INTRODUCTION
Frame Made Rag Rugs in Context

Loom-woven rag rugs (also known as rag carpeting) have been a decorating staple for years and became a respected item of the country decorating style in the 19th and 20th centuries. Not so with the frame made rugs. Part of the difference is that too many of the rugs made on frames were simply an imitation of the loom weaving process (string warp, fabric weft) and since frames are not easily adapted to that style, the rugs were generally of a poorer quality.

Most rug frames were home made, though in the early part of the 19th century mail-order houses such as Sears, offered pre-built frames often with a full complement of pegs. Small frames for yarn weaving were sold through the 1960's and similar small frames for weaving hot pads with "sock loops" are still available in toy and craft stores. These small frames had the unfortunate side effect of convincing people that the larger pegged frames could also be used for weaving in the same way. Of course, that didn't work, and many of the antique wooden pegged frames have been idle for decades because they were just too large to accommodate the standard weaving procedure.

The biggest distinction between frames and looms is that most of the frame types are rigid while looms have mechanisms that allow for the adjustment of the tension of the warp threads. If you have ever tried to weave on a frame, even a very small one, you know that as each row of weft (cross threads) are woven through the warp, the warp gets tighter and tighter. At some point, weaving becomes impossible unless there is a way to release the tension on the warp.

In this book, you'll find that the techniques are divided up into "tensioning" and "non-tensioning" methods. The former will tighten the warp threads (like weaving) while the latter do not create stress on the warp. It is these non-tensioning techniques that are the most suitable for using on a frame. They are also the easiest to learn and come in a wide variety of textures.

An added bonus to the non-tensioning rug making methods is that the rugs themselves are thicker and softer than woven rugs, making them ideal for use where shock absorption is a consideration. Use them anywhere you do a lot of standing. Being made entirely of fabric, these rugs are also much more durable and less likely to bunch up or skid across the floor than the lighter weight rugs, so they can also be used at an entry or in heavy traffic areas.

PART I:
NON-TENSIONING METHODS USING A PEGGED FRAME

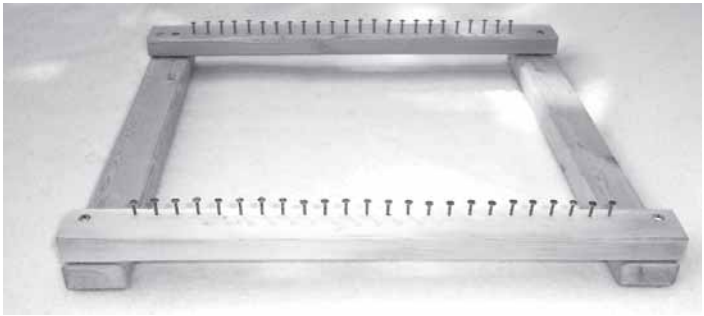
CHAPTER 1
Making and Warping the Frame

At this moment there aren't any commercially-made pegged frames for rug making, although I expect that to change soon. Luckily, the basic high-low pegged frame is quite easily built with simple materials. Of course, rug frames can be built in any size, but for your first frame, I really recommend keeping it small. The one square foot size is ideal for sampling a variety of the rug making methods and is easy to handle as you are learning. You can also assemble the squares into a larger rug, so even with the small frame you can create a large rug.

Another advantage of using a small frame is simply psychological. The square foot sections are quickly made and being able to see progress quickly is gratifying to beginning rug makers. Also, if you have a mobile lifestyle, the small frame can go with you more easily than a larger one.

If you already have a flat frame that you want to use, all you need to do is add the "pegs" which can be small nails, screws or wooden dowels. Craft stores sell fancy pegs already made, which will also work. The sample frame shown uses 1" X 2" finished lumber, which is available at home improvement stores. All four sides are cut 15 inches long, so that when they are assembled, there is an approximately 12" X 12" clear opening. (Don't worry about exactitude in the opening. As long as you use the same frame in creating rug sections, they will all fit together.)

When the boards are cut, sand the edges and ends smooth. The frame boards can be painted or sealed for extra smoothness if you like.



Put the four boards together, just laying the end boards on top of the side boards as shown in the illustration and nail or screw the corners, making sure that the boards are all at right-angles forming a square. Use two screws or nails at each corner so that the frame will hold its shape. The frame in the photograph has one screw in the top board and one in the bottom board at each corner. Only the one in the top board shows.

Finally, add the pegs to the high ends only. In the frame shown, small nails are used, about one inch long (don't use upholstery tacks since they will pull out). If you are using screws or dowels, pre-drill holes so that the boards don't split. You will need 24 pegs on each end, spaced on ½-inch centers. The pegs should be placed about ½ inch in from the edge of the boards. Notice that the pegs line up with the center opening of the frame—don't set the pegs at the ends of the board. As soon as the pegs are set, the frame is ready to use.

Preparing the Warp

A marvelous feature of rugs made on pegged frames is that they have four finished edges as soon as they come off the frame. This is made possible by using a continuous warp—a single strip of fabric is wound around the pegs which forms the internal structure of the rug.

The first warping you will use is a ½-inch warp pattern since the pegs are that far apart. This width of warp is used for all of the rugs in Part I, with the exception of locker hooking.