



## A HANDMADE TRADITION:

### Hooking A Picture With Rags

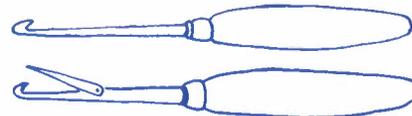
Winter is and always has been a time for indoor crafts. Making rag rugs was a typical activity in the early Vermont homes. The materials were always on hand. When an article of clothing wore out, it was then ripped up into strips which were later used to hook or braid a rug. To design and complete a whole rug was a big project, one that took many weeks, or even months.

You may wish to try your hand at hooking a small rug but remember that it may take a long time to finish it. Don't let this discourage you, but instead enjoy reviving an age old craft.

#### You Will Need:

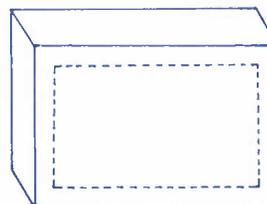
- Cloth ripped into ¼ inch strips of any length - you may use any combination of materials but they should all be of the same weight; wool and cotton are best. You may use a heavy rug wool instead of rags (available at any yarn store).
- Light colored burlap cut to a 24 by 30 inch rectangle
- Scissors
- Pencil, waterproof marker, and crayons

- Thumbtacks, or masking tape
- Sturdy cardboard carton, no larger than 18 by 24 inches
- Strong thread and one needle
- Rug hook
- Iron
- Pieces of plain paper
- Cardboard
- Assorted jar lids, boxes, and jello molds of different sizes
- Ruler
- Knife



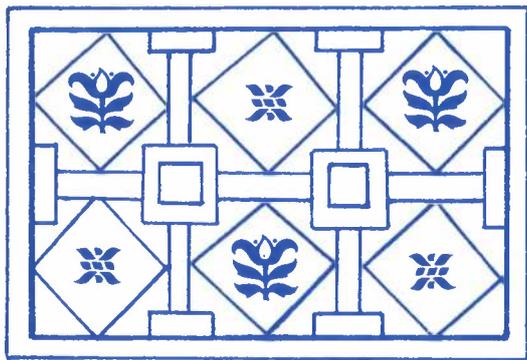
#### Where To Begin:

1. To make your frame, begin by cutting down the sides of a cardboard carton so that it is about 5 inches in height. Then cut out the bottom of the carton leaving about 1½ inches on all sides as indicated by the dotted line in the illustration below.



2. Using jar lids, boxes and jello molds to trace around, design a simple picture on a piece of paper. You may want to create your own stencil by cutting out a shape from a piece of cardboard and tracing around it.
3. With crayons, color in the shapes. Experiment with different color combinations until you find one that you like.
4. Now lay out your piece of burlap. With a ruler, measure 3 inches from each side. Then draw a line defining this 3 inch border. This will leave an 18" x 24" rectangle in the middle. Later, when your project is complete, you will hem this 3 inch border under so that your rug will have a straight, strong edge.

5. Within the 18 x 24 rectangle redraw your design by tracing around the shapes you selected. Use a pencil first and then go over it with a marking pen.



6. Stretch the burlap over your cardboard frame. Use thumbtacks or tape to secure it. Keep the burlap straight and the tension as even as possible.

### Now You Are Ready:

1. Sit comfortably at a table. Rest one side of the cardboard frame against your body, the other against the table. This leaves both of your hands free to hook.
2. Start hooking your design in straight lines beginning at a corner. With your left hand, hold your length of rag or yarn underneath the burlap. With your right hand hold the rug hook above the fabric. Poke through the burlap and hook the yarn or rag held below. Pull this loop up and through the burlap.
3. Push the hook back into the burlap one or two spaces down from where you made your first loop. Repeat the hooking process. Loops should be about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch in height.
4. Work one area of your rug at a time. Outline the shapes in that area first and then fill them in with lines of hooking in the color of your choice.

5. Work in this manner until all the burlap is filled with your design.
6. The beginning and end of each length of rag or yarn should be pulled to the front surface of the rug. It can then be clipped so that it is the same height as your loops.

### Things To Watch For:

1. At first you may have trouble because each new loop you make may pull out the one before it. With practice, though, you will soon be able to form a new loop without disturbing its neighbor.
2. Try not to crowd your loops. If they are packed too tightly the rug will not lie flat. On the other hand, if they are packed too loosely, your design will not be clearly defined and the rug will not be as strong.
3. To make a tighter and neater edge for your rug, double the thickness of your yarn or rags for the outermost rows.

### Finishing:

1. Remove your rug from the frame when you have completed all the hooking.
2. Place your project face down on the floor or ironing board. Lightly press the rug with a steam iron.
3. Fold the 3 inch burlap border back. Iron flat and let cool.
4. Pin the hem securely. With a sturdy thread and needle, sew it down. Be sure to sew through the burlap and not just through the yarn or rag strips. As an alternative to sewing down the hem, you can glue it down with a latex cement that will remain pliable when dry.
5. If your edges curl, turn the rug upside down again and steam press the edges. While they are still warm and damp, weight them down with a heavy object and let sit overnight.