



THE TEXTILES of TIMBERLINE LODGE

by MARY ELIZABETH STARR

Photographs courtesy of Oregon W. P. A. Art Project

Worthy of pilgrimage by America's hand weavers are the beautiful hand woven textiles at Timberline Lodge on Mt. Hood near Portland, Oregon. They are an expression of the best in modern American design. But so is the entire lodge for that matter and to speak of the textiles only would be to tell only a part of the story.

Timberline Lodge was built by the W. P. A. in 1937. That in itself means little for what community cannot boast at least one W. P. A. structure? But in Timberline Lodge the insight of architecture and the skill of craftsmen seem to be welded into one with nature's grandeur. Mt. Hood, loftiest peak in Oregon, and one of the grandest in the Cascade range, seems to belong to the city of Portland. One seldom sees a picture of the city without Mt. Hood in the background. It is so easily reached from Portland that with our increasing interest in winter sports in general and skiing in particular a lodge on Mt. Hood seemed a very logical thing. The location, 6000 feet elevation on the southern slope of Mt. Hood is certainly a well-chosen one. One can stand on the front terrace of Timberline Lodge and gaze over the lesser Cascades stretching endlessly to the south with

Mt. Jefferson's symmetrical cone rising distinctly over a hundred miles away. But Timberline is not just another mountain inn.

Timberline Lodge was built without precedent. Its architecture is unique and has been christened "Cascadian". The ski lounge on the ground floor and the main lounge of the floor above it are six-sided, taking their shape from the mammoth hexagonal chimney which towers through the center of the rooms. Huge fireplaces grace the alternate sides of this pylon to provide ample fireside space for many guests. The shape of chimney and lounge are echoed in the shapes of tables, couches and lamp bases.

"Timberline Lodge is unusual not only because of its lavish use of indigenous materials but also because of the wide scope it has given to the creative and inventive talents of native artists and craftsmen." These words are from a federal bulletin which deals largely in dollars, man-hours, dimensions and board feet — probably to provide answers to those innumerable questions "how much?" and "how many?" which are said to be the only questions Americans ask. Even the section entitled "Art" gives statistics — the number of pieces of wrought iron used as andirons, lighting fixtures,



View of the main lounge showing the hexagonal chimney, one of its three fireplaces, and the skillful recalling of the architectural shape in the table tops and couches. The generous use of wrought iron can be seen in the furniture and building braces, andirons, lamps, light fixtures, ash trays and the gates to the dining room. Just faintly visible through the gates are handwoven curtains.

furniture braces and grill work — the 130 watercolors which hang in the guest rooms, depicting thirty-seven varieties of local flora — the 119 hooked rugs in thirty-six designs using forty-five color combinations. The handwoven textiles are described only by the following two sentences: "With warp of Oregon flax and weft of Oregon wool, 136 yards of curtain material were woven by hand for use in the dining room. Hand woven are also 322 yards of material made into fifty-two bed spreads, and 564 additional yards required to upholster the chairs, benches, couches and stools of the guest rooms and main lounges."

One's impression on seeing Timberline is that surely some master mind did the planning and some master hand guided the chisel, torch and shuttle to produce such perfect harmony and keep everything on the same magnificent scale. A harmony such as is seldom seen exists between the lodge, its furnishing and its setting. Only an artist could have the fine feeling for proportion that characterizes Timberline Lodge.

That artist is Mrs. Margery Hoffman Smith. Trained as an interior decorator and widely traveled, Mrs. Smith was an excellent choice for designer. As Assistant State Director of the Oregon Art Project she was responsible for the design and execution of all the furnishings. She has a knowledge of all the various crafts used in Timberline. She made her designs and at the same time taught women to hook rugs using cuttings from sewing rooms and cast-off

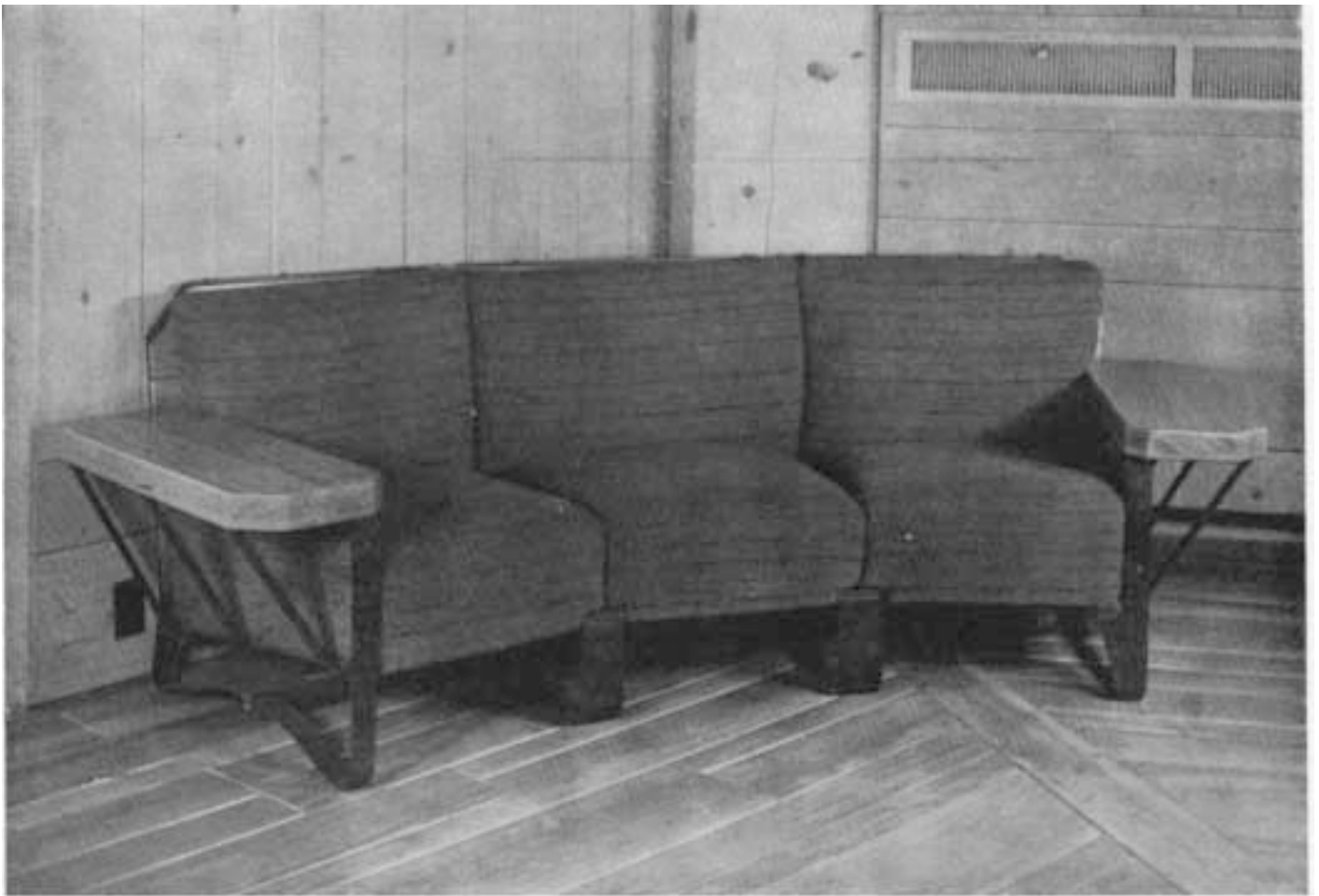
apparel and blankets from C.C.C. camps.

She delved into Indian lore and early history and made designs for the curtains of sail cloth which are used in the main lounge and guest rooms. She also used floral forms for these curtains—bachelor button, blue gentian, anemone, Solomon seal, trilium and others. In fact, many of the rooms are designated by name rather than by number. In the Trilium room, for instance, one would find the trilium applied in an all over pattern on the sail cloth curtains, an etching or water color of triliums over the fireplace, stylized trilium motives in the restrained carving on the furniture and in the hooked rugs on the floor.

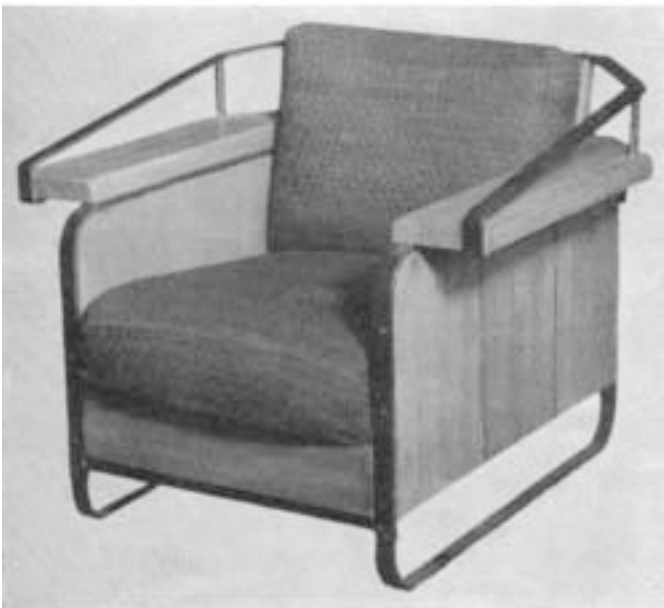
She started with her own four harness loom and taught women to weave. The main dining room has ten pairs of hand woven draperies, designed in horizontal stripes and in warm rich colorings.

The furniture in the ski lounge is made of wood, wrought iron and raw hide, but in the guest rooms and main lounge all of the upholstery material is handwoven. In keeping with the setting the materials are for the most part fairly coarse in texture and somewhat bold in design. Herringbone twills and the crackle weave with variations are the two technics most used. Nothing new or startling there, but used as only a person with a knowledge of design principles and rare good taste would use them.

There is nothing Scandinavian, Austrian or Swiss about this "Alpine hostelry". It is truly American.



Curved couch upholstered in chenille fabric woven as a twill on a crackle weave threading.



Arm chair upholstered in fabric woven as a twill on a crackle weave threading, using linen warp and wool weft. This fabric is used in many colors.



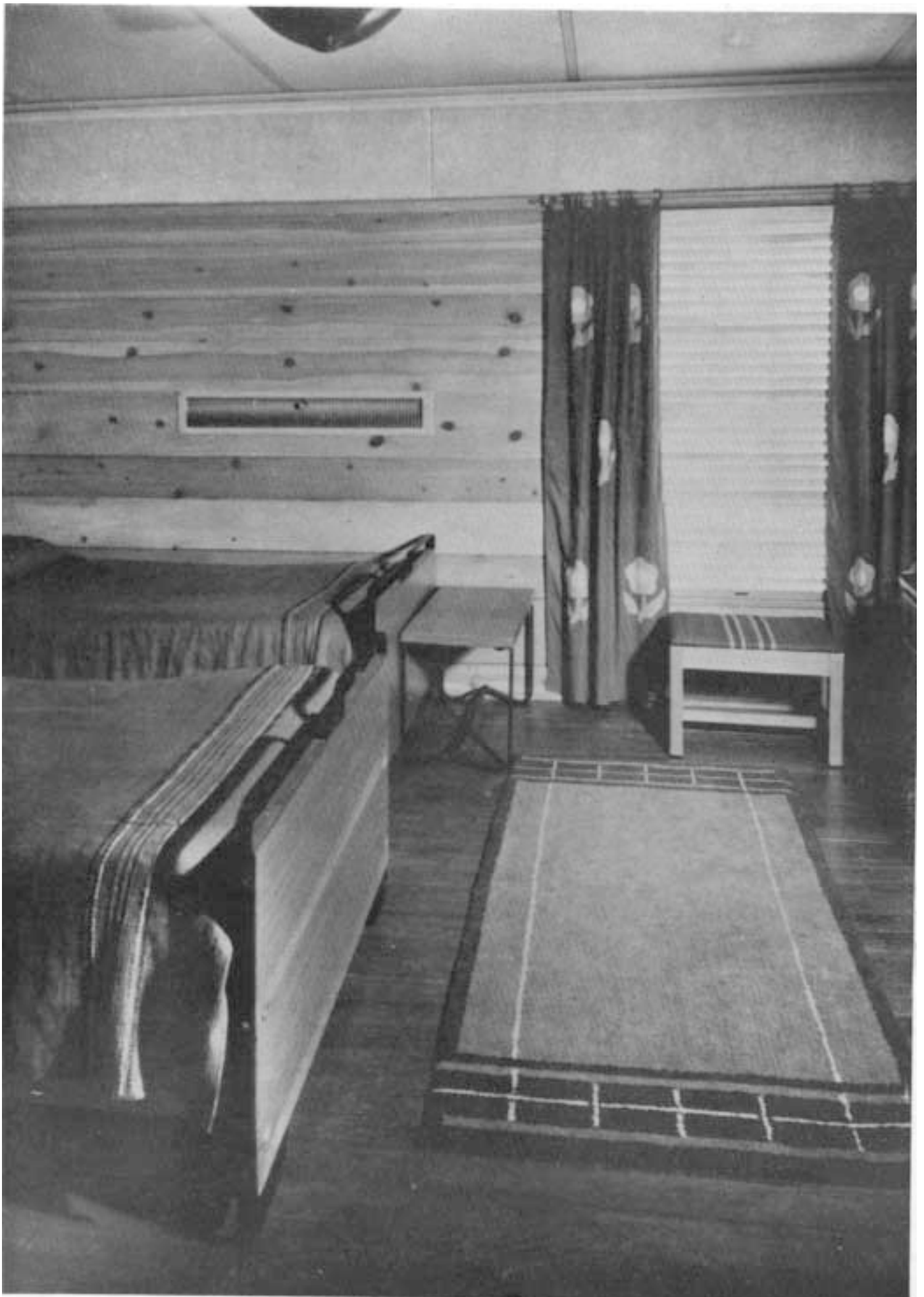
Portion of a de luxe bedroom showing harmonious use of many handicrafts. Hand made furniture with hand woven upholstery, appliqued curtains, flower print, hooked rugs, wrought iron in furniture and andirons in squirrel design. Only the telephone is machine made.



Chair upholstered with crackle weave fabric, linen warp, wool weft.



Bedroom chair upholstered with handwoven fabric in herringbone twill, using linen warp and wool weft. Curtains are of sail cloth with Indian design of triangles applied by hand. Lamp is wrought iron with raw hide shade.



Guest room showing handwoven bedspreads and bench cover, hooked rug, appliqued curtains and hand made furniture.