

BURLINGTON HANDWEAVERS & SPINNERS GUILD | 1954- HISTORY | 1986

By Frances Forstner and Helen Amos

In 1954 the Director for the Recreation Department organized the first weaving classes in Burlington. The first weaving classes were on box looms. Then Mr. Minshal, Director for the Five Counties, managed to assemble 6 floor looms to circulate among the weaving guilds in the Five Counties on request. The Burlington weavers managed to get these looms periodically and most of the box loom weavers continued on the floor looms when they were available. Some of the weavers acquired their own floor looms.

In 1957 Mr. Minshal and Miss Muff, who was Consultant for the Community Programs for the Department of Education for Ontario, came to Burlington to one of the classes to talk to us about the advantages (workshops, conferences and exposure to other weavers) of organizing a Guild. The Guild was founded in January 1958. The purpose was to enable weavers to communicate, to exchange ideas, to interest others in the art of weaving and to encourage and help new weavers.

The Guild is a non-profit organization. A membership fee is charged to help cover costs of administration, new equipment, books for the library and fees for guest speakers.

The Guild is affiliated with the Ontario Handweavers and Spinners Association (OHS). The OHS organized week long, live-in workshops with international and well-known teachers and many of the Burlington Guild members attended for advanced study. The Burlington Guild also, when the bank balance permitted, would sponsor one of the members to the workshops, and the whole Guild benefited from the samples and drafts brought back.

The Guild's monthly meetings were held in the members' homes. The classes were held wherever the Recreation Department found space. Finally in 1965 we received a permanent home for classes and monthly meetings at the Pines on the Guelph Line. At about the same time, the looms, which had been circulating, became the property of the Burlington Weavers Guild.

In 1972 the Recreation Director decided to hold a seminar for all the arts and crafts guilds in Burlington to explore what was needed in the way of accommodation. By this time there were four more Guilds and more space for meetings and classes was needed. It was decided that a building large enough to hold the Guilds and a meeting room was needed. Many meetings were held in the next 5 years at City Hall. Interviews were held with the Guilds re space requirements, and consultations with the architects were held to determine costs.

The fundraising started with pledges from Guild members. A pledge of \$75 for 3 years was suggested for members. Most members honored this pledge, some more generously. The fund raising programs were varied and included the first Kaleidoscope in 1973, an art auction, and a number of flea markets. The Weavers Guild held flea markets in 1977, 1978 and 1979. Many industries such as Stelco, Dofasco and many others were a great help.

The city set aside the site on the old Hydro right of way. The Cultural Centre was formally opened on June 8, 1978.

By this time the Guild had nine floor looms and a 90" loom. The Guild had heard that Helen Daw in Hamilton was moving and had a 90" loom for sale. To raise the purchase price of \$150, Guild members each contributed \$10, and the Guild members had a number of bake sales to raise the

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balance. The other nine looms moved into the studio at the Burlington Cultural Centre were the five 27" looms which had traveled around the Five Counties in the early days, one 45" loom, one new 27" floor loom, and one 15" Dorothy loom and the tapestry loom. Wintario matched our inventory, and we acquired 8 new 27" looms for teaching in the studio.

Through the years there have been many workshops and special events sponsored by the Guild in addition to classes run by the BCC. Here is a list of some of them:

- 1975 October - Wall hanging workshop with Mrs. Bateman
- 1975 October - Spinning & Dyeing workshop with Shirley Bircher
- 1976 January - Tapestry workshop with Dini Moes
- 1976 October - Spinning workshop with Ted Carson
- 1977 June - Dye workshop with Ankarat Dean
- 1977 August - Controlled colour and Structures with Sally O'Sullivan
- 1978 January - Advanced spinning with Ted Carson
- 1978 March - Card weaving with Linda Tark
- 1978 August - Colour and design with Sally O' Sullivan
- 1978 November - Twining workshop with Frances Forstner
- 1979 May - Transparency workshop
- 1979 September - Twills with Ted Hallman
- 1979 November - Dyeing workshop with Ted Carson
- 1980 March - Double weaves with Barb Prus
- 1981 April - Guild First Juried Show
- 1981 - we hosted Five Counties Seminar
 - Velveteen workshop with Frances Forstner
 - February and March - Colour classes with William Hodge
 - April - Second Guild Juried Show
 - October - Fashion fabrics workshop with Dini Moes
- 1984 October 12-14 - we hosted OHS conference
- 1984 October 15-19 - Couturier Fabrics workshop with Virginia West
- 1986 June - Third Juried Show