

# Ann Jones

## Weaving a Life in Fabric

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*“We all have our own life to pursue, our own kind of dream to be weaving...”*

– *Louisa May Alcott*

At Spruce Forest Artisan Village, Ann Jones has woven her “own kind of dream” into a rewarding livelihood as a full-time weaver, transforming yarns into fabrics she uses to create a wide range of items both useful and unique. Within her studio, located in the 230 year old Glotfelty House in the Village, Ann works with several looms to create traditional and contemporary styles varying in material, color, and texture. She prefers natural fibers like cotton, silk, rayon, and alpaca. Scarves and shawls are top sellers. Also popular are purses and custom clothing. For the home, she makes looper rugs, pillows and placemats.



**Ann busy at the loom in her very colorful shop in the Glotfelty House at Spruce Forest Artisan Village.**

Her chosen occupation is one of the oldest surviving crafts. During the Neolithic period – about 12,000 years ago – people began interlacing pliable materials to create a variety of utilitarian objects. The art of spinning, creating thread by alternately twisting together and stretching out bundles of plant fibers, allowed people to create textiles by weaving or interlacing sets of vertical threads (the “warp”) with sets of horizontal threads (the “weft”). Early weavers soon developed a mechanical device, the loom, to allow greater efficiency and speed for creating textiles. Today weavers can choose from a variety of looms, ranging from the simple backstrap loom to vertical rug looms, portable

table looms and many types of floor looms.

A native of Irwin, Pa., with a family background in fiber arts, Ann seemed destined to become a weaver. Her mother and aunt were both skilled seamstresses who made their own patterns and embellished clothing with tatted lace and smocking. At a Girl Scout summer camp, she enjoyed learning how to weave with a simple drinking straw loom for making belts. For two summers, she worked as a nanny for an art teacher who had a loom in her Shadyside home. While pursuing a degree in elementary education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), Ann decided to take a weaving class as an elective.

“Jean Slenker, a renowned fiber artist and instructor at IUP, who started many students on a lifetime career in weaving, was a great teacher,” she says. “I loved the class. We took a field trip to a yarn warehouse, and that’s where my love for yarn started.

The summer after her first year of teaching elementary school in Salisbury, Pennsylvania, Ann was looking for something to do during the summer. So she signed up for a spinning class at Spruce Forest Artisan Village, near Grantsville, Maryland. After learning that a spinning demonstrator was needed at the Miller House in the village she applied and was selected for the position. During the

four summers she demonstrated spinning, used natural dyes to color her handspun yarn, and used her yarn in the technique known as overshot weaving, used to make traditional coverlets. Her mentor, Betty Haupt, a former director of the Somerset Historical Society, encouraged Ann to continue weaving overshot by asking her to participate as a demonstrator at Mt. Craft Days, a fall event in Somerset, Pennsylvania.

In 1975, during her fifth summer at Spruce Forest, Ann was given permission to set up a weaving studio in the empty Glotfelty House. She focused primarily on using yarns she spun and dyed to make patterns from the American Colonial period while taking art courses and workshops to learn more about weaving. Ann began to incorporate more contemporary designs and develop her own distinctive style as her business grew. Eventually she began to offer classes in weaving and took on several apprentices to help with the shop. She has participated in crafts shows and exhibited her work throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio and West Virginia.

Besides teaching school full-time and weaving at her studio, Ann earned a master's degree in guidance and counseling and helped her husband John establish his business, the Fernwood Gallery adjacent to Spruce Forest. The Gallery specializes in all-natural botanical soaps and skin care products available at the store and online.

“We keep it low-key and small,” she says. “We can manage how busy we want to be.”

After teaching for 35 years, Ann retired in 2010. She now works full-time at her Spruce Forest studio from May through December, Sunday through Saturday, except Tuesday. “I never saw myself doing this as a full-time job that could support me, but it is the perfect retirement.” she says. “It’s so much fun. It energizes me.”

During the winter months, she and John head south to Maryville, Tennessee. “I have the winter to play with new ideas” Ann says, describing plans to find new sources of yarn and focus on making vests and purses. “It’s a time to change it up.”

Ann believes that the late Alta Shrock was inspired to establish the Spruce Forest Artisan Village by Eleanor Roosevelt’s work with settlement schools, notably the



**Top photo: Cones of colorful thread used in weaving.**

**Bottom photo: Ann enjoys combining color and textures using natural fibers, as shown in these finished scarves.**

Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. These schools included courses in mountain handicrafts to help area residents preserve traditional craft skills that could help them create livelihoods for themselves and their families.

“Alta put us real solidly on the road to keeping our tradition,” Ann says. “The Village has grown so much since I started there. You never know who will visit. I love meeting new people. It keeps it interesting.”

**Spruce Forest Artisan Village • [spruceforest.org](http://spruceforest.org)  
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