

# Hooked Rugs in Newfoundland: The Representation of Social Structure by Design

By Gerald L. Pocius

## The Argument of the Author:

In the article, Pocius tries to construct the hooked rugs as social structure with the two different rugs that are popular in Newfoundland. The first rug that is commonly seen in the home of Newfoundlanders is a geometrical style, where the designs and pattern style is extremely limited. This design is two-dimensional, and the pattern can be easily copied. This rug is presented in the kitchen, and in plain view of family and friends. The kitchen is a place of familiarity, and those who are close to the resident will go into this room while visiting. The thought behind this is that the kitchen is a place of comfort, and everyone who is there is equal. The hooked rug with only the two dimensions is one that everyone in that community might have; in this sense, they are equals. The second rug that is seen in Newfoundland is considered to be more unique, than the two-dimensional. The second rug is rarely seen because it is kept in the front room, which did not have any other name except simply “the room”. This room would contain the family’s finest belongings, including a unique hooked rug. This hooked rug is not limited to a two-dimensional geometrical style; instead, this rug is based on three-dimensional figure with multiple pattern styles. This room was usually reserved for a clergyman, or merchant who would on occasion visit the home and the unique rug would be visible. In this room, only people of privilege would sit, and this is the only time the unique rug is presented. This presents a hierarchical sense, because this room and hooked rug would presented to only those who were considered of great importance, not someone who is thought to be equal to those who occupy the house.

## Brief History of Hooked Rugs:

- Hooked rugs first originated in England, and was done by women who could not afford to make quilts, or do any type of weaving.
- Hooked rugs first came to Canada during the first part of the 19 century, and was first made by women with different materials found around the home.
- When hooked rugs first made their appearance, it often was seen as a sign of a family being poor and impoverished.
- By the time the 20<sup>th</sup> century came along, hooked rugs had become a part of Newfoundland folklore, and had established itself as a social structure for the locals of Newfoundland.
- In Newfoundland, there two rooms used for company; the first was the kitchen, and the second was a room that was usually located in the front of the house.
- Today, the hooked rugs are considered a part of the fine arts in Canada. Today many hooked rug kits can be order, or bought in stores.

## Questions:

1. What do you think the importance is of the hooked rug in Newfoundland?
2. Why do you think the social structure in Newfoundland in being present through hooked rugs? Explain.
3. Do you think there is another social significance to the Newfoundland hooked rugs?