## Collecting Striped Blankets

## between the lines

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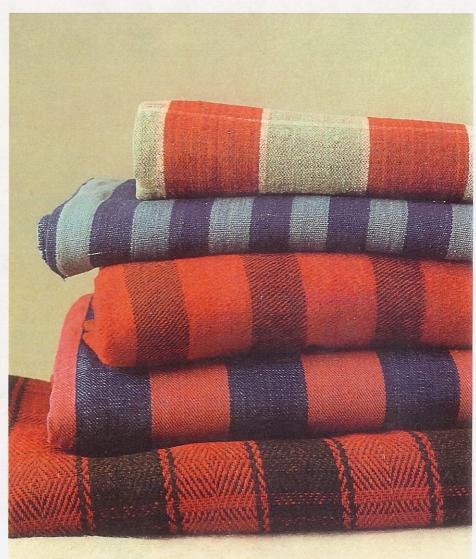
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or make pillows."One decorator used Beacon blankets to upholster head and foot boards on twin beds in Aspen," she says. "Everyone wanted to copy it."

Old blankets are fairly easy to find. Most popular are probably the iconic woolen trading blankets with broad horizontal stripes, imported from England beginning in 1800 by Hudson's Bay, of Canada. American Indians would bring animal pelts to trading posts and exchange them for guns, kettles, tobacco, blankets, and other staples. Small vertical black stripes, or ticks, at one edge indicated the size of the blanket and thus the number of beaver pelts each was worth. Other companies, such as Pendleton, sprang up to trade with American Indians, and Beacon Blankets used American

LINING UP The origin of the multistriped homespun fringed blankets, above, remains a mystery. They date from the midigth century, and some dealers speculate that they were originally shawls. Blankets made on home looms during the 19th century, above right, were colored with natural dyes such as indigo. Three broad-striped Hudson's Bay blankets, right, in unusual colors are stacked with five more vividly striped early Pendleton blankets.





Indian motifs for many of its blankets; but stripes were only a small subset of what they produced.

Unlike such industrially produced goods, the striped blankets referred to as homespun were made on farms throughout the United States, especially during the first half of the 19th century. Home looms were rarely more than three feet wide, so these blankets have one or more seams running their lengths, and therefore the stripes don't

always match up perfectly. To some, such flaws are endearing, while others find them disconcerting.

Of course, just as the stripe motificrosses cultures, striped blankets come from all over the world. Rubenstein also sells blankets from Nepal and countries in South America. "No matter where they're from or how old they are," says New York–based dealer Michele Fox, "they're very modern looking. They look great now."

HANDWORK Homespun striped blankets, left, were relatively easy for domestic weavers to produce. The commercially manufactured woolen blankets called doubles, right, are twice the length of standard-size blankets. Usually used in camps, they enclosed the sleeper on top and bottom, like an early version of a sleeping bag. SEE GUIDE FOR SOURCES

