

## “Seven Sisters”

Pearl K. McGown

34" x 54" on linen, #3 and #4 cuts

Submitted by Peggy Hannum, Pennsylvania

Photo on page 139

I thoroughly enjoy hooking Pearl McGown's patterns with their lovely scrolls and flowers. Last year I was looking for a pattern for my annual hooking project for Maryland Shores Rug School, my “vacation” from teaching, planning and dyeing for my students. My teacher, Nancy Blood, suggested this early Pearl design. However, it wasn't listed in the Cushing catalog, the repository for all of Pearl's patterns; but on inquiry the good folks there said they would search it out, and it was found! I was thrilled to have been able to order it, albeit sight unseen.

There are seven different flowers surrounded by very large, scrolly leaves. I asked Nancy to color plan it, and when she sent me the formulas, I was delighted. She knows I like dramatic, intense colors! Each flower is different, and each represents the favorite flower of one of Pearl's six sisters. The rose is Pearl's. The color plan is an all-color plan, a different color for each flower with the central motif being the red, red rose. The scrolls are so large; they are more muted, and while they frame, do not compete with the dramatic center.

When I dyed the scrolls, I used a method suggested by Nancy many years and many rugs ago. There were six colors of wool, each dyed in 8 values with the same formula. If you carefully mark each **wool** color **differently**, i.e., cut one corner, cut 2 corners, use one pin, use 2 pins, etc., etc., the same for each of the 8 values of each wool color, you can then soak and dye them together. Take one piece of each shade and dye value 1 in one pot; 6 more pieces in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pot as value 2, and so on through value 8. You will need 8 pots, **but** you can dye 24 swatches (4 swatches of each six colors of wool) in a few hours! An added plus is that some bleeding occurs, in this case with the teal (Dorr 144), and it nicely gives highlights of this shade in the other wools. Take one dye formula six times (in this case with 6 colors of wool) in 1 CBW and use your regular spooning (1/2, 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, rest). You can see how crucial it is to mark each wool color or by the time you get to sorting the dried swatches, it would be impossible to tell which wools belonged together in a swatch.

The above method of dyeing has always worked nicely and using these same shades for leaves in the center ties the rug together well, and 24 swatches should be ample wool. However, what I hadn't bargained for and realized as soon as I had finished the center leaves and one corner of scrolls was that I was going to be short of several shades. I had no desire to dye 24 more swatches when I only needed one or two more of several. The predicament was that I needed to replicate the method I had previously used, soaking and dyeing all 6 wools together as the bleeding had altered the colors. I decided I could live with 2 of each or 12 more swatches. By halving my process they should come out the same. It didn't!! Now what? They needed more of the blue-green from the teal. I checked the Cushing colors and their Turquoise Blue was the

closest to Dorr's 144. I put a large pot of boiling water on the stove in a "what's to lose" mood, re-soaked the offending new (12) swatches, mixed some Turquoise Blue in 1 CBW, wet value 1 of the light green inner scroll, the worst of the matches and began putting a small amount of dye in the pot and adding the 12 swatches, all the time keeping a close eye on the value 1 of the old and new swatches and did this several times until I had a close match. I felt very, very lucky! My advice is to be sure you have enough in the first place! There was still a slight difference, but by using the new swatches in opposite corners and the originals in the other opposite corners—an old trick taught by a teacher long ago when re-dyeing for Orientals—your eye does not catch the subtle difference.

"Seven Sisters" became a challenge in a way I hadn't anticipated, but that is part of the fun of hooking. The "Sisters" are beside my bed, and I really love both their design and colors. They also were honored with one of the People's Choice awards at the McGown Northern Teachers' Rug Show this past July.

### **"Seven Sisters" Color Formulas**

**Background** = Nancy's Color Beauties Spot 34 "Plum Duff" over Dorr 1042 (took 2 yards)

**Veins/Stems/Tendrils** = Nancy's Color Beauties "Cape Shore Crewel" over Dorr 8218 (1 yard)

**The following come from Mary Anne Lincoln's *Recipes from the Dye Kitchen***

Use the following spooning: 1/2 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 5 - 9 - 14 - Remainder

Use 8 pieces of wool 12" x 14" — gives 4 swatches (2/3 yard)

**Pansy** = "Red Grape" over Woolrich Lavender 631

**Rose** = "Rich Red 1A" over Dorr Red Grapefruit

**Lily** = "Winter Cedar" over Woolrich Old Ivory 894

**Wild Rose** = "Rusty Tulip 5A" over Dorr 19-1

**Dahlia** = "Butterscotch 11A" over Dorr Sunflower or Woolrich Lemon 385

**Morning Glory** = "Morning Glories" over Dorr 6356

**Leaves/Scrolls** = "Oak Leaf Gray-Green" over Dorr 101

Dorr 102

Dorr 142

Dorr 144

Dorr 8218

Woolrich Polly's Grayed Aqua 708

A word to the wise: do 6 swatches of each color—adjust dye amounts accordingly!

**White Tulip** = 1/32 Plum + 1/32 Navy in 1 CBW

Spoon: 1/4 - 1/2 - 1 - 2 - 4 - 8 - 16 - Remainder