

on 20- or 22-count burlap with 8-ply yarn and, most likely, a mechanical hook that was popular at the time. There are vestiges of fringe around the perimeter of the mat. We hooked the reproduction with regular bulb-handled hooks on 18-count linen (better for archival purposes) using 6-ply yarn. Doris, Jean, and Shirley Lindsay employed overdyed and onion-skin dyeing to create the colors for the motifs and the blue corners. The background yarn, consisting of four black and two brown threads, was specially twisted by MacAusland's Woollen Mill on Prince Edward Island.

Shirley provided space in her home for hooking the reproduction. The mat was set up in Shirley's family room on a large hooking frame similar to ones used by quilters. A photograph of the original mat, enlarged to full size to show individual loops, was placed on the wall for the hookers' reference. Guild members were invited to drop by and hook at any time. Each hooker was encouraged to work on any portion she wished, although most tended to concentrate on a single area during a day's hooking session. The frame was large enough that several people could sit and hook at the same time. Twelve guild members spent a total of 309 hours from January to September 1997 hooking the reproduction. Doris kept a journal describing the planning and preparation stages of the project, and Shirley recorded the hours spent hooking. We also made sure guild

more than 50 hours researching the design from the original mat, preparing linen backing, making templates, and copying the pattern. We made several trips to the museum and, accompanied by the curator, Peter Larocque, scrutinized every detail of the mat to determine the backing and type of yarn used, the motifs, the original colors, and the hooking technique. Because the original was badly faded, we determined the colors by carefully separating the loops and checking the deepest tones closest to the burlap. We also examined the less-faded hues on the back. Eventually, the mat was transferred to the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton for several days to make it more available to us.

Each symbol and motif was researched and carefully traced from the original. This proved to be somewhat difficult because certain sections, such as where the ox appears behind the tree, were hard to make out on the deteriorating mat. Once we were satisfied that the templates were as close as possible to the original, we copied the pattern onto linen backing with a permanent marker.

To aid in the hooking of the reproduction, we took photographs of both the front and back of the antique mat. Close-up enlargements were made of each motif and the border so the pattern could be studied by the hookers as they worked on the replica.

Abigail had hooked the original mat

Norman (the chairperson), and I spent Elizabeth Bastin, Jean Ketch, Doris Committee members Mary Marshall, **Recreating an Original**

Abigail Smith's mat. efforts to produce a superb replica of next 2 1/2 years, 14 of us combined our to undertake the project. During the challenge and established a committee textile history. Our guild accepted the public exposure to a piece of Canada's original mat as well as provide more frequently and thus help preserve the fact. Such a replica could be displayed create a reproduction of the historic exhibit, it was suggested that our guild In the course of conversation at the craft through exhibits and publicity.

A Guild Gets Involved

In February 1995, the public had a rare opportunity to view Abigail Smith's mat at the National Exhibition Centre in Fredericton during Heritage Week. Although the mat is an exceptional piece, it is not often displayed because of its fragile state: The burlap backing is extremely brittle and the light-sensitive colors have faded with time. During the same week, the exhibition center also hosted a display of rugs hooked by members of the Heritage Rug Hooking Guild. Our guild was formed in 1982 to provide a venue for rug hookers to meet and exchange ideas, to organize workshops and courses in traditional rug hooking, and to promote public awareness of the craft through exhibits and publicity.

Maryland (a small village outside the provincial capital of Fredericton). She was born about 1818 and trained as a teacher. By the 1840s she was working in a one-room schoolhouse in the Parish of Fredericton. The 1844 School Inspection Return and Teacher's Return for the education department show that Abigail was in charge of 20 pupils—11 female and 9 male—ranging from 4 to 15 years of age.

In addition to the regular subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, and grammar, Abigail also provided instruction in plain and fancy needlework. Although no references to her death have been found, her tombstone is inscribed with the date March 29, 1861, which is the year following the production of the hooked mat.

Doris Norman, Norma Fage, and Jean Ketch (left to right) of the Heritage Rug Hooking Guild work on a reproduction of an 1860 hooked mat.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY NORMA FAGE