

# Rittermere Farm Craft Studio Fonds

## 1951– 2006

RG 312

Brock University Archives

- Creator:** Edna Rittenhouse, Margaret Rowan (nee Rittenhouse) and Ted Rowan.
- Extent:** 30 cm of textual and photographic records  
1 metal stamp for embossing paper
- Abstract:** This archive is comprised of material relating to the craft of rug hooking and the Rittenhouse family's involvement in the craft. The Rittenhouse family ran a successful business known as the Rittermere Farm Craft Studio as well as being the driving force behind the formation of the Ontario Hooking Craft Guild. Edna Rittenhouse was a lifelong crafter and her daughter and son-in-law worked with her to develop new materials and techniques for the craft. Design creation was also one of their specialties.
- Materials:** Handwritten, typed and typeset scripts of an expository nature on the craft of hooking, designs for the craft of hooking, and some textual information of a personal nature about the Rittenhouse family and their involvement in the craft. Illustrations and pictorial representations of completed projects.
- Repository:** Brock University Archives
- Processed by:** Joan D'Arienzo
- Last Updated:** August 2010
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- Use Restrictions:** Current copyright applies. In some instances, researchers must obtain the written permission of the holder(s) of copyright and the Brock University Archives before publishing quotations from materials in the collection. Most papers may be copied in accordance with the Library's usual procedures unless otherwise specified.
- Preferred Citation:** RG 312, Rittermere Farm Craft Studio Fonds, 1951-2006, Brock University Archives, Brock University

**Acquisition Info:** Donated by John H. Rowan, son of and on behalf of Edward C. (Ted) Rowan. Ted Rowan managed the Rittenhouse Farm Craft Studio family business, July 2010.

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**Administrative History:**

Crude examples of today's rug hooking craft have been attributed to 4<sup>th</sup> century Egypt as well as Bronze Age Scandinavia. The beginnings of the craft in North America arrived with European settlers during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries but it was not until the 1850's, when emptied burlap sacks were available that the art form known to us today began to evolve. It was a craft that impoverished, rural women employed to provide warmth for their families. Used burlap was held tight between old wooden floorboards and a bent nail was used to push and pull bits of old material i.e. clothing rags through the openings. By the 1930's the hooking of rugs had evolved into a more stylized form of crafting with the use of pre-made patterns and the use of woolen yarn cut to specific lengths.

Equipment, materials, dyes and techniques continued to evolve. During the 1950's, the Rittenhouse family of Vineland in the Niagara Peninsula opened a craft store and studio. Within a short period of time, they realized that resources for the craft of rug hooking were in demand and they began to build their business around this niche. Edna Rittenhouse, the mother, was the wool dyer; Margaret Rowan, the daughter, was the pattern designer; Ted Rowan, the son-in-law, changed careers and became the manager of the family business. The 1960's were a prosperous time, not only in the Niagara Peninsula, but also for the Rittenhouse business. Edna Rittenhouse had been hooking rugs for decades but she and her family worked at developing and sharing newer techniques with newer materials. Shading manuals were authored and published; students became teachers; creativity abounded in the demand for and the creation of new designs. Instead of using woolen yarn, they were using pure woolen fabric; instead of using a standard cutter, they began using a uniquely designed cutter; instead of using frames, they employed a table top method. The new material and technique resulted in a rug with a smooth, uniform texture and a soft nap. Since many crafters belonged to crafters guilds, Margaret and Ted Rowan began promoting the idea of a guild for rug hookers and in time the Ontario Hooking Craft Guild was also a reality. A joint project between Chatelaine magazine and the Rittermere studio for Canada's centennial year of 1967 was extremely well received within the circle of hooking crafters and the Rittermere Farm Craft Studio became a North American landmark for crafters. From this point onward the studio had a large customer base not only in North America but also overseas. The studio remained popular until 1984 when Margaret and Ted Rowan decided to retire. The Rittermere name has been preserved in the name of Rittermere-Hurst-Field which is a similar business located in Aurora which is just north of Toronto.

**Sources:**

Jamar, Tracy. [A Few Loops of Hooked Rug History](http://www.antiquequilt dating.com/Hooked_Rugs-Jamar.html). 19 Aug 2010.  
<[http://www.antiquequilt dating.com/Hooked\\_Rugs-Jamar.html](http://www.antiquequilt dating.com/Hooked_Rugs-Jamar.html)>.

Field, Jeanne. Let's Hook Rugs. 19 Aug 2010. <<http://www.letshookrugs.com/about.asp>>.

Ross, Kaye. "When Neighbours Came to Hook Rugs". Canadian Home and Garden. Feb 1955.

Rittermere Farm Craft Studio Fonds. Brock University. Aug 2010.

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**Scope & Content:** The fonds is comprised of materials that represent the Rittermere Farm Craft Studio between 1951 and 2006 as well as the Ontario Hooking Craft Guild that was formed through the aspirations of the Rittermere Studio. The bulk of the material is about the craft of hooking: instruction, designing and technique. A binder of price lists was taken apart and the sheets became items within the files. Coloured photography slides were taken from metal cases and placed into sleeves in multi-slide pages. The pages were subsequently placed in files. The majority of the materials were loose and they were thoroughly sorted into their current arrangement. Box 2 is an oversize box for uniquely sized materials.

The largest series, Series I, includes material that Rittermere published about hooking, material published about Rittermere and materials about hooking that did not make it to publication. This series is arranged alphabetically into subseries. The subseries are also arranged alphabetically with a secondary chronological sort if appropriate. The second largest series, Series II, is multimedia: photographs, slides and a scrapbook. The series is arranged alphabetically. Series III is a small series of miscellaneous material. Series IV is material about the Ontario Hooking Craft Guild and its history. It is arranged chronologically.

There are numerous depictions of completed hooking projects throughout the fonds. These can be found within booklets, as photographs & slides and as part of a magazine or newspaper articles. Instructions for the craft are also abundant and can be found within booklets, kits and an unpublished manuscript that was intended for publication as a book.

**Organization:** The records were arranged into 4 series.  
The first series was arranged into 5 subseries.  
Series I, Published and Unpublished Works, 1953-1961, 1963, 1965-1968, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1976-1984, 1996, 2006, n.d.  
Subseries A, Booklets  
Subseries B, Design Work  
Subseries C, Media Publicity  
Subseries D, Scripts  
Subseries E, Book and Handout Proofs

Series II, Multimedia, some 1960's, mostly n.d.  
 Series III, Miscellaneous, 2002, 2006, n.d.  
 Series IV, Ontario Hooking Craft Guild, 1966-1981, 1981-1996, 2001,  
 2006, n.d.

- Inventory:**                    **Series I.        Published and Unpublished Works, 1953-1961, 1963, 1965-1968, 1970-1971, 1973-1974, 1976-1984, 1996, 2006, n.d.**
- Sub-series A: Booklets, 1957, 1959, 1965, 1968, 1974, n.d.**
- 1.1                    Design Catalogues, n.d.
- 1.2                    Design Technique, 1968, n.d.
- 1.3                    Dyes & Dying, 1957, 1959, 1965, 1974, n.d.
- 1.4                    Lessons, 1974, n.d.
- 1.5                    Shading Charts, flowers & leaves, n.d.
- Sub-series B: Design Work, 1957, n.d.**
- 1.6                    Samples, various, 1957, n.d.
- 2.1-2.2                Design kit, n.d.
- Sub-series C: Media Publicity, 1953-1956, 1958-1961, 1963, 1966-1968, 1970-1971, 1974, 1976, 1979, 1984, 1996, 2006, n.d.**
- 1.7                    Magazine articles, 1955, 1960, 1961, 1966-1967, 1971, 1979, n.d.
- 1.8-1.9                Newspaper articles, 1953-1956, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1963, 1966, 1968, 1970, 1974, 1976, 1984, 1996, 2006, n.d.
- Sub-series D: Book and Handout Proofs, 1970-1971, n.d.**
- 1.10                    Book addendums, originals, n.d.
- 1.11                    Book manuscript, original, with publisher letters, 1971, n.d.
- 1.12                    Book summary, original, n.d.

1.13 Booklet on design technique, original, n.d.

1.14 Miscellaneous, originals, n.d.

1.15 Publisher letter, loose, 1970, 1971, n.d.

**Sub-series E: Sheets, 1973-1974, 1976-1984, n.d.**

1.16 Kits & Designs, 1974, 1978, 1980, n.d.

1.17 Miscellany, including bulletins, cards, invitations, maps, newsletters, flyers, special mailings, etc., 1973, 1976, 1978-1983, n.d.

1.18 Price lists & order forms, general & cyclical, 1973, 1976-1984, n.d.

1.19 Teaching & Workshops, 1974, 1977, n.d.

**Series II. Multimedia, ca. 1960, n.d.**

1.20 Photographs, black/white & colour, various smaller sizes, completed projects, studio teaching & miscellany, n.d.

1.21 Photographs, black/white, various larger sizes, completed projects, teaching & miscellany, ca. 1960, n.d.

2.3 Photo album, teal cover, 33.5 cm x 31.5 cm, completed projects, n.d.

2.3 Scrapbook, maroon/black cover, 37.5 cm x 32 cm, photographs, news articles, personal notes, n.d.

1.22-1.24 Slides, colour, standard size, completed projects & miscellany, n.d.

**Series III. Miscellaneous, 2002, 2006, n.d.**

2.4 Metal stamp for embossing paper, blue and silver and stamped paper sample in box, black/white, 16 cm x 13 cm x 5 cm, n.d. Embossing shows "Rittermere Craft Studio Limited, Ontario, Private Company".

1.25 Retirement notes, 2002, 2006

**Series IV. Ontario Hooking Craft Guild, 1966-1-1996, 2001, 2006, n.d.**

- 1.26 History, 1966-1981, 1985
- 1.27 History, 1981-1996, 2001, 2006, n.d.

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**Related Material:** Fitzpatrick, Deanne. Hook me a story : the history and method of rug hooking in Atlantic Canada. © 1999 [TT 850 F58 1999]