

Antique Rug Studio

Early 20th Century Donegal Arts & Crafts Carpet Designed by Gavin Morton

Description

Donegal Arts and Crafts Carpet

Killybegs, Ireland

Early 20th century

Gavin Morton Design

Wool pile of symmetric knots on a wool foundation.

Morton's of Scotland was creating mostly machine woven carpets since the middle of the nineteenth century. Gavin Morton, a second generation proprietor, saw a market in hand knotted carpets when they began to arrive in the British market in quantity from Turkish centers like Oushak. However, the Oushak trade was already controlled by merchants who would soon amalgamate into Oriental Carpet Manufacturers. But there were other sources and these were closer to home, and fell within the cost profile. Ireland, in particular, was the home of both low wages and skilled craftswomen willing to learn a new trade. Alexander Morton was the founder of the firm of Morton's, but his son James ran the business side of the firm, and it was he who in 1896 first set up looms at Killybegs. Carpets became readily available by 1900, in both the British Islands and America. A larger factory was opened in 1901. His brother Gavin was more attracted to the artistic, design side of the work and with Robertson and Voysey designed the large majority of Donegal carpets. Designs were eclectic, covering both traditional Irish Celtic patterns and more "Oriental", primarily Oushak, designs. The firm operated until the 1950's.

This "Turkey red" carpet eschews borders. At each end of the field is a verdant vase supported on two slender stems. These bushes converge in a notched open diamond with "weeping willow" variants on the diagonals. At the corners are bent right angle floret sprays. Rosettes grow from broken stems developing from horizontal extenders of the main motif. The whole effect is that of a centered, but not overtly medallion, layout. The color palette is narrow, including red, cream and black. One could see it as a Turkish



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village yastik (cushion cover) blown up to vast room-size. The weave is quite coarse and the carpets were intended for a middle class clientele, going with wallpaper, furnishings and accessories. They were marketed primarily through Liberty of London. The carpets in this design, as most of Donegals were, came in various colorways, and there are examples with cream and dark blue grounds. Unlike Oushaks which were produced in quantity, Donegal carpets were woven in smaller numbers and have always been relatively uncommon. The designs pare away extraneous elements and one is left with the essence. This simple, but not simplistic, boldness and strength, has made them popular in almost any but the most elaborated settings. In the early 20th century, they graced the homes of many of the newly affluent British middle classes.

Stock ID:	#24303
General Rug Type:	European
Specific Rug Type:	Donegal - Arts & Crafts
Circa:	1950
Color:	Red
Origin:	Ireland
Material:	Wool
Weave:	Pile - Knotted
Shape:	Rectangle
Width:	11' 4" (345.44 cm)
Length:	16' 8" (508 cm)