

OSAGE STYLE RIBBON-WORK

ONE FOUR-RIBBON PATTERN

by JERRY SMITH



The intent of this article is to explain how to cut and fold ribbons to complete one specific pattern of Osage style ribbon-work. This 4 - ribbon pattern is one of perhaps a dozen similar standard patterns found originally on blankets, women's skirts and on the leggings, clout and dance trailer of a straight dance suit. In addition these patterns now may adorn dance aprons, shirts, and shawls.

We refer to this style as "Osage" due to the abundance of Osage blankets, skirts and straight suits that are decorated in this 4-ribbon geometric applique through the art of ribbon-work is also practiced by fine ribbon workers from other tribes in the area such as Oto, Ponca, Kaw and Pawnee. However, these design elements and techniques are not uniquely Osage in origin as the art of ribbon-work dates "back at least 160 years." It had a rather wide distribution amongst the tribes of 4 regions and its "area of highest development was the Great Lakes Region" amongst the Winnabago, Sauk and Fox, Potawatomi, etc. We might also note that ribbon-work was always women's work.

The dimensions that are given in Fig.2, are for a straight dance set of ribbon strips, but they are also appropriate for shawls, shirts and aprons. These dimensions would have to be altered slightly to be used for a women's skirt or blanket.

Materials - Ribbons

Most work today is done in 100% rayon ribbon imported from France. Though the earliest work was done in imported silk ribbons, at present other ribbons or more commonly moire and taffeta yardage may be used. However, the 100% rayon ribbon is preferred as it has the body to hold a fingernail crease. This ribbon is available at some of the larger metropolitan yardage shops and in all colors from Supernaw's Indian Supply Company.

The top photo shows the ribbon pattern on the back of a shirt. The photo below shows the same pattern on the shawl worn by Betty Ketcheshano.

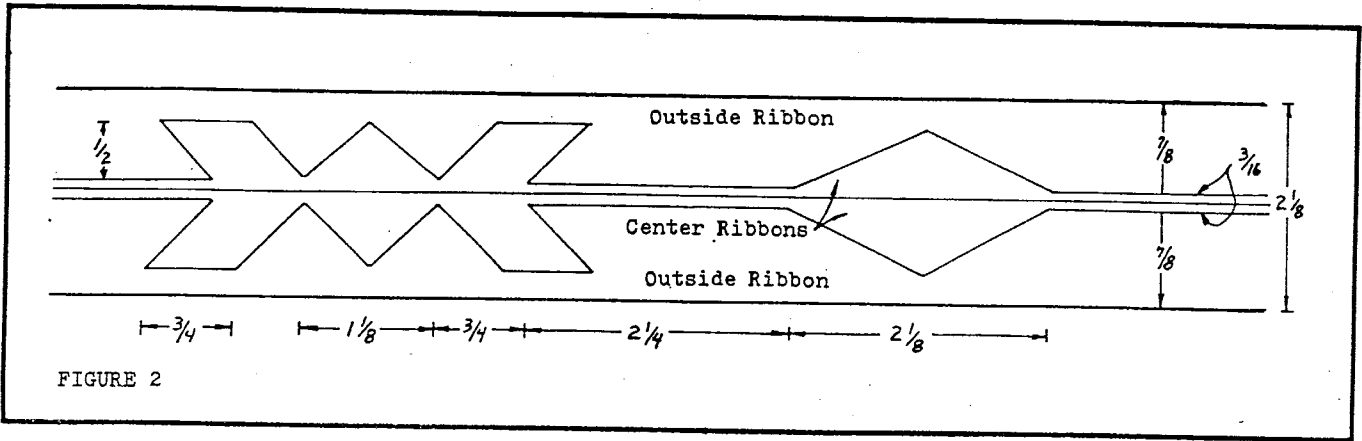


FIGURE 2

FIGURE 3

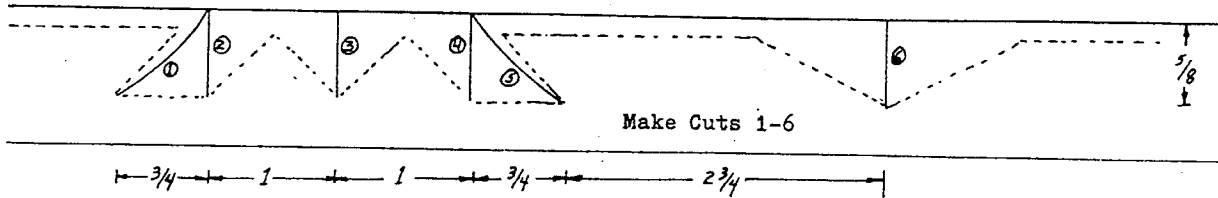


FIGURE 4

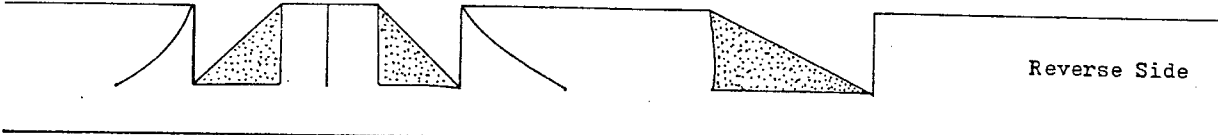


FIGURE 5

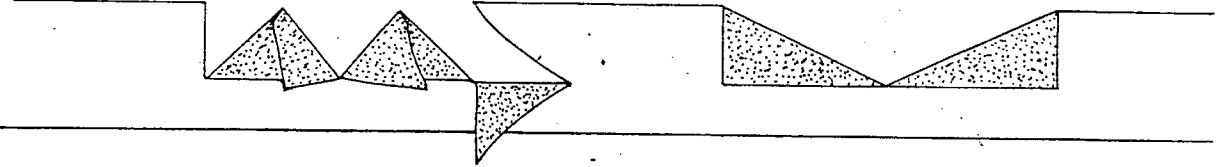


FIGURE 6

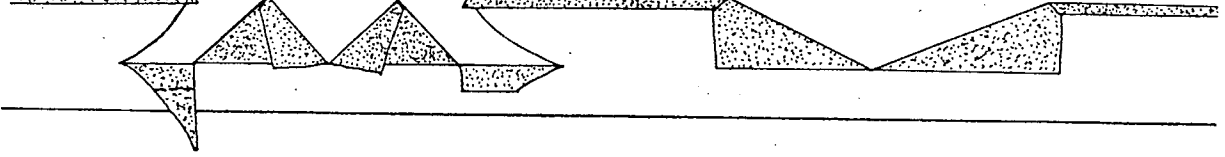


FIGURE 7

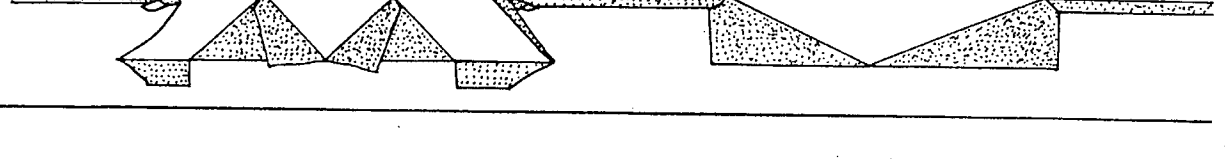
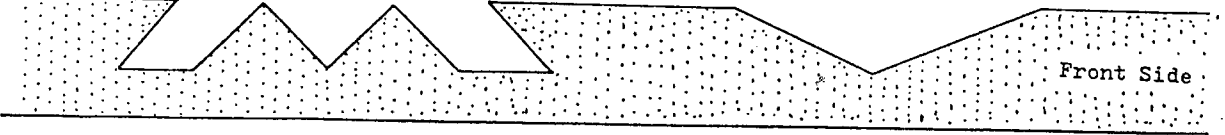


FIGURE 8



Colors:

Almost all colors are seen, especially shades of the primary colors. In a 4-ribbon, 4-color design the two outside ribbons are different colors but of the same intensity. The two center or inside ribbons are also of the same intensity and different colors. The outside ribbons are darker in color than the two center ribbons. This contrast is a must!! If not present, the design folded into the outside ribbons will not be evident. Once in a while, this scheme is reversed, but there must always be a contrast. Possible colors:

- | | | |
|--------|-----------------|----------------|
| blue | red | deep turquoise |
| white | white | yellow |
| yellow | yellow | pink |
| red | green | dark purple |
| | dark purple | |
| | yellow | |
| | green turquoise | |
| | deep red | |

Construction

Use 1 1/4" ribbon or cut a 2 1/2" ribbon in half. Trim off one bound edge of the ribbon when using 1 1/4" ribbon.

1. Fold under 1/8" of one of the light colored inside ribbons and sew it to other inside ribbon as in Figure 1. The ribbons should be as long as the finished piece of ribbon-work. Use thread to match ribbon and use only straight stitch. These ribbons may also be seamed together front to front, folded out and ironed. Also, if not using 100% rayon ribbon, a backing of pelon 2 1/8" wide might be adviseable.
2. Each outside ribbon must be cut and folded as illustrated in Figures 3 - 9. The length of each cut is critical, each must be the same. Make cuts as shown in Fig. 3. Cut only one design at a time. Fold with fingernails as shown in Fig. 3 - 8. Baste this cut and folded portion in place. If the length of the desired ribbon-

FIGURE 1

Center Ribbons

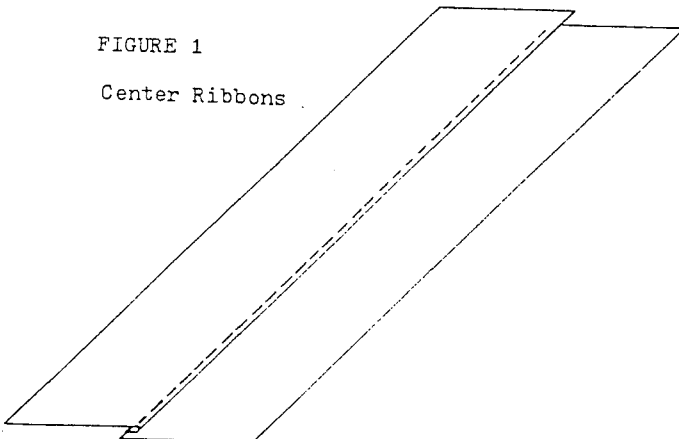
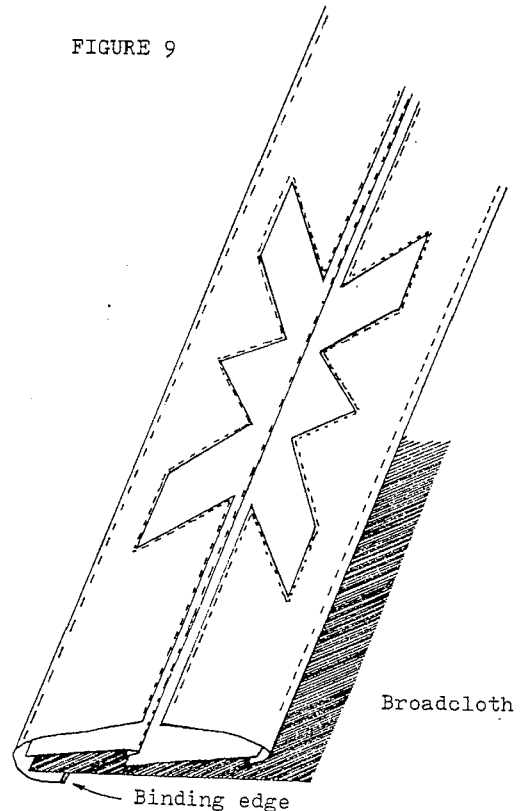


FIGURE 9



work strip requires another design, cut, fold and baste this portion in place as before and continue to the next design. Cut, fold and baste design into the other outside ribbon; do these one at a time to insure they match up with the other side.

3. Sew two outside ribbon in place using a straight stitch. Use matching thread. Stitch quite close to the edge. Sew down the entire left or right side first before sewing the next.
4. Take out the baste stitches and iron.
5. Pin in place on broadcloth and sew outside seams. One edge of the ribbon work usually acts as a binding as in Fig. 9.

If you have seen a completed piece of ribbon-work, the designs are not super precise, the matching is not accurate each time and the points are a little rounded. This should be encouraging to the beginner.

Before starting the "real thing," some paper folding and cutting is suggested along with a couple of trial samples. To avoid measuring again and again a cardboard template might be made to help locate the cutting points 1,2,3,4,5 on Fig. 3. Don't hesitate to bring your questions and samples to the pow wow for a little "hands on" help:

References:

Leech, Polyak, Ritzenthaler; "Woodland Indian Ribbon-work," The Art of the Great Lakes Indians; the Flint Institute of Arts; 1973, 72-97819



OSAGE STYLE RIBBON-WORK

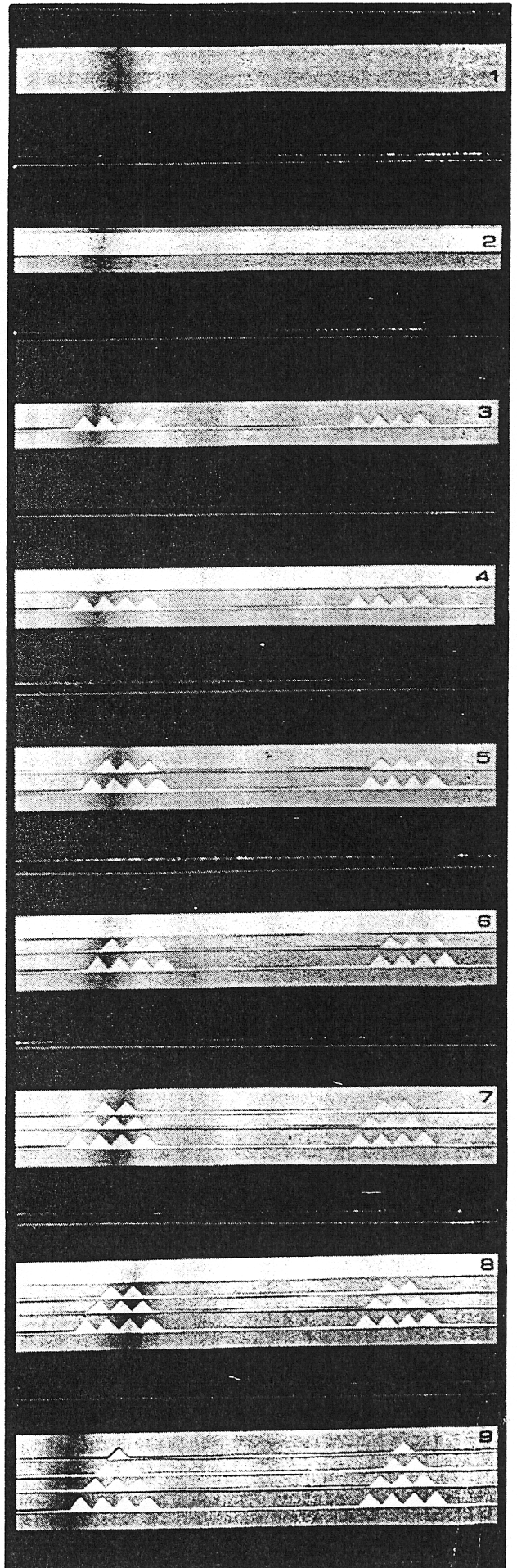
MUTIPLE RIBBON PATTERN

by JERRY SMITH

Since the details of a 4-ribbon pattern were presented in the Feb. '78 issue, let's progress to the construction of a "multiple ribbon" pattern, i.e. the use of more than six ribbons to fashion the design in which ribbons are sewn in place from left to right one partially on top of the next. There is no center ribbon (s) from which the design begins. The best way to describe this technique is to say that the ribbons are sewn in place much in the manner that a roofer would overlap shingles. This is the simplest multiple ribbon pattern which we might call the tipi design. This pattern is seen on straight dance suits and Osage women's leggings. Many of the construction details of the earlier article apply here.

Materials

Use 100% rayon ribbon imported from France. Though ribbon of this type can be found at some yardage shops, all colors are not available. Supernaw's Oklahoma Indian Supply usually carries a large range of colors. Taffeta yardage cut into strips is a good substitute, though it is more difficult to work with.



Colors

Because of the nature and simplicity of this pattern, two colors seem to be the rule. Examples: royal blue & light pink; deep maroon and light turquoise; deep purple and light green, purple and white, etc. As in the previous article, the design is evident only if there is a contrast between adjacent ribbons.

Construction

Determine the length of your ribbon strip and cut the ribbon to that length. Next, cut each into 1" strips. Do not use the BOUND edge of the ribbon, except on ribbon # 1 photo 1. This ribbon will act as a binding for the cloth when your finished ribbon strip is sewn in place on the broadcloth.

Figures 1, 2 & 3 indicate how to cut and fold the "v" notches into your ribbons. The greatest aspect of this design is that you only need to cut and fold only 4 out of the nine ribbons: 4 notches in ribbon number 3, 3 in number 5, two in number 7 and a single notch in number 9. Finished notches are 1/4" deep and 1/2" wide.

As before folding can be done with fingernails, an iron may help. Fold under 1/4" of ribbon # 2 and baste it onto ribbon # 1 9/16" from the edge, photo 2. 5/16 of ribbon # 1 will show, the other 1/4" will serve as the binding. After folding the four notches at uniform intervals (three inches between tip elements) in ribbon # 3 baste it in place 3/32" from the edge of ribbon # 2, photo 3. As in photo 4, ribbon # 4 is also "plain," no design. Fold over 1/4" and baste in place 5/16" from edge of ribbon # 3. Maintain the intervals indicated above depending on whether it is a notched ribbon or plain ribbon and baste other ribbons in place as indicated in photos 5-9.

Now use sewing machine to sew ribbons in place. Use only a straight stitch in matching color of thread. Sew very, very close to the edge of each ribbon. Remove baste stitches before sewing ribbon strip into the cloth. Finished product is about 2 1/4" wide. If taffeta yardage is used, a 2 1/4" backing of pelon is suggested as the taffeta cloth will gather when stitched together. A pelon backing may be used with the ribbons but should not be necessary.

In your best interest, do a sample piece or two. Experiment with foot and thread tension to avoid puckering. Try sewing without basting first and if puckers iron out straight, you may save yourself some time.

To complete the project fold under the outside ribbons, pin the strip to the broadcloth and straight stitch in place, Fig. 4. Remember, the ends of the strips on dance clouts are pinked only and not sewn under.

References:

Smith, Jerry; "Osage Style Ribbon-work", Moccasin Tracks, Feb. 1978.

Ribbon #3

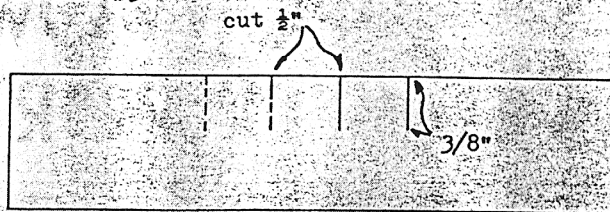


Figure 1

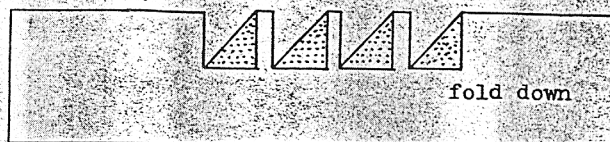


Figure 2

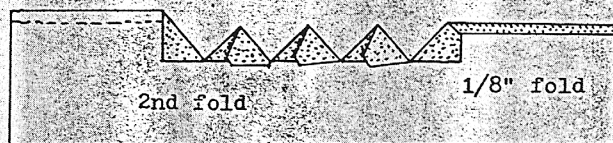
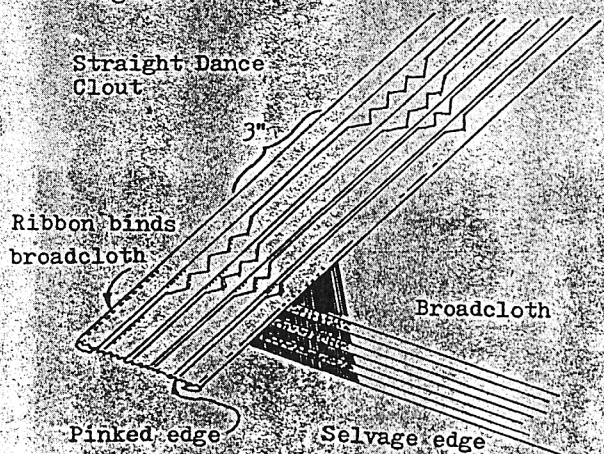


Figure 3

Figure 4

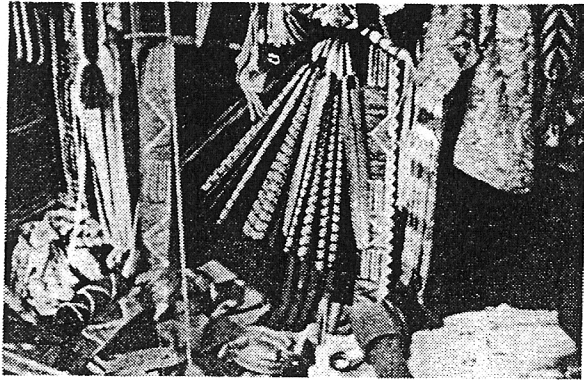


Note: Photos on opposite page are of a paper model.

OSAGE Ribbon-work

Three-Ribbon Pattern

by Jerry Smith



Up to this point, the ribbon-work articles printed in TRAILS have dealt with patterns that are relatively easy to execute though the completed pattern looked somewhat complicated. In this article, the reverse is true. The pattern is quite simple looking compared to the effort involved in measuring, cutting and folding just two ribbons. For convenience, let us call this pattern the "F-pattern".

I personally have an affinity for this pattern on two counts. First, it's certainly an old, elegant and bold module that looks great on a straight dance suit. Secondly, as a mathematics teacher, I find it interesting that this pattern is an example of a "tessellation;" that is, a space divided by two or more congruent figures of equal areas. Perhaps the most popular tessellations are found among the drawings of the acclaimed German artist, M.C. Escher. The ribbon-work at the bottom of photo 5 is the best illustration of this art form. Here, one can see triple F's pointing left while the medium colored F's of the same area are upside down and point right.

Enough of mathematics. Several versions of the F-pattern are possible. Many are present in the photos. There are double, triple and single F's. Some point the same direction, photo 5 (bottom); others point away from each other, photo 3. Some incorporate "steps" on the back side of the F. In photo 2, a double F-pattern is mirrored and placed next to the original to create a four ribbon pattern of a totally different look. This has been done with a single F pattern in photo 5 (top).

TECHNIQUE

The technique of ribbon applique and materials remain the same as those discussed in previous issues. Swiss rayon taffeta ribbons are used.

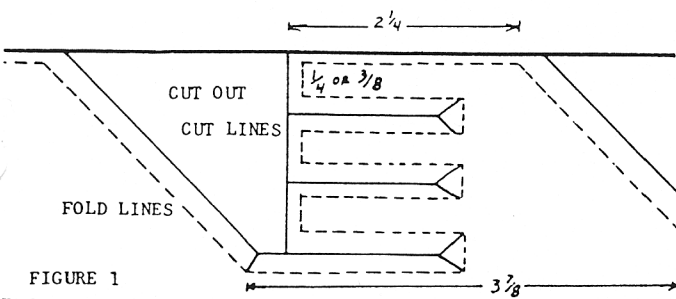
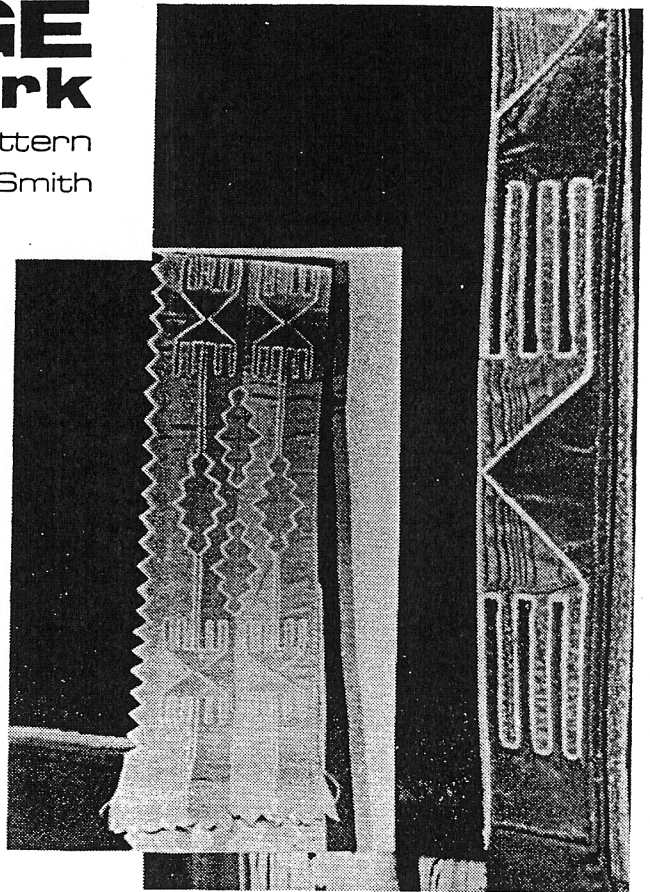


FIGURE 1



The ribbons are cut, folded, basted in place and then sewn together by machine. Figures 1 & 2 indicate how to cut and fold the "F" portion of the design. Figure 3 indicates how the "steps" are cut and folded. Dimensions for the pattern shown in photo 5 (bottom) are given in Figure 1 2 3

CONSTRUCTION

To create this three ribbon pattern, one ribbon is cut and folded into the F-pattern. It is then sewn on top of an uncut and unfolded ribbon (the base ribbon). Next, a second ribbon folded into the F-pattern but slightly smaller is sewn on top of the first F-ribbon so that less than 1/8" of the first F-ribbon shows.

COLORS

Once again, contrast in colors is extremely important. Without contrast the design is not evident and the entire effect of the design is lost. This three-ribbon pattern seems to always have one dark, one light and one medium colored ribbon. The light colored ribbon is always sandwiched between the dark and medium colors. Possible color combinations:

emerald	copen	royal blue	scarlet
white	white	maize	maize
wine	beauty	old rose	purple

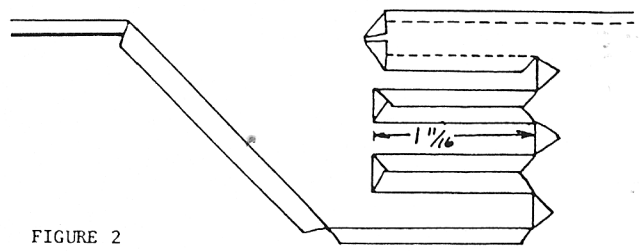


FIGURE 2

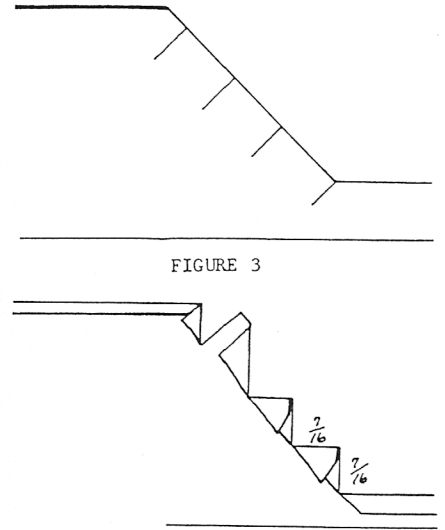
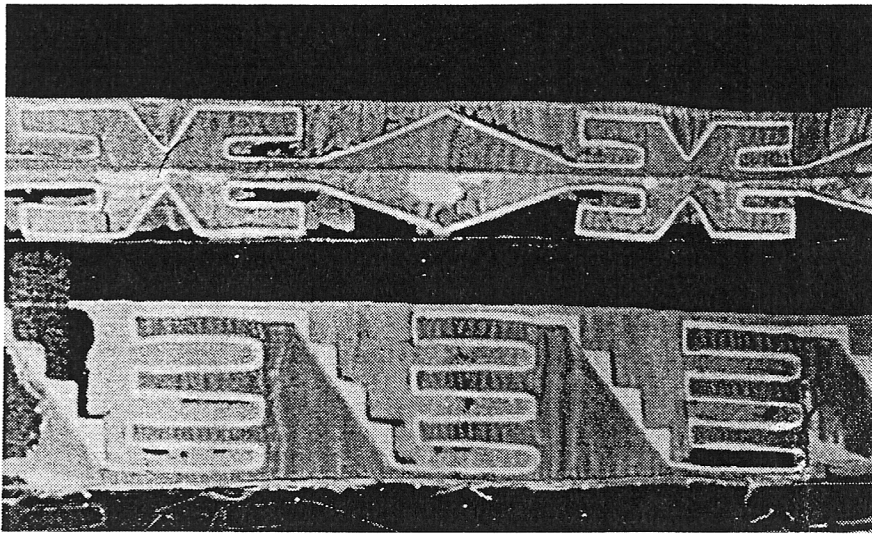


FIGURE 3

When making plans to sew onto the broadcloth, place the medium color next to the wool and the dark color on the outside. The F's on the dance trailer can point all one way or turn the middle one upside down so it appears to point the opposite direction.

PHOTOS

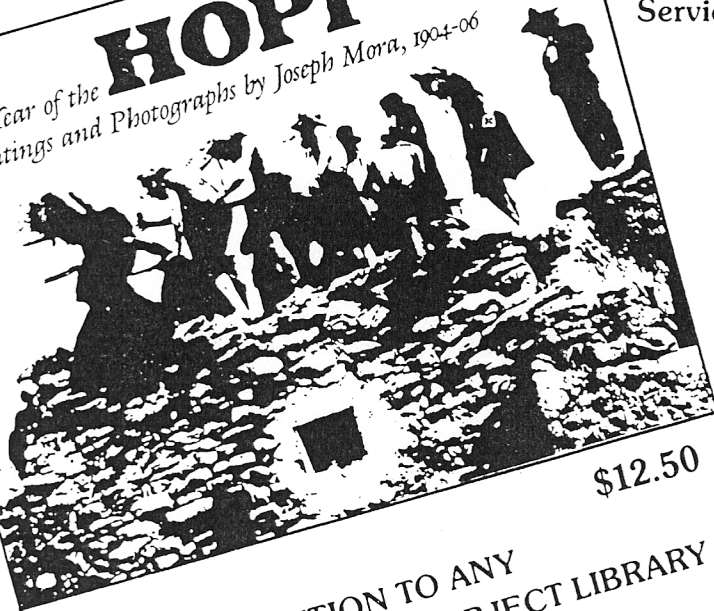
- 1) A case at the Lilly Burckhardt Museum showing a triple (left) and double (right) F-pattern. Note the saw-tooth edge on the right pattern. Photo by L.R. Strom.
- 2) An outstanding Osage skirt collected by Benson Lanford, here mirrored F's form a 4-ribbon pattern. Photo by K. Tsuji

- 3) Clout strip (triple F-pattern) of moire ribbon at Lilly Burckhardt Museum. Colors are beauty (pink red), white, and turquoise blue. L.R. Strom photo.
- 4) Old dance clout also from the Benson Lanford collection. It is interesting that the top design is appliqued to the front (or back) two sides, the bottom design to the back. The fine delicate silk ribbons have deteriorated with use and age. Because they were silk ribbon they were sewn right to the wool and not to each other. Photo by K. Tsuji.

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RIBBON-WORK

OSAGE MUTIPLE RIBBON NO. THREE

by JERRY SMITH

Our fourth, in a series of ribbon-work patterns and techniques, is an explanation of two multiple ribbon patterns that require only a single design element though the pattern looks much more complicated. These patterns are found on men's straight dance suits and on traditional Osage leggings for women. It would be helpful to refer to the Feb. '78, May '78 and June '78 issues of Tracks as the details presented in those issues apply to the patterns described here.

As previously stated, ribbon-work of this type is fashioned from 100% rayon ribbon imported from France. This is not the rayon satin ribbon commonly found in yardage stores. Taffeta yardage cut into strips is an adequate substitute.

COLORS

A series of light and dark colors is the effect usually present in this pattern as in other patterns also. Colors in list # 1 for a nine ribbon pattern are symmetrical as the color above and below "red" are the same. In list # 2 the colors are not symmetrical but also effective and typical.

1 deep purple
white
green
white
red
white
green
white
deep purple

2 purple
lt. yellow
rose red
lt. yellow
royal blue
lt. yellow
purple

Ideally colors should be arranged so that the pattern is prominent. It is prominent only if there is a contrast between adjacent ribbons.

CONSTRUCTION

Cut ribbons into 1 inch wide strips and cut each to the desired length depending whether it is to be used on a clout strip, a legging strip, etc. Use the bound edge of the ribbon for ribbon # 1, otherwise the binding must be trimmed off because it will create a bulge in the finished product.

Figure 1

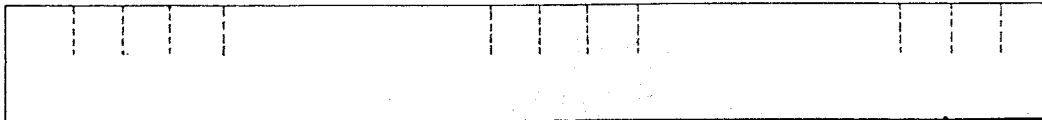


Figure 2

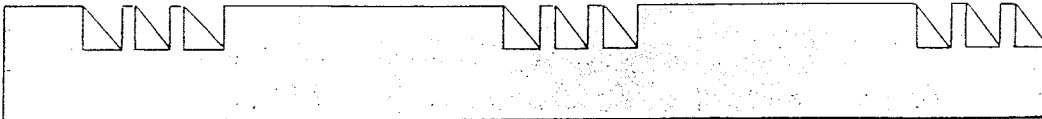


Figure 3

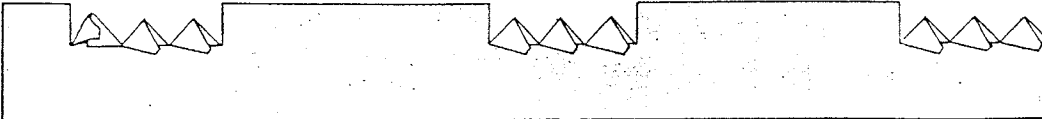


Figure 4

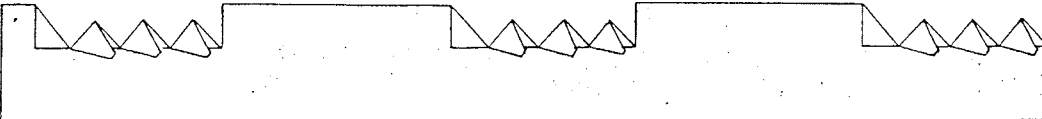


Figure 5

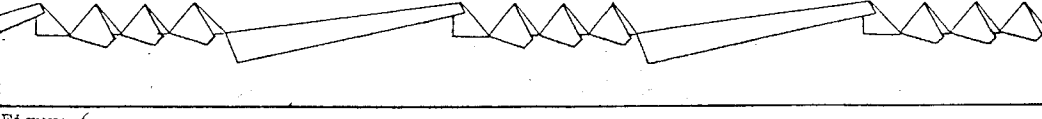


Figure 6

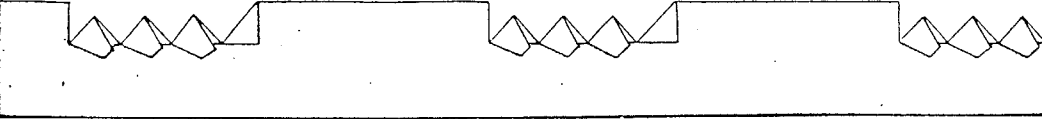


Figure 7

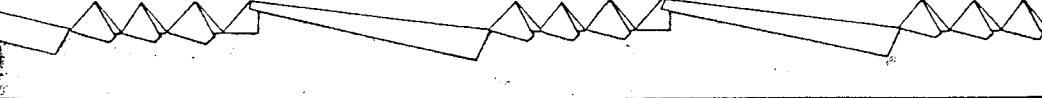
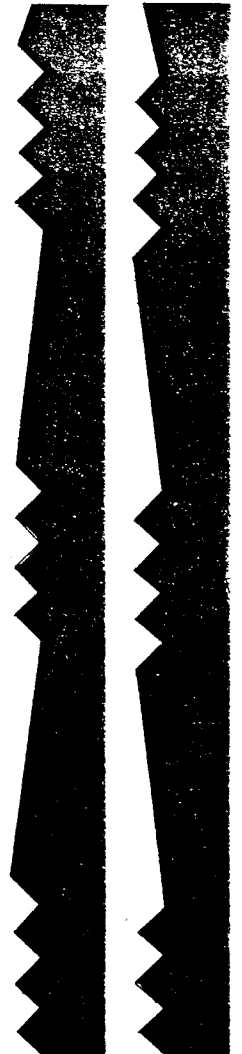
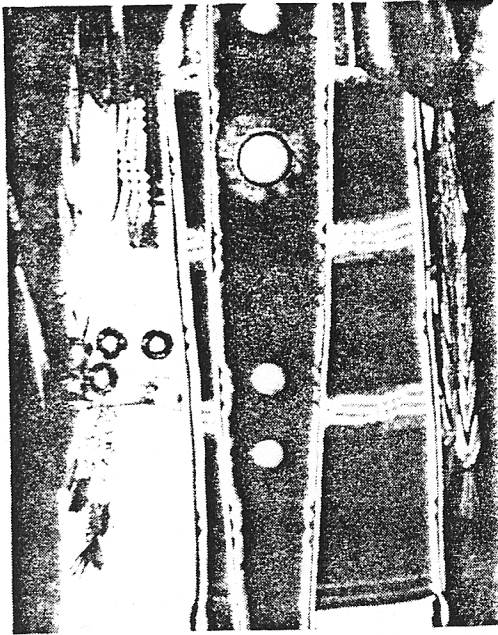


Figure 7A Figure 5A





To produce the design, cut and fold ribbon strips as in Fig. 1-5. The finished folded ribbon is shown in Fig. 5A. Use fingernails to fold the ribbon; a warm iron may help. Remember, ribbon # 1 is not cut or folded as in Figure 8. The bound edge of ribbon # 1 would be at the top.

Since each ribbon is cut and folded the same, a legitimate question arises, "How can one design element create the pattern illustrated?" It's simple. After basting ribbon # 2 down (Fig. 9), ribbon # 3 is slid $\frac{1}{4}$ " to the right such that the peaks of ribbon # 3 meet with the valleys of # 2 as indicated in Fig. 10 - and so on, and so on, and so on for the next 4 ribbons until each is basted in place after a $\frac{1}{4}$ " shift. See Figures 8 -13. Because of this shifting, an inch or more must be added to the original length or shift the cuts in Figure 1 a $\frac{1}{4}$ " to the right for ribbons 3-7. After basting ribbons in place, iron ribbons and then use sewing machine to sew the ribbons in place. Match thread to the color of the ribbon being sewn. Straight stitch very close to the folded edge as shown in photo 2.

Adjacent photo 1 is a dance trailer and clout with ribbon strips of pattern A. Photo by Kaysee Tsuji at a powwow in Quapaw, Oklahoma.

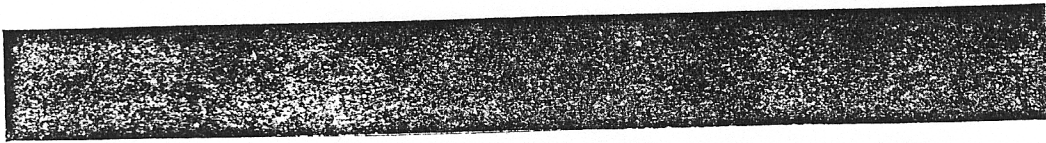


Figure 8
ribbon #1

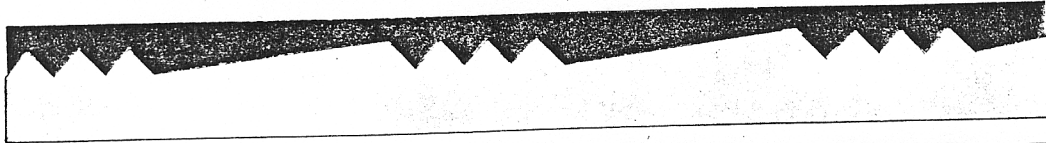


Figure 9
ribbon #2

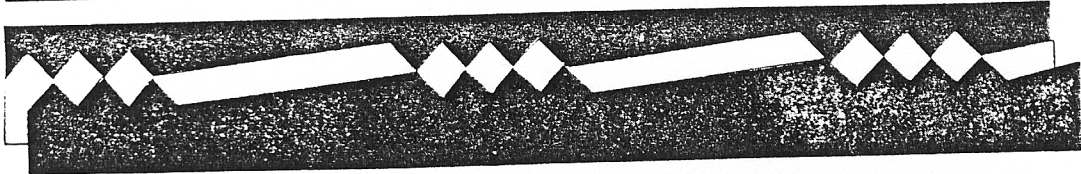


Figure 10
ribbon #3

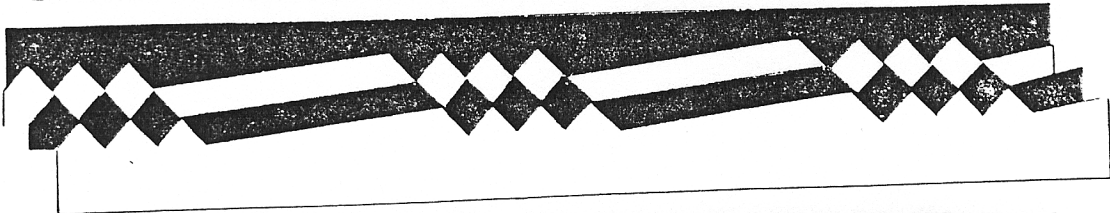


Figure 11
ribbon #4

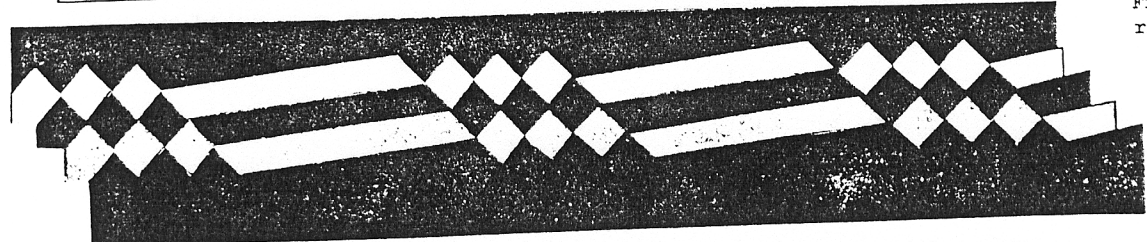


Figure 12
ribbon #5

Pattern A

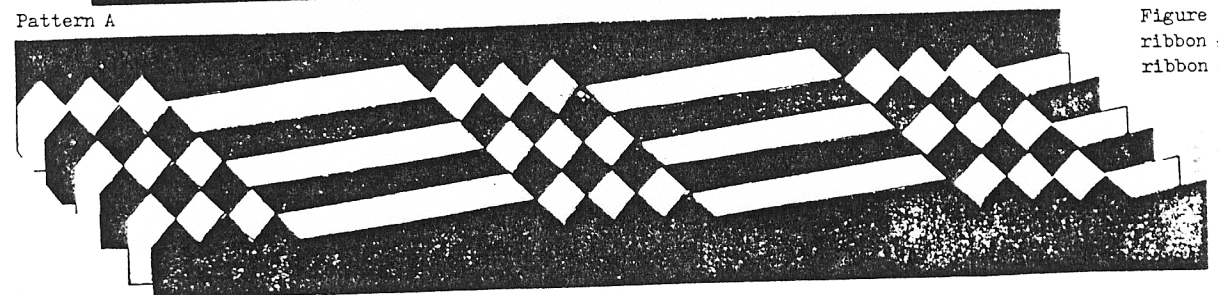


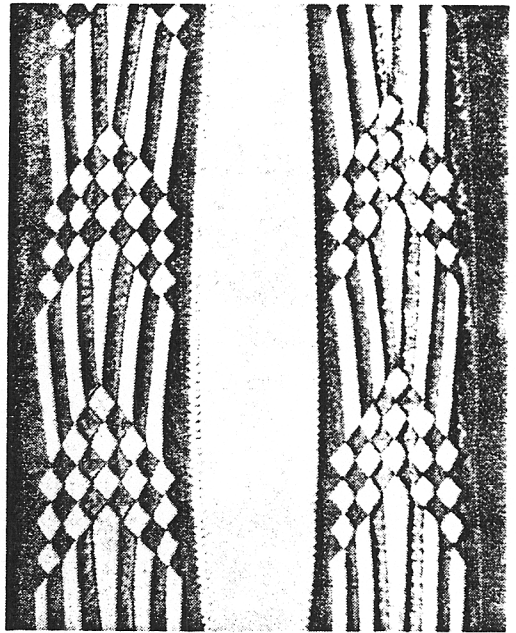
Figure 13
ribbon #6
ribbon #7

A SECOND PATTERN

Figure 13 illustrates a 7-ribbon pattern labeled as "pattern A." A second pattern, labeled as "pattern B," can be fashioned by cutting and folding the first 5 ribbons as before with pattern A. The last 4 ribbons are cut and folded in the manner shown in Figures 1-3, 6 & 7 which results in the design given in Figure 7A. To assemble pattern B, baste ribbons in position according to Fig. 8-12 and then Fig. 14-17. Complete this 9-ribbon pattern by straight stitching with the sewing machine.

Upon first inspection, the finished ribbon strips shown in photos 1 and 2 do seem quite complicated. Such effective and striking creation fashioned from a single simple design element is indeed a credit to the artistry and ability of the Indian craftsman. As indicated, the technique used in ribbon-work is not hard though it takes time and patience.

Photo 2 is a pair of Osage woman's leggings with ribbon-work in pattern B. Notice the contrast in adjacent ribbons. Photo by Tsuji, with permission of Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma.



2

Figure 14

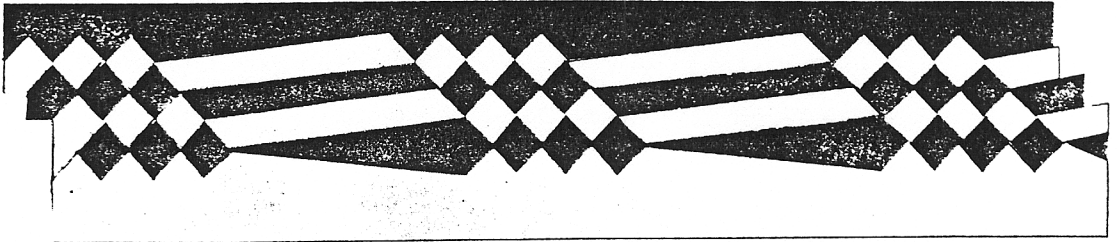


Figure 15

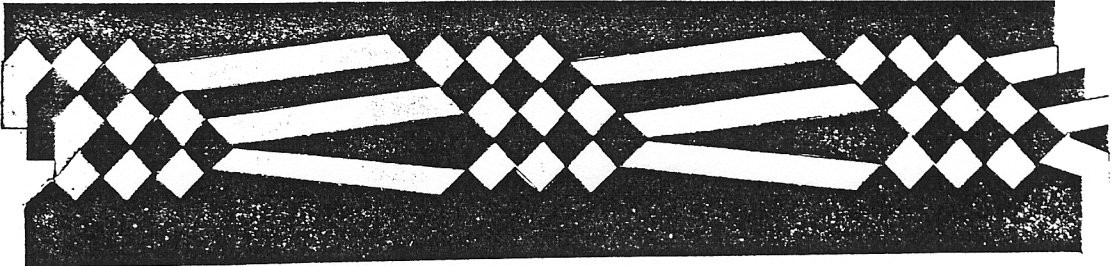


Figure 16

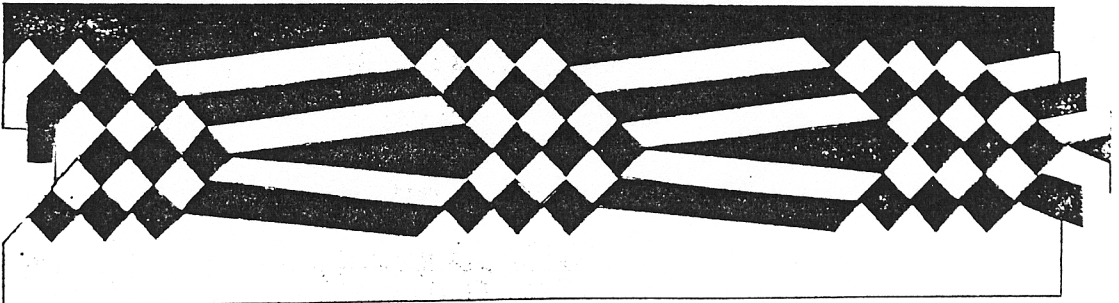
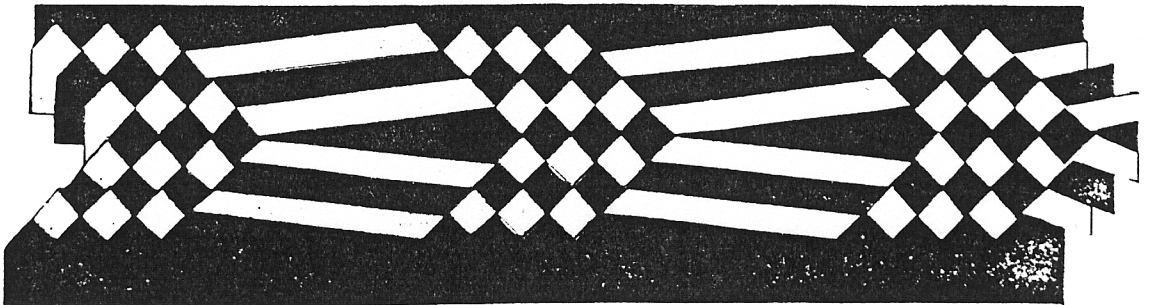


Figure 17

Pattern B



A SECOND PATTERN

Figure 13 illustrates a 7-ribbon pattern labeled as "pattern A." A second pattern, labeled as "pattern B," can be fashioned by cutting and folding the first 5 ribbons as before with pattern A. The last 4 ribbons are cut and folded in the manner shown in Figures 1-3, 6 & 7 which results in the design given in Figure 7A. To assemble pattern B, baste ribbons in position according to Fig. 8-12 and then Fig. 14-17. Complete this 9-ribbon pattern by straight stitching with the sewing machine.

Upon first inspection, the finished ribbon strips shown in photos 1 and 2 do seem quite complicated. Such effective and striking creation fashioned from a single simple design element is indeed a credit to the artistry and ability of the Indian craftsman. As indicated, the technique used in ribbon-work is not hard though it takes time and patience.

Photo 2 is a pair of Osage woman's leggings with ribbon-work in pattern B. Notice the contrast in adjacent ribbons. Photo by Tsuji, with permission of Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

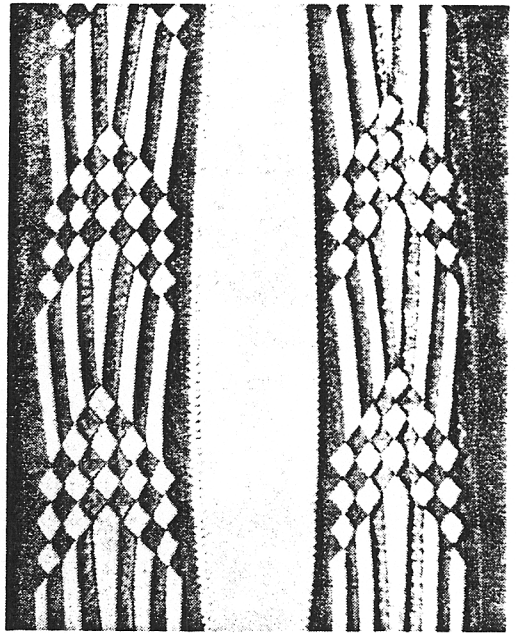


Figure 14

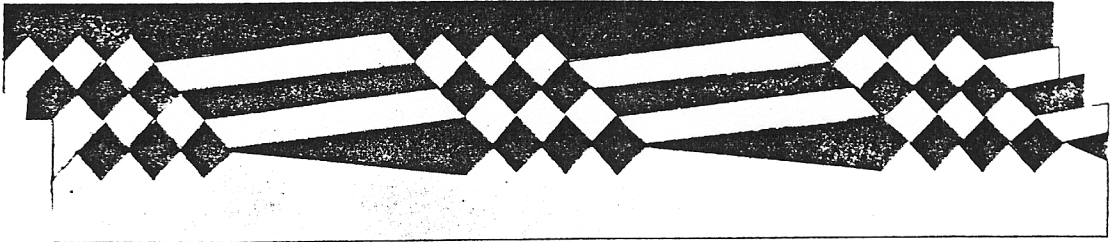


Figure 15

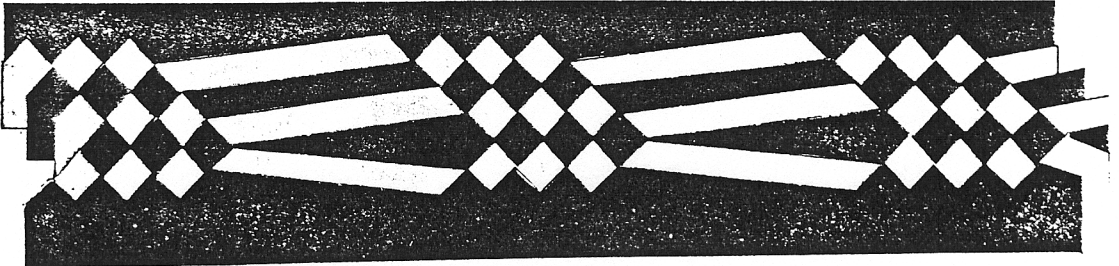


Figure 16

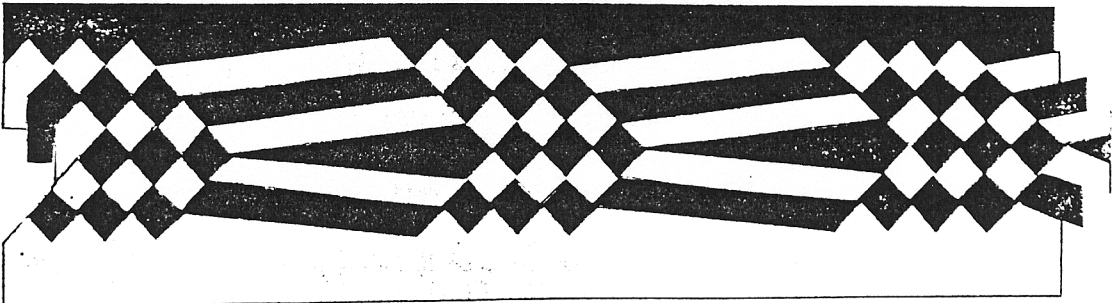
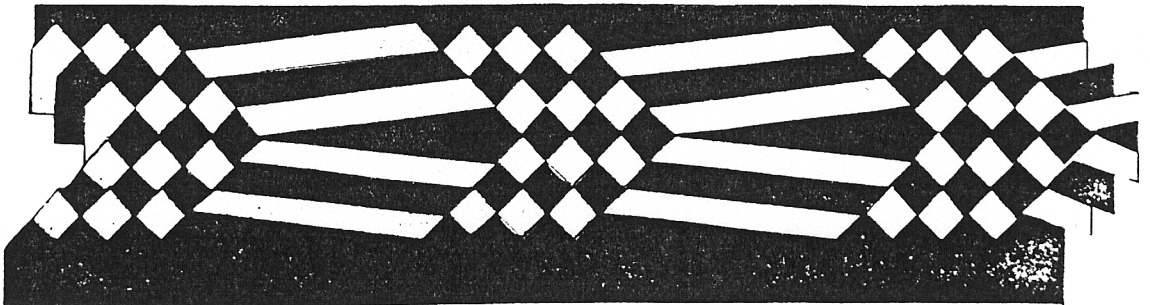
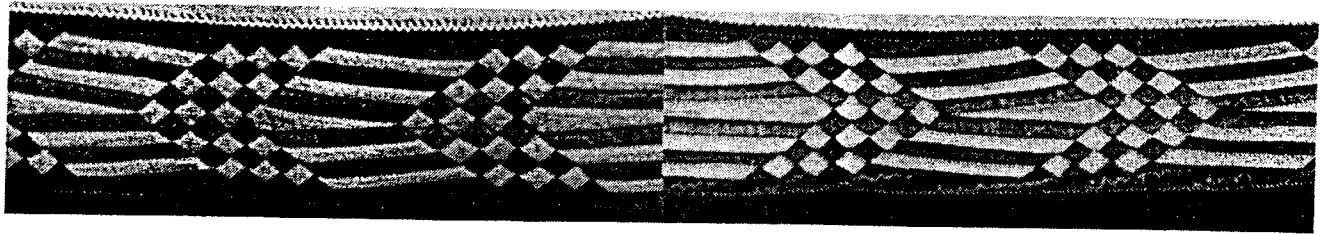


Figure 17

Pattern B





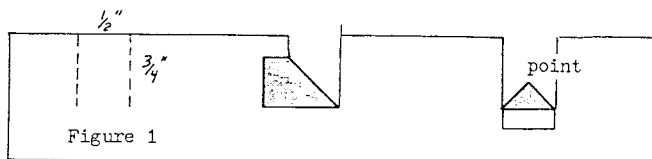
ribbon-work review

by Paul Sheppard

After having read the No. 3 ribbon-work article in the September, 1978, issue of Moccasin Tracks, I went ahead and made a set of ribbon-work myself. When I was done, I realized that there are many things to know about making Osage multiple ribbon-work that can only be learned by doing. I would like to pass on some "tricks of the trade" that I learned.

I used ribbons from Supernaw's. He pointed out that they were all Swiss rayon, not French. The colors acted differently from each other. My deep purple shrank under the iron, but other colors didn't. This fact is important, for the shrinkage could move the points of your design. If you use an iron to crease your folds (I did), then you should pre-iron the uncut ribbon so that it won't change in length. This is similar to pre-shrinking material. I obtained samples of each ribbon color. These were quite helpful in making color decisions.

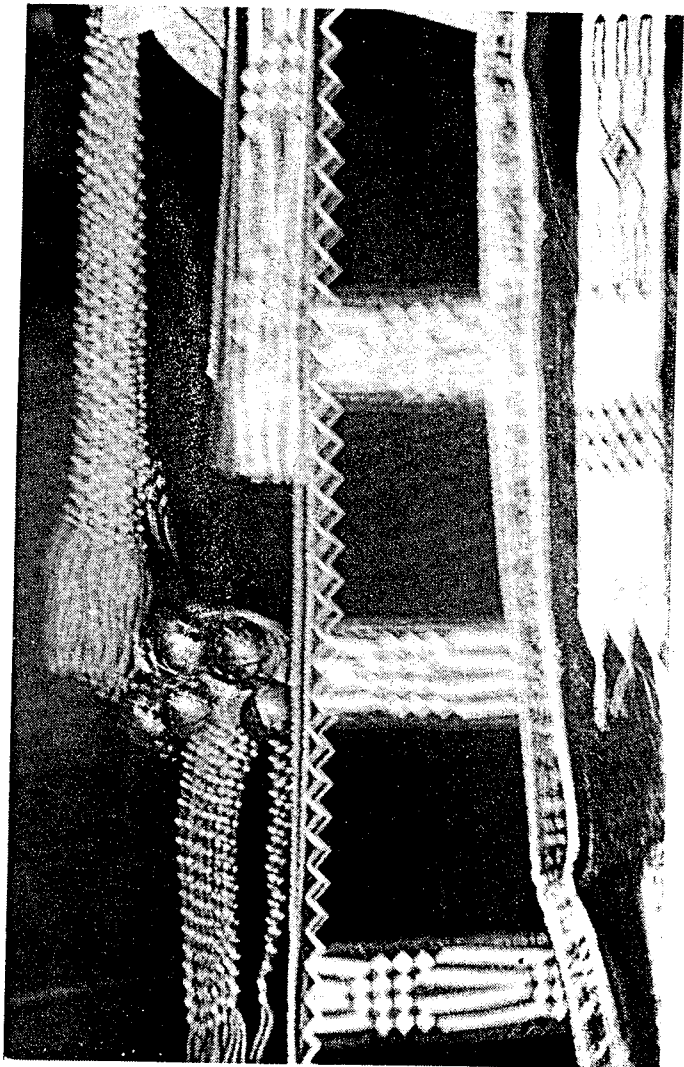
Obviously, the distance between cuts is important, but no less important is the depth of each cut. They must be consistent. Use either a razor blade or scissors to be sure of accuracy, for the slightest mistake will seem to shine out. The depth of the cut must be longer than half the distance between cuts, $\frac{1}{2}$ " between and $\frac{3}{8}$ " deep worked very well for me. This gives a double fold at the tip of the point, which prevents fraying. As stated $\frac{1}{2}$ " by $\frac{3}{8}$ " cut is fine however, on all light color ribbons, the depth needs to be longer still, to prevent the showing-through of dark colors underneath. A width of $\frac{1}{2}$ " and a depth of $\frac{3}{4}$ " worked well, see figure 1.



Once you are done making the cuts and folds, you must hand sew the piece onto the last ribbon. Don't use a pellon backing! I basted each point, and took three stitches for any inbetween section. This secured it in place so that it wouldn't slide while being sewn. Basting does take awhile, but it is a must. Be careful to fit the points very close to the points of the last ribbon. Also, don't baste so that the machine stitch crosses over the hand stitch, for it makes a mess that is difficult to fix. Baste with a different color thread so that you don't forget to pull it out when you're done, and use a good thin needle when basting so that no holes are left.

There are 9 different pieces to do: 3 trailer, 4 clout, and 2 legging pieces. It worked best to do ribbon #1 for all nine pieces, then ribbon # 2, and so on. This seems to be the easiest way to be consistent. Make the outside ribbons $\frac{1}{2}$ " wider than the others, for these two will be folded under the wool. These outside ribbons need to be folded to make the whole piece $2 \frac{3}{8}$ " wide.

An obvious comment is to take your time and be accurate. It took one hour to do each ribbon of the legging pieces.



The title photo, the ribbon-work panels from a pair of Osage women's leggings, is courtesy of the Thomas Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The above photo features the excellent ribbon panels from the clout and dance trailer made by Paul Sheppard. We thank Paul for his fine article. This fine quality work certainly gives his statements credibility. The colors are: Dark purple, white, red, lt. yellow, green, lt. yellow, red, white, dark purple.

This included measuring, cutting, basting, sewing, and then removing the basting thread. Do enough practice pieces to be comfortable with the procedure. I did three pieces, all with different colors, which was also helpful in choosing color combination. Before starting, scrutinize a well made Indian ribbon-work strip (if available) to pick up any other hints.