

The Lost

**Bohemian &
Swedish Braids**

OTHER TITLES BY THE AUTHOR

Rugmaker's Handbook Series:

- #1 Knitted Rag Rugs for the Craftsman*
- #2 Fabulous Rag Rugs from Simple Frames*
- #3 Crocheted & Fabric Tapestry Rugs*
- #4 Traditional Shirred & Standing Wool Rugs*
- #5 Simple, Spectacular Braided-in Rugs*
- #6 The Lost Bohemian & Swedish Braids*

Other titles:

- Bohemian Braid Rugs for the Beginner*
- Multi-strand Braids for Flat-Braided Rugs*
- Flat Wrap Rugs and Baskets*
- Introduction to Patched Rugs*
- Amish Knot Rugs*
- Broomstick Rugs*
- Chain Braid Rugs*
- Wagon Wheel Rugs*
- Anchored Loop Rugs (American Locker Hooking with Rags)*
- Bodkin Rugs*
- Introduction to Tambour Rugs*
- Knotted Shag Rugs*
- Pjonging and the Single Strand Chain Braids*
- "Hook Braided" Rugs; the Two-strand Attached Chain Braid*
- Kitchen Table Rugs*
- String Crochet Rugs*
- Primitive Rug Hooking, An Introduction*
- "Beaded" Rugs, A Unique Standing Wool Rug*
- A Rugmaker's Sampler*

For more information about all types of traditional rugmaking, visit the author's website, ***Rugmaker's Homestead*** at

<http://www.rugmakershomestead.com>

The Lost

Bohemian & Swedish Braids

Rugs, Baskets, Variations

Written and Illustrated by
Master Rugmaker

Diana Blake Gray

Rugmaker's Handbook No. 6:
The Lost Bohemian & Swedish Braids

All Rights Reserved, Copyright 2016 by Diana Blake Gray

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage and/or retrieval system without the written permission of the publisher.

Rafter-four Designs

For information address:

Rafter-four Designs

P O Box 40

Cocolalla, ID 83813

<http://www.rugmakershomestead.com>

This book includes information previously copyrighted by the author in 1986 and 2003

SHORT EXCERPTS FROM THE TEXT MAY BE PUBLISHED WHEN INCORPORATED IN A REVIEW. HOWEVER, CRAFT WRITERS AND EDITORS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT SEVERAL OF THE METHODS INCLUDED IN THIS BOOK ARE PUBLISHED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME AND REPRESENT ORIGINAL WORK. DERIVATIVE ARTICLES AND WRITTEN WORKS REQUIRE WRITTEN PERMISSION AND MUST INCLUDE SPECIFIC CREDITS.

ISBN: 1-533422-59-1

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	Page 8
The Backwards Rug	
What are these Stitches	
What's New in this Book	
How to Use this Book	
CHAPTER 1: THE ANCIENT STITCH	Page 12
How the Stitches are Related	
The Ancient (or "Half" Bohemian) Stitch	
CHAPTER 2: GETTING STARTED	Page 15
Hooks, lacing needles & safety pins, sewing machine (optional)	
Cutting a T-shirt	
CHAPTER 3: MODERN BOHEMIAN BRAID BASICS	Page 17
Modern Bohemian Braid—Terms You Should Know	
Parts of the Modern Bohemian Braid	
Starting a Modern Bohemian Braid	
Making a Slip Knot	
Making the Base Round	
Talking to Yourself	
Pair Round, Round "1"	
Trouble Shooting for the Absolute Beginner	
Row "2", Row "3"	
Turning the Practice Piece into a Basket	
Beginner Projects	
Hiding the Tail	
Pattern for Hexagonal Rugs	
Making Round Bohemian Braid Rugs	
Pattern for Round Rugs	

CHAPTER 4: TRICKS OF THE TRADE	Page 39
Adding Strip or Changing Colors without Sewing	
Finishing Off a Bohemian Braid	
Optional Whip Stitched Edge	
Using Two Colors	
Adapting Patterns for Materials that Stretch	
Placement of Doubles After Correction Rows	
Pentagons with Stretchy Materials	
Pattern for Pentagonal Rugs	
Making a Round Rug with Stretchy Materials	
CHAPTER 5: THE TRADITIONAL BOHEMIAN BRAID	Page 54
Parts of the Stitch	
Making the Stitch	
Practicing on a Base	
Self Talk	
When You Run Out of Working Strip	
Starting a Traditional Bohemian Braid	
Adding on Another Section of Strip	
CHAPTER 6: THE SWEDISH BRAID	Page 63
Parts of the Stitch	
Practicing on a Base	
Making Doubles	
Beginning a Swedish Braid Rug	
Basic Pattern: Round Swedish Braid Rugs	
CHAPTER 7: OVALS	Page 75
Pattern for Small Ovals	
Beginning a Long Oval with a Chain	
Starting without a Base Chain	
Continuing the Long Oval Shape	
CHAPTER 8: SQUARES & RECTANGLES	Page 85
Square Bohemian or Swedish Braid	
Correction Rows	
A Simpler Way to Make a Square	
Finishing Off a Square	
Rectangular Rugs	

CHAPTER 9: CREATING A DESIGN	Page 92
Starter Design Working with Two Strands	
Working with Three Strands	
CHAPTER 10: BASKETS & HATS	Page 97
Alternating Colors in Baskets	
Making a Set of Stacking or Nesting Baskets	
Making Patterned Baskets	
Shaping Baskets	
More Complex Shapes: An Urn	
Making Hats	
Oval Hats	
An Oval Hat with a Tapered Crown	
CHAPTER 11: FOOL THE EYE BRAID	Page 104
Making the Fool the Eye Braid	
Fool the Eye Braid Directions: Round	
Oval Rugs with the Fool the Eye Braid	
CHAPTER 12: THE FINE POINTS	Page 114
Hooks, Crochet Hooks	
Working with Narrow Cotton Strip	
Working with Wider Cotton Strip	
A Note about Fabric Yardage and Metric Conversions	
The Bias Joint	
Double Folding Fabric Strips	
Using Heavy Cotton Fabrics	
Using Satins and other Delicate Fabrics	
Using Wool Fabrics	
Using T-Shirts and Stretchy Fabrics	
Bulky Yarn and Roving	
Stash Busting Yarn Projects	
Using Cord for Rugs and Baskets	
Clothesline and Utility Cord	
Macramé Cord	
Jute, Sisal, Baling Twine, etc.	

Introduction

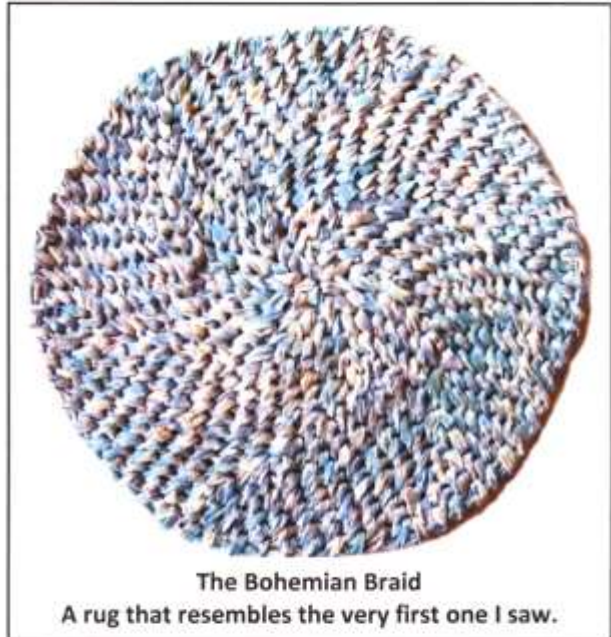
I don't use the word "lost" lightly. There are dozens of rug making methods that have fallen out of use, but I've never considered them lost. The Swedish and Bohemian braids, however, represent an entire family of textile structures that resemble nothing else. Even the venerable Peter Collingwood in his masterpiece *The Makers Hand* about unusual textile structures missed the entire family.

I first saw a Bohemian Braid rug when I was 17 or 18 years old. I'd been studying weaving under a professional weaver with a 300-year family tradition of fine weaving.

Being conscious of a variety of textile structures, I knew the rug was quite unusual. What fascinated me was that between each stitch around the edge I could see a knot had been tied. One side looked like a basketweave, but the other looked braided, and the rug was very sturdy, even being tattered.

I was informed that the rug was just a "beggar's braid"—nothing to get excited about. But I couldn't get that rug out of my mind. Over the years that followed (college and career) I researched old rug methods, but there was no information about the rug technique (nor much about any of the traditional rag rugs). But I was determined to recreate the rug and got to see and study it once more before it disappeared for good.

With a professional career going well, the research and trial-and-error attempts were at best sporadic, but I kept extensive notes. About seven years elapsed before I began to make headway. At last I could reproduce the basketweave/braided appearance, but not



The Bohemian Braid
A rug that resembles the very first one I saw.

the knots between the stitches—and it did make good rugs. Finally, in a fit of marathon determination, I did figure out the knots, but not before I'd stumbled on another structure as well. So, in order of discovery, I found the Modern Bohemian Braid, the Swedish Braid and only at last, the Traditional Bohemian Braid like the original rug.

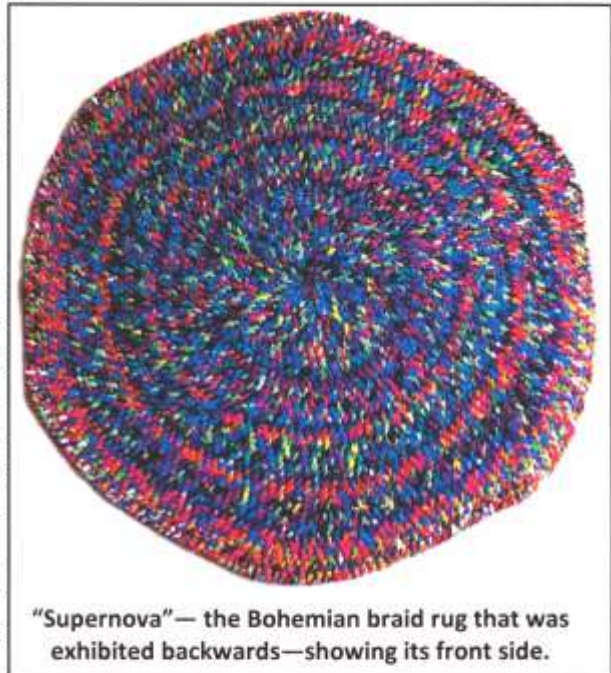
Years later, in the 1980s I found an old Swedish braid rug in an antique store in northern Missouri. I've always regretted not buying it, but did learn that it had come from an estate of a Swedish pioneer family. It was only then that I began referring to the method as the Swedish braid.

In 1986, I wrote *Bohemian Braid Rugs for the Beginner*. I've never seen an example of the modern Bohemian braid that pre-dated those instructions, but will not at all be surprised if one turns up. With the antiquity of fiber work, I've come to believe that every discovery is really just a re-discovery.

THE BACKWARDS RUG

To illustrate how lost these techniques are, in about 1990, I was asked to contribute a couple of rugs to a travelling exhibition “Rags to Riches” sponsored by the Readers Digest Foundation.

One of the rugs was a Bohemian braid. I had told the curator that it was unusual and was blithely assured that their textile experts would know exactly what it was. When it arrived, I received a call, “What is this? We’ve never seen anything like this!” I offered to send stitch diagrams and also to provide advice about how to hang and display the rug. That advice was dismissed with assurances again that the textile experts knew all about displaying rugs.



The exhibit travelled the United States for about three years and in ninety venues. Near the end I received a copy of the catalog for it. The Bohemian braid rug had been **hung backwards** all of that time. It wasn’t the first time, nor the last, that I encountered resistance from the “art” community to the idea that there are techniques that they don’t already know about.

WHAT ARE THESE STITCHES

The Bohemian and Swedish braids are looped and laced constructions made with a hook. They are not Nalbinding (literally “needle binding”) which is also a looped and laced construction, but made using a needle. The Bohemian braid family of stitches cannot be made with a needle and is worked in the opposite direction. Though made with a hook, the Bohemian and Swedish braids are not crocheted and most use only short lengths of fabric strip or yarn.

The family consists of four techniques that I have discovered so far. There may be other stitches in the family that are waiting to be re-discovered as well. This book includes:

- The Ancient Stitch
- The Traditional Bohemian Braid
- The Swedish Braid and
- The Modern Bohemian Braid

All of the other stitches are simple modifications of the Ancient stitch. (See Chapter 1.) Each stitch has its own characteristic texture which is noticeably different on the front and back.

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS BOOK

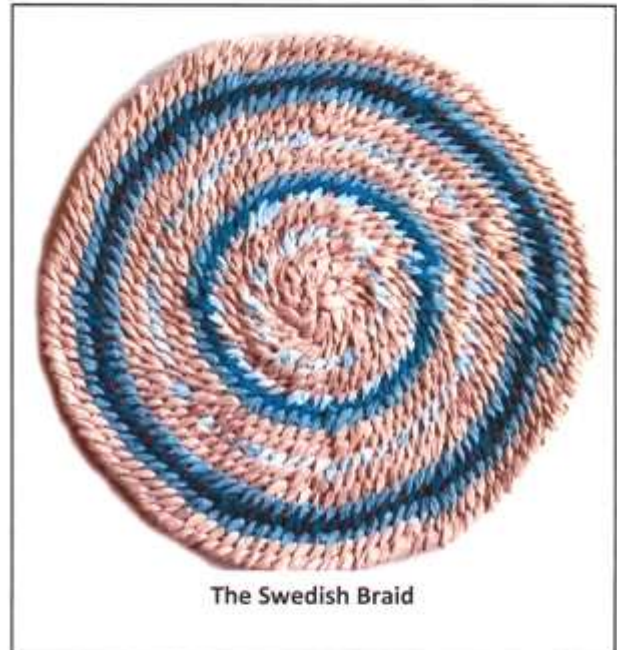
The Swedish braid has languished on my to-do list for three decades and finally the directions for it are in this book. Because photographs of the Swedish braid have been on the Rugmaker's Homestead website and in various publications, I have fielded many, many requests for directions, and all I can do is thank all the petitioners for their patience.

The ancient stitch, which I had relegated to just a footnote previously, now takes its rightful place as the original technique from which all of the others evolved.



Bohemian Braid Rugs for the Beginner (1986) was in black and white with lots of line drawings rather than photographs. This book features color photos of each stitch and the projects made with them.

Like all of the Rugmaker's Handbooks, the steps are shown in closeup so you can really see how the stitches work.



There are new techniques for the Bohemian braids, including creating designs in the rugs and a variation called the "Fool the Eye" braid.



For years I've apologized to the left-handed for the right-hand-only directions in the 1986 edition, and that is rectified in this book. All of the techniques are illustrated side by side with left- and right-handed photographs.



Pentagonal Bohemian braid basket

Also, new are techniques for using modern stretch materials with emphasis on recycling clothing. New patterns and techniques for using two colors and for making ovals, squares and pentagons appear for the first time.

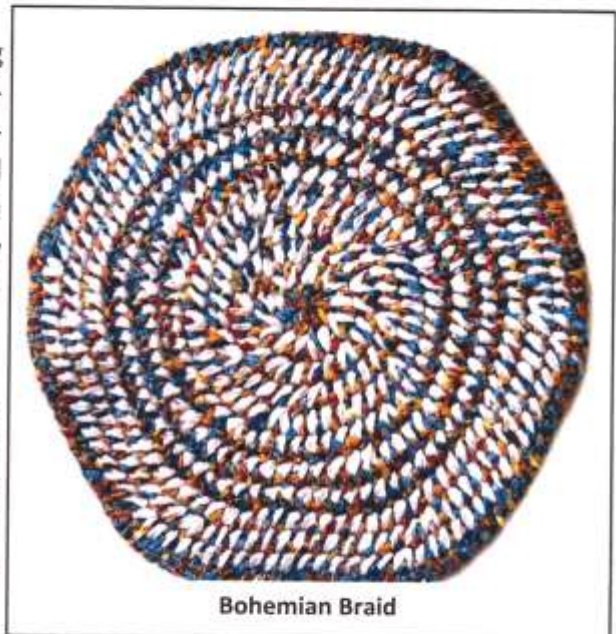
Plus an entirely new section on making baskets and hats in various shapes and styles is in the back. I know how popular Bohemian braid baskets have become as gifts and for craft markets.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I'm often asked if a particular book is suitable for beginners. With the Bohemian and Swedish braids, everyone is a beginner, and this book is designed to lead you in basic steps. Over the last 30 years I've learned quite a lot about how people learn a new and unusual skill.

This book is organized to make that learning process as straightforward as possible: beginning with the modern Bohemian braid and transitioning to the traditional Bohemian braid which leads to the Swedish braid. Even if you only want to learn the Swedish braid, I very strongly suggest that you tackle the skills in order.

All of these stitches work in the same patterns. Once you have the basic idea down with the modern Bohemian braid, the more elaborate stitches will seem easier to handle—you don't have to learn a stitch and a pattern at the same time—just the stitch.



Bohemian Braid

There are two "reference" chapters which you'll want to peruse before you begin a project. Chapter 12 (The Fine Points) will guide your materials selection and includes odds and ends such as making your own hook to use.

In Chapter 4, Tricks of the Trade, are a number of techniques that will come in handy as you begin your first projects. These refinements apply to all of the stitches and include such things as how change colors, alternate colors, end off a project and how to alter patterns if you're using stretchy materials.