

**Governor's Heritage Award
May 13, 2010
Stephanie Ashworth-Krauss
Acceptance Letter with Photos from the Slideshow**



I'm proud and deeply honored to receive the Governor's Heritage Award for 2010. As it happens sometimes, good things occur all at once. As this letter is being read to you, I'm on a flight to attend my youngest daughter's graduation from the University of Montana. Only a family event of this importance could keep me away from such an exciting event today. I'm grateful to my sister, Elizabeth for representing me at this ceremony. In fact, it is because of my wonderful family and talented ancestors that I'm the artist that I am today.

My great grandmother, Philena Moxley, who was born in Williamstown, Vermont in 1844 was an entrepreneur who at the young age of 20, opened a 'Fancy Goods' store where she sold fabric, thread and other sewing supplies.



Stamping blocks- Metal strips imbedded in wood to form design. Block is dipped in thick solution and stenciled onto fabric.

Most notably, though, she created wooden stamping blocks that were used as stencils to transfer designs onto fabric so that ladies of the day would have a pattern to follow for embroidery or rug hooking. These blocks of wood had metal strips tapped into the lines of patterns drawn on their surfaces. When the block was completed, they were dipped in a paint-like solution, then inverted onto the fabric to create a permanent design.

By the time Philena closed her shop in the mid 1880's, she had over 2000 stamping blocks, many of which she designed herself. Some of these blocks have been passed down through the generations, eventually coming to me. One of my favorite block-designs is of grapes and leaves.



Philena Moxley's Wooden Stamping Block
4" x 6"



Jesse's Arbor, 2003 14" x 14"
Design created using Moxley Stamping Blocks

I used this design to create a rug-hooking pattern which I call Jesse's Arbor in honor of Philena's husband, Jesse Parker.

Here are two more examples of stamping blocks that I used for a rug hooking 'sampler'.



Rose Stamping Block



Pansy Stamping Block



Moxley Sampler
14"x18" 2007

I received inspiration from my great grandmother, as well as a few of her stamping blocks, but I learned the art of rug hooking from my mother, Anne Ashworth who was a talented rug hooker, designer, and colorist in her own right.



Stephanie & her Mom, Anne Ashworth, 1996



Anne Ashworth with Vermont Cow, 1986



Anne Ashworth (far right) designed & hooked this 23'x5' hall runner. 1992

My mom, who passed away in 2001, was nationally recognized as a fine artist and teacher. In 1981, she founded the Green Mountain Rug School where rug-hooking classes are offered annually in June. More than 220 students and 20 teachers from around the US and Canada arrive on the campus of Vermont Technical College in Randolph Center, to enjoy a peaceful atmosphere of learning and camaraderie. Green Mountain Rug School is still owned and operated by our family, and in 2011 we'll celebrate 30 years of continuous operation.

Rug hooking is one of those crafts passed from grandmother to mother to daughter as is the case in my family. My mom taught me to hook when I was 5 or 6 years old and I, in turn, have taught my three daughters how to create hooked rugs. The technique of rug hooking is fairly simple. Wool fabric is cut into narrow strips that are pulled through a backing to make loops that form the pile of the rug. A tool like a crochet hook with a wooden handle is used to pull the strips through the backing. The origins of rug hooking date back many centuries, but in Vermont, rug hooking gained popularity with farm wives who used old clothing cut into strips and then hooked those strips into burlap from grain sacks. It was one of the original recycle, re-use it type of crafts.



Stephanie & daughter, Cecely 1999



Stephanie hooking at her Montpelier Shop, 2002

In 2000 I took over Green Mountain Rug School and added to it a year-round retail shop in Montpelier where I sold supplies for other rug hookers. I also started to experience some success in selling my rugs. The Vermont State House was exhibited at the State House in 2005 and is currently part of a collection of 6 rugs I was commissioned to hook by a local Montpelier resident.



Rug Repair at the shop
Stephanie & Vicki

In 2006 I moved the Green Mountain Shop to East Montpelier to the house where I live with my husband, Ted Allen. My three employees and I continue to sell kits, wool fabric, and rug hooking supplies. We also offer classes, as well as cleaning and repair of hooked rugs. Adjacent to the shop, is a special dye kitchen where I custom dye wool fabric for rug hooking which is another skill I learned from my mom.



Stephanie dyeing fabric
2008



Pam, Wink & Steph
Green Mountain Rug School 2007

My business and craft are truly a family effort. My older sister, Pam who lives in Florida, comes to Vermont every summer to help with Green Mountain Rug School and for many years, my dad did the bookkeeping and repaired rug hooking equipment for many of the students who attended Green Mountain Rug School.

Rug hooking has played a major role in all aspects of my life. I first met my husband, Ted, when he bought a gift for his late wife who was a well-known rug hooker in Central Vermont. Our first social contact was when he volunteered to help move my rug supplies home from the annual Rug Hooking Exhibit at Shelburne Museum. Since then, he has been part of my rug hooking life in many ways- most notable, traveling with me to rug hooking gatherings and teaching venues all over the country, and to International Guild meetings as far away as Wales. He's helped load and unload totes of supplies and bolts of wool in Vermont, Maryland, New York City, Louisville KY, and points in between. He lives happily in our home in East Montpelier surrounded by wool, dyes, supplies... and rug hookers.



Ted & Stephanie travel to rug hooking shows



Lindsay, Stephanie, Mariah
at Rug School, 2009

The next generation is stepping forward with new interest and lots of creative energy. My daughters, who grew up with the rug hooking craft all around them, are now helping every year with Green Mountain Rug School. My youngest daughter, Mariah, pictured on the right, recently learned all about dyeing fabric and last summer spent many happy hours in my dye kitchen. It's Mariah's college graduation that I'm attending in Montana. Our family is looking forward to Mariah's return to Vermont and I'm excited to think she may even return to my dye kitchen.

In closing, I'd like to express my deep thanks to the Vermont Folk Life Center and Vermont Life Magazine for awarding me the Governor's Heritage Award for Outstanding Traditional Artist for 2010. I'm pleased that this award recognizes the craft of rug hooking which has such a wonderful history in Vermont and is so widely practiced in the Green Mountain State today. I'm proud that my family and I have played an important role in educating people about rug hooking and helping to bring about a resurgence of interest in this traditional art form.



Students at Green Mountain Rug School