



# *Pioneer Art Counterpanes*

By Alice Baker

Pioneer women would never have had the temerity to characterize any of the articles they made as art, but many of these objects today take on a new beauty in spite of the wear of years and the fading action of time.

Not many of these old time coverlets are in existence today. Most of them were made of blue and white yarns and an occasional one of pink and white threads. One very outstanding one was exhibited at the 1942 Hobby Show at Lagrange, Wisconsin. Its pattern was that of a peacock with tail outspread made by a Mrs. Elmer Malcomb, long since gone to her reward.

Mrs. Florence Pardee of Eagle, Wis. is the fortunate possessor of one made by her great-grandmother, Mrs. Erastus Churchill who lived in Waukesha in the house recently occupied by Mr. Chet Taylor on Barney's Hill. This bed cover, two yards and four inches wide and two yards forty inches long, woven of dark blue wool and white linen thread is still little worn and unfaded, a white fringe being the one feature removed because of wear.

The pattern is conventional yet pleasing in its simplicity but the weaver must have used skill to adhere to the elements of its design.

The question of when and where it was made presents an intriguing speculation. Was it made in Waukesha or in Homer, Vermont, the former home of Mrs. Churchill? If made in Waukesha, it could easily be over one hundred years old for that was the date 1842 the Churchills came to the pioneer town. But Mrs. Pardee's grandmother, Mrs. Mary White, later Mrs. Lambert Colyer, never mentioned in all the forty-three years she lived with Mrs. Pardee anything about weaving or a loom in her girlhood home. This fact in itself would indicate that Mrs. Churchill, the former Amelia Osterhout, must have woven it in her Vermont home sometime before 1827, the date of her marriage. Bedding was the dower of an adolescent girl, thriftily and joyously prepared for that romantic denouement. Using 1827 as the date of completion, this bed cover must be 140 years old.

Mrs. Pardee does know, however, that her prized tapestry has had seventy-five years of wear in her childhood and adult homes, and that this article which was accepted in a matter fact manner takes on a new aura of value as the years flash by and visitors marvel at its age and worth.

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