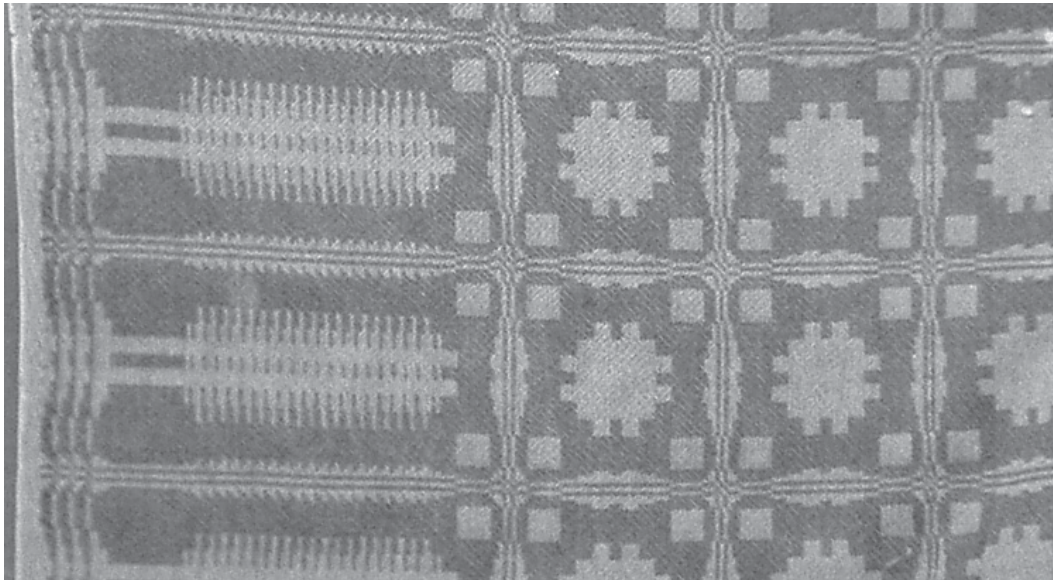


Cotton Towel With Pine Tree and Snowballs in a Dutch Linen Cupboard by Augusta Uhlenbeck



Once upon a time an American textile curator said: “loving textiles is travelling, seeing other cultures and building bridges between them”. I like the idea that textile lovers can build bridges between peoples.

In Western Europe we think that we haven’t the large overshots like the American coverlets. However, in a Dutch manuscript written in the middle of the eighteenth century (1752) there were already fabrics in it that we now call “shadow weave”. These geometric fabrics were woven on an eight-shaft pulley loom, and the figured ones on a draw loom. It is remarkable that almost 250 years later we are still doing it in the same manner. You can do it so much easier.

In the French region of the Pays Basque near the Spanish border, weavers wove, and still weave the “Tissus Basques”. This is the same structure as in the American coverlets, the large overshots. In French it is called “frappes coloniaux”. Frappes means floats, but coloniaux? Perhaps this means from the settlements or to the settlements in the New World.

This part of a cotton towel came from the linen cupboard of my parents. I have no idea why it was there. The only thing I can imagine is this: Industrial laundries in the 1960s sold pieces of lost cloth to industries that needed them. Paper tissues were not used in the Netherlands at that time. The cleaned cloths were sold in big sacks of several kilograms. My father bought a lot of those sacks. A linen serviette (napkin) of the United State line also came out of it.

Origins

USA? I don’t think that it is European. Please let me know if you have suggestions.

Dating

After the Second World War, 1950s or 1960s. Any other suggestions?

The Design

This is the typical pine trees and snowballs known from the American coverlets. The row of pine trees is on the left next to the selvedge. You can imagine that there is a border around the pine trees.

Measure of the Piece

Width 59 cm = +/- 23.5 inches

Height 64 cm = +/- 25.25 inches

Three sides have a hem and the fourth has a selvedge,

Measure of the Pattern

Height: five inches

Width: ten inches

Colors

White in the warp; blue in the weft.

This blue color is not “bleach resisted”.

Number of warps and wefts

One warp and one weft

Structure

Damask structure. A damask structure needs a brilliant and a matt effect obtained with the same weave structure. To have that structure you can use twill or satin.

The oldest (+/- 300/400 years AD) are in four-shaft twill (1/3 and 3/1). Five-shaft satin damask was not seen before the fourteenth century. Satin on eight shafts was not used until the middle of the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century “Damas the Lyon” has a satin weave (brilliant) and a taffeta (tabby) or a warp-rib weave (canele 2/2), a weft rib weave (rep 2/3), or a basket weave (2/2). These structures give the mat effect.

In a damask fabric the ground is normally a warp-effect. You can turn the whole fabric. During the Chinese T'ang Dynasty (531 – 907 AD), weavers made a kind of damask with plain weave and added a basket weave on it to become a four-shaft twill. I will show you this trick at the end of this article.

Binding

Ground: four-shaft twill; 1/3 warp effect, direction to the right (white).

Motif: twill; 3/1 effect in the motif, direction to the left (blue).

Density

Warp: 14 threads/cm = +/- 36 threads/inch

Weft: 14 threads/cm = +/- 36 threads/inch

Probably this was higher as shrinking on the loom = +/- 5%, and it has been washed and washed. Perhaps it is around 18/20 threads cm = 46/51 threads /inch.

Material and Threads

Warp: two plied S, cotton

Weft: simple Z, cotton

If you use different tensions in the two systems (warp and weft) in the twill, you will see the diagonal of your twill so much better.

Selvedge

Width: 1.25 cm or 0.5 inches. 1/8 inch or 1/3 cm has a higher density; around 72 threads/ inch or 28 threads/ cm. The selvedge is in warp-rib weave (canele 2/2) with two different densities. See also Denting.

Number of shafts/blocks/treadles

Warp = four blocks x four end twills = sixteen shafts

Weft = four blocks x four end twills = sixteen treadles

Plus two shafts (minimum) for the selvedges

Denting

One end per dent except for the selvedge in which 1/8 inch has two ends per dent.

Loom

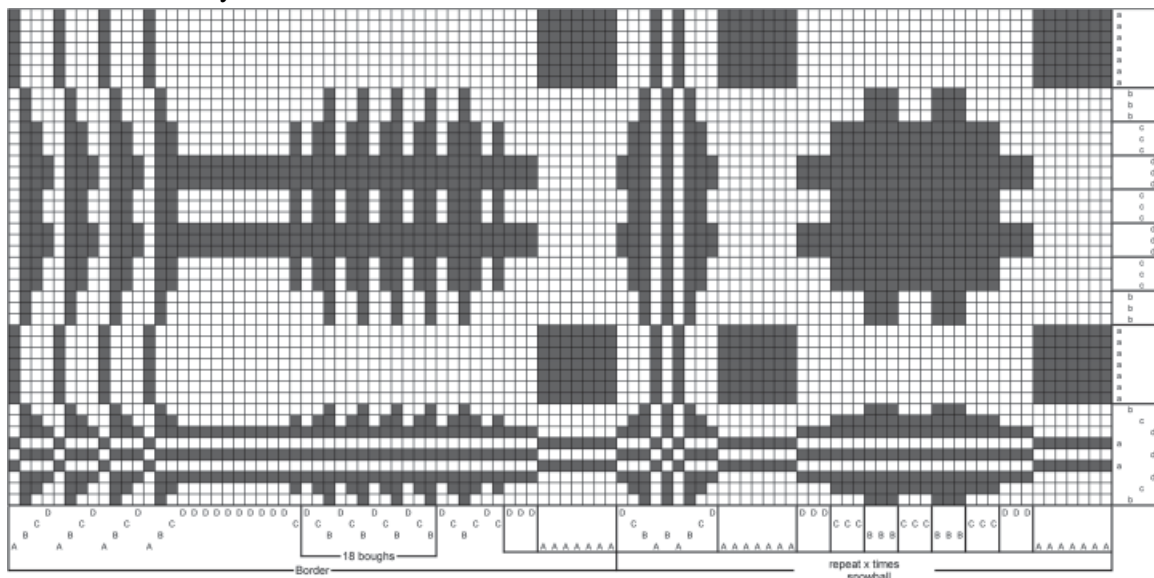
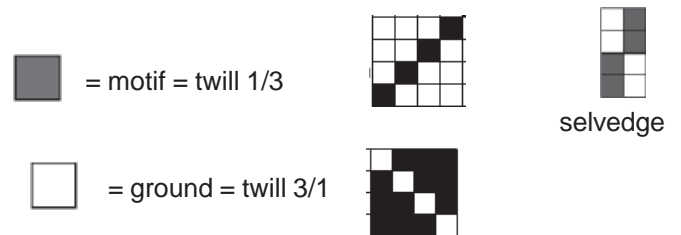
Technically speaking the fabric could be woven on a hand shuttle loom. In the actual weaving the selvedge is too regular for hand weaving, so I do think it was done on an industrial shaft loom. A jacquard loom with punch cards is another possibility. The selvedge is closed and not fringed. A shuttle was used.

Analyzing the Design

The block profile below shows the design and the structure details.

There are four blocks in the warp direction: A, B, C, D for trees and the snowballs.

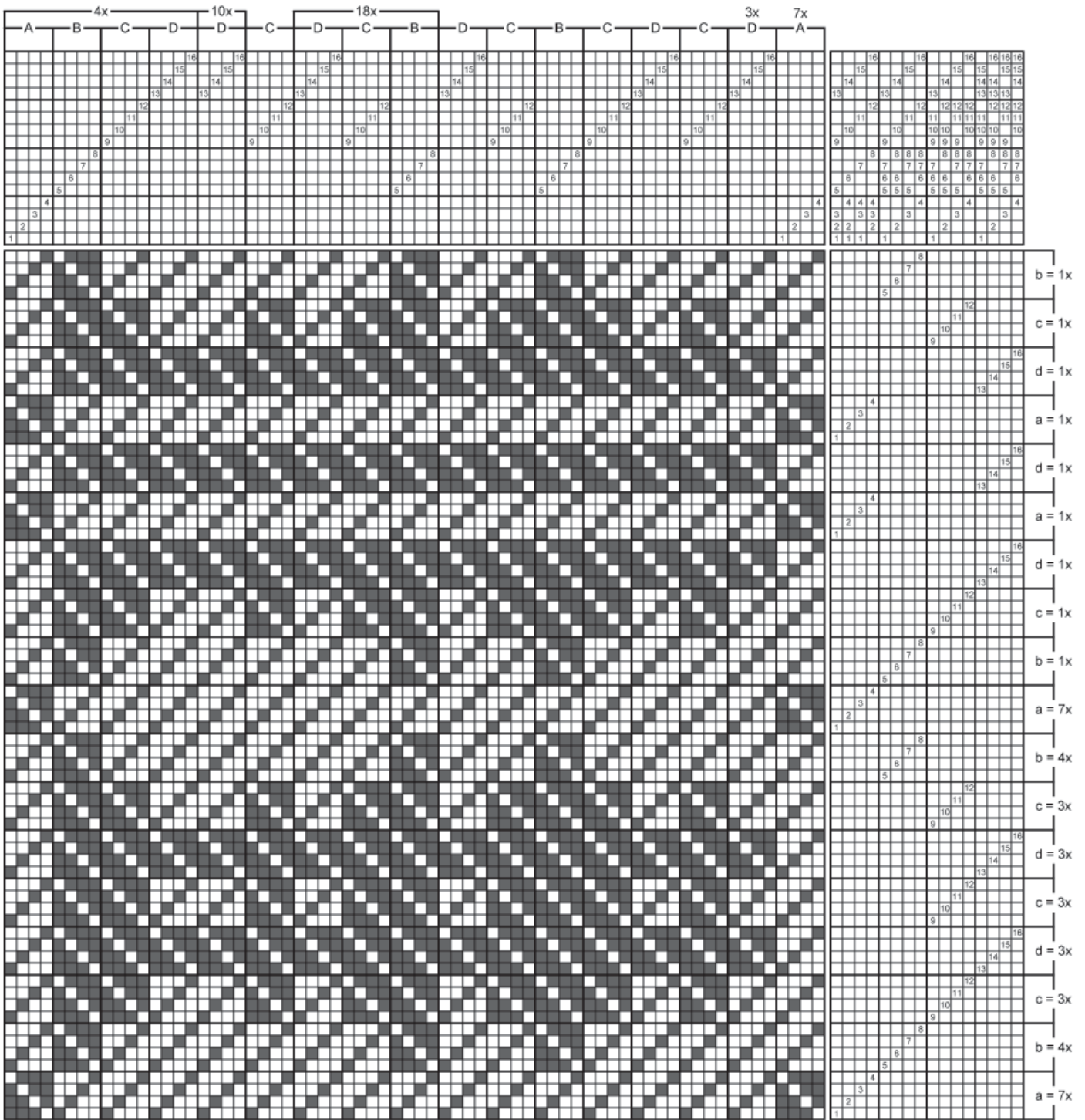
There are four blocks in the weft direction: a, b, c, d for the trees and the snowballs. Every block in the warp and weft effect has four threads in the unit and its multiple. Make sure to thread carefully to avoid mistakes.



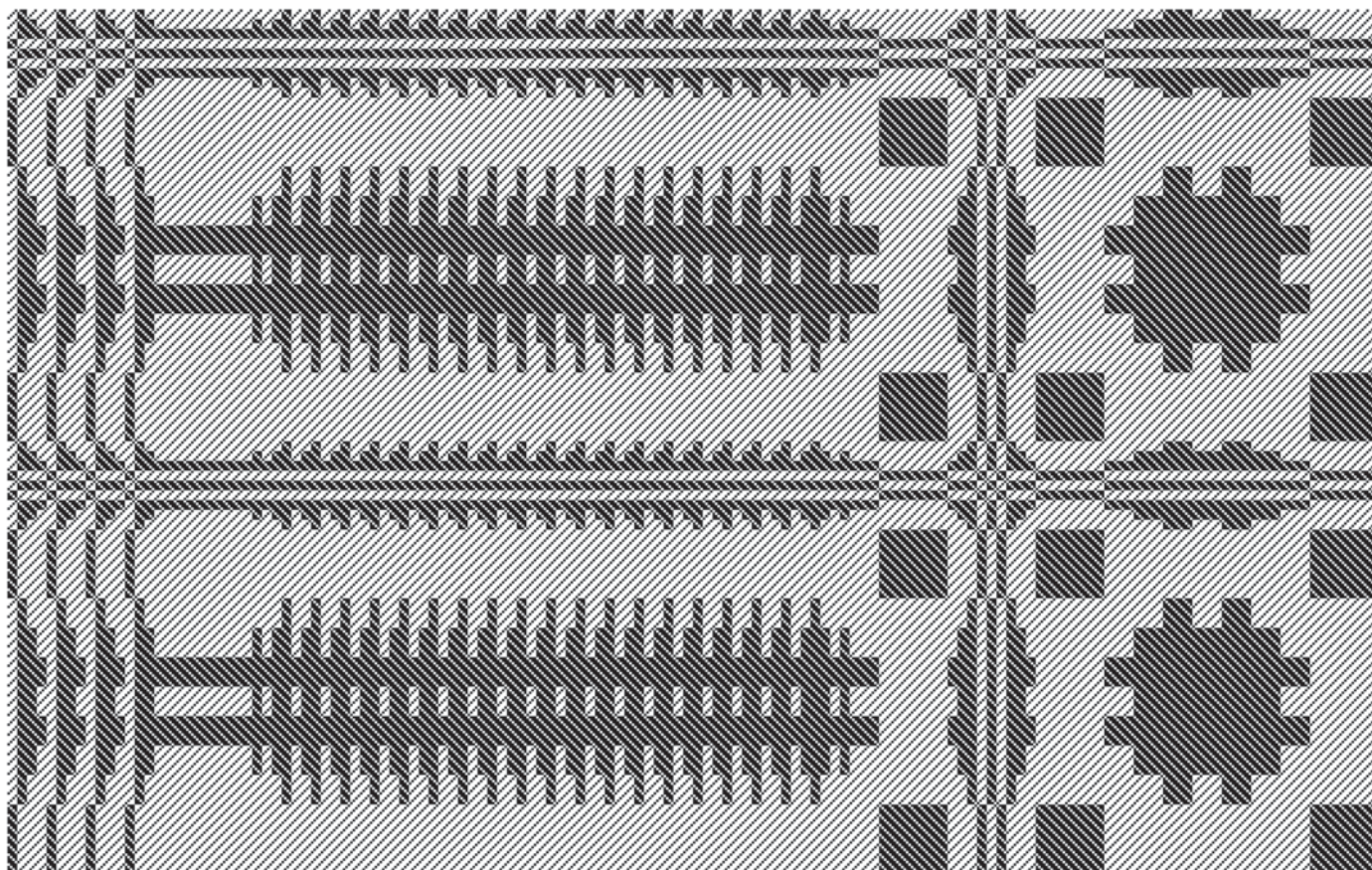
Draft

I have cut the draft in two parts: the pine tree and the snowball.

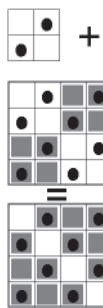
The pine tree:



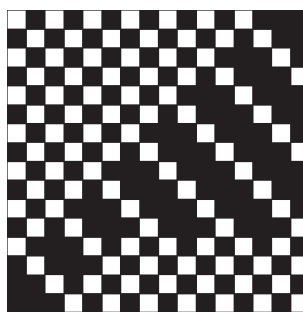
This is the whole fabric. Nice, isn't it?



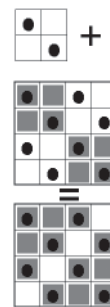
For the Chinese T'ANG trick:
On your loom with a minimum
of two shafts you can weave
tabby. Select the 2/2 basket
weave and you will see your
four-shaft twill on a tabby
ground. Turning the tabby
weave or the basket weave
turns the direction of the twill.



Twill four to the left



Circle = tabby



Twill four to the right

Bibliography

Hanyu, Gao, *Soieries de Chine*. Edited by Fernand Nathan, SA. Paris: 1987. In 1986 published by The Commercial Press LTD. Hong Kong. Coproduit par the Commercial Press et Shanghi Scientific & Technical. ISBN 2-09-290-039-1

Jonge, Daniel, *De Technology Van Achaelogische En Kusnhistorische Weefsels*. Syllabus. Gent: 1986.

Strickler, Carol. *American Woven Coverlets*. Interweave Press. Loveland, CO: 1987

On page 64 you will see almost the same pine trees. Almost!

Uhlenbeck, Augusta, *Les Tissus Anciens Avant Jacquard*. Syllabus of Augusta Uhlenbeck. Chevreuse/Tourcoing: 1986.

Addition comments from Debbie and Jim Rindfleisch.
concerning the article
“Cotton Towel With Pine Tree and Snowballs in a Dutch Linen Cupboard »
by Augusta Uhlenbeck in C.W January 2005.



The U.S.A. blanket which was not a Dutch towel.

My wife Debbie is a complex weaver and asked me to respond to your January 2005 article.

The fabric sample you have is part of a light blanket issued to United States merchant seamen from around 1940 until 1970. The original was 75"x49". These are now very rare and are actively sought as keepsakes by retired merchant seamen. Commonly called "counterpanes" but this is a nickname.

There is a lot of interest, but I really don't know of anyone besides Debbie and yourself that have researched the subject.

Years ago Debbie deciphered and published a deck blanket from the Titanic in Handwoven magazine. The replica blanket won first place in the hand-woven

blanket category at the Virginia State fair, I think about five years ago. This is the only other article or replica I know dealing with these textiles.

Continuing with the Chatham Blanket Company - The original mill that produced the tree/snowball pattern was located in Elkin, North Carolina. Unfortunately, it seems not to be in business anymore, although someone else is making Chatham baby blankets. Chatham Manufacturing was sold to a conglomerate called CSI which then - in the best traditions of capitalism - raped the company and disappeared. Today the only current references to the original mill I can find are concerning the toxic waste cleanup (dyes, mordants, hydraulic oil, etc) at the old site.

Perhaps the old patterns remain somewhere. I have an archivist friend looking into this with the Elkins chamber of commerce.

Cheers, J

In the meantime, we have had some good luck with research. I asked a librarian friend at the Mariner's Museum to check their archives for information about your blanket pattern.

It seems there were two designs, one with trees and snowballs and the other all snowballs. The colors were the same, yarn and weave similar, and it seems the all-snowball design came after the trees/snowball pattern.

Checking photographs of crew quarters from various ships discovered this. These are dated, and we may be able to establish more-or-less service dates for the patterns. I will guess the later version was flame proofed. There is a good possibility that the Chatham Blanket Company wove these blankets. This little mystery has turned into a fascinating research project that just keeps expanding.

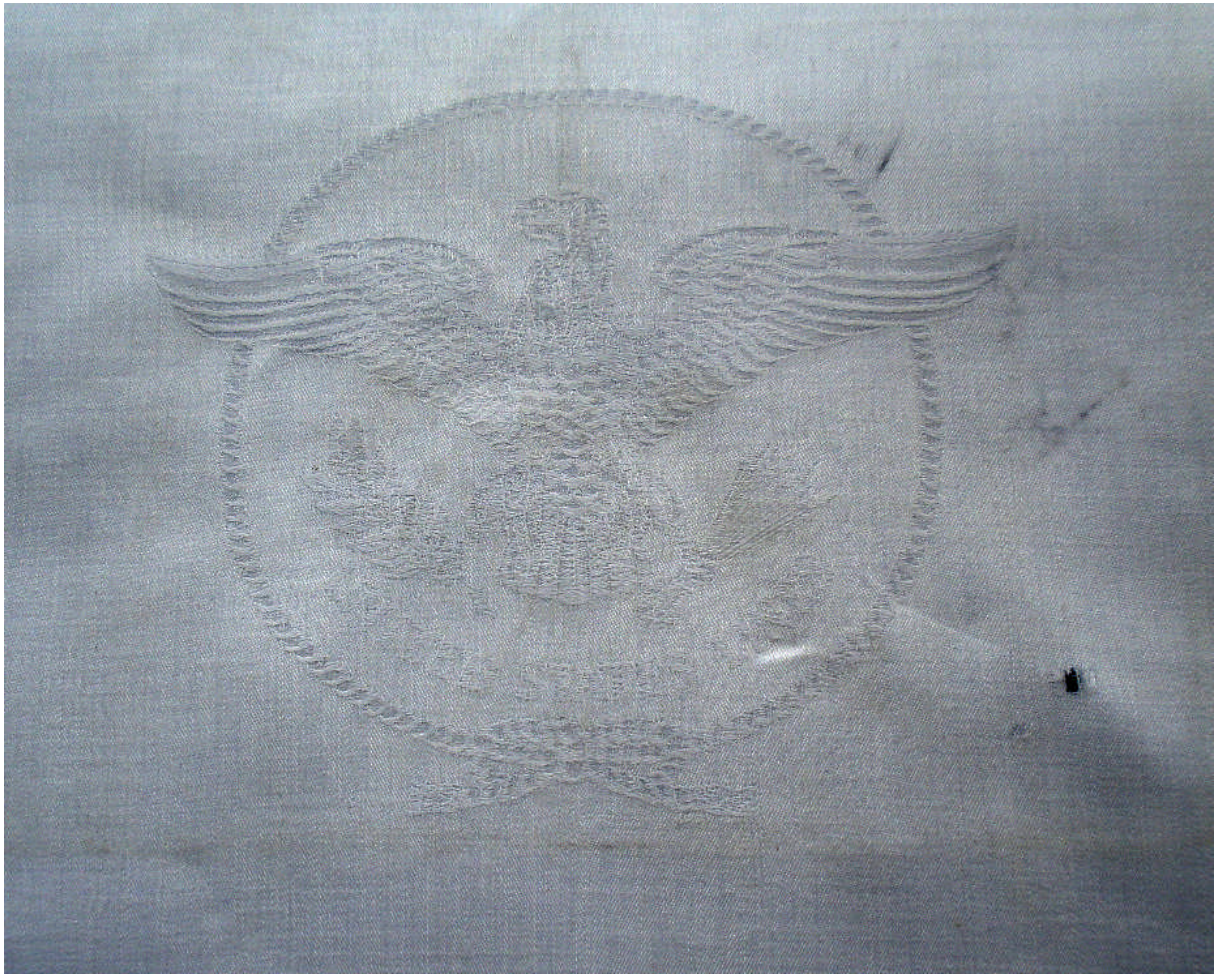
Now we're researching the Chatham mill (I believe long since closed) to see what can be found.

There's far more information than you can possibly use in the article, but it's a lot like a real snowball and just keeps growing on its own.

On a hunch I checked through Debbie's collection and found one of these blankets. It's the same size with sewn hems

At the same time we've found photos of the blankets used by the Cunard Lines. These were very complex jacquard woven pieces with a crest in the centre surrounded by a circular border. Very nice.

J



The USA cotton napkin found in an Dutch cupboard in the town of Amsterdam..

The linen napkin marked United States Lines is as you suspected part of the mystery. The United States lines was an American shipping company from about 1945 until 1970. It operated a number of ships, both cargo and passenger. Cargo ships enjoyed paper napkins. The three principal passenger liners were the Manhattan, America, and the United States. First Class passengers used linens. Second and third class passengers used cotton.

Somewhere on the border there may be a notation USL with a number. This is the service entry date and can be used to trace the identity of the ship from which it originated. If the marking is USL 52 or if there is no marking the piece is from the S.S. United States. This ship ended service in 1969. All of the liners' assets were sold by 1970. From time to time linens from these ships are sold on E-Bay.

A very nice little mystery...