



By Laura Lee Rose
Centralia, MO
BIG MUDDY CHAPTER



MISSOURI HOOKERS PASS DOWN ART THROUGH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Learning by doing has been the reason many traditional crafts have survived for generations: basketmaking, wood carving, weaving, and music-making are only a few crafts that have been passed down through families and communities. Of course, one of the best ways to learn is to do, and the MISSOURI FOLK ARTS' TRADITIONAL ARTS APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (TAAP) has been making certain that older skills continue to be shared and thrive for generations.

The traditional arts program – informally known as TAAP – is

among the oldest apprenticeship programs in the United States. Beginning in 1984, it has brought together more than 500 traditional artists, who share their work through an eight-month, master/apprenticeship partnerships. Based on the University of Missouri Columbia campus, the program emphasizes the need for preserving folk arts in Missouri. About 10 teams are selected each year through a competitive process, which includes essays, a work plan, and samples of previous craft work. The teacher has to demonstrate advanced skills in the craft, while the student shows that they are ready to move their work to a master level. Each team

develops their own programs and projects, and documents their journey. For the 2023/24 season, Tina Edholm and Mary Barile were fortunate to participate in the program as rug hookers. Both are members of Big Muddy Rug Hookers ATHA Chapter in central Missouri.

Mary has been rug hooking since her early teens (more than 50 years), and Tina began to learn the craft several years ago after attending the Baa Baa Boonville Hook-in (which this year is sponsored by Big Muddy Rug Hookers as the Marshall Monster Mash). Since Tina wanted to design her own work, the pair decided to focus on the skills she needed for that: dyeing, design/transfer, and just as important, the history of the craft. Tina chose to focus on her family's story, beginning with enslaved people who became sharecroppers around Darling, Mississippi, after the Civil War. She interviewed relatives, visited the region,



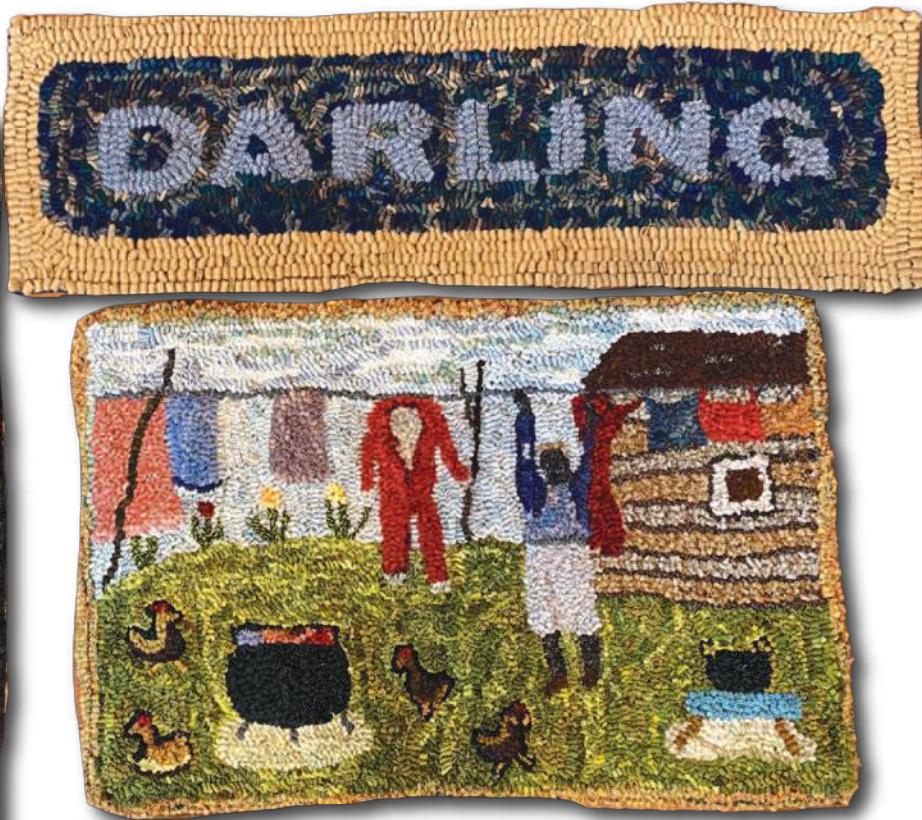
Tina Edholm, left, and Mary Barile.
Photo courtesy of James Henderson.

Photographed at Wool & Cotton Company, Boonville, MO.



took photographs, and sought inspiration from Works Progress Administration (WPA) photos of the time period. Her three rugs: *Plowing*, *Taking Down the Laundry*, and *Street Sign*, were pieces she designed for the program.

Mary learned fine hooking when she started to hook as a preteen, but is now a primitive hooker, and uses primarily PUTNAM™ dyes. Tina, on the other hand, wanted to explore the brighter colors available through other dye manufacturers, which required a different technique. So, they both mixed, and dipped, simmered, and rinsed the various dye products and formulas. Some of the results were spectacular; others were relegated to the background darks pot for later salvation. Photos flew back and forth late at night since Tina wanted input, and Mary (sometimes) had to scramble to figure out why the formulas had done what they did. A few months



The mentorship provided an opportunity for Tina to explore the intersection of culture, heritage, and rug hooking. The black-and-white photos from the Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Collection offered a glimpse into the farm labor experiences similar to that of her ancestors as sharecroppers in Mississippi. Influenced by narrative family stories, she selected three photos to create rug patterns that give a voice to their lived experiences. Patterns were drawn on linen and provided to volunteer rug hookers to be completed. The completed pieces will be displayed as a series in a future exhibit.

Taking Down the Laundry was hooked in the style of folk artist Clementine Hunter. Adapted from photo contained in the Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection (Library of Congress). Drawn by Tina Edholm, hooked by Mary Barile. Photo courtesy of James Henderson.

Man with a Mule

Adapted from a photo from the Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection (Library of Congress) designed, drawn, dyed, and hooked by Tina Edholm.

Photo courtesy of James Henderson.

Darling Road Sign

Designed and drawn by Tina Edholm. Hooked by LauraLee Rose.

later, Tina can now handle different products consistently, and isn't afraid to add hot purples where Mary would cringe and use a subtle wine.

The designs were just as challenging. Mary and Tina agreed that a few small pieces would be

better to start with. Tina, a talented photographer, turned immediately to photos, while Mary searched her collection of early 20th century auction catalogs for suggestions. The pair found middle ground with the WPA photographs, which are stunning in their simplicity and evocation of life, heartache, and

persistence in the face of poverty and racism during the 1930s. After settling on a few photos, Tina asked if other hookers would consider doing a small piece; Laura Lee Rose and Mary took on the challenge. Tina sketched out the designs, transferred them to linen, and left Laura Lee and Mary to their own devices.

The Plow was based on a WPA photograph and descriptions of life in Darling, MS given to Tina by her uncle, who grew up there. She used wool that she had dyed and the mule's tale was flax fibers prepared by a friend.

Taking Down the Laundry, Mary's small rug, used the style of the folk artist, Clementine Hunter, and was based on a WPA photo of a migrants' camp.

The Darling Sign was inspired by markers along county road near the town.

During the program, Tina kept a notebook of dye recipes and samples, attended workshops and guild meetings, and organized a rug hooking event at a local historic house, where the ragtime composer John "Blind" Boone, lived and worked. She also assisted in the development of a rug hooking show at the Arrow Rock State Historic site, which ran from August until October, 2023. She interviewed rug hookers, learned family history, and discovered that she also came from a long line of quilters in the Black tradition, which has inspired her to create new rug designs.



Tina demonstrates rug hooking to an elementary student at a Heritage Festival during which more than 400 students were given the opportunity to try their hand at hooking.

Throughout the process, Mary learned, and remembered, as well. She experimented with new dyes, began to work from photos rather than detailed patterns, and started to research rug hooking history in Missouri, realizing, more than ever, the importance of passing along the story of the craft, as well as the techniques. "Being a participant in TAAP reminded me, again and again, why I love to hook rugs," Mary said. The pair were also supported by Wool and Cotton no. 219, owned by Elinor Barrett who also serves as president of the Big Muddy Chapter.

Mary and Tina were not the first Missouri rug hookers to participate in the program. In 1987 Helen Jeffries taught rug hooking and braiding. Emma Lou Lais was a master teacher in 1990.

If you are interested in participating in a traditional arts

apprenticeship program, check with your state arts council. A number of other states have offered the program, including Maryland, Arkansas, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, Indiana, Texas, Washington, Massachusetts, Tennessee, Arizona, California, Ohio, and Rhode Island. Applications are usually accepted annually from the teacher/apprentice partners, and each state has its own requirements. The programs last about 9-12 months, and the chance to meet with other traditional artists and see their work is priceless.



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