rug hookers within another rug hooking tradition. Since rug hooking in Chéticamp is so regionally-specific and was so significantly altered by Lillian Burke, rug hooking specifics such as style and aesthetics may differ between types of rug hookers, but they largely retain the same fundamental technical design elements put forth by Burke and discussed in the previous chapter. While at first glance the three rugs (see figures 4.2, 4.2.1 and 4.2.2) may seem to look radically different, in fact they have more in common than may be superficially evident.

The majority of the hookers in Chéticamp are hobbyist or vocational hookers – that is to say they make their living as rug hookers, whether that means they own their own gallery (most do not), are employed by a gallery owner to hook, or sell their rugs to a middleman who then sells them to local shops. Many Vocational hookers, save those who own their own shops like Lola, are given pre-set designs to stamp on their rugs, or are told which of their designs sell best. They have limited creative control over what they hook. Lola explained to me that she often actually stamped the burlap for most of the hookers that sell in her shop. Some of the vocational hookers sign their work, like Lola (who signs her works with a large cursive L); however, many do not. Vocational rug hookers were not necessarily drawn to the tradition for any artistic reason, but for economic ones. Lola was taught to hook as a young child after her father died. Her mother needed money so an older lady in the community taught both Lola and her mother how to hook and began buying their rugs to sell to galleries and shops.

4.5 Vocational Rug Hookers

Lola LeLièvre lives on Chéticamp Island, which, in the summer, is a beautiful short drive from Chéticamp proper. Over a low bridge surrounded by the dark crashing waves of the Atlantic Ocean, Chéticamp Island faces downtown Chéticamp so you get an unbeatable view of the village, its rocky shoreline, and colourful homes. When I visit Lola at her home, I see none of these things. It is the beginning of March and Chéticamp is being hit with a massive snowstorm. The normally short drive across the causeway to Chéticamp Island is downright terrifying; the visibility is poor; the gravel roads are totally iced out and the wind is nearing 100 km/h. After a careful drive, up a steep road I

arrive at Lola's lovely home. Lola greets me at the door with her sister-in law Yvette LeLièvre, also a rug hooker.

The thought of interviewing Lola was a bit daunting. She owns a successful rug hooking gallery in Chéticamp, Jean's Gift Shop, and she is held up as one of the most successful rug hookers in the area. In her early fifties, she is also the youngest professional rug hooker I met in Chéticamp and the youngest person I interviewed for this thesis. Lola only began hooking when she was eleven and her mom relocated the family to Chéticamp from Toronto. Lola was taught to hook when her parents separated and both she (as the eldest child) and her mom became responsible for the family. An older lady in the community taught them to hook and began bringing them burlap, which they would use for their rugs. Lola explains that,

Marie LeBlanc came over and she gave us a few pointers on how to hook rugs but we would bring her like – she would give us a full burlap to do – so we were trying to do it. They were just terrible. If you had gone outside and just shake them in the wind they would have all come apart. Because we kept trimming, trimming, trimming. That's what we were doing. We were trimming everything. Oh that's nice and even, but we were clipping all of the wool off. But you know what? She was saying "oh my, what a good job, here's another burlap," she would keep giving us burlap. I know she'd throw them away but she'd pay us. She must have done that for about a year. (LeLièvre, Interview, 2016)

The first designs that Lola was taught to hook were florals, something that neither she nor Yvette LeLièvre were fans of: "I hated doing flowers; I hooked flowers for about ten years" (LeLièvre 2016). Eventually she moved away from the more conventional floral designs and embraced what she calls "primitive design." Generally, primitive style hooked rugs utilise bright colours without shading. Though in Chéticamp, the primitive

style rugs of hookers such as Lola LeLièvre and Catherine Poirier still utilize shading, since this is a hallmark of the Chéticamp rug tradition.

Eventually, as Lola tells it, she walked into Jean's Gift Shop to buy burlap and found out Jean wanted to retire and was looking to sell the store. Since Lola did not have the money to outright purchase the store, Jean asked her to run the store in her stead.



Figure 4.3: Hooked rug by Lola LeLièvre (photo by author).



Figure 4.3.1: Hooked rug by Lola LeLièvre (photo by author)

After ten years, Lola was able to purchase the store. This meant that Lola was now not only designing and hooking her own rugs, but she was now responsible for designing rugs for all of the rug hookers who hooked for her store.

The idea that someone else would design rugs to be hooked by others may sound strange but it is a common practice in Chéticamp rug hooking, one that began with Lillian Burke and continues to this day. In Lola's case, not all of her hookers use her designs, but many do. She provides them with a roll of burlap with the designs stamped on and they

eventually return to her the completed rugs. Some rug hookers who sell in her shop sell their rugs on consignment through Lola as well. Since Lola is the only hooked rug-only store left in Chéticamp, she is also the only store to not use a middleman with her rug hookers. While other galleries and tourist shops employ a middleman, someone who buys rugs from hookers and sells them to the local stores, Lola either buys directly from rug hookers or acquires pieces on consignment.

In her role as a business owner, Lola tries to emulate the women who purchased her first rugs years ago, Geraldine Small and Marie LeBlanc. The empathy and patience that Geraldine had shown Lola and her mother when they first began selling their rugs in something Lola brings to her business practice now. Lola relays the following story,

One lady that was hooking for me and she would do anything I asked her – anything I wanted her to hook – no problem. She'd do roosters, she'd do bears, she'd do coasters. She'd do anything that I wanted her to do. She got sick last year. She got very ill. Anyway, she said "Lola, I don't know if I can hook anymore." And she was missing it. So I said, "You know what? Have a piece of burlap at home anyway and if you feel like doing it, do it." She brought me maybe ten pieces. It was so bad. Well, because she was so sick and she, the hooking was all uneven. It was really high and her work had always been very nice so she brought it in and she was so feeble. And she says, "Lola, you don't have to pay me for them." And I know, "I'm going to pay you for them, I'll pay you and whenever you feel like hooking, just keep hooking." So I bought them. She would keep coming in and they would start to get better. (LeLièvre, Interview, 2016)

In many ways this interaction mirrors the first interactions Lola had when she began rug hooking when women in positions of economic power still paid for Lola's rugs even though they were not well made. According to Lola this is not a common practice in Chéticamp but one she felt was important for her to take on as a business owner.

4.6 Fibre Artists

There is one Fibre Artist in Chéticamp at this time – Yvette Muise. Yvette has been rug hooking professionally since she was 15. As a professional artist, and a tradition bearer, she inhabits several “art worlds” as described by Howard Becker (1982, 34). If we conceptualize an art world as being an eco-system where art can be conceived, produced, marketed and consumed, Yvette belongs to both the more traditional, local Chéticamp art world and the larger art world dominated by art galleries, agents and online stores. And yet in many ways, she belongs to neither. Traditionalists in Chéticamp refuse to acknowledge Fibre Artists as part of the rug hooking tradition. As a participant noted, “modern rug hooking isn’t the same, it’s an entirely new tradition. I wish they would make some rugs with flowers or something so we don’t lose that” (Poirier, Interview, 2012).

The first time I drive to Yvette’s house for an interview is during a March snowstorm (a different snow storm than the one I drove in for my first interview with Lola. Winters are stormy in Chéticamp). It is also the first time I am driving around Cape Breton without my husband, which means that even though I loathe driving in snowy conditions, I have no choice this time around. Even though Yvette’s home is usually a ten-minute drive for the home of my Chéticamp hosts, I am a bit worried about the drive since she lives off of a gravel road up a fairly steep hill. In the years I have been visiting Chéticamp I have met Yvette several times, usually at the home of Bill and Linda Roach, local artist and gallery owners, but this is the first time Yvette and I are meeting alone to discuss rug hooking. Arriving at her home I find her setting up a large

fire in her wood stove on her main floor. The home is rustic with open wooden beams on the ceiling and carpets warming the wood floor. There are no hooked rugs in her home.

Yvette learned how to hook from her mother when she was around six years old, first helping her mom hook backgrounds and then eventually moving to flowers. During our first interview, she tells me that,

I remember the age of fifteen I was tired of doing flowers. I wanted to quit school and do this full-time and everybody thought I was insane. So, my mind was made up that I was not continuing with school because I hated it from day one [...] At the age of fifteen, I started doing different pieces. The first one I did was, measured maybe, eight by twelve or something. And it was a little old lady holding the mop upside down and for the mop I put the wool through the burlap and knotted it in the back so was mop was 3D. I made a little bun on her head and the little bun I did the same thing. She had a little yellow dress, I wish I still had it, but my brother was teasing me that was it was ridiculous and that it would never sell. So my mother brought it to the gallery and it sold like [*snaps fingers*]. (Muise, Interview, 2012)

From the beginning of her career, Yvette consciously positioned herself as a Fibre Artist, someone not merely following the footsteps of the tradition, but pushing it forward and into new, sometimes uncomfortable directions. Not long after she sold her first piece, Yvette continued to help her mother hook more conventional pieces while also working on her own rugs. The second rug that she sold was of a unicorn, which she tried to sell on consignment to one of the local rug hooking galleries. The owner at first refused saying that, “I can’t buy this because I don’t know if it will ever sell!” But she said that in the spring I could hang it on the wall and see what happens. So we hung it on the wall and it was gone like [*snaps fingers*]” (Muise, Interview, 2012). This reticence on the part of the gallery owner to purchase Yvette’s work reflects the larger Chéticamp

design aesthetic, that too much deviation from the accepted designs of the locally accepted rug tradition is not acceptable. Yvette's biggest career successes came from outside of Chéticamp. While she kept selling her pieces on consignment to local galleries, they were always purchased very quickly, unbeknownst to Yvette, by the owner of an art gallery outside of Halifax. Eventually the owner met Yvette and offered her an exhibition at her gallery, her very first in the fall of 1990 when Yvette was 19 years old.

Yvette's design types fall under two broad categories: first, "weird" designs, as she calls them, which are designs of her own creation, and second, are her faithful recreations of images, photos and experiences that inspire her. Her faithful recreation rugs culminated in the creation of her Book of Kells rug. St. Mary's University has a facsimile of the Book of Kells that Yvette was able to access in order to faithfully recreate two of its pages. She explains that,

When I found out that St Mary's University had purchased a replica of the book – they had paid \$50 000 for an absolute replica of the Book of Kells. It said in the newspaper that it even had the wormholes. So I definitely wanted to go see that. So I called them [...] everybody was saying to me "you can't call them, like who do you think you are?" I called them and they were thrilled [...] I had an appointment and they brought me to little white gloves and a magnifying glass and the book. So I chose my favorite page and I did a replica in four by six foot rug. After I started I sent photos of the beginning of it to the university. Cyril Bird, the Director of Irish Studies contacted me and said "we want to keep an eye on this. Send us more photos" so I did. When I was about three-quarters done he said "Bank of Montreal wants to give something to the University and we think this would be perfect." So, then they asked me for a price. At the time I was selling my work for about 25-35 dollars a square foot, depending on the detail, because here everyone was selling for between 15-18 dollars a square foot. I had a friend say to me "Yvette if you sell this for less than \$8000 I'll never speak to you again." (Muise, Interview, 2012)

The Book of Kells rug (see figure 4.4) was not only Yvette's first large-scale piece; it was also a piece that changed how she negotiated herself as an artist. While she struggled to arrive at a fair price for her rug, she eventually asked for the \$8000 her friend had suggested and promptly convinced herself that she had priced herself out of the sale. At the unveiling she was flown down to Halifax and paid for her rug. Cyril Bird, who was initiated the sale, pulled her aside and said “‘When we got your letter we were sure it was a typo that you forgot to put a one or even a two in front of the eight,’ he put his finger on my nose and said ‘learn from this.’ Within the year my work was selling for three to four hundred dollars a square foot” (Muisse 2012). The Book of Kells rug (see figure 4.4) was an early shift for Yvette's art – she began charging much higher amounts for her rugs, from \$15 to \$300 a square foot, an over 1000% increase in her pricing.

That Yvette's faithful reproduction rugs have brought her recognition and media attention in Chéticamp and Nova Scotia is not surprising, as they fall in line with what she describes as the Chéticamp artistic aesthetic. In Chéticamp, as in most places, there are specific artistic aesthetics that are viewed as having significantly more cultural capital than others. Yvette and the other rug hookers I spoke to all expressed the same view that Chéticamp as a whole has a specific aesthetic that it values. This echoes what Gerald Pocius says about art and its values being the products of the culture that produced it (Pocius 2003).

In her original “weird” designs, Yvette generally falls under four fluid categories: nature, fish, figures, and words. She rarely hooks flowers anymore, perhaps

as a conscious rejection of the dominant position floral rugs have in Chéticamp, though some of her earlier rugs reflected this favorite Chéticamp design. An example of this is her Tree of Life rug (see figure 4.4.2). The Tree of Life design is a general design that is found in many rug traditions in Europe, the Middle East and in North American Indigenous communities.



Figure 4.4: Yvette Muise “Book of Kells” rug (used with permission)

The tree of life design in Chéticamp seemed to be a popular one, as Yvette noted that, “The tree. It was common design when I was growing up. The local women would more or less copy each other” (Muise, 2017). The pattern is found among the John Garrett company’s rug designs as of 1931 as pattern #301. The Garrett version (figure

4.4.1) features a tree (motif A.4.6B) rising above a mound of flower (motif A.2.1), with various flowers blooming off separate branches (motif A.1.1F). It also features a dark, solid border (motif B.2.1A). When Yvette and I visited *Les Trois Pignons* Museum in Chéticamp, a museum dedicated to the local rug hooking tradition, I found a Tree of Life rug (figure 4.4.3) hanging prominently on display. The rug was hooked in 1976 by Marie Muise. This rug enjoys many common design features to both Garrett's and Yvette's versions. Where the Garrett design features a realistic looking tree trunk, both Yvette's and Marie's designs feature a curvy tree trunk reminiscent of a tall leaf. Where Marie's, like Garrett's, features various flowers such as cabbage roses, buttercups, and forget-me-nots, as well as an abundance of shaded leaves (motif A.1.3), Yvette's Tree of Life only includes white and pink shaded cabbage roses.

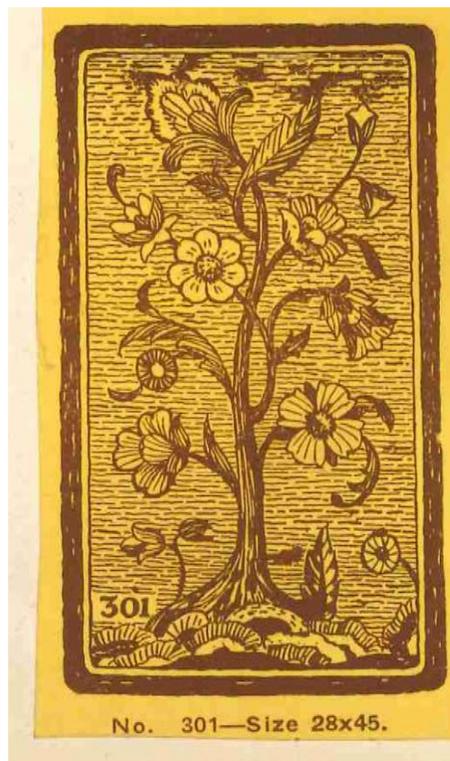


Figure 4.4.1: Tree of Life rug design by the John Garrett Company # 301 (John Garrett Fond, Canadian Museum of History archives)



Figure 4.4.2: Tree of Life rug by Yvette Muise (photo used with permission)



Figure 4.4.3: Tree of Life hooked rug by Marie Muise, *Les Trois Pignons* Museum 882-495. (Photo by author)

Though Yvette consciously stays away from designs that she feels are not modern, as she finds the Burke aesthetic constricting, her own designs often wink at more traditional aesthetic forms. Her fish series (see figure 4.4.4), as an example, feature multi-coloured fish (motif A.4.1C), sometimes covered in fishermen's nets, other times with hooks dangling. While the colour and composition is distinctly different than other fishing scenes depicted in Chéticamp rugs, the distinct nod to Chéticamp's heavy reliance on the sea for survival is shown in these rugs.

While Yvette lived away from Chéticamp for nearly 20 years, she continued to hook and display her work in art galleries in Halifax and Montreal. While living in Montreal, she explains that,

I approached maybe less than a dozen galleries, with my portfolio and a sample or two. They were very impressed, they were blown away, but my work is, I don't work small. It's very difficult, see a painting you can put a dot on a four by four but with wool if you want to do any detail it has to be a little bit bigger. And they didn't know the tradition, even as impressed as they were. One gallery owner ran next door, got the other gallery owner so he would come in, so she could show him. They were both blown away but they both refused me. Because, they said, it takes so much wall space and what if we don't sell. They wanted to save the space for artists they know they're going to sell. (Muisse, Interview, 2012)

This interaction is one that Yvette encountered often while she was living away and is emblematic of the particular situation she finds herself in; in Chéticamp and in Nova Scotia more generally, she holds much cultural capital as a rug hooking tradition bearer. While she may feel that her art is not entirely embraced within Chéticamp because of her willingness to step outside of what she considers too-confining accepted aesthetics, living and creating her art in Chéticamp affords her a place of respect from

people locally and from tourists who purchase her pieces. When she is removed from her cultural context, removed from Chéticamp, and Nova Scotia, the cultural capital afforded to her as a tradition bearer is also removed and while her art is appreciated, the cultural context and understanding of her position is lost and art galleries, unfamiliar with the history and the tradition of Chéticamp rug hooking are unwilling to take a risk on Yvette, seeing her value only in her name-recognition as an artist. In Chéticamp, people want to purchase her art as well as purchase part of the tradition that she represents.



Figure 4.4.4: Hooked rug with fish design by Yvette Muisse (used with permission)

In the years since she moved back to Chéticamp in 2009, Yvette has struggled to find a business model that works for her art. She steadfastly refuses to create small, cheaper pieces, which means that her work is rarely sold in the local galleries, leaving

her entirely dependent on commissioned pieces or pieces selling at the annual exhibition of local artists entitled “Hands Dancing.” She now sells her pieces for five or six hundred dollars a square foot and has struggled to sell her pieces regularly. This has led Yvette to other avenues for her art, including sporadic periods of teaching rug hooking, as well as investigating other business ventures including starting a carefully curated second-hand clothing store, as well as an Airbnb.

4.7 Hobbyists

After years of getting acquainted with Chéticamp rugs, I first became aware of Catherine Poirier when I was searching the collection at the Canadian Museum of History. Looking for Chéticamp rugs, specifically those hooked by hooker Elizabeth Lefort or designed by Lillian Burke, I came across the rugs of Catherine Poirier, which looked nothing like the staid, muted, docile rugs I had originally been searching for. These rugs all featured a stark, solid border and mostly primary colours. They depict colourful Chéticamp saltbox homes, Acadian flags, agricultural landscapes, and fishing scenes. The aesthetic difference struck me immediately and continued to intrigue me throughout my research into Chéticamp rug aesthetics.

Catherine Poirier (née Cormier) was born in 1902 in Cap Le Moine, near Chéticamp. She was a descendant of *Les Quatorze Vieux*, the original fourteen inhabitants who established Chéticamp. She was one of fifteen siblings, though only six or seven survived to childhood (Eber 26). Her father was a fisherman, like many of the men in Chéticamp, while her mother took care of the family and the home. Like many women in Chéticamp, Catherine and her mother hooked to supplement her father’s

income. In winter, Catherine's mother hooked, and when Catherine was old enough she began joining her mother at the frame. Catherine began hooking around the same time as Lillian Burke arrived in Chéticamp and while Burke (as discussed earlier) was pushing the Chéticamp design aesthetic towards floral, geometric neo-colonial designs, Catherine went in another aesthetic direction. She notes in an interview with rug collector Dorothy Eber that "When Ms Burke came to Chéticamp, people started hooking for her. The designs changed but when I got serious into hooking, I designed it all my own. I always do my own designs. At first all they did was hook flowers, so I hooked scenery because no one else was. After a while they started hooking scenery too" (Poirier 1988). Chéticamp rugs at the time that Catherine began to sell her rugs, had already fully internalized the Burke aesthetic – rugs that were being sold were mostly floral, so Catherine's bold colours, and sceneries would have stood out as unique amongst the more common muted floral rugs.

Catherine's designs are usually of landscapes, animals and scenery depicting life in Chéticamp. As Eber notes in her writings about her first encounter with Catherine's rugs at a store in Chéticamp, "Some of the Chéticamp rugs hookings are the size of coasters. They often show birds and flowers, carefully worked from patterns, but there is still room for creativity. Over in a corner, Jane spots a wonderfully original rug. Both of us wanted to buy it, but the proprietor told us that 'the big yellow hen with all the chicks' was already sold." (Eber 1994,12). This rug design (see figure 4.5), of a chicken (motif A.4.1B6) surrounded by her chicks, is the design that put her name on the map. As Catherine describes it, the design features a mother hen with her babies who are causing her some trouble. She notes that "lots of things are going wrong. The first one,

on the left is sick. He's going to die. The second is very stuck up. The third is ready to run because his mother is scolding the fourth. The fifth one say [sic], 'I don't care, I'm going to eat'" (Poirier Interview, 1988). In the background of the design are two buildings – a yellow house and a red barn. The architectural style of the home as well as the colours used to depict them is unmistakably Chéticamp.



Figure 4.5: Hooked rug, Catherine Poirier, Canadian Museum of History 2005.141.7 (used with permission)

While Catherine Poirier passed away before I began my doctoral studies, I found recorded interviews with her in the Canadian Museum of History's archives, which offered a first-hand account of her life and her art. The threads running through her interviews and her rugs are of individuality and resistance. She was actively rug hooking at the time of Lillian Burke, and when many of the women in Chéticamp were hooking for Burke, Catherine refused. When Burke was actively altering the design and general aesthetic of rug hooking in the area, Catherine resisted. Instead she worked on

developing design aesthetics that were at once entirely regional and unique. Catherine's design aesthetic, while seemingly different than the design aesthetic Burke imagined for Chéticamp rugs, actually retains much of the vernacular aesthetics that Burke developed for Chéticamp rug hooking. While the houses, barns and animals she hooks rarely use shading, her skies, grass and oceanscapes utilize the subtle and intricate shading that Burke was known to have implemented in the area. Her rugs are hooked with fine wool, not cut-up old clothes. Catherine also hooks large parts of her rugs in squares, a method that Burke insisted upon. This gives Chéticamp rugs an almost three-dimensional look that is entirely unique to the region's rugs.

I chose to focus on four of Catherine's rugs because they are largely representative of her larger corpus of rugs and allows us a broad view of the types of rugs she hooked and sold. Catherine speaks of adding her own artistic expression to the reality of life in Chéticamp in her rugs. Thus, her rugs are artistic depictions of everyday life in Chéticamp. Catherine's rug depicting Chéticamp's *Parroise St-Pierre* (see figure 4.5.1) with a numbers of nuns entering the church for mass is set against a multi-tonal shaded blue sky. The sandstone church is a focal architectural point in Chéticamp – its central tower, and tall silver spire can be seen from a long distance. Its intimidating presence reminds me of Quebec towns where a large imposing church sticks up and out, towering over the small, rural homes it dwarfs. The nuns walking to church are depicted wearing black habits with black veils and white wimples. The church is one of few stone churches in Cape Breton and is the tallest and largest building in Chéticamp. Catherine explained the story behind the idea for this rug,

Sundays we went to church. Not too much during the week, because there was too much to do. We'd go with the horses and wagon. We used to tie the horses to the fence and the horse would stay there until we came back. Oh yes, the church was very important in our lives. It was the centre of our lives. That's why our people got thrown out of Acadia; they wouldn't turn Protestant to swear allegiance to the King. All my friends liked this hooking. Even our young priest came to see it. I told him "it must be a windy day, because the priest is not standing quite straight." I wouldn't have thought of saying so myself, but the priest said "Perhaps he's had a bit too much wine. "After church, if the weather was nice, the young people would meet and talk. In my hooking, I've put the choirboys and the nuns. (Catherine Poirier, Interview, 1988)

In this rug, Catherine uses at least seven shades of blue, ranging from light baby blue to a dusky grey-blue, to colour in her sky. The grass contains at least four shades of green. Catherine, like many rug hookers of her generation, dyed her wool by hand herself. Catherine explains that, "we made our own dyes; the rhubarb root made a beautiful yellow. Everyone then raised their own sheep, and my mom spun all her own wool" (Catherine Poirier 1988). Hand dyeing wool was something insisted upon by Lillian Burke in the 1920s and is something that was practiced by Catherine when she hooked, though fewer and fewer rug hookers dye their own wool. This use of shading in both the background sky and the grass is a hallmark of Catherine's land and sea- scapes.

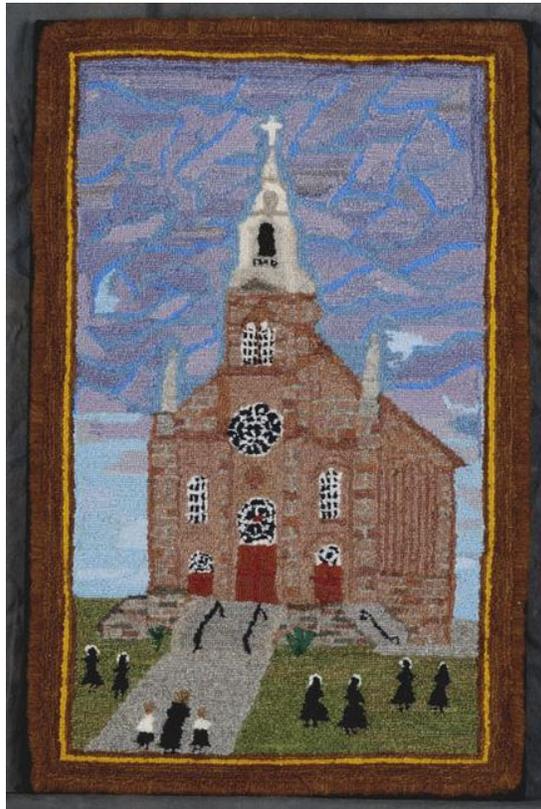


Figure 4.5.1: Hooked rug, Catherine Poirier, Canadian Museum of History 2005.141.8 (used with permission)

Catherine often used vexillological and flag (motif A.4.3) images in her rugs to depict the bi-cultural nature of Chéticamp – at once both deeply Acadian (though separated from other Canadian Acadian communities) and Canadian. Her rugs (see figure 4.5.2) often depict both the Canadian (motif A.4.3B “Maple Leaf) and Acadian flags (A.4.3A “Acadian”). The Acadian flag – blue, white and red with a yellow *Stella Maris* nestled in the upper left corner – blankets Chéticamp. The *Stella Maris* (Mary’s star) is a symbol of Mary, a patron saint of mariners, and the Acadian national symbol. It can be found painted on the sign that welcomes visitors to the area, flying as a flag in front of Chéticamp homes, painted on lobster traps that double as address posts, and on

many hooked rugs. While the Acadian flag is certainly not only used by Chéticampers, its use on hooked rugs is ubiquitous in Chéticamp. In the seven years I have spent visiting Chéticamp, it is the most common vexillological symbol to be featured on rugs denoting how strongly tied Chéticampers are to their Acadian identities. As Catherine explains about the rug,

My father also had to make the hay. When he needed to, in the summertime, he'd take a few days off from fishing to do the haying. At that time we'd rake the hay by hand, but in later years he bought himself a baler. In those days, we always wore those white aprons. But the aprons you see in the hooking are too clean. Those people taking a ride must be tourists! Sometimes in the hookings I put Acadian flags around the edges, but I hook the Maple Leaf as well. They always fly together. (Catherine Poirier, Interview, 1988)



Figure 4.5.2: Hooked rug, Catherine Poirier, Canadian Museum of History 2005.141.1 (used with permission)

While rugs illustrating the agricultural and fishing life of Chéticamp were certainly a large part of Catherine's rug designs, she also hooked rugs (see figure 4.6.3) that depicted the more private lives of women. This is most obviously seen in her rug depicting a Chéticamp kitchen. The kitchen is a cheery yellow, with a wood burning oven warming a kettle. There are decorative plates on a high shelf on the left and brown stoneware pieces on the right. A hooked rug in a stylized basket weave design (motif B.3.2) adorns the floor next to a cat and a dog. The kitchen occupies an important role in the Chéticamp home, in my experience visiting in the area, the kitchen is where guests are entertained with tea, coffee, and light refreshments during a visit. In Chéticamp, dropping by for an unexpected visit is a custom that took a while for me to get used to. Coming from a large city, I grew up always being instructed to call before I arrived at someone's doorstep, the only exception being going to visit my grandparents. This courtesy became ingrained in me even after I moved to St. John's and noticed that dropping by unannounced seemed to be much more popular in Newfoundland than it had been in Montreal. But in Cape Breton, dropping by for long visits was something I learned to enjoy while living with Bill and Linda Roach, my Chéticamp home base. Linda's kitchen door is almost always unlocked, and friends and family drop by for coffee on a regular rotation.

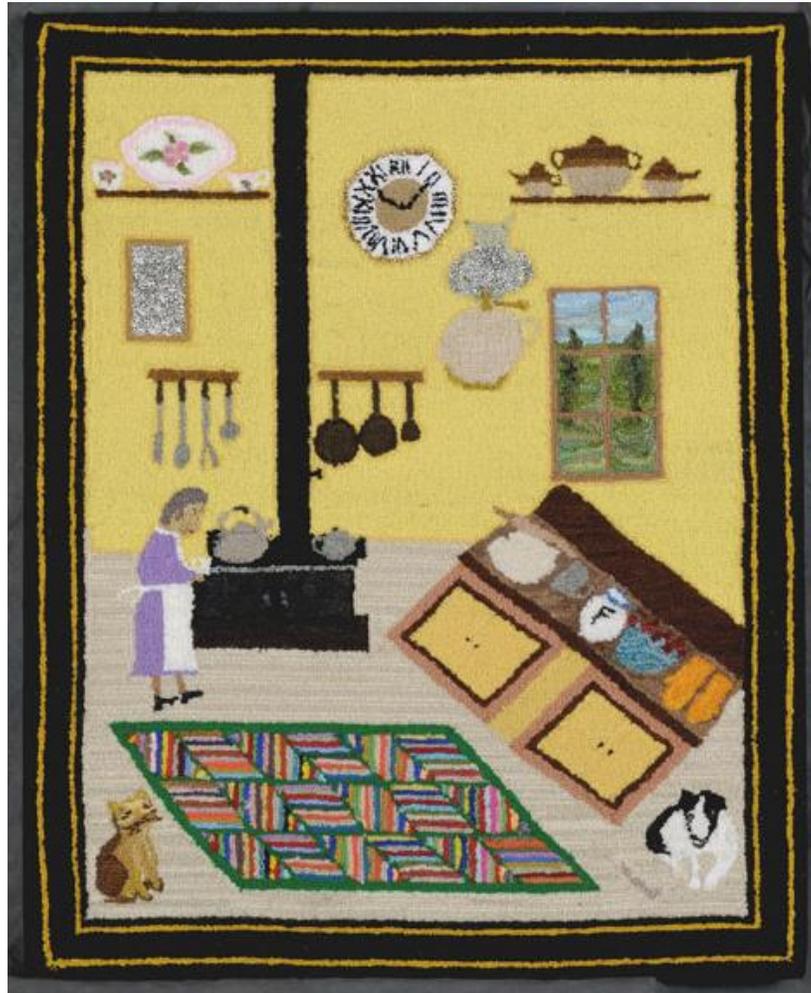


Figure 4.5.3: Hooked rug, Catherine Poirier, Canadian Museum of History 2005.141.5 (used with permission)

Though their rugs differ significantly in appearance, Catherine Poirier and Annie Mae Camus are both Hobbyist rug hookers because their intentions surrounding their craft is largely pleasure-based, not financially motivated. Anne Mae, much like Catherine, spent the better part of her adult life living away from Chéticamp, returning only after she and her husband retired. While she had learned to hook as a young girl with

her mother, Anne Mae did not actively pursue rug hooking until she moved back to Chéticamp in 2007. She explained to me that, “For me, this is a hobby, not a business. My daughter now has a little corner store here, called *Le P’tit Chady*. She said I spent too much time indoors, so she makes me come to the store and sell my rugs. I get to see people. I like spending time with people like that. She takes some of my rugs on consignment.”¹³ Annie’s rugs are mostly coaster sized, though she does make larger rugs for family as gifts, and the designs are often cut from books, postcards and magazines that she keeps in a small box in her hooking room. Although she is a Hobbyist rug hooker, the style of rugs she creates, unlike Catherine, are Burke inspired. They largely feature flowers such as lupins (see figure), birds, and some Chéticamp landscapes.



Figure 4.6: Lupin rugs by Annie Mae Camus (photo by author)

¹³ « Moe j’fais ça pour un *hobby*, c’est pas pour ma *business*. Pis là ma fille a l’magasin le « P’tit Chady », pis là a disait j’étais trop enfermée dans la maison, ça fait [inaudible] « pourquoi s’tu viens pas les vendre là? Tu vouerras du monde... » Moe, j’aimions voir du monde. Ça fait c’est elle a prend du *consignment* [inaudible] pour vendre. »

While Annie Mae mostly sells through her daughter's corner store, but she also sometimes sells to Daniel, a middleman who also sells to the Sunset Art Gallery, owned and operated by Linda Roach and her folk artist (and Hobbyist rug hooker) husband, William (Bill) Roach. Linda explained that she tells Daniel what designs sold well and which she would like more of and he requests those specific designs from the rug hookers he buys from. Anne Mae notes that "some people work with rugs to make money. When I started hooking again, the only one who would buy from me is Daniel Camus. He comes, and he tells me, 'I want this, and this. I want ten like this'" (Camus, Interview, 2016).¹⁴

4.8 An Economic Tradition

Most women used rug hooking as a means to make money. This speaks to the fact that the rug hooking tradition in Chéticamp, while seemingly having had a very artistic history, has been functionally an economic one. As Yvette notes about growing up in Chéticamp amongst rug hookers, "I grew up with people not really liking, not really enjoying it, just needing the money. It was a job. And I've heard many swear that they had to go home and hook. And just wished they could find a job so they wouldn't have to hook" (Muise 2012). This was something I heard over and over again – rug hooking, ever since the pedlars and Lillian Burke, had taken on a decidedly economic trajectory. It was a way for women to use the skills they acquired growing up to make money. Lola LeLièvre noted that she has eight years left before she can retire and, while she loved to

¹⁴ « Y'en a faut qui travaille là-d'sus pour se faire d'l'argent. Parce qu'asteure moa quand j'ai commencé icitte, le seul qui voulait acheter de moa, c'est Daniel Camus. Ben lui y vient, pis y va m'dire : « J'aimerais avoir ça comme ça que je fais, j'en veux 10 comme ça. Y m'dit les ordres qui veut. »

hook, it is mostly a means to an end for her (financial independence). While it fulfils her creatively, if she could stop at any moment, she would. This sentiment was echoed by many of the women I spoke to, especially those who relied on rug hooking for financial support. Hobbyists rug hookers tended to hook later into their lives, likely because it was a source of pleasure to them, not a necessity.

In many ways, rug hooking in Chéticamp is what historian Sharon MacDonald calls an economic tradition and I believe it is exactly because of this that the tradition is experiencing such a decline. Commercial rug hooking, from when the first pedlars arrived to the selling of rug through current local galleries, was always first and foremost, a means to financial ends. It may have been a creative and artistic means for some, but the reason women learned to hook with their mothers and grandmothers was always because they needed to make money, and rug hooking was an important and popular way for local women to make money. Rug hooking helped women not only supplement their husbands' wages, it also helped ensure that should there be a bad fishing or growing season, the family would not starve. In the off-seasons, their husbands would often join them at the frame to increase their output. In fact, entire families would be found hooking throughout winter in order to sell the rugs in the spring to middlemen and art brokers who would then sell them to a gallery or tourists for profit. It is exceedingly rare for someone to have learned rug hooking only as an adult, or only for the purposes of artistic expression. To be a rug hooker was a sign of poverty; it was a symbol that you needed to hook for survival. In many ways, it never lost this stigma, even nearly a century after the cottage industry fundamentally changed how Chéticampers viewed, created and sold their rugs; the women who hook largely do it for

money. Therefore, when women no longer needed to rely on their hands for money, when the economy improved or when they could take jobs outside the home, rug hooking fell by the wayside, maybe returned to as a hobby in their later years like Catherine or Annie Mae have done, in a symbolic reversal of this locally-understood symbol of poverty.

Another aspect of the economic importance in rug hooking is contemporary consumption and tourism. Bending to the tastes of tourists while maintaining profits is a constantly evolving practice that often leaves rug hookers feeling the loss, both creatively and financially. Take this exchange between Linda Roach, Bill Roach, rug hooker Adele Poirier and her husband Tommy at the Roach's kitchen table one afternoon while I was in town,

Adele Poirier: Then we were members of the Co-op Artisanale, we were hooking for them. So, we were paying maybe a few dollars, but we could only get it on consignment. If we hooked the whole winter and put it on consignment, we would have made a lot more money. But they bought it from us fairly cheap and then they'd price it very high.

Linda Roach: Like we sell from that Daniel, an eight by ten, the three little men on the wharf, that's the most common, \$49.95, he takes it to sell it here, like he puts the prices. He, I get a percentage of that and then he bought it from the rug hooker, so there's not much money being made for the rug hooker, if he's getting some, I'm getting some. For that eight by ten I betcha they may get maybe eighteen, twenty dollars.

Tommy Poirier: And how long would it take? A day or two?

Adele Poirier: Oh my Lord, yeah.

Bill Roach: Eight by ten?

Linda Roach: You know, the three little men on the wharf.

Bill Roach: Yeah, yeah. About a week and a half.

Tommy Poirier: For \$18 (Interview by author 2016)

What this exchange demonstrates is the financial control still being largely held by non-rug hookers. The middleman system is deeply ingrained in Chéticamp with only a few rug hookers selling directly to tourists or galleries. Tommy Poirier notes that women quiltmakers in his hometown in Pennsylvania, fed up with their middleman system, eventually decided to cut them out completely. He explains that,

I come from Pennsylvania about an hour away from Lancaster county, Amish, Pennsylvania Dutch. And all the Plains women, to use their generic term, they make quilts. And these quilts are five hundred, a thousand dollars for a quilt. But they have cut out the middle man, you know. They sell out of their farm houses. You're driving down the road and there's a sign at the end of a lane: "Quilts." All over the place: quilts. And you drive down this lane and there's these beautiful five hundred, thousand-dollar quilts that these ladies have made over the winter – Cottage industry. But they are cutting out the middle man. And probably the tax man too (Tommy Poirier, Interview 2016).

Those who strike out on their own are likely to face difficulties finding a constant stream of revenue such as the kind experienced by Yvette Muise discussed previously.

The sense that rug hookers, already economically-disadvantaged women, were historically treated un-favorably financially is clear; starting with the visiting pedlars who traded rugs for household goods, continuing in the belief that Lillian Burke under-paid her workers and finally with the contemporary middleman system in which rug hookers see themselves as being under-valued by the current system. They navigate a tricky situation in an economically underdeveloped region, where no one; not the middlemen, neither the gallery owners, are making large profit margins.

The consumption of Chéticamp rugs has remained largely similar throughout its history as an artistic tradition most often bought and consumed by outsiders. The largest consumption shift is in function; where rugs before Burke and during the cottage industry

were usually used as rugs: they are now stripped of this function and occupy a consciously artistic space. During my last visit to Chéticamp I wandered through several shops looking for a hooked rug that could be used as an actual rug in my living room. Overwhelmingly, the small size of most rugs meant that they were not intended for the floor, and the larger rugs (though still not very large at all) seemed intended as wall hangings. I finally found a rug in the Sunset Art Gallery that very clearly was intended for floor use. It was a rag rug featuring a nautical theme in bright blues and red. At the cash register with Linda, I mentioned how much difficulty I had in trying to find an actual floor rug in Chéticamp and asked her if she knew the women who had hooked the rug. Linda's reply was that the rug came from a rug hooker in Chester, on the mainland of Nova Scotia, because she had been unable to find floor rugs in Chéticamp.

This shift in function has meant that Chéticamp rugs occupy a complicated relationship when it comes to tourist tastes. As they are now purely decorative, the distinct styles (Burke-inspired, folk art, tapestry) of rugs are consumed differently by those who buy them. Burke-inspired rugs are often coaster or place-mat sized, indicating that their use may have shifted to occupy a place at the dinner table. The designs themselves are symbols of the region. Largely floral, they do not bear a physical resemblance to Chéticamp but the connection is culturally learned when tourists purchase them. Due to their size, they are made in multiples, so they are handmade, but mass-produced.

Folk art, primitive rugs, though generally larger than Burke-inspired rugs, are no longer meant to be used in grand colonial homes in the way that Burke's rugs were during the cottage industry. The designs used in these rugs (seascapes, fishing vessels,

Chéticamp landscapes) evoke a sense of rurality and anti-modernism closely tied to the place they are hooked. In this sense, these rugs act as an index for tourists. Their depictions of local spaces show evidence of what is being represented.

Finally, tapestries are consumed by tourists who understand their value as pieces of high art, both in financial terms, but also in terms of design. Yvette Muise told me about one of her pieces, a large, complicated hooked tapestry of Chaucer's Wife of Bath, being purchased by a couple who later invited her to come view it in their home. Upon entering their home, she saw that the rug was nestled between paintings of dancers by students of French painter Edgar Degas. Tapestry rugs rely on consumers with the proper cultural capital, and knowledge to appreciate and evaluate them. Taste and class are closely bound within this rug style as they fit into what Bourdieu terms "art for art's sake" (Bourdieu 1977) compared to art created for a market, which Burke-inspired rugs and folk art, primitive rugs are. Tapestry rugs are largely one of a kind as well, fuelling their perception as one-off, unique pieces of art.

4.9 Conclusion

Many of the local hookers have been trying to improve the lot of rug hooking by trying to contemporize it and attract younger women, but as hooker Lola LeLièvre told me, the relationship between rug hooking, poverty and survival is very strong in the area. For many women, rug hooking did not inspire pride but shame and as soon as women no longer needed to hook, they stopped, and stopped teaching their children as well. Slowly the tradition became seen as something older ladies eventually come back to as a leisure activity. In some ways this reflects what folklorist Diane Tye has written

about molasses (2008) and lobster (2011) in the Atlantic provinces, as well as the work of George Lewis on lobster and social class in Maine (1989). Foods that once represented poverty and invited feelings of shame eventually became iconic and nostalgic foods once there was enough space from the context in which communities depended heavily on them (Tye 2008, 340).

Since the end of the cottage industry, women in Chéticamp have continued to hook rugs for tourists and patrons. Changing consumer tastes has meant that the aesthetic of the rugs has changed and diversified with folk art and tapestry style rugs becoming more prominent in the area. There are three types of contemporary rug hookers in Chéticamp: Hobbyists, Vocational rug hookers and Fibre Artists. All three types create rugs that, on the surface, seem rather different, however they are all simply variants of the local aesthetic which was largely developed by Lillian Burke during the cottage industry. While they each employ various design characteristics (colour choice, rug size, pattern) their rugs co-exist within the same tradition.

The role of the middleman, which was first played by the pedlars, then by Lillian Burke, has been taken over by locals who control much of the artistic production in the area. Most notably, rug hooking in Chéticamp is an economic tradition where rug hookers have long viewed it as a means to a financial end. In this way, it is a marker of poverty, closely bound with feeling of shame, and thus when rug hookers are financially able to leave it behind, they do, perhaps revisiting it after retirement.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

“I made the story of my life in the things I made”
(Catherine Poirier, Interview by Dorothy Eber, 1988)

5.1 On the Wall

My first hooked rug is now proudly framed and mounted in my living room, near my grandmother's needlepoint pieces, and above the couch, where brocade pillows made by my other grandmother rest. On the floor is a large hooked rag rug, made in Rimouski and given to me by a now-retired colleague. It is markedly different than my own brightly-coloured rug, and even more dramatically so compared to the small collection of Chéticamp-style rugs that adorn my home. They are all the size of coasters, in varying shades of brown, yellow, cream, and pink. The delicate shading and the tight uniformity of the loops make them seem almost machine-made in their perfection.

I tried placing all of my hooked rugs, from the more rustically-made rag rug to the large, vintage, circular Chéticamp rug featuring small pastel flowers, on tables or the floor, but my cats soon discovered that unhooking the rugs, loop by loop, was a favourite pastime of theirs. Spending a few hours in the evening, re-hooking the unraveled rugs eventually drove me to put every rug up on the walls. It occurred to me that I was struggling with viewing my rugs as being actual, functional rugs. Not because of their cost, many were given to me, but because of the woman hours they took to make. This meant that for me, they had become precious pieces to be displayed, even though some had been clearly made with the intention of being used as floor covering.

5.2 What is a Chéticamp Rug?

This thesis is the story of how utilitarian material culture was transformed into a cottage industry, and eventually into high art. In this way, Chéticamp rug hooking carries the meaning of what the tradition meant at each of these stages along the way. As this thesis has presented, the Chéticamp rug hooking tradition is varied and nuanced with multiple design aesthetics co-existing within the same tradition. Burke-inspired rugs, primitive rugs, and tapestries are all different facets of the same textile tradition in contemporary Chéticamp.

What these various styles of rugs in Chéticamp have in common are a specific set of technique, and methods that I believe are what characterise the area's design and style. There are certain characteristics that are unique to Chéticamp rugs. They are: hooking in squares (in which the back of the rug looks the same as front), uniform loops, hooking every hole in burlap, the use of 2-ply fine wool, a mastery of shading, and a purely aesthetic function. While these characteristics are a mixture of technique and style, they are what created the Chéticamp aesthetic. Chéticamp technique became culturally ingrained and with it a very strong sense of what constitutes "Chéticamp" hooking – what is correct, accepted, and valued, and what is not. The women I spoke to had very specific beliefs about what a Chéticamp rug was, what techniques could be employed to create it, and what designs were acceptable. Many, if not most of these beliefs are directly tied to, and descended from, the changes Lillian Burke made to the local rug hooking tradition. In many ways, this makes perfect sense. What is and is not acceptable is really a discussion of who has the power to define such things. Tradition

bearers have power through cultural capital, but tourists have economic power to define and shape the tradition.

Before Lillian Burke's arrival, Chéticamp rugs were a home-based handicraft. Though a home craft, they were not devoid of artistic value, as is seen in the rise of the travelling pedlars trading rugs for home goods. Burke molded the tradition into something wholly new and marketed it as something original and different than any other rug hooking tradition in North America. The changes that she brought were exactly what made Chéticamp rugs so popular with wealthy American patrons and visiting tourists. These changes are what have made Chéticamp rugs stand out from other rug hooking traditions and what has allowed it to be considered "more than folk art" (Yvette Muise 2012); thus it follows that these techniques, methods, and designs are held very closely and dearly by the community, with little acceptance of variance or deviation from them.

Rug hooking in Chéticamp has been, since the arrival of Lillian Burke, an art form destined for tourists and wealthy arts patrons. Rugs are now sold mostly through gift shops geared towards tourists passing through Chéticamp. The rhetoric I often hear when I visit Chéticamp is that the rugs have become tourist trinkets, pale imitations of their former glory. This gives me pause. The function of Chéticamp hooked rugs has not changed since Burke's time; the tradition was always meant for the consumption of outsiders. Though the rugs themselves have changed, with smaller, cheaper rugs and a diversity of styles becoming more common, the function of the Chéticamp-style rug as an item of fine craft remains.

I had originally envisioned this thesis to be an in-depth ethnography of the current rug hooking community in Chéticamp, but after my arrival in Chéticamp to begin fieldwork, the reality was rather different than my expectations had been. There were few rug hookers around and even fewer that were interested in being interviewed about it. I was lucky that several women and men agreed to talk to me about rug hooking but I would be remiss not to acknowledge how different this thesis would have been, had it been written even 15 years ago, when there were many more rug hookers and many more local galleries selling their work. These dwindling numbers of hookers pushed me to interview whoever would speak with me, and to conduct a significant amount of archival research, which no doubt affected the kind of thesis I ended up writing. In the end this thesis has focused mostly on aesthetics, design, and economics, placing Chéticamp rug hooking within a wider rug hooking context, something that had not previously been done before. Chéticamp's rug hooking tradition is one that was largely invented by Lillian Burke as both an economic tradition and a self-consciously artistic one. Unlike many other rug hooking traditions which slowly made their way from the floor to the wall – that is to say the rugs went from having a purely utilitarian function to eventually fulfilling a mostly aesthetic purpose – the rug hooking style that was pioneered by Lillian Burke and piggy-backed on to the existing rug hooking tradition before supplanting it was an artistic endeavor.

5.3 Chéticamp Rugs and Art

Chéticamp rug hooking is an artistic practice, one wrapped up in issues of taste, creativity, class and economics. The artistic production of the rugs has historically been

(and to a certain point, still is) centred around brokers. First the pedlars arrived, trading rugs for other goods and selling the rugs to mainland markets. Then Burke and the cottage industry set up the middleman system, which is still in place today, where middlemen often control artistic output. Consumption of Chéticamp rugs by collectors and tourists affect creative control over aesthetics in the area, with middlemen basing their orders purely on financial considerations. This means that for most rug hookers, save for those who do not sell their rugs, operating within this system creates a struggle for creativity and agency, between rug hookers and those who control the production.

When we consider the folk art-craft- art continuum that I discussed in my first chapter, it becomes clear that Chéticamp rugs occupy multiple cultural spaces with regard to artistic practice. In terms of transmission, Chéticamp rug hookers largely do not learn through formal schooling but have rather tended to learn from other rug hookers in informal settings. In this way, Chéticamp rug hooking falls between formal art and fine craft schooling and the auto-didactic learning of some Canadian folk-art traditions (such as the largely auto-didactic *indiscipliné* folk art movement in Quebec). When it comes to function, in its current, contemporary form, Chéticamp rugs no longer function as floor coverings. Apart from the coaster-sized rugs which retain a utilitarian function, they are purely aesthetic in function, aligning more closely with high or folk art than with craft pieces.

5.4 Chéticamp Rugs and Economics

Chéticamp rug hooking, as an economic tradition, plays an important financial role for women in the area. Since the days of the pedlars, women saw that the rugs'

perceived value could be something that allowed them more financial security. This understanding meant that when Burke arrived in the area looking to start a cottage industry that would require a near-complete re-working of rug-making methods and aesthetics, women in Chéticamp were open to it. As the women I spoke to noted, rug hooking was a way to have a reliable income in an area where much of the labour is dependent on unstable sources, such as natural resources (fishing, lumber, agriculture etc.). This also meant that rug hooking is closely tied to notions of poverty. Women and their families hooked all winter long for the financial compensation of selling their rugs. Rug hooking is not comfortable; crouching over the frame for hours and focusing closely on pulling small loops through even smaller burlap holes causes strain in the back, eyes, and hands. This physical discomfort is also an emotional one, with rug hookers associating the tradition with the shame being poor. This has translated to former rug hookers no longer teaching their daughters how to hook, largely due to the fact that they have other, more lucrative and less physically demanding options for employment.

5.5 Chéticamp Rugs and Aesthetics

Above all, this thesis has been an examination of aesthetics and design. Captured within aesthetics is what the rugs mean to both those who make and consume them. For tourists, the rugs are symbols of a perceived anti-modernism. Through the purchase of a hooked rug, they are able to bring home material reminders of their moment of experience with rural Nova Scotia. For rug hookers, rugs are a symbol of economic need and poverty, but also agency and the ability to overcome depressed rural economic conditions. This has changed over time as the rug hooking tradition has evolved. For

Yvette Muise, rugs are a symbol of her identity as both an artist and as a Chéticamper. They represent her upbringing, learning how to hook with her mother in the style of Lillian Burke and choosing to move away from it towards a style she views as high art. Yvette does not hook rugs because of poverty, as she often tells me, she will never stop because it is too big a part of her. For Fibre Artists such as Yvette, Chéticamp rugs are a refined and representative expression of a living culture and how much the tradition has developed. They are re-imagining what Chéticamp rug hooking means.

The motif-index that I developed by examining several hundred hooked rugs demonstrates that consistent structural elements such as motifs are dependent on context. When used in a comparative manner, it also helps illustrate how often those creating hooked rug designs, whether they were sold commercially as patterns or designs to be used as part of a cottage industry, were sharing and borrowing design ideas throughout North America. The motif-index is a typology and a tool that enables discussion by standardizing language and terminology which allows for comparative examination of hooked rugs from across a variety of traditions. My hope is that the index, as a living document, be added to as new rugs are examined.

As we saw with Lillian Burke's designs, she was not only aware of other hooked rugs designs but was also inspired by older European artistic movements, as well as popular culture. By aligning her rug aesthetics and her designs with high art influences, Burke's designs consciously tap into notions of taste and class. Design, in this case, is then tied to consumption, creativity, symbolism and intertextuality with other traditions.

By examining design and aesthetics through structure and motif (essentially the grammar of rug hooking), rug hookers and designers work within a fixed, but unwritten,

set of rules. However, there is room for infinite variation. The different styles I have discussed such as rag rugs, tapestry rugs, Burke-inspired rugs, whether they are part of the Chéticamp rug hooking tradition or not can be considered dialects of the same textile tradition.

Until now, there have not been any long-term academic studies looking at Chéticamp rug hooking. While Chéticamp is known for its rugs, they have not received much scholarly attention. In fact, rug hooking on the whole has received much less academic attention than other forms of handicraft and material culture. This thesis is the first to focus on Chéticamp rug hooking. The motif-index that I developed can be used by other scholars interested in rug hooking design and motifs usage in handmade material culture. This thesis places the Chéticamp rug hooking tradition within several contexts; its Canadian rug hooking context, its commercial rug hooking context, its context as a rug hooking cottage industry, and finally its artistic context within the larger art world. In a museum context, Chéticamp rugs from the cottage industry are largely non-existent. Outside of the Bell family home, no Burke-designed rugs are to be found in museum collections across Canada. While *Les Trois Pignons* museum has several local older rugs, and rugs made by Elizabeth Lefort, they also lack rugs from the cottage industry. Moreover, the few Burke-designed rugs they display are re-creations. This is likely because so many of them were shipped to the United States and as they were unsigned, their connection to Chéticamp would have been quickly severed. Unlike the Grenfell rugs, which were tagged before sale, the Chéticamp cottage industry rugs have not become collector's items in the same way.

5.6 New Directions

Future research in this area could include more archival research into rug hooking patterns and designs, or an ethnographic study of local rug hooking/craft galleries in Chéticamp. A comparative study of the main rug hooking cottage industries in Canada (Grenfell, Chéticamp, and Charlevoix) is a topic that would certainly be rich in material. This would entail challenging work in order to find and acquire hooked rugs from Burke's cottage industry, as there are none at this time in any Canadian museum collection. Since they were mostly sold to Americans finding Burke-designed rugs would be a difficult but important project.

In the archives of the Canadian Museum of History sits a rather large collection of handwritten correspondence between rug hooker Catherine Poirier and rug collector Dorothy Eber. The letters need to be transcribed as the handwriting is very difficult to read. However, an in-depth examination of these letters and postcards and what they reveal about Catherine's life in Chéticamp and her rug hooking could be material for further publications on the lives and artistic practice of rug hookers.

Finally, a study of museum collections of hooked rugs in Canada is something that has interested me as well – what museums choose to collect tells us about what is considered worthy of conserving for future generations. In terms of future curatorial projects, an exhibition on rug hooking cottage industries in Canada is another potential avenue. I would also be interested in extending this research into some of the areas I have touched upon in this thesis and delve further into the topic of women's work and handicrafts, as well as early Nova Scotia labour history through handmade objects. I hope to continue this work, examining the richness of women's work in both artistic and

economic contexts, while also highlighting how truly complex and layered a regional craft can be.

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Appendix 1: Motif-index for Hooked Rugs

A. Curvilinear

A.1 Branch and Leaf

A.1.1 Branches

A.1.1A Branch

A.1.1A1 Branch, repeating

A.1.1A2 Branch, translated

A.1.1A3 Branch, rotated

A.1.1A4 Branch, mirror reflection

A.1.1A5 Branch, glide reflection

A.1.1B Branch, frame

A.1.1C Branch, frame scrolled

A.1.1D Branch, medallion

A.1.1E Branch, with leaf

A.1.1F Branch, with flower

A.1.2 Stems

A.1.2A Stem

A.1.2A1 Stem, repeating

A.1.2A2 Stem, translated

A.1.2A3 Stem, rotated

A.1.2A4 Stem, mirror reflection

A.1.2A5 Stem, glide reflection

A.1.2B Stem, frame

A.1.2C Stem, frame scrolled

A.1.2D Stem, medallion

A.1.2E Stem, with leaf

A.1.2F Stem with flower

A.1.2G Stem, with thorn

A.1.3 Leaves

A.1.3A Leaf

A.1.3A1 Leaf, repeating

A.1.3A2 Leaf, translated

A.1.3A4 Leaf, rotated

A.1.3A5 Leaf, mirror reflection

A.1.3A6 Leaf, glide reflection

A.1.3B Leaf, needle

A.1.3C Leaf, wide

A.1.3D Leaf, wide – lobed

A.1.3E Leaf, wide – simple

A.1.3F Leaf, wide – smooth

A.1.3G Leaf, wide – toothed

A.1.3H Leaf, wide – lobbed, smooth

A.1.3I Leaf, wide – lobbed, toothed

A.1.3J Leaf, wide – clover

A.2 Florals

A.2.1 Flower

A.2.1A Flower, repeating

A.2.1B Flower, translated

A.2.1C Flower, rotated

A.2.1D Flower, mirror reflection

A.2.1E Flower, glide reflection

A.2.2 Four Petal Flowers

A.2.2A Four petal flower

A.2.2B Four petal flower with shading

A.2.2C Four petal flower with shading and leaf

A.2.2E Four petal flower with leaf, no shading

A.2.2F Four petal flower with stem

A.2.2G Four petal flower with stem, shading

A.2.2H Four petal flower with stem, shading, leaf

A.2.2I Four petal flower with stem, shading, leaf, no shading

A.2.3 Five Petal Flowers

A.2.3A Five petal flower

A.2.3B Five petal flower with shading

A.2.3C Five petal flower with shading and leaf

A.2.3D Five petal flower with leaf, no shading

A.2.3E Five petal flower with stem

A.2.3F Five petal flower with stem, shading

A.2.3G Five petal flower with stem, shading, leaf

A.2.3H Five petal flower with stem, shading, leaf, no shading

A.2.4 Six Petal Flowers

A.2.4A Six petal flower

A.2.4B Six petal flower with shading

A.2.4C Six petal flower with shading and leaf

A.2.4D Six petal flower with leaf, no shading

A.2.4E Six petal flower with stem

A.2.4F Six petal flower with stem, shading

A.2.4G Six petal flower with stem, shading, leaf

A.2.4H Six petal flower with stem, shading, leaf, no shading

A.2.5 Tulips

A.2.5A Tulip

A.2.5B Tulip with shading

A.2.5C Tulip with shading and leaf

A.2.5D Tulip with leaf, no shading

A.2.5E Tulip with stem

A.2.5F Tulip with stem, shading

A.2.5G Tulip with stem, shading, leaf

A.2.5H Tulip with stem, leaf, no shading

A.2.6 Carnations

A.2.6A Carnation

A.2.6B Carnation with shading

A.2.6C Carnation with shading and leaf

A.2.6D Carnation with leaf, no shading

A.2.6E Carnation with stem

A.2.6F Carnation with stem, shading

A.2.6G Carnation with stem, shading, leaf

A.2.6H Carnation with stem, shading, leaf, no shading

A.2.7 Lupins

A.2.7A Lupin

A.2.7B Lupin with shading

A.2.7C Lupin with shading and leaf

A.2.7D Lupin with leaf, no shading

A.2.7E Lupin with stem

A.2.7F Lupin with stem, shading

A.2.7G Lupin with stem, shading, leaf

A.2.7H Lupin with stem, shading, leaf, no shading

A.2.8 Flower, misc number of petals

A.2.8A Flower, misc number of petals

- A.2.8B Flower with shading
 - A.2.8C Flower with shading and leaf
 - A.2.8D Flower with leaf, no shading
 - A.2.8E Flower with stem
 - A.2.8F Flower with stem, shading
 - A.2.8G Flower with stem, shading, leaf
 - A.2.8H Flower with stem, shading, leaf, no shading
- A.2.9 Thistle
 - A.2.9A Thistle
 - A.2.9B Thistle with shading
- A.2.9C Thistle with shading and leaf
 - A.2.9D Thistle with leaf, no shading
 - A.2.9E Thistle with stem
 - A.2.9F Thistle with stem, shading
 - A.2.9G Thistle with stem, shading, leaf
 - A.2.9H Thistle with stem, shading, leaf, no shading
- A.2.10 Poppy
 - A.2.10A Poppy
 - A.2.10B Poppy with shading
 - A.2.10C Poppy with shading and leaf
 - A.2.10D Poppy with leaf, no shading
 - A.2.10E Poppy with stem
 - A.2.10F Poppy with stem, shading
 - A.2.10G Poppy with stem, shading, leaf
 - A.2.10H Poppy with stem, shading, leaf, no shading
- A.2.11 Flower bud on stem
- A.2.12 Flower arrangement, medallion
- A.2.13 Flower arrangement, scrolled
- A.2.14 Flower – unidentifiable
- A.2.14 Lily
 - A.2.14A Calla Lily

A.3 Scrolls

- A.3.1 Looped scrolls
 - A.3.1A Looped scroll, repeating
 - A.3.1 B Looped scroll, translated
 - A.3.1 C Looped scroll, rotated

- A.3.1 D Looped scroll, mirror reflection
- A.3.1E Looped scroll, glide reflection
- A.3.2 Geometric scrolls
 - A.3.2A Geometric scroll, repeating
 - A.3.2B Geometric scroll, translated
 - A.3.2C Geometric scroll, rotated
 - A.3.2D Geometric scroll, mirror reflection
 - A.3.2E Geometric scroll, glide reflection
- A.3.4 Scroll, Celtic knot
 - A.3.4A Celtic knot, repeating
 - A.3.4B Celtic knot, translated
 - A.3.4C Celtic knot, rotated
 - A.3.4D Celtic knot, mirror reflection
 - A.3.4E Celtic knot, glide reflection
- A.3.5 Scroll, Tudor
 - A.3.5A Tudor scroll, repeating
 - A.3.5B Tudor scroll, translated
 - A.3.5C Tudor scroll, rotated
 - A.3.5D Tudor scroll, mirror reflection
 - A.3.5E Tudor scroll, glide reflection
- A.3.6 Scroll, bouquet, medallion
- A.3.7 Scroll, straight
 - A.3.7A Straight scroll, repeating
 - A.3.7B Straight scroll, translated
 - A.3.7C Straight scroll, rotated
 - A.3.7D Straight scroll, mirror reflection
 - A.3.7E Straight scroll, glide reflection
- A.3.8 Scroll, with leaves
 - A.3.8A Scroll, with leaves, repeating
 - A.3.8B Scroll, with leaves, translated
 - A.3.8C Scroll, with leaves, rotated
 - A.3.8D Scroll, with leaves, mirror reflection
 - A.3.8E Scroll, with leaves, glide reflection
- A.3.9 Scroll, with branch
 - A.3.9A Scroll, with branch, repeating
 - A.3.9B Scroll, with branch, translated
 - A.3.9C Scroll, with branch, rotated
 - A.3.9D Scroll, with branch, mirror reflection

- A.3.9E Scroll, with branch, glide reflection
- A.3.10 Scroll, with flower
 - A.3.10A Scroll, with flower, repeating
 - A.3.10B Scroll, with flower, translated
 - A.3.10C Scroll, with flower, rotated
 - A.3.10D Scroll, with flower, mirror reflection
 - A.3.10E Scroll, with flower, glide reflection
- A.3.11 Scroll, Medallion

A.4 Pictorial motifs (medallions)

- A.4.1 Figures
 - A.4.1A Person, female
 - A.4.1B Person, male
 - A.4.1C Person
 - A.4.1C1 Occupational figure
 - A.4.1C2 Political Figure
 - A.4.1C3 Hunting Figure
 - A.4.1C4 Fishing Figure
 - A.4.1C5 Religious Figure (religious occupation)
 - A.4.1C6 Farmer Figure
- A.4.1 Animal
 - A.4.1A Mammal
 - A.4.1A1 Cat, single
 - A.4.1A2 Cat, multiple adults
 - A.4.1A3 Cat, multiple with kittens
 - A.4.1A4 Dog, single
 - A.4.1A5 Dog, multiple
 - A.4.1A6 Horse, static
 - A.4.1A7 Horse, in motion
 - A.4.1A8 Horse, ridden
 - A.4.1A9 Horse, head only
 - A.4.1A10 Deer
 - A.4.1A11 Deer, with antlers
 - A.4.1A12 Lion with mane
 - A.4.1A13 Rabbit(s)
 - A.4.1A14 Bison
 - A.4.1A15 Bear
 - A.4.1A15.1 Polar Bear
 - A.4.1B Birds

- A.4.1B1 Bird, misc, single
 - A.4.1B2 Bird, misc, flock
 - A.4.1B3 Bird, misc, in flight
 - A.4.1B4 Bird, goose
 - A.4.1B5 Bird, goose, in flight
 - A.4.1B6 Bird, chicken
 - A.4.1B7 Bird, puffin
- A.4.1B8 Bird, penguin
 - A.4.1B9 Bird, duck
- A.4.1C Fish
- A.4.2 Fabula
 - A.4.2A Three bears
 - A.4.2B Three little pigs
 - A.4.2C Mother Goose
- A.4.3 Vexilologic
 - A.4.3A Acadian
 - A.4.3B Maple Leaf
 - A.4.3C Stars and Stripes
- A.4.4 Emblematic
 - A.4.4A Masonic
 - A.4.4B Crown/ Tiara
- A.4.5 Heraldic
- A.4.6 Landscape
 - A.4.6A Building
 - A.4.6A1 House
 - A.4.6A2 Farmhouse
 - A.4.6A3 Church
 - A.4.6A4 Shed
 - A.4.6A5 Barn
 - A.4.6B Tree
 - A.4.6C Sailing Vessel
 - A.4.6D Fishing Vessel
 - A.4.6E Materials
 - A.4.6E1 Shell
 - A.4.6E2 Rock
 - A.4.6.F Natural landscapes
 - A.4.6F1 Beach
 - A.4.6F2 Ocean

- A.4.6F3 Lake
- A.4.6F4 Harbour/Port
- A.4.6F5 Forest clearing
- A.4. 6F6 Sky

A.4.7 Tool

A.4.8. Musical Instrument

B. Rectilinear

B.1 Geometric Shapes

- B.1.2 Square

- B.1.3 Rectangle

- B.1.4 Diamond, vertical

- B.1.5 Diamond, horizontal

- B.1.6 Triangle

B.2 Geometric Scrolls

- B.2.1 Straight line scroll

- B.2.1A Straight line, border

- B.2.2 Celtic knot, border

- B.2.3 Interlocking

- B.2.4 Triangle

- B.2.5 Arrow

B.3 Composite motifs

- B.3.1 Lattice

- B.3.2 Basket Weave

- B.3.3 Log Cabin

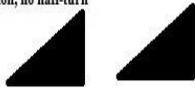
- B.3.4 Hit and Miss

- B.3.5 Inch

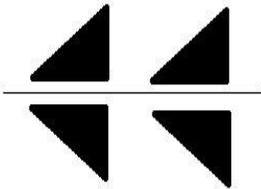
Appendix 2: Symmetry Pattern Types

One-dimensional patterns

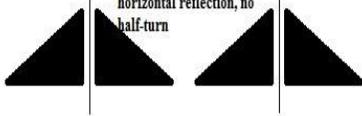
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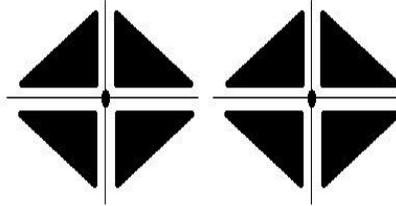
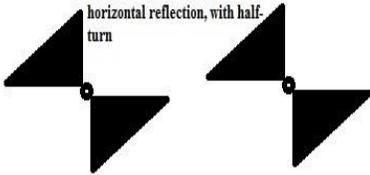
no vertical reflection, with horizontal reflection



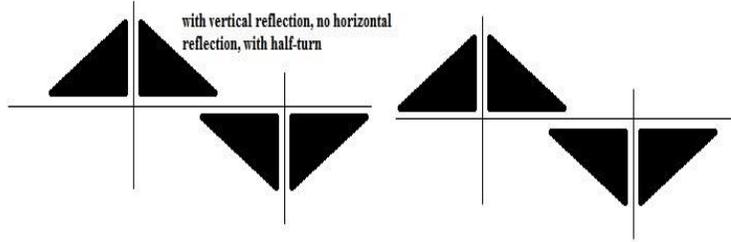
with vertical reflection, no horizontal reflection, no half-turn



no vertical reflection, no horizontal reflection, with half-turn

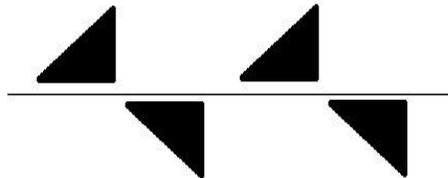


with vertical reflection, with horizontal reflection



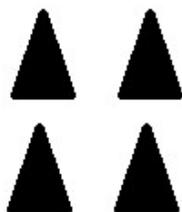
with vertical reflection, no horizontal reflection, with half-turn

no vertical reflection, with glide reflection

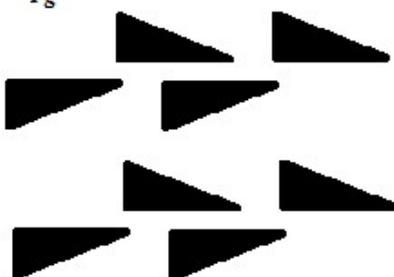


Two-Dimensional Patterns

P1



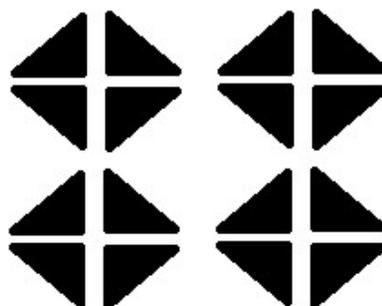
Pg



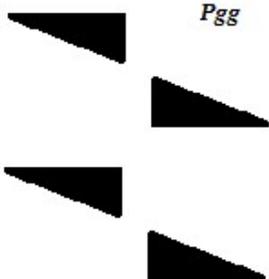
P2



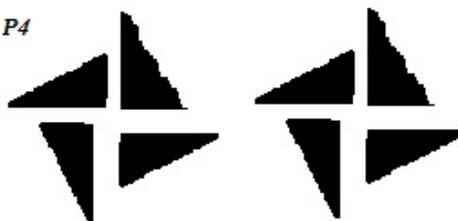
Pmm



Pgg

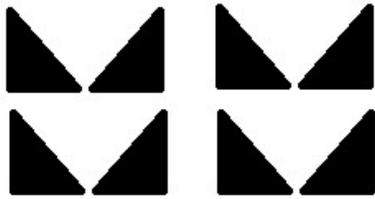


P4



Two-Dimensional Patterns (continued)

Pm



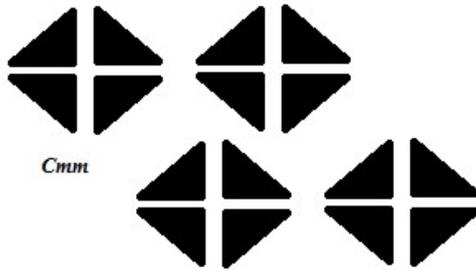
Cm



Pmg



Cmm



P4m



P4g

