Bertha Voisine braided rug
MCC-00484

Total boxes: 1
Cubic feet: 0.79ft

Prepared by
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Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes
University of Maine at Fort Kent
Fort Kent, Maine

Bertha Voisine braided rug (MCC-00484)

Shelf List Number: AX-484

Collection Overview

Creator
Bertha Voisine, creator

Dates
2000's

Extent
1 box (0.79 cubic feet)

Provenance
Material was purchased from Mrs. Bertha Voisine for the Acadian Archives permanent collection

Language
NA

Conservation notes
This rug was wrapped in tissue paper and placed in an archival box.

Restrictions

Access:

No restrictions

Physical:

No restrictions

Technical:

No restrictions

Rights Statement

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Recommended Citation
Bertha Voisine braided rug MCC-00484, Acadian Archives/Archives acadiennes, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

Collection Description

Historical Information

Braided rag rugs have been around for centuries, and with good cause. A braided rug was a staple in early, Colonial American culture. Settlers would use scraps of clothing and other excess materials to make a floor covering that would provide warmth and protection for a particular home's inhabitants and guests.
Braided area rugs can be constructed in a variety of different ways including a banded braid construction, cloth braid construction, flat braid construction and yarn braid construction. Banded braid constructions boast wide bands of either solid colored or variegated braids made from predetermined patterns to offer an appealing, thick look. A cloth braid construction is indicative of a time when outgrown clothing was cut into strips and then hand braided into a floor covering. A flat braid construction is a common construction as it is one of the easier and classic methods. Simply intertwine three ropes of fabric and/or yarn, and you will have yourself a braided rug. A yarn braid construction evolves from yarn in its initial state to a uniquely finished area rug.

Braiding is an extremely old yet versatile technique that has been modernized over decades to display its appeal and charm.[1]

Biographical information
Bertha (Bouley) Voisine was born on July 27, 1913 to Alsime Bouley and Hedwidge Marquis of Fort Kent, Maine. Bertha was the only girl in the family and worked on her father's farm with her brothers. Her mother taught her how to knot, sew, and braid rugs. She married Alphonse Voisine on October 27, 1947 and had two sons. She was a relentless woman raising chickens, sold and delivered eggs and vegetables earning the name 'la bonne femme carotte' (the good carrot lady). She cut hair for fifty cents a head and entire families went to her home for haircuts. She loved to cook, go fishing and playing bingo.

Having worked hard all her life, she did not throw anything away. Bertha would collect scraps of material and would braid it into colorful rugs to sell. She became quite popular for this unique talent and through a University grant program, she began teaching this skill to others. She was named *Master Rug Braider* by the Maine Arts Commission for her contributions to the traditional arts of the St. John Valley. She has rugs on display at the University of Maine at Fort Kent, the University of Maine at Orono, and at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. Bertha passed away in 2009.

[1] https://www.thorndikemills.com/rug-history.php

Scope and content
This collection consists of one multicolored oval braided rug made by Bertha Bouley Voisine. All the braid strips are a half inch wide when doubled and are machine sewn prior to braiding and lacing of the rug. The middle part of the rug has some red, white, and blue colors and the outer part of the rug has some red, purple, and gray colors. It measures 35 inches x 21 inches.

Arrangement
Not applicable

Separated materials
Not applicable.

Subject Headings

Acadian--Antiques
Aroostook County (Me.) – History
Arts and crafts
Fort Kent (Me.)
Rag rugs
Rugs, Braided
Saint John River Valley (Me. and N.B.) – History
Textile Industry
Textile – Production

Related materials
Bertha Voisine, Fort Kent Maine: DVD F27.S35 V657 2001
MCC-001435: St. John Valley Folks Art Survey collection

Collection Inventory

One oval shaped, multicolored, braided rug.