A Cabinet of Wonders: Curators Share Their Favorite Finds

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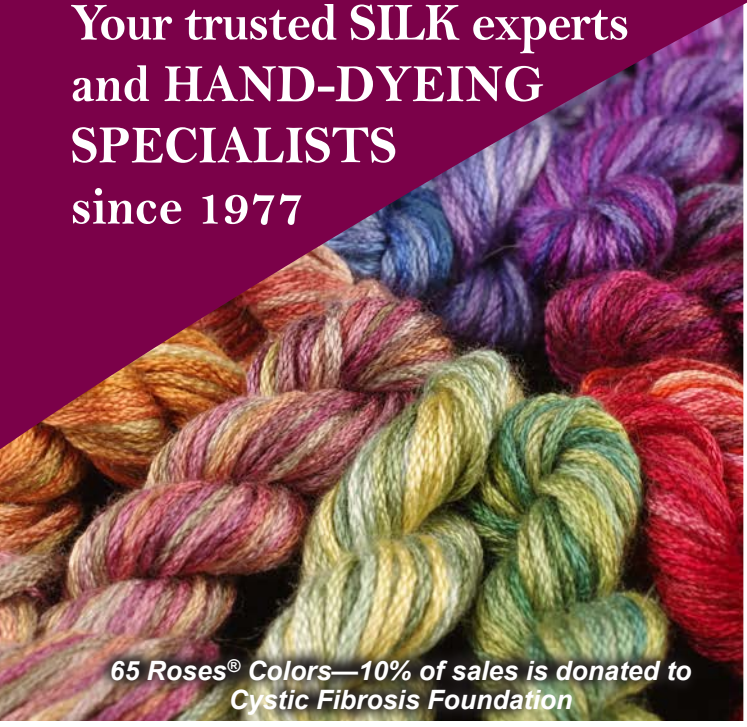
North African Cloth
from the Sam Noble Museum Collection

FALL 2026

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Priscilla Gibson-Roberts's Armenian wedding socks. *Photograph by Joe Coca*

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A detail of Judith Copeland's rug-hooked mat inspired by a Colonial Revival–style runner housed in an eighteenth-century Georgian mansion. *Photo by Matt Graves*

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Notions

Our Cabinet of Wonders

"I bring stray gains along, and don't forget." —William Stafford

Beginning in the sixteenth century, wealthy collectors sometimes gathered and arranged an array of art pieces or objects from the natural world into displays known as a "cabinet of curiosities." Also called wonder rooms, these eclectic collections laid the groundwork for the modern museum and the desire to preserve and interpret human experience.

Museums today, especially museums with textile collections, share that desire, preserving histories often left out of official records, such as women's labor, domestic economies, and a cultural knowledge carried in thread rather than text. I am in love with all textile collections, whether they are in grand museums or in tucked-away corners of the world. I am also grateful for the photographs, insights, and inspiration the guardians of these collections share as we create each issue of the magazine.

PieceWork has assembled its own cabinet of wonders for this special issue honoring museums. Our wonders include knitted ganseys from England's Norfolk coast, hooked rugs from a Georgian mansion in Maine, and folk costumes from Finland and Austria—alongside friendship quilts, Algerian goldwork, Amish show towels, and Napoleonic lace. It is a small cabinet, perhaps, but one that holds a world of stories.

Join us in this celebration of museums, the joy they bring, and the knowledge they share.

Karen



Detail of needle lace made in mid-nineteenth-century France in the collection of The Lace Museum. *Photo courtesy of The Lace Museum*

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Necessities

Must-have tools & treats for the needle artist



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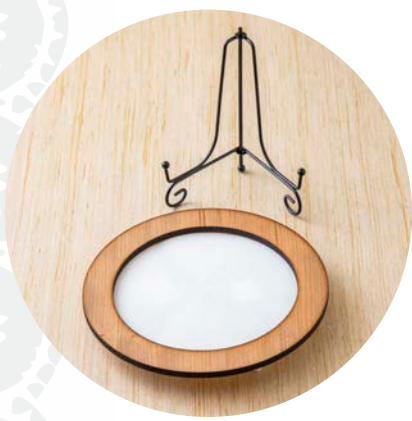
Light and Lofty

One of the first yarns produced by Brown Sheep Company is its Top of the Lamb singles yarn. Created for Navajo weaving, the yarn is also a wonderful choice for knitting a highly textured gansey sweater or blanket. Skeins are available in a range of colors (Admiral shown) in worsted weight and sportweight. **brownsheep.com**

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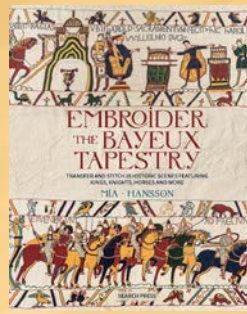
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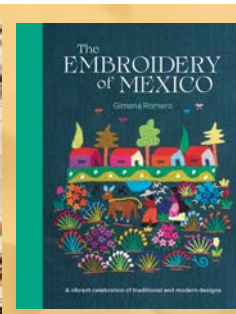
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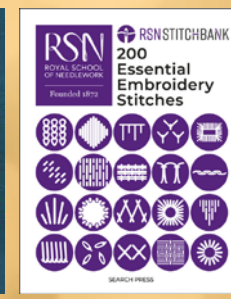


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Objects of Affection

Museum Experts Reveal Their Favorites

CAROL J. SULCOSKI

Imagine your workplace is a museum, and you are surrounded by beautiful and meaningful objects every day. Would you be able to pick a favorite? We put that challenge to several experts working with museum textile collections, and their responses were fascinating and delightful.



The set of extraordinarily fine nineteenth-century needlepoint lace in the collection of The Lace Museum. The crowns from the top to the bottom of the ribbons measure 2.75 inches, and the crest is 5.25 inches in height. *Photo courtesy of The Lace Museum*



Detail of the needle lace, featuring the eagle at the center that is less than 2 inches tall. The lace is so fine that it's difficult to see the stitches with a naked eye. *Photo courtesy of The Lace Museum*

IN GRAND-MÈRE'S SUITCASE

The Lace Museum, Fremont, California

Lace lovers, unite! Our first textile expert is Kimberly Davis, managing director of a wonderful place called The Lace Museum. Located in the San Francisco Bay Area, The Lace Museum currently contains a whopping ten thousand pieces of lace in its collection, along with tools, lace-related publications, samples, and other ephemera. The museum began with a small group of women banding together in the late 1970s to preserve the art of lacemaking. It's now a thriving nonprofit teaching museum, with in-person and online classes, lectures, demonstrations, and exhibits to keep lace alive.

With such an abundance of riches to choose from, we almost felt bad asking Davis to pick just one lace object from the museum's collection. Davis, however, didn't hesitate and selected an unusual set of extremely high-quality needle lace made in France in the mid-nineteenth century.

"It's made with the emblem of Napoleon III's court," she explains, referring to the eagle in the center, "and he reigned as emperor from 1852 to 1870." It's likely that the set was made by a respected workshop rather than a single individual, and the individuals who worked on the piece would have been highly skilled artisans. Sadly, records identifying the workshop or makers are not available.

Davis believes, based on the fineness of the thread, that the pieces were made of linen and supplemented with horsehair for structure. She thinks the lace was meant to be appliquéd, but on what we do not know. Pieces like these "do not have visible signs of use and were so special and valuable that they were brought to [the United States] when their owner immigrated from Europe."

Davis chose this set because of its delicacy: "It's so small and fine that we wonder how anyone could see to make it," she marvels. She also points to the quality of the motifs, a level of detail that is "nearly unheard of."

A Congregation's Fond Goodbye

Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum, Hadley, Massachusetts

Tucked away in rural western Massachusetts is a hidden gem called the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum. The museum, traditionally known as Forty Acres, is a historic house that was continuously occupied by one family for some three hundred years, then converted to a museum. The museum is maintained as it was at the time of its conversion in the late 1940s—a house somewhat frozen in time. Objects, including schoolgirl samplers and other pieces of embroidery and cross-stitch in addition to correspondence, the buildings and grounds, photographs, and diaries, all tell the story of generations of the free and enslaved people who lived and worked there.

When we asked historian Elizabeth Pangburn to select a favorite object, she selected a textile in the collection that is both a tribute to a particular family member and an intriguing piece of material culture. Pangburn, who coordinates exhibit research and design for the museum, among other duties, described a quilt that was given to family member George Putnam Huntington (1844–1904), third great-grandson of the Porters, who built Forty Acres.

Huntington was an Episcopal clergyman who served at several Massachusetts parishes before landing in Hanover, New Hampshire. (He also taught Greek and Hebrew to students at Dartmouth College.) When Huntington retired, his parishioners presented him with this quilt, now preserved at Forty Acres. It resembles the so-called "friendship" or "autograph" quilts that were popular in the mid-nineteenth century: "Friendship quilts are made up of a patchwork design of individual squares or blocks, often from available fabric scraps or a piece of fabric from an item of special significance such as a wedding dress. . . . Participants in the gift would sign a square and sometimes include a date or sentimental message such as 'remember me.'"[1]

A friendship quilt was presented to a person or family who was moving away or to mark a special occasion, such as a wedding. After his many years of service, Huntington's parishioners chose to memorialize his service with this priceless gift.

Like most friendship quilts, George Huntington's quilt is made of cotton fabrics, with individual motifs set against a solid cream ground. Light pink, blue, yellow, and red calico create a "restrained palette," as Pangburn describes it, and some of the fabrics are repeated in various blocks. The individual designs were hand-appliquéd and feature a variety of star patterns as well as simpler blocks and cross designs. Each block was approximately 9 inches square, and 66 blocks were used.

Each parishioner or family would have created one of the quilt blocks; although there are overall similarities, including the harmonious repeats of fabrics, each family had discretion in creating their block. Some of the motifs were clearly made by more advanced quilters, but part of the charm is that quilters of different skill levels were called upon to participate. Although it's difficult to see, a number of women parishioners signed their names on the quilt in ink, now faded to brown.

Pangburn is particularly intrigued by a large, six-pointed star appearing in the center. The motif "disrupts the pattern in an interesting way," she observes, noting the haphazard placement of the women's names across the rest of the piece. This motif resembles the Mariner's Compass block, and the image of someone leading the way, presumably with God and their church as the compass, certainly seems fitting for a clergyman. Or as Pangburn puts it, "It feels like a testament to his impact on the church community, a physical manifestation of the relationships he nurtured." She concludes that, for her, the quilt "represents the ecosystem of human connection. . . . The names on this quilt are like the ripples of a stone thrown into the water—ever widening and still visible long after the stone has disappeared."

Algerian Elegance

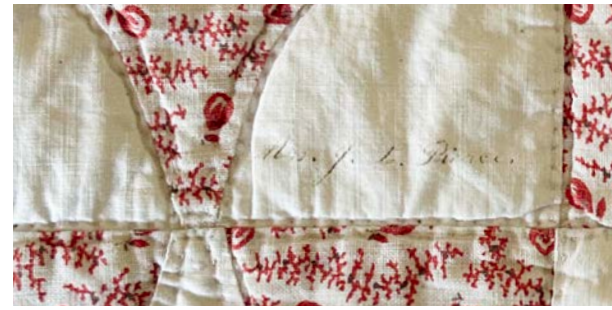
Sam Noble Museum, Norman, Oklahoma

If you were searching for North African textiles, Norman, Oklahoma, might not be the first place you'd look. Luckily for us, the Ethnology Department of the Sam Noble Museum, part of the University of Oklahoma, has an extensive collection of global textiles, including objects from Morocco and Algeria. Fragments from an embroidered textile most likely created in Algeria caught the eye of assistant curator Claire Nicholas.

As with all museum objects, context is important. Nicholas explained the interesting provenance







Autograph quilt given to Huntington by his parishioners in Hanover, New Hampshire. *Photo courtesy of the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum*





Top: One end of the open-weave linen henna towel embellished with silk floss and goldwork. *Bottom:* Detail of the henna towel shows strips of gold laced directly through the fabric. *Photo courtesy of Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, University of Oklahoma, Ethnology Collection, E/1976/3/001, 002*

of the piece, which is part of the university's former home economics collection transferred to the Sam Noble Museum in 1976. The first director of the university's art museum, Oscar B. Jacobson, took a sabbatical with his family in 1925. Over the next year, they visited a swath of countries, including France, Morocco, and Algeria. Jacobson and his wife, Sophie (an art historian who published under the pen name Jeanne d'Ucel), collected numerous textiles and other objects for the university during their journey. Nicholas describes the textile fragments as pieces of open-weave linen embellished with silk floss and goldwork. The collection notes described the fragments only as a "henna towel." During rites of passage, intricate patterns in henna were (and still are) applied to women's skin, particularly on the eve of a wedding. The bride would rest her hands on decorative towels or pillows to showcase her henna designs and to protect her clothing from the dye. Nicholas believes the fragments could be two ends from a single rectangular henna towel, although it's impossible to know for sure.

As with many historical textiles, we're left with educated guesses when it comes to provenance. Nicholas believes, based on the characteristics of the embroidery, that these pieces were made in an urban area—rural makers tended to create woven textiles rather than embroidered ones. The maker was likely a girl or woman. Learning how to embroider was part of a well-bred girl's education, and some girls even attended home-based workshops to learn various techniques. Another possibility is that the object was made by an experienced female artisan, commissioned for a special occasion.

Why did Nicholas select this piece? Color, for one reason. The bright orange and pink embroidery, she explains, is a bit unusual for this object's type and time period—late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Some North African textiles, particularly in Morocco, feature more goldwork than these fragments; they also are worked in shades of cool red and blue or purple-blue. Nicholas opines that new kinds of dyes or the process of aging may have affected the colors, or they may have been influenced by textiles from other regions that arrived in the port of Algiers, which had been part of the Ottoman Empire from the early sixteenth century, later coming under French colonial control from 1830 until 1962.

Nicholas is also fascinated by the motifs used in the fragments. Most textiles of the region use abstracted geometric motifs sometimes evoking flora or architectural elements, as well as arabesque patterns. Anthropomorphic or highly representational motifs are less common. But these fragments have more varied designs: what look like boats, palm fronds, and floral motifs. Nicholas is struck by an eight-pointed star motif that she believes was intended to be a flower. Another motif resembles a tulip, a subject that often appears in Ottoman textiles.

The stitchwork itself has interesting features, too. Nicholas notes that much goldwork of the era was made with thread consisting of a center core with metal wrapped around it. The goldwork in these fragments, however, are made of actual strips of metal, either gold or gilded. The metal strips aren't couched, she observes; instead, the gold "thread" goes straight through the fabric. "I'm surprised there isn't more damage to the cloth," she notes.

It's a beautiful textile with unusual and attractive embroidery, unique stitchwork, and bright colors that is "playful and eye-popping," says Nicholas. "That's why I like it!"

What began as a simple question to museum professionals became a reminder of why museums matter. They connect us to stories stitched across time and place, and to the people who care for them with such insight and affection. ❖

Notes

1. Nick Boschetto, "Friendship Quilts: A Gift of Remembrance," *Journal of Antiques & Collectibles*, August 10, 2020, journalofantiques.com/digital-publications/joac-magazine/features/friendship-quilts-gift-remembrance.

Resources

The Lace Museum, thelacemuseum.org.

Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum, pphmuseum.org.

Sam Noble Museum, University of Oklahoma, samnoblemuseum.ou.edu.

CAROL J. SULCOSKI is a knitting author, designer, and teacher. She has written seven knitting books, including *Knitting Ephemera* (Sixth & Spring Books, 2016), which is full of knitting facts, history, and trivia. Her articles have appeared in *Vogue Knitting, Modern Daily Knitting,* and *Noro Magazine,* on the Craft Industry Alliance website, and elsewhere. She lives outside Philadelphia and teaches at knitting events, knitting shops, and guilds. Her website is blackbunnyfibers.com.

Ganseys in Wonderland

A Journey to the Sheringham Museum

LINDA M. PERRY



Sheringham fishermen from three boats pose for a studio portrait at a pop-up photography studio in nearby Grimsby adorned in their handknitted ganseys. *All photos courtesy of the Sheringham Museum Trust*

I have a love affair with ganseys, those traditional handknitted, motif-textured fishermen's sweaters. The affair started innocently over a year ago, when I checked out the used books for sale at my local library. Huddled together at the end of a shelf were three worn but wonderful gansey knitting books. I snatched them up immediately, and that is what started me down a deep rabbit hole. I have enjoyed every minute, every stitch of it.

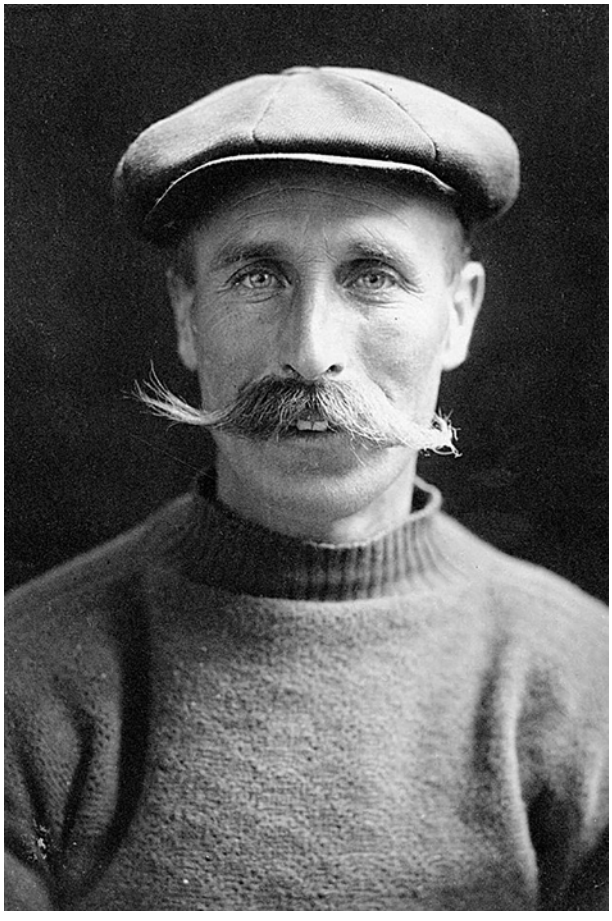
I continued to collect more books, all feeding my desire to learn about the folklore and variety of pattern stitches of a British knitting tradition from over one hundred years ago. With pattern books as inspiration, I designed and knitted nine gansey sweaters in a nine-month frenzy.

THE MUSEUM

Books were just a gateway tonic. The next step was to scour the internet for additional resources. Information came from a variety of sites, and when I came across the Sheringham Museum's site, I was lured in by the historical lore. The current museum,

in the town of Sheringham on England's Norfolk coast, opened in 2010 to rehouse an expanding collection that was previously displayed in fishermen's cottages tucked behind the main street. Today, the museum has many significant specimens of the century-old ganseys on display and in its archives.

One special segment of its website contains a depository of gansey stitch designs as cataloged by the late researcher Martin Warren. This collection has a few dozen historical examples of fishermen ganseys, complete with photographs of the fishermen modeling their sweaters. The vintage photographs reveal the character of some of the fishermen. Perhaps it was this motley crew of men that further captivated my heart and soul. As I added to my swatching regimen, I studied and copied the actual stitch graphs next to each personality. Invariably, I ended my sessions by scrolling back to "Toofie" Farrow's picture. I confess to spending some very meaningful and meditative moments staring at Mr. Farrow. In looking at him, I felt the presence of my great-grandfather MacGregor of that same time, an immigrant to America from Aberdeen, Scotland. Thinking about his piercing yet kindly blue eyes, the calm of his deep brogue, and the mellow scent of his pipe invoked sweet memories. I would close my computer, always with a tight throat and never a dry eye.

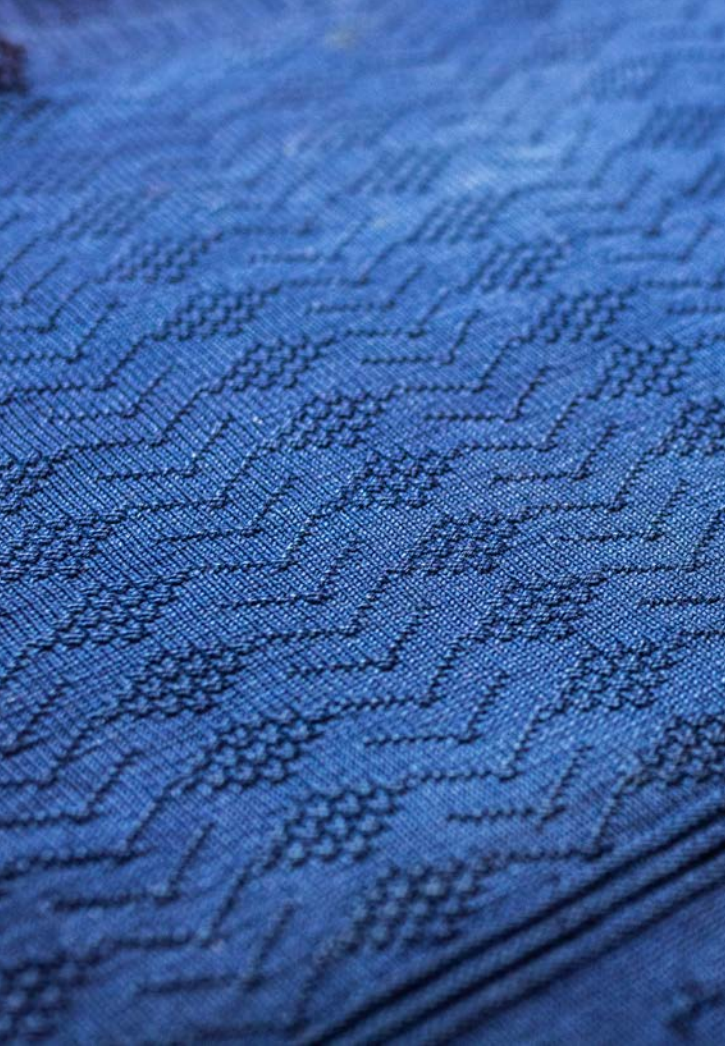


Sheringham fisherman "Toofie" Farrow wearing a plain gansey (slightly felted, with an echo of a net mask pattern), circa 1905. This is part of the Martin Warren inventory. *Photo by Olive Edis*

The Gansey

It is helpful to understand the context and backstory of gansey sweaters to fully appreciate the significance of these woolly gems found in the archives at the Sheringham Museum. Historically, fishing has always been an important industry in the British Isles. A fisherman's family often had hard times economically, as the catch was unpredictable and inclement weather made sailing dangerous. Women and young girls knitted to supplement the family income as well as clothe their loved ones. The gansey was a most practical garment. The dense knitting (10 to 12 stitches per inch) made a somewhat water-resistant garment that shielded against the cold winds. The sweater design also put function before fashion. It was close-fitting to enable the fishermen to work without bulky restrictions on movements, the sleeves were made shorter so that the cuffs could be free from net and rigging interference and soiling, and the sweater length was just above the waist to accommodate their oilskin overalls. Ganseys were traditionally knitted with the fronts and backs the same, so with signs of wear and tear, the sweater could be rotated. The yoke and a portion of the upper sleeves had motifs composed of knit and purl combinations. These textural designs helped create small pockets of trapped air for additional insulation. Stitch motifs were original to each family and each community. There were no written knitting patterns at the time, so designs were passed down from memory by generations of knitters. This emphasized familial identity, was a source of pride, and created a sense of belonging in one's village.

The fishing industry experienced a boom in the mid- to late 1800s and into the early 1900s all along



Detail of a gansey in the Sheringham collection.

the British coasts. Fishermen, accompanied by thousands of support workers, followed the migrating herring. It was quite a phenomenon to see bands of Scottish lassies making their way down the coasts from Lerwick, Scotland, to Lowestoft, England, taking over the fishing piers as they gutted and packed the fish. These hardworking "gutter quines" found time to knit when off duty. The townspeople were in awe of their knitting obsession. It is no wonder that the diversity of motifs made its way around the coasts as locals copied many of the designs or improvised to elaborate on their familiar repertoire. The town of Sheringham, England, gained a reputation for the finest ganseys during this era.

The Journey

My next plan was to visit the museum to explore the gansey collection in person. I hoped this bucket-list trip would finally satisfy my gansey quest. I was able to network from across the pond and secured a date

Meeting the Sheringham Gansey

With the input of the Museum's gansey group, I learned about specific Sheringham gansey characteristics and design components that were particularly clever and purposeful from a construction standpoint.

Yarn: The yarn is tightly spun, five-ply or even six-ply, and 100% wool. When knitted, it produced a firm fabric that was nearly water-repellent and windproof. Most ganseys displayed were navy blue, very typical of the era.

Lack of seams: Most ganseys were knitted in the round, so there was no need for side seams, and the stitches were straightforward stockinette up to the sleeves. Structurally, this gave a durable body area without possible weakness of seams. It was common practice to put a couple of purl stitches on opposite sides. Perhaps this was to indicate to the knitter where the sides needed to be divided for the sleeves and yoke, or maybe it was an aesthetic factor carried over from woven garments.

The gussets: Diamond-shaped underarm additions were worked in increases and decreases at the juncture of the body and sleeve. This gave extra ease for movement, sturdier fabric, and less stress at the armhole.

The yoke area: This is where the motif patterns start and is a signature of Sheringham ganseys. (Fishing communities in other geographic areas had different variations.) Knitting at the yoke ceases to be circular. The back and forth knitted construction is dense and thus affords further warmth around the shoulder area. It was particularly exciting for me to see the many stitch motifs of the collection, which signified aspects of the fisherfolks' lives in the Sheringham district. Symbolic motifs included crab pots, herringbones, nautical flags, the basketweave pattern similar to that in the handwoven fishing creels, and filler stitches such as the rice stitch that resembles fish scales. The sleeves were added by picking up stitches around the armscye with repeats of the yoke motifs on the upper sleeve.

The bottom edge (also called the welt) and the cuffs: This section was knitted in ribbing, often 2x2 rib. This made the edges flat, strong, and stable while creating flexible fabric. Often, there were initials above the welt for the purpose of identification.

Physically touching and viewing these artifacts, which were made over a century ago, was the highlight of my journey.



A display of the child-size museum ganseys, all miniature replicas of some of the archived ganseys and charted patterns of the East Anglia Gansey Group Collection.

to meet the dedicated gansey gals at the Sheringham Museum. I booked my trip, lucky that the timing coincided with the famous Shetland Wool Week. After 10 days in Scotland, including the adrenaline-filled days in Lerwick, Shetland, I continued down the east coast of Scotland and finally landed in East Anglia on the northeast coast of England, where the Sheringham Museum awaited. At one point, as I was gazing out the train window, I caught my reflection and thought to myself, "This is a looking-glass moment." Surely, this was the same route that the Scottish fisher lassies took over a century earlier.

I disembarked from the train in Sheringham on a bright and cheery day, cool enough for donning a gansey yet warm enough to enjoy the salty atmosphere of the charming seaside. On the promenade, I passed an abundance of shops, murals, and eateries before I saw the unmistakable nautical-inspired architecture of the Sheringham Museum looming at the foot of the hill. Inside the Museum, lifeboats, fishing boats, a semblance of a fisherman's cottage, a boat-building gallery, a geology gallery, and a section on social history told the village history.

The Meeting

Ruth Yates, trustee and chair of the Sheringham Museum, met me as I entered and welcomed me into a meeting with four volunteers. I immediately recognized their attire: each wore a gansey, all different and all impeccably handknitted. It was a true testament to their dedication to the gansey endeavor. I couldn't wait to hear about their knitting expertise and experiences. We had a general discussion, and one of my lasting impressions was that they all agreed there is no one absolute way to design a gansey. Straying from the protocol is acceptable, and creative license encourages the art of the craft. As they paraded sweaters from the archives, purple nitrile gloves in hand, I knew I was about to experience a wonderland in wool.

My immediate impression of the ganseys was that they were extremely dense and compact; after all, they were knitted on needles the size of thin wire. This reinforced my former mindset that ganseys were indeed made for practical reasons. The sweaters were also in very good condition, considering most were made (and worn) a hundred years ago. Many of the specimens were made by local knitters of the time, so there was



The "Gansey of Inclusivity" is a nod to the LGBTQ+ community in the form of an oversized gansey. Curator Lisa Little designed the actual gansey pattern shape and knitted the yoke and sleeves. David Shenton knitted the colorwork sections.

a story and direct connection to the Sheringham legacy. It was obvious that hours went into knitting each one, often in the dark of night, as there was no electricity. Or they were knitted between doing chores, walking on errands, and childcare. I could even sense the fishermen themselves with their toils and tribulations on the dangerous seas, and an essence of the salty seas seemed to permeate the garments.

Lisa Little, textile curator and manager, arrived and suggested a tour of the museum. In addition to all of the things in Sheringham's nautical history, I witnessed even more tantalizing textile attractions, including a colorful exhibit of child-size ganseys, all knitted by volunteers. They hung from above as on a clothesline on a busy washday. The "Gansey of Inclusivity," a gigantic sweater designed and handknitted by Lisa Little and the local famed cartoonist David Shenton, was suspended from the ceiling. In awe, I thought it could literally fit over a Volkswagen bug.

As the day drew to a close, I was presented with yet another treasure—trays of vintage knitting sheaths. Knitting belts and sheaths were used to support a knitting needle for ease in manipulation while knitting. The tools were remarkable for their beauty and craftsmanship. Some were handcarved, others decorated with painted insignias. They were often made by a knitter's partner and given as a betrothal gift. Altogether, it was a meaningful collection of treasured pieces. Perhaps yet another rabbit hole? I'm all in! ❖

Resources

The East Anglia Gansey Group (EAGG) on Facebook, originally part of the Sheringham Museum Textile Team, is dedicated to researching, recording, and promoting the gansey legacy; Jan Whitehead, administrator.

The Lowestoft Gansey Project Facebook page maintains a list of gansey-related events and activities in the area; Jan Whitehead, administrator.

Sheringham Museum, sheringhammuseum.co.uk.

Taylor, Rita, Lesley Lougher, Jan Hillier, Ken Holloway, and Martin Warren. *Sheringham Ganseys: People, Places, Patterns.* Sheringham, England: Sheringham Museum Norfolk Trust, 2025.

LINDA M. PERRY has been a lifelong knitter and is a recent devotee of ganseys. With degrees in textiles and design, she taught in higher education for decades and now resides in Damariscotta, Maine. Her daily mantra is "No Idle Hands." Her sincere appreciation goes to all those who were so knowledgeable, hospitable, and generous with their time and expertise, especially Ruth Yates, Rita Taylor, Judy Capon, Heather Oliver, and Lisa Little. One of Linda's favorite memories is sitting with Sheringham volunteers who never had idle hands and were always knitting and working on their current gansey projects.



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Knitted Warmth from Sheringham

A Gansey Sampler Throw

LINDA M. PERRY

The traditional fisherman gansey has existed for more than two hundred years, yet only in the late 1960s were patterns written. Fortunately, examples of the hardy sweater survived, enough to translate and document the many various motifs.

The original gansey design had a square silhouette and was close-fitting and short-waisted. The sweaters were densely knitted in the round to the armholes, then back and forth for front and back yokes, and had underarm gussets, no seams, and shortened sleeve lengths. A visually exquisite array of knit and purl stitches adorned the yokes and the upper sleeves. These designs provided warmth due to the raised-stitch combinations that trapped the air for insulation. Initials were often knitted above the bottom ribbing welt for identification purposes.



The section of the gansey throw with Marriage Lines and Half Flag stitch motifs. *Photos by Matt Graves*

The stitch motifs are a study in design. Fishermen identified closely with their respective fishing villages, and symbolism, superstitions, and beliefs all factored into the stitch designs.

Examples of popular motifs include everyday objects in their lives: ropes, nets, anchors, herringbones, shells, the steps from the shore to the village quay, lighthouses, wavy shapes of the seas, and zigzags of lightning. A common motif is called "marriage lines," denoting the ups and downs of married life.

This small sampler throw gives an opportunity to try out 10 gansey stitch motifs, simple in stitch yet rich in textural dimension and deep in symbolic meaning. The classic patterns are charted, and the borders provide a "frame" for the sampler. The result is a cozy, hard-wearing, attractive work of art. Wrap yourself in history.

MATERIALS

- Frangipani *5-ply Guernsey Wool* (100% pure British wool), 1,200 yd (1,097 m)/17.6 oz (500 g) cone: 1 cone of Denim
- Needles: size 3 (3.25 mm) 24" (60 cm) circular (cir) or size needed to obtain gauge (see Notes)
- 2 stitch markers
- Tapestry needle

Gauge: About 22 to 24 sts and 32 to 40 rows = 4" (10.2 cm), depending on stitch pattern, after blocking.
Finished Size: about 27" (68.6 cm) wide and 47" (119.4 cm) long.

Visit pieceworkmagazine.com/abbreviations for terms you don't know.

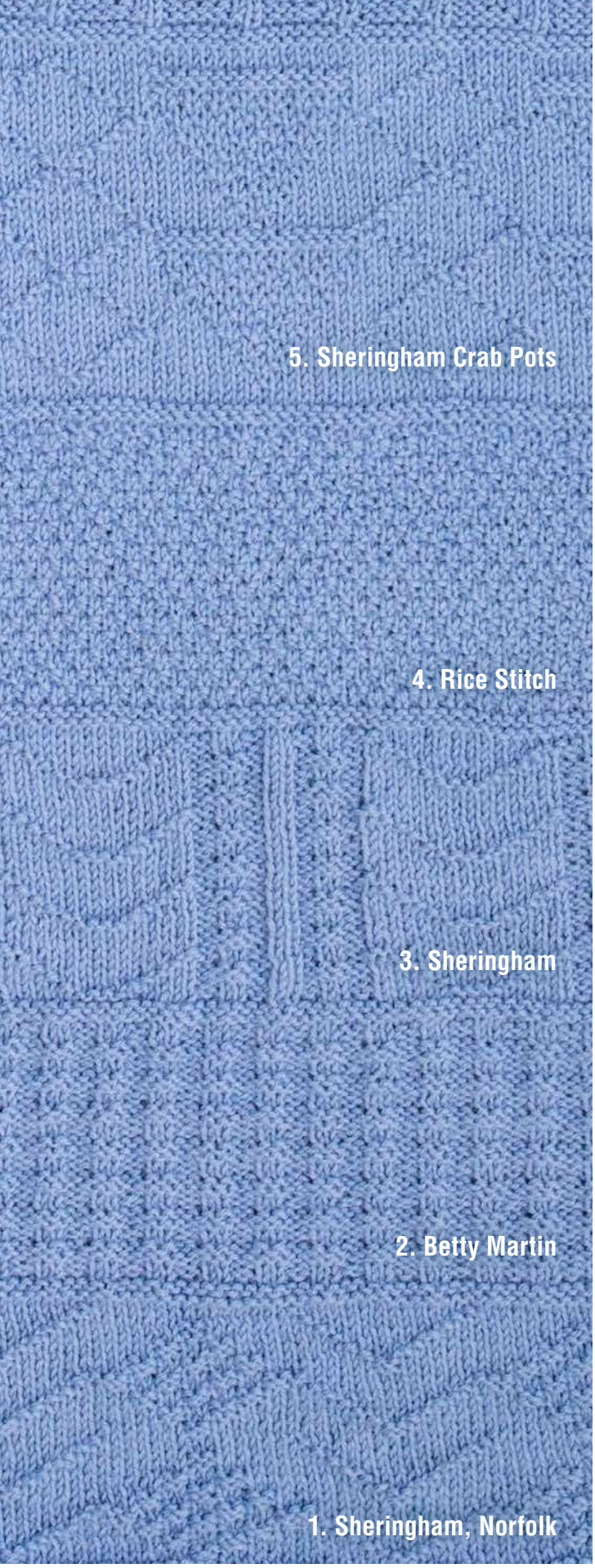
NOTES

Choose a needle size that creates a compact fabric and shows off the raised-stitch definition.

Frangipani is the iconic gansey go-to yarn with all the characteristics necessary to make the traditional, durable sweater. It is tightly spun, is easy to knit with, and gives great stitch definition, essential for clarity of the stitch patterns. I have experimented with other sportweight yarns readily available in the United States. They are a bit more loosely spun and have more drape, while still being very warm and



Ten gansey stitch motifs come together in the Sheringham Gansey Sampler Throw, a loving tribute to a seaside tradition.



The ten stitch motifs.

hard-wearing. I refer to them as my "American Rebel yarns":

- Brown Sheep Company *Top of the Lamb Sport* (100% wool), 350 yd (320 m)/4 oz (113.4 g) skein or 1,400 yd (1280 m)/lb (453.6 g) cone
- Harrisville Designs *Shetland* (100% wool), 217 yd (198.4 m)/1.75 oz (50 g) skein or unwashed 900 yd (823 m)/8 oz (226.8 g) cone

While the historical gansey sweaters were typically made in handsome deep-blue shades representing the sea and the sky, I suggest using lighter shades. The darker colors tend to conceal the stitch patterns. I often choose unconventional, fun colors such as goldenrod, violet, terracotta, ruby red, pink, and blue-greens as well as cream and neutrals. I do not suggest using heathers. Green was historically a taboo color for ganseys, due to superstitions of bad luck. However, if you don't have a boat, or if you do and have no worries about it sinking, by all means, go for the green!

This project can be easily converted to a scarf or shawl. The widest patterns have a 28-stitch repeat, so for a scarf, cast on 56 stitches; for a shawl, cast on 84 stitches; and add the garter-stitch borders if desired. For good proportions, reduce the height of the panels to about 2" (5.1 cm). Repeat panels as desired for a total of 20 or more panels. A narrower scarf or shawl may need less yarn than the blanket, depending on length.

Gansey Sampler Throw

Lower Border

CO 150 sts.

Knit 8 rows.

Next row (RS): K5, pm, knit to last 5 sts, pm, k5.

Next row (WS): K5, sl m, purl to last 5 sts, sl m, k5—piece measures about 1" (2.5 cm).

Note: Cont to knit the first and last 5 sts of all following rows for the garter-stitch side borders, and work the charted pattern for each panel over the center 140 stitches.

Panel 1: Sheringham, Norfolk

Work Rows 1–16 of Sheringham, Norfolk chart twice—32 pattern rows total; panel measures 3½" (8.9 cm) from end of lower border.

Welt Band

This 4-row band is worked between the panels to separate the stitch patterns. The first 3 rows create a

reverse-stockinette welt on the RS of the fabric, and the 4th row is purled across the center stitches on the WS to set up for the next panel.

Row 1 (RS): Knit.

Row 2 (WS): Knit.

Row 3: K5, sl m, purl to last 5 sts, sl m, k5.

Row 4: K5, sl m, purl to last 5 sts, sl m, k5—welt band measures about ½" (1.3 cm) high.

Panel 2: Betty Martin

Work Rows 1–4 of Betty Martin chart 7 times, then work Rows 1 and 2 once more—30 pattern rows total; panel measures about 3½" (8.9 cm) from previous welt band.

Welt Band

Work Rows 1–4.

Panel 3: Sheringham

Work Rows 1–8 of Sheringham chart 3 times, then work Rows 1–6 once more—30 pattern rows total; panel measures about 3¾" (9.5 cm) from previous welt band.

Welt Band

Work Rows 1–4.

Panel 4: Rice Stitch

Work Rows 1–4 of Rice Stitch chart 8 times—32 pattern rows total; panel measures about 3¾" (9.5 cm) from previous welt band.

Welt Band

Work Rows 1–4.

Panel 5: Sheringham Crab Pots

Work Rows 1–40 of Sheringham Crab Pots chart—panel measures about 4¾" (12.1 cm) from previous welt band.

Welt Band

Work Rows 1–4.

Panel 6: Half Flag

Work Rows 1–6 of Half Flag chart 6 times—36 pattern rows total; panel measures about 4¼" (10.8 cm) from previous welt band.

Welt Band

Work Rows 1–4.

Panel 7: Marriage Lines

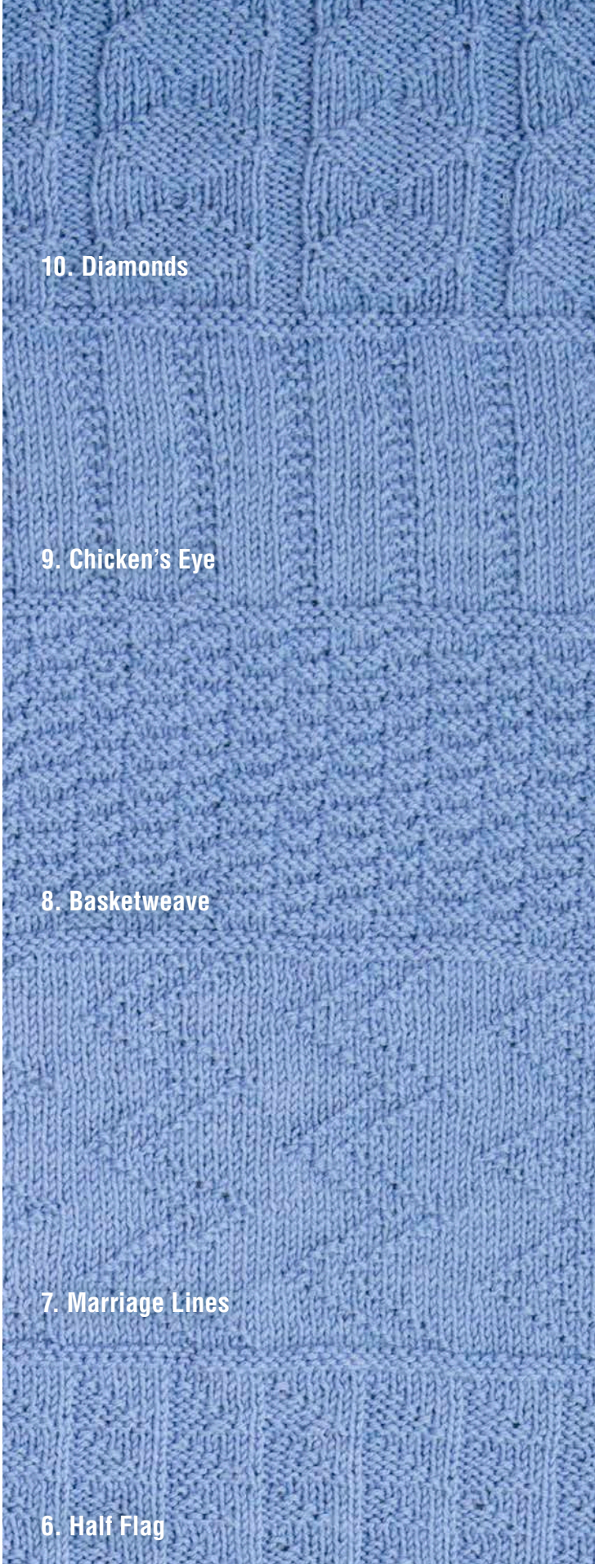
Work Rows 1–14 of Marriage Lines chart 3 times—42 pattern rows total; panel measures about 5" (12.7 cm) from previous welt band.

Welt Band

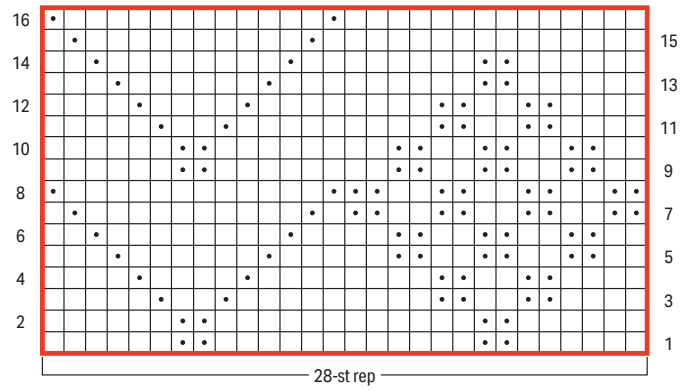
Work Rows 1–4.

Panel 8: Basketweave

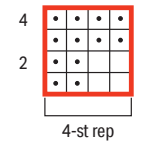
Work Rows 1–4 of Basketweave chart 9 times, then work Rows 1 and 2 once more—38 pattern rows



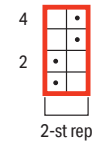
Panel 1: Sheringham, Norfolk

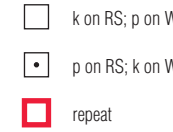


Panel 2: Betty Martin

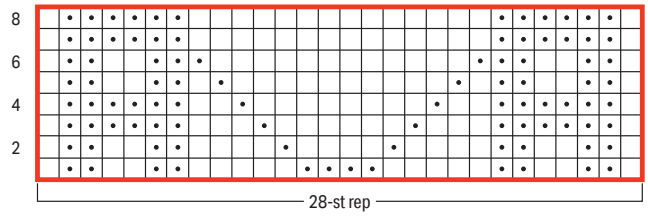


Panel 4: Rice Stitch

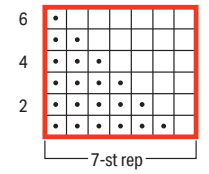




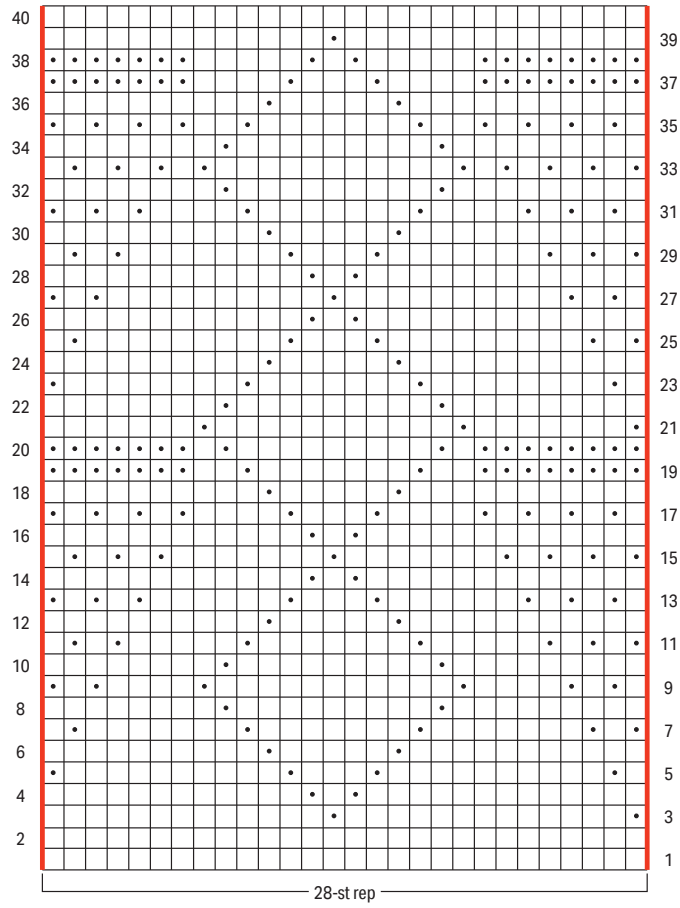
Panel 3: Sheringham



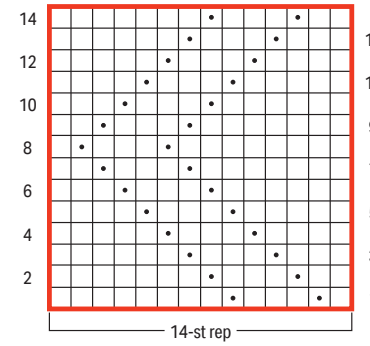
Panel 6: Half Flag



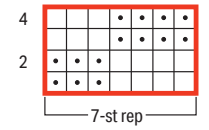
Panel 5: Sheringham Crab Pots



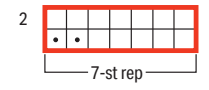
Panel 7: Marriage Lines



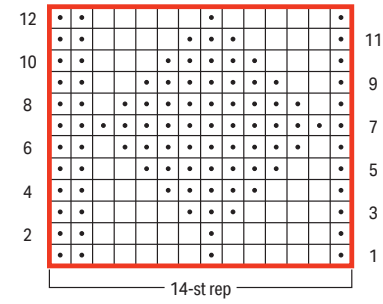
Panel 8: Basketweave



Panel 9: Chicken's Eye



Panel 10: Diamonds



Fishermen identified closely with their respective fishing villages, and symbolism, superstitions, and beliefs all factored into the stitch designs.



The edge of the gansey throw highlighting the Sheringham, Norfolk, and Betty Martin motifs.

total; panel measures about 4" (10.2 cm) from previous welt band.

Welt Band

Work Rows 1–4.

Panel 9: Chicken's Eye

Work Rows 1 and 2 of Chicken's Eye chart 14 times—28 pattern rows total; panel measures about 3½" (8.9 cm) from previous welt band.

Welt Band

Work Rows 1–4.

Panel 10: Diamonds

Work Rows 1–12 of Diamonds chart 3 times—36 pattern rows total; panel measures about 4¼" (10.8 cm) from previous welt band.

Upper Border

Next row (RS): K5, sl m, knit to last 5 sts, sl m, k5.

Next row (WS): K5, sl m, purl to last 5 sts, sl m, k5.

Knit 8 rows—upper border measures about 1" (2.5 cm).

BO all sts.

FINISHING

Weave in ends.

Wet-block according to your preferred method, pinning the sides as straight as possible to even out any differences in the panel widths. ❖

LINDA M. PERRY has been a lifelong knitter and is a recent devotee of ganseys. With degrees in textiles and design, she taught in higher education for decades and now resides in Damariscotta, Maine.

Threads of Humanity

Three Remarkable Items from the Textile Collection of the British Red Cross Museum

ERIKA ZAMBELLO

For more than a century and a half, the British Red Cross has stood at the front lines of humanity's darkest and most defining moments, offering care, dignity, and hope to people in crisis. Its museum and archives extend that mission by preserving the objects and stories left behind—fragile textiles, handmade dolls, and stitched messages that reveal how ordinary people endured extraordinary circumstances.

The British Red Cross and Its Museum

A nonprofit organization with a tremendous legacy, the British Red Cross has "been here for people in crisis, no matter who or where they are."[1] The organization operates humanitarian and social services programs not only in the United Kingdom but also around the world. In 2024, it supported 5.2 million people worldwide and 11,000 people in emergency situations, and its experts traveled to 14 countries 34 times to provide humanitarian aid and offer their skills.

"At the British Red Cross Museum and Archives, our aim is to bring over 150 years of humanitarian work to life," explains Mehzebin Adam-Suter, British Red Cross Museum Curator.[2] "We want visitors to leave with a sense of resilience, compassion, and an understanding of the scale of the effort behind this history. We collect, preserve, and share stories from conflicts and disasters, and we hope people come away seeing how humanitarian work has changed over time and feeling inspired by stories of hope and resilience." The museum has permanent and seasonal exhibits exploring the organization's efforts, as well as an online collection.

The textiles on display and in the archives tell remarkable stories of courageous people during global conflict. Three in particular exemplify the importance of sharing these everyday items now and in the future.

Bergen-Belsen Dolls

In one display case at the museum, viewers can look at a small doll, clothed in a blue-and-white striped dress and a purple/gray headscarf. Her eyes are bright blue, and she appears to be smiling—an expression nearly impossible to believe when learning about her provenance.

Stitched in 1945, the doll comes from the hands of a survivor of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, liberated at the end of World War II. Bergen-Belsen was established in 1940 for prisoners of war and then turned into a concentration camp in 1943. Thousands perished at this horrific site. Of the thousands who survived Bergen-Belsen, many had to remain at the displaced-persons camp for more than a year after the war ended to grow stronger and wait for opportunities for resettlement.

It's hard to imagine life for newly liberated prisoners, and harder still to imagine them making dolls from the very prison uniforms they once wore. Still, the goal of making the dolls was to begin art therapy for the shattered survivors, so that they spent time productively as they waited to leave. "Enforced idleness was demoralising to people recovering from sickness and starvation," Lucy Adlington writes in *Four Red Sweaters: Powerful True Stories of Women and the Holocaust*. "Handiwork became a form of therapy."[3]

Adam-Suter explains that several of the dolls in the museum's collection were originally given to Enid Fordham, who joined the British Red Cross in April 1945 and was immediately deployed to Bergen-Belsen, where she worked for 16 months. According to the museum archives, Fordham recorded the immense suffering she witnessed at Bergen-Belsen in her diary: "There were 60,000 bodies there—living and dead. About a hundred a day were dying, and for a time they all had to be put into an empty swimming pool to be later taken away for burial. . . . The people were suffering from all kinds of diseases—and starvation."

Fordham kept the dolls for many years and later donated them to the museum so their stories would not be lost.

It's hard to imagine life for newly liberated prisoners, and harder still to imagine them making dolls from the very prison uniforms they once wore.



Freed prisoners made dolls as part of art therapy after the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was liberated following World War II. The dolls were given to nurse Enid Fordham as a thank-you for her efforts, and she later donated them to the British Red Cross. *All photos courtesy of the British Red Cross Museum*

Adam-Suter speaks to the impact one doll has on visitors:

> The striped fabric immediately reminds people of a horrific period in history, yet the doll also represents hope and survival. It shows the strength and resilience of the human spirit, even in the darkest circumstances. I am very drawn to creative objects like these. During the Second World War, prisoners of war and civilians in captivity often used materials from food parcels to make practical items or detailed works of art. These objects show resourcefulness and creativity, and they are strong reminders of how people held on to their identity and dignity during wartime.

Changi Quilt

In 1942, on the other side of the world, the Japanese invaded Singapore and imprisoned more than 3,000 civilians and over 50,000 Allied soldiers in the city of Changi. Of those inmates, 500 were women with their children.

While imprisoned in difficult conditions, the women turned to needlework, not only to pass the time but also to communicate with husbands and family members who lived separately on the men's side of the camp. A quilt stitched in the prison camp and given to the military hospital is now in the Red Cross Museum's collection.

"The Changi Quilt is another powerful example in our collection," says Adam-Suter, explaining that the idea for the quilts came from Ethel Mulvany, a Canadian internee and Red Cross representative, who encouraged the women to create patchwork squares, each adding something personal. "This helped relieve boredom and kept morale up. For women whose husbands and family members were held separately, the quilts became a way to send news that they had survived. A gift to a humanitarian organization appeared harmless to Japanese authorities, which meant the quilts could pass inspection and carry these important messages."

The quilt is made with 66 squares, each one representing the individual maker with her embroidered



Each square of the Changi quilt was stitched by a prisoner in 1942 during the first six months of internment at a prison in Changi, Singapore. According to the British Red Cross Museum website, "A small, embroidered message was attached to the rear stating that it was to be passed to a Red Cross Society at the cessation of hostilities."

name. The quilt includes embroidered flowers, animals, silhouettes of people, and encouraging phrases, such as "Hope Springs Eternal."

Women made three quilts in the Changi jail. Adam-Suter notes that pieces such as these highlight the human ability to express compassion, resistance, and imagination in the most difficult situations. Donating the quilts to the British Red Cross after the war ensured that their stories would be preserved for generations to come, "which shows the trust people placed in the organization and their wish that these experiences would not be forgotten."



A small woolen doll made by members of the Canadian Red Cross, Vancouver Prisoner of War Branch, as part of a fundraiser. It sold for 50 cents and included a pin on the back so it could be worn as a brooch.

World War I Wool Dolls of the Vancouver Prisoner of War Branch

The British Red Cross Museum's collection includes multiple woolen dolls created by the Canadian Red Cross during World War I. Volunteers for the Vancouver Prisoner of War Branch focused on supporting Canadian soldiers captured in Europe and made these small dolls for fundraising purposes to benefit the Canadian Red Cross. The dolls were meant to resemble individuals from different nations in the Allied forces. One is an Australian soldier riding a camel; another is a Russian Cossack, complete with snowshoes; still another is a sailor; and another is outfitted like a British soldier. King George V and Queen Mary also make an appearance in the collection. According to museum records, the dolls were sold for 25 cents to $1 apiece. Selling the dolls not only raised funds, but making them also provided a creative outlet for worried volunteers at home and was meant to boost morale. "They are simple pieces, but they show how communities found ways to help even from far away," Adam-Suter adds.

Reflections

Textiles are often lost to time. They ravel, become misplaced, are stained, or they, quite literally, dissolve. And yet, they are a tender part of our history. Museums run by organizations such as the British Red Cross not only preserve the physical objects themselves, increasing their longevity, but they also create and share a digital archive for those of us who want to connect to people across the world and from centuries or millennia past. I accessed the Museum's archive from where I live and work in Florida. And yet, I could see in beautiful, close-up detail, what other people have crafted to make a difference in their lives and in the lives of those around them.

The British Red Cross Museum and Archives preserve a legacy of human kindness and ingenuity in times of conflict. Everyday items, on display today, tie our humanity together, past and present, and are critical to understanding how textiles have influenced both survival and rebuilding. ❖

Notes

1. "About the British Red Cross," redcross.org.uk/about-us.
2. Email interview with British Red Cross Museum curator Mehzebin Adam-Suter, December 8, 2025.
3. Lucy Adlington, *Four Red Sweaters: Powerful True Stories of Women and the Holocaust* (New York: Harper, 2025), 246–47.

Resources

British Red Cross Museum and Archives, museumandarchives.redcross.org.uk/explore.

ERIKA ZAMBELLO is a writer, artist, and communications specialist living in north Florida. She loves writing about all things fiber for *PieceWork, Spin Off, Farm & Fiber Knits, Cast On,* and more. She publishes nature books with AdventureKEEN and is excited about her children's book, *ABCs of Maine*, coming soon from Islandport Press.



Karelian traditional dress displayed in a permanent exhibition at the Craft Museum of Finland.
All photos by and courtesy of the Craft Museum of Finland unless otherwise noted

Where Tradition Meets Design

The Craft Museum of Finland

MARI VOIPIO

Suomen käsityön museo, the Craft Museum of Finland, is hidden behind an unassuming façade on a pedestrian street in Jyväskylä, central Finland. Housed in a former bank building, it surprises visitors with a wealth of unexpected delights, captivating crafters and noncrafters alike. The museum highlights handcraft as a profession, art form, and hobby, offering interactive activities. It also features permanent and temporary exhibitions focused on crafting and Finnish textile culture. Its mission is to support and interpret handmade Finnish craft for professionals and hobbyists, sharing stories rather than displaying many antiques. It also houses *Suomen kansallispukukeskus*, the National Costume Center of Finland, which preserves Finnish national costume traditions. The Conservation Center, part of the museum but located elsewhere in Jyväskylä, conserves valuable textiles and provides specialist advice.

Two modern permanent exhibitions opened in the basement of the museum in June 2025: *Craftstories—Tales of Finnish Skill* and *A Timeless Tradition—Finnish National Costume.*

CRAFTSTORIES

This exhibition introduces you to a range of Finnish craftsmanship traditions while also making you think of your own crafting traditions. Displays of various craft materials such as wool, straw, birch bark, metal, wood, and clay encourage a focus on sustainability. Visitors can also explore how an idea can be inspired by nature, history, art, or trends, browse additional information and ideas on the interactive screens, and watch short films of crafters working. *Craftstories* provides interactive activities for young visitors who will also be entertained with an enticing

tunnel shortcut through the wall that will only accommodate small, nimble visitors. Museum guests are encouraged to save some time for the experimentation area, contribute to a new rag rug on the loom, and sign the guest book.

A Timeless Tradition

In this exhibition, you will see the variation in Finnish national costumes from the western and the eastern traditions. The border between the western-style Finnish and the eastern-influenced Karelian dress areas was not clear-cut but was located roughly where the eastern border of Finland is today. Western Karelia was traditionally a province of Finland. In 1944, Karelia was ceded to the Soviet Union, and 400,000 displaced Finnish Karelians were resettled in the remaining Finland. The Karelian diaspora carries on the traditions even today. This border is also where the church of the West and the church of the East originally met almost a thousand years ago, and the Karelian national costumes especially show variation related

The Making of a National Craft Museum

In December 1888, the Imperial Senate within the Grand Duchy of Finland (an autonomous state within the Russian Empire until 1917) ordered "that an allowance be granted for the operation of a handicraft museum beginning in 1890. The resulting museum operated under the Society of Industrial Art and was located at the Museum of Art and Design (operating today as the Design Museum)." From 1908 to 1926, the museum was known as the State Handicraft Museum. It stayed in Helsinki until 1933, when its collections were placed into storage for nearly 50 years. It was reestablished in Jyväskylä in 1982 and opened to the public in 1983. In 1992, the National Costume Center joined, followed by the Conservation Center in 1995. The museum received its current name in 1997 and moved to its present location in 2000.



Finnish national costumes in the *Timeless Tradition* display.





Top: Vihti national costume. *Bottom:* Detail of the fine metalwork on the Vihti silk cap. *Photo by the author*

to faith. In the exhibition, the Karelian costume mannequins are on the left, and the Finnish costume mannequins are in the middle and on the right. If the room is not crowded, you can step back and easily observe and compare these traditions.

There are fewer men's national costumes than women's, but some are on display here. Additional items hang between the mannequin groups, and the smaller display cases around the room highlight various costume features such as pockets and jewelry. The texts on the display cases are short, but laminated information sheets in Finnish and English provide additional information. The films and the interactive screens provide more information on the techniques used in these costumes as well as the past and present of the national costumes.

One purpose of the display is to place the national costumes and Finnish peasant ancestors in the wider European context. Finland, a Swedish province until 1809, was familiar with European fashions. Many of the western-style national costumes reflect late-eighteenth-century fashions with the combinations of skirt, bodice, and silk caps for women, and vest and breeches for men. A few costumes, such as the one from Loppi, are based on early-nineteenth-century fashions with high waists. If you are acquainted with textiles of that period in Western Europe or in the United States, the printed aprons in one of the display cases may feel familiar to you, as well as the silk kerchiefs and fine cotton aprons with woven-in sprigs. Even the colorful striped wool fabrics used for skirts, bodices, vests, and jackets have been influenced by the colorful handwoven worsted wools produced in England, especially Norwich, in the late eighteenth century.

Embroidery on National Costumes

I had the pleasure of closely examining two women's national costumes from two different traditions: Vihti and Kivennapa. The Vihti national costume is from a Finnish municipality in Uusimaa province, near the current capital of Helsinki. The Kivennapa costume is that of an eastern orthodox community on the Karelian isthmus. Today, the area is known as Pervomaskoye in Leningrad Oblast, roughly 37 miles (60 kilometers) northwest of St. Petersburg.

One misconception is that folk embroidery is always bold, colorful, and unrefined. It can be that as well, but much of the embroidery on these costumes is minuscule in scale and done with careful manipulation of stitches and fabric. I somewhat knew what to expect, but the skill of the makers rendered me almost speechless when I examined the pieces closely.



Vihti Costume: Metal on Silk and Subtle Whitework

Whoever stepped into church wearing the original Vihti silk cap must have held her head high. The purple silk is embroidered with multiple types of metalwork: wound metal thread, spangles, and carefully creased flat strips. Tiny tubes of wound metal thread secure the spangles; national costume consultant Taina Kangas told me that she usually winds them around a pin. The hard silk caps worn with lace underneath are a typical feature of many Finnish national costumes, but they are more commonly embroidered with silk or left unadorned. Often, the lace worn with the cap is bobbin lace, but other types of lace appear; the Vihti costume has a lace of hand-embroidered cotton tulle netting.

A less visible but quite common feature in Finnish folk dresses is counted whitework on the linen shirts. Drawn-thread decoration is quite common on collars and cuffs. In the Vihti shirt, a line of 2-millimeter-high ladder hemstitches at the fold of the cuff creates the tiniest picot edge with six picots per ⅜ of an inch (1 centimeter). The top of the cuff is decorated with *ronkkaus*, whipped running stitches in triangular shapes; one triangle is 5 millimeters wide. The shirt has similarly decorated shoulder patches with picots, ronkkaus, and a zigzag formed by minimal chain stitches.



Top: The *kostuli*, or summer jacket, features linen strips below the collar embellished with cross-stitch, satin stitch, and backstitch. *Photo by the author*
Bottom: The *rekko,* the front placket on a Karelian blouse.



The Karelian winter wool apron and its cross-stitched band. *Inset photo by the author*

Kivennapa Costume: Colorful Wool Embroidery

The blouse has a typical Karelian feature: *rekko*, a front placket that is closed with a silver brooch. Dense rows of counted running stitches cover minimal pleats in the fine linen fabric. The wool embroidery threads start and end on the left, creating a fringe. Additional embroidery can be added on top. The collar is embroidered in the same way, but on a straight piece of fabric that the final rows of embroidery force into the collar shape.

The unlined cotton-linen summer jacket, *kostuli*, has a similar collar. The front edges are decorated with linen strips embroidered with cross-stitches, satin stitch, and backstitch. One must get quite close to tell the difference between the stitches, as the cross-stitches are done over two threads in very fine



Karelian summer apron. *Inset photo by the author*

linen. The wool winter apron has a similar finely cross-stitched band between gold ribbons.

The white linen summer apron has Karelian-style *nyytinki* (bobbin lace) inserts and drawn-thread embroidery as well as additional details stitched free-hand with colorful wools. The apron is finished with a fringe of long linen thread.

The *sarkaviitta* is a winter jacket made from wadmal, a coarse undyed wool fabric. The jacket has a specific style of embroidery stitched in green, orange, and light-blue wool thread. Several of the strips, including the rust-colored loops, are couched. Most of the stitches used have no names, but the fan shapes surrounding the embroidery are known as "flies"; the type shown in the photo on page 34 is called "a fly with a neck" because the stitch that ties the bundle down in the middle is elongated.



Embellished front of the *sarkaviitta*, or winter jacket. The button placket is embroidered chamois. *Photo by the author*

The National Costume Center of Finland

The Finnish term *kansallispuku* refers to an officially registered national costume replicating regional traditional dress based on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century peasant festival clothing. Like Norway's *bunad*, the Finnish kansallispuku arose during a quest for national identity under foreign rule, hence the "national" prefix despite regional variations. The concept's symbolic origin dates to August 5, 1885, when eight women from various Finnish regions dressed in traditional attire and presented a rowing boat to Tsarina Maria Feodorovna, the Empress of Russia, in Lappeenranta, the present-day regional capital of South Karelia.

Existing clothing, written records, paintings, and photos are used when a new national costume goes through the strict approval process to be officially registered. The National Costume Center conducts research and provides education and guidance on the costumes of Finnish-speaking Finland, including the parts of Karelia relinquished to the Soviet Union in 1944, while the costumes of the Swedish-speaking villages on the coast and the Åland Islands are the responsibility of Brage r.f. in Helsinki. Brage r.f. is a registered nonprofit association that actively promotes the practice of Finnish-Swedish folk culture.

The National Costume Center is not open to the public, but you are welcome to ask for information and advice by email. Except at Christmas and in July, it is often possible to make an appointment to meet with the national costume experts at the center. The museum houses the library, but staff keep the model costumes that aren't on display in a separate warehouse, so you must schedule any costume viewing in advance.

Visiting the Museum and Viewing the Collections

It is possible to make a day trip to Jyväskylä from the Helsinki area by train or bus. The trip takes four hours each way, but there are direct connections throughout the day. By bus, you can also continue from Jyväskylä north to Oulu and Rovaniemi. The museum is located within a 10-minute walk from the travel center, and there are many shops and restaurants nearby. While most visitors to the museum are Finnish, international guests are warmly welcomed. Staff speak English and Finnish, and exhibition information is available in both languages. Guided tours and craft workshops in English can be arranged by advance booking. The shop sells only handmade items with an emphasis on sustainability, as well as craft-related books.

If you arrive before the museum opens, you can explore *Toivolan vanha piha*, a nineteenth-century-style quarter that hosts restaurants, workshops, and a yarn shop. Jyväskylä is also the home of many of the buildings designed by Alvar Aalto, the famous Finnish architect, including the Alvar Aalto Museum. ❖

Resources

Craft Museum of Finland, craftmuseum.fi.

The Craft Museum of Finland's online collections, skm.finna.fi. The user interface is available in English, but the object entries are written in Finnish. Don't hesitate to contact the museum if you find something you want more information about.

Jyväskylä, Finland, visitjyvaskyla.fi.

MARI VOIPIO credits her life-long interest in historical textiles to her mother and both grandmothers. She conducts research primarily to support her teaching; her current focus is on the folk textiles of preindustrial northern Europe. She wishes to thank the Craft Museum of Finland for the warm welcome and aid.

Karelian Double Run Scarf

Inspiration from the Craft Museum of Finland

MARI VOIPIO



Mari's gorgeous linen scarf in double running stitch draws inspiration from a Karelian design sample in the Craft Museum of Finland. Antique scissors and thimble courtesy of the Loveland Museum. *Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted*

The Karelian double running stitch embroidery and several other styles of colorful counted-thread embroidery were first described in writing by ethnologist Theodor Schvindt in 1894 and 1895 in his book *Suomalaisia koristeita (Finnish Ornaments)*. He traveled widely in Karelia and recorded the method of embroidering a multicolor pattern consisting of small squares on the diagonal, which was found on the headdresses of women who belonged to the Eastern Orthodox faith.

The Craft Museum of Finland holds an interesting collection of Karelian counted-thread embroidery samples that are said to be based on old Karelian textiles. The assumption is that they were embroidered by students and craft enthusiasts between 1890 and 1910 and were deposited in the newly reestablished Craft Museum of Finland in 1984. This scarf design is based on sample E0244/047, which I was allowed to examine. Both pattern elements can also be found in Schvindt's book. The original sample was stitched with cotton floss on a coarse linen embroidery fabric that closely matches 24-count linen fabric.

If you desire a crisp pattern, it is best to use Evenweave embroidery linen. If a long piece of suitable linen is not available, you can stitch the ends separately, hem all around, then whipstitch the pieces to a finished scarf body. I chose a light, flowing linen batiste fabric for my scarf and used soluble canvas to guide the stitching.

With folk embroidery, the color shades vary from piece to piece, but a red is a red, and a blue is a blue. I matched my floss to a photo I took at the museum, but I have stitched equally appealing practice samples in other deep blues and reds. The floss used must be colorfast because the scarf ultimately will be worn and washed.

Once you've learned how the stitching order proceeds, this style of stitching is not difficult. However, it is relatively slow because four stitching passes are required for each pattern. If the scarf is too large a project, a single red diamond with or without its blue corners can make a lovely coaster, sew-on patch, or pincushion.

Materials

- Light- to medium-weight fabric or premade scarf, 16" × 40"–70" (40 cm × 102–178 cm) and 14-count soluble or waste canvas
- Anchor *Stranded Cotton Mouliné* (100% cotton), 8.7 yd (8 m)/skein, red #00046 (3 skeins) and blue #01036 (2 skeins)



The original sample E0244/047 housed in the Craft Museum of Finland. *Photo courtesy of the Craft Museum of Finland*

- Needles: tapestry #24 and embroidery #8 or #9
- Needle threader (optional)
- Embroidery frame (size to accommodate entire design area), Q-snap (6" [15.2 cm] square), or hoop (6" [15.2 cm] diameter)
- Sewing thread: medium blue and white, 1 spool each
- Scissors: fabric and embroidery
- Fray Check or fabric glue (optional)

Design Size: 2½" × 12½" (6.4 × 31.8 cm)
Finished Scarf Size: 14" × 54½" (35.6 × 138.4 cm)

Instructions

Prewash the foundation fabric (unless already prewashed). Use cold to warm water and no-spin or very low-spin washer cycle, as linen can easily form permanent "wash creases." Iron the fabric while still damp. If cutting the scarf piece from a larger fabric piece, wash and iron first, then measure and cut.

Find the horizontal center of one end of the scarf fabric. Mark the vertical middle line of the scarf by running a single line of long running stitches with the blue sewing thread from one end to the other, carefully following the fabric threads. This ensures that the pattern is similarly centered at both ends. If using strips, mark their vertical centers.

If using soluble canvas, waste canvas, or linen as a stitching guide, measure and cut the pieces as needed. Place these auxiliary fabrics at each end of the scarf, 1½"–2" (4–5 cm) from the bottom edge, making sure the middle line marked on the scarf and the middle row of holes in the canvases or linen are aligned. Using the blue sewing thread, securely baste the canvas or linen to the scarf fabric, making sure the scarf fabric remains straight.

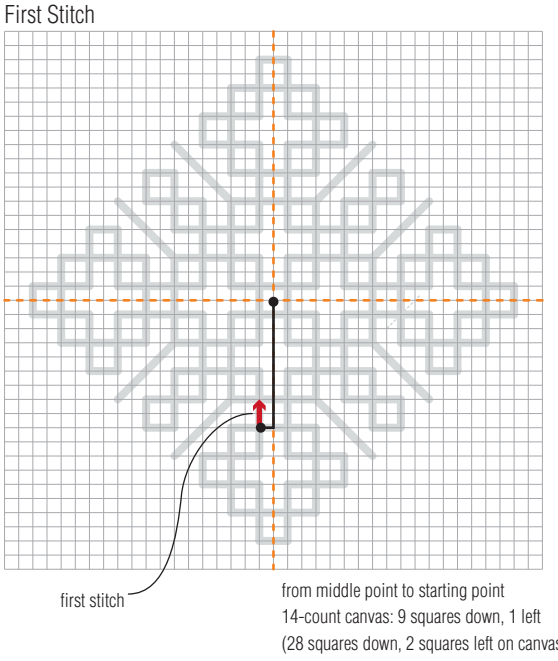
Note: All stitching is done using the stab stitch and four strands of floss over 2 squares of 14-count canvas. One square on the diagrams represents 2×2 squares. Cut the stitching thread 28"–30" (71–76 cm) in length to limit the number of stops and starts per motif. Strip the floss into individual strands and recombine into 4 strands.

The central square of the center diamond is the middle of the motif (Karelian Design chart). Follow the First Stitch diagram to find the starting point for

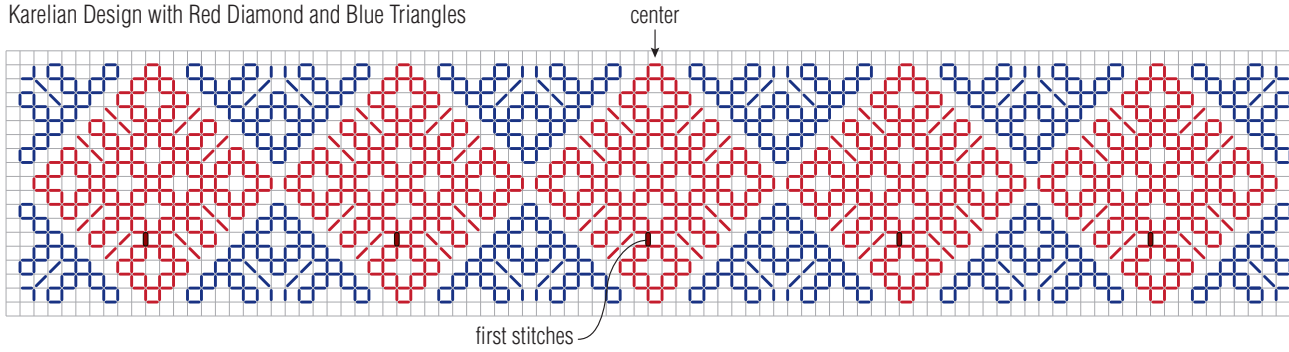


Four stitching passes are required for each pattern of the Red Diamond and Blue Triangles designs.

First Stitch

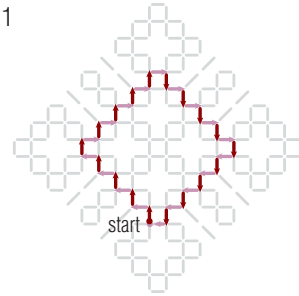


Karelian Design with Red Diamond and Blue Triangles



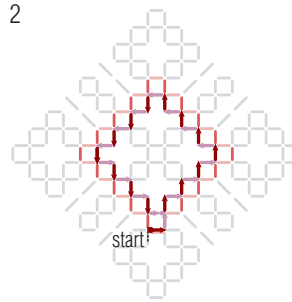
Red Diamond Motif
Steps 1–5 and Completed Motif

1



Stitch vertical stitches clockwise.

2

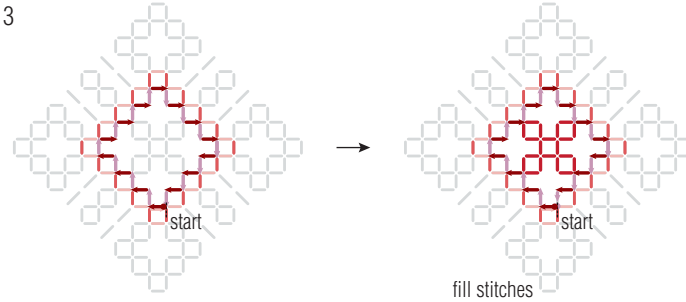


Reverse and stitch vertical stitches counterclockwise.

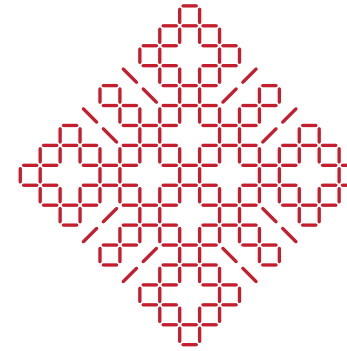
Key

- Current row, stitch on surface
- Current row, stitch on back
- Current row, fill stitch
- Previous row, stitch on surface
- Previous row, stitch on back
- Path of future stitch
- Path reversed from previous row

3

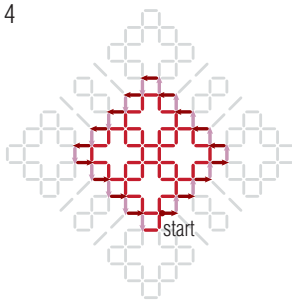


Reverse and stitch horizontal stitches clockwise, stitching the internal motif when it first occurs.



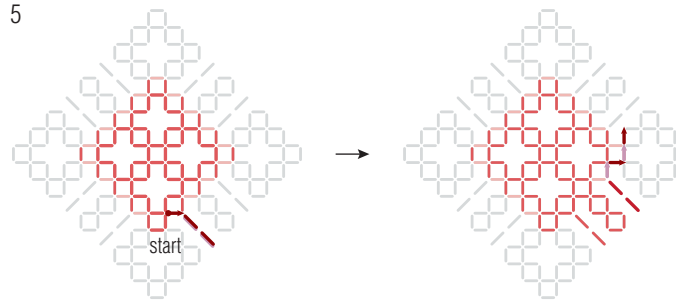
completed motif

4



Reverse and begin stitching horizontal stitches counterclockwise.

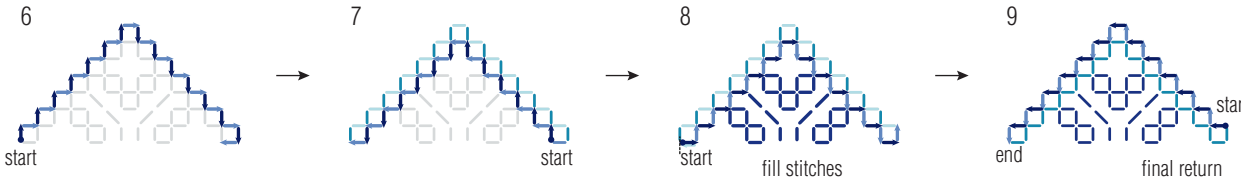
5



Stitch the external motifs as they occur.

Blue Triangle Motif

Stitching starting to the right



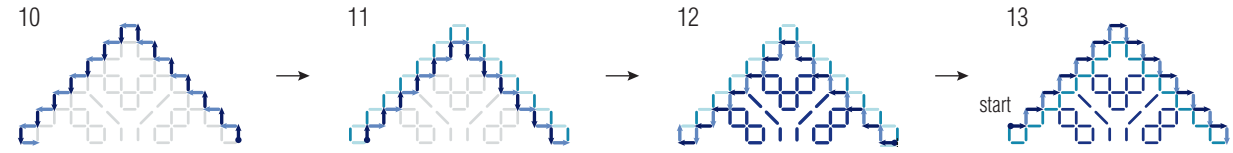
Starting at left, stitch vertical stitches clockwise.

Reverse and stitch vertical stitches counterclockwise.

Reverse and stitch horizontal stitches, completing internal motifs as they occur.

Reverse and stitch remaining horizontal stitches to complete the Blue Triangle motif.

Stitching starting to the left



Starting at right, stitch vertical stitches counterclockwise.

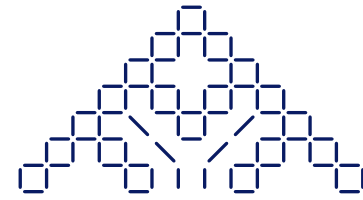
Reverse and stitch vertical stitches clockwise.

Reverse and stitch horizontal stitches, completing internal motifs as they occur.

Reverse and stitch remaining horizontal stitches to complete the Blue Triangle motif.

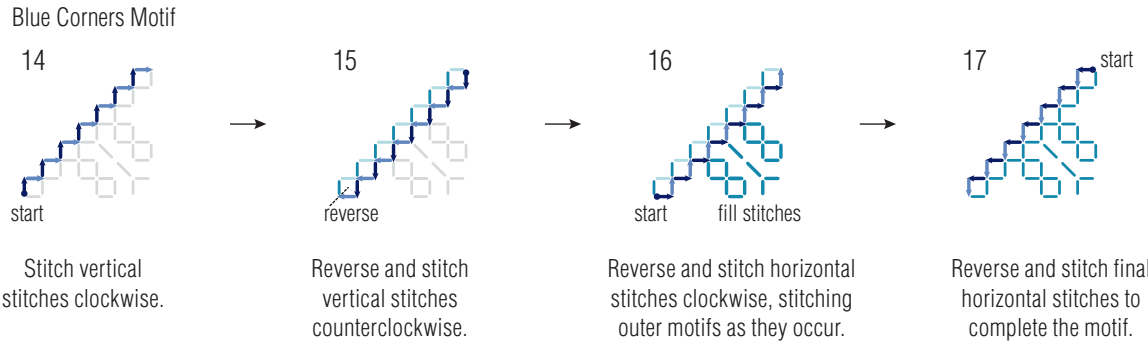


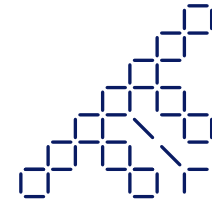
Stitches on the reverse side of the scarf (*top*) mirror the front (*bottom*).



completed motif

stitching the Red Diamond Motif. Stitch this central diamond, following Red Diamond Steps 1–5, then continue stitching the motifs to the right: blue triangles (Steps 6–13), red diamond, blue triangles, red diamond, then blue corners (Steps 14–17), following their respective steps. Then return to the design middle and proceed stitching to the left, following the Karelian Design chart for placement. See Steps 10–13 for stitching the blue triangles to the left. Continuously refer to the how-to diagrams to stitch the motifs. The blue motifs always start at the baseline, but pay attention to the first stitch of each new red diamond motif. After the first vertical passes of a motif have been stitched, double-check that these stitches are located correctly




completed corner motif

before continuing to stitch. To end a stitching thread, weave the tail into the backs of previous stitches, using the sharp embroidery needle to split the threads. The Finnish instruction books say to whip the tail around two or three stitches, then make a small loop and put the needle through this loop, tighten this knot, and whip the tail around a few more stitches before cutting the thread. Adding a tiny bit of Fray Check or fabric glue with a needle or pin tip helps to further secure the ends.

To finish the scarf, remove all the basting stitches. If soluble canvas was used, carefully cut off all the pieces outside the embroidery area. Then follow the manufacturer's instructions for soaking the fabric to dissolve the canvas. Pat the fabric between towels to remove moisture, and let dry.

If waste canvas was used, carefully cut off any extra pieces outside the embroidery. Spritz a few motifs at a time with cold water to soften the waste canvas, then pull out the canvas threads one by one (tweezers are helpful). When all the canvas is removed, rinse the embroidered areas with water, pat the fabric dry between towels, and let dry.

To hem, first iron the scarf fabric and check that the fabric is rectangular and that there is an equal amount of fabric for hems on the sides and ends, trimming as needed. Hems are ⅜" (1 cm) wide at the sides and ½" (1.3 cm) wide at the ends. Turn the hems to the back and stitch by hand or machine, using the white sewing thread.

If the scarf ends were stitched on separate fabrics, iron these pieces and trim as needed. Hem the sides to match the width of the scarf body. Then hem the top and bottom edges of both pieces. Hand-appliqué to scarf ends. Iron the finished scarf and wear it proudly! ❖

MARI VOIPIO credits her life-long interest in historical textiles to her mother and both grandmothers. She conducts research primarily to support her teaching; her current focus is on the folk textiles of preindustrial northern Europe. She wishes to thank the Craft Museum of Finland for the warm welcome and aid.

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Stitched Identities

Embroidery, Costume, and the Politics of Tradition at the Graz Folk Life Museum

MIMI SEYFERTH

When I am traveling, I try to take advantage of opportunities to visit folklife museums featuring needlework. When I traveled to Austria in September 2025, I was eager to visit the Folk Life Museum in Graz, the capital of Styria in southeastern Austria. I first learned about the museum when I discovered the web page for its embroidery exhibit *Counting Culture: Cross-Stitch from the Past to the Present*.[1] On my visit to the museum, I was not only impressed by its beautiful embroidery exhibit, but I was also fascinated by the museum's history and surprised by connections between the museum's extensive collection of traditional folk costumes and goals of the fascist regimes that governed Austria in the 1930s and during World War II.



Cross-stitch embroidery exhibition *Counting Culture: Cross-Stitch from the Past to the Present* featuring over three hundred cross-stitched items. *Photo courtesy of the author*

History of the Graz Folk Life Museum

Viktor Geramb (1884–1958), a preeminent Austrian folklorist, founded the Graz museum in 1913. A student of German, geography, and history, Geramb received a doctoral degree from the University of Graz in 1907. From 1909, when he became secretary of the board of trustees of the Landesmuseum Joanneum (now known as the Universalmuseum Joanneum, a multidisciplinary museum with several locations in Styria), Geramb aspired to establish an independent museum of folk life and folk art. He achieved this goal in 1913, when he established the Graz Folk Life Museum and served as its director until his retirement in 1949.

From its inception, the museum was housed in a structure built as a Capuchin monastery at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The monastery was constructed during the Counter-Reformation led by Hapsburg Archduke Ferdinand II (1578–1637), then sovereign of Inner Austria and subsequently the Holy Roman Emperor (1619–1637), as part of his campaign to eradicate Protestantism in his territories. The current Folk Life Museum campus includes a church of Saint Anthony of Padua, dedicated in 1602 and used for monastic purposes.

On November 11, 1786, almost two centuries after construction of the monastery, Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II (1741–1790) decreed that the monastery should be converted to a *Narrenhospital* (fools' hospital). This conversion was conducted in connection with Joseph II's efforts to close monasteries of contemplative orders that did not engage in pastoral care, schools, or nursing. Subsequently, on December

15, 1788, the monastery was reopened as a mental asylum. The structure continued to function as a mental asylum, housing patients in what appear to have been dismal conditions, until 1873, when the asylum's patients were transferred to a new facility. However, due to a smallpox epidemic, the former asylum was immediately reopened in 1873 as an isolation hospital.

In housing the museum in a historic structure that had previously been a monastery, an asylum, and a hospital, Geramb was following the dictates of his mentor, the Bavarian museum curator Georg Hager (1863–1941), who opined that a museum's collection should be placed "in rooms whose spirit resonates with them. And such rooms are not found in magnificent new buildings, but almost exclusively in old buildings."[2]



The costume hall in the Folk Life Museum. *Photo by N. Lackner, courtesy of the Universalmuseum Joanneum*

The Costume Collection

Geramb's most notable contribution to the Folk Life Museum is a costume collection covering 2,500 years of history in the everyday clothing of the Styrian rural population. Geramb, recognized as the foremost expert on traditional Styrian costumes, worked with Konrad Mautner (1880–1924), a member of an Austrian family of prominent Jewish industrialists and collector of Austrian folk music, art, and costumes, on a definitive two-volume study of Styrian costume—the *Steirisches Trachtenbuch* (Styrian Costume Book)—ultimately published in 1932 and 1935.

The museum's costume collection focuses on *tracht*, a term derived from the German verb *tragen* (to carry or wear) that describes traditional folk clothing found in German-speaking communities. The costume collection is displayed on 42 wooden mannequins housed in a separate *Trachtensaal* (Traditional Costume Hall) on the museum campus. Construction of this separate building began in 1933 and was completed in 1938. Since 2003, the Trachtensaal has been connected to the main museum building by a tunnel-like glass walkway.

The Graz artist Alexander Silveri (1910–1986) and the Graz sculptor Hans Mauracher (1885–1957) produced wooden mannequins for the Trachtensaal. Melitta Maieritsch (1913–1992), an arts and crafts graduate of the Graz technical college, was responsible for the reconstruction of historical clothing, including sewing garments and knitting knitwear, for display in accordance with Geramb's instructions.

The Trachtensaal costume collection begins with the figure of a Hallstatt salt miner, circa 700 BCE, dressed in a cap and chest piece made of lambskin, a loden cape, leg wraps made of chamois leather, calfskin shoes, and a belt with bronze fittings. The collection ends with the figures of two women and a man from Styria, circa 1870. The two female figures are dressed in traditional *leiblkittel* (dirndls with fitted bodices, full skirts, and aprons), and the male figure is dressed in a Styrian-styled traditional Austrian men's suit with green piping on the jacket lapels and trouser side seams. Figures from various time periods include, among others, a Styrian shepherd, from the circa tenth to nineteenth centuries, dressed in a linden bast cloak and a large disc-shaped hat—a style remarkably unchanged for a millennium. Another is a medieval man, circa 1180, dressed in a blue tunic with belt, hose, and shoes. The third is a Styrian

hunter, circa 1800, dressed in a short, fur-trimmed jacket, a tall cylindrical hat, and stunning Bavarian twisted-stitch knitted socks.

Fascist Appropriation of Tracht Clothing

The costume collection at the Graz Folk Life Museum has a charged political history. As a German nationalist, Geramb focused on what he viewed as the shared origins and organic connection between Germany and Styria. He assembled the museum's costume collection during the reign of the Austrofascist regime (*Ständestaat*) that governed Austria between 1933 and Nazi Germany's annexation of Austria in the Anschluss of 1938. As noted on a placard in the entrance to the Trachtensaal, "the regime declared Austria a 'Christian-German federal state' distinct from Nazism or Communism [and] [t]o create and display its new identity, the [A]ustrofascist *Ständestaat* also turned to *Tracht* . . . as well as folk studies as the new 'science of the people.'" During the period of Austrofacism, the museum was unfortunately used to foster this identity. As a placard in the museum states: "The Trachtensaal embodied the idealized image of a homogenous 'people's community': corporatist in structure, anti-modern, and German-Styrian." After the Anschluss, the Nazis continued to reference tracht as symbols of Aryan purity, national unity, and traditional gender roles.

The Trachtensaal has been reorganized several times since World War II, most recently in 2022. Now, it features a multipanel mural by the contemporary Austrian artist Franz Konrad that, in artist Silvia Stecher's words, "unpacked the complex entanglements of the production and staging of 'homeland protection clothing.'"[3] As the former Folk Life Museum curator Birgit Johler observed, "the Trachtensaal is now presented as a time capsule that opens up multifaceted insights and relationships between science, politics, and society in the 1930s."[4]

Cross-Stitch from the Past to the Present

The collection of the Folk Life Museum includes more than three hundred cross-stitch objects. A wide selection of these embroidered items featuring half, three-quarter, and double-sided cross-stitch is on display in the exhibit *Counting Culture: Cross-Stitch from the Past to the Present*. The exhibit includes samplers, ribbons, garments, household textiles, and more.



An artist and a sculptor from Graz created wooden mannequins to display the museum's collection of traditional folk clothing. *Photo by N. Lackner, courtesy of the Universalmuseum Joanneum.*

The museum display notes that embroidery was "originally a privilege of the nobility and the church," but "found its way into middle-class and even rural society during the Reformation [1517–1648]," with sample pattern books, known as *Modelbücher*, providing templates for folk embroidery patterns. In addition to pattern books, sample clothes, known as *Musterfleck* (sample patch) or *Merktuch* (memory cloth), were disseminated to preserve embroidery patterns. The museum display advises that, in connection with the emergence of German nationalism, "pattern books from the sixteenth century were reissued under the label 'old German patterns' and presented as an idealized collective historical style consciousness."

The cross-stitch exhibit, which is arranged chronologically, shows a striking contrast between the colorful samplers embroidered in the eighteenth century to 1880 and the monochromatic red embroidery predominant in samplers dating from the end of the nineteenth century. The exhibit explains that the colors and designs in the older samplers reflect the Empire (1804–1867) and Biedermeier (1815–1848) periods. It also notes that this kind of embroidery was mainly done by wealthier women who could afford the required expensive materials and had the free time. The museum display further notes that, beginning with the emergence of the German nationalist movement, embroidery magazines encouraged "the 'German woman' . . . to avoid such [pre-1880] 'kitsch productions'" and to embroider instead "not 'endearing' or 'maudlin' patterns, but 'clear' and 'honest' forms correspond[ing] to the 'German character.'" Following this recommendation, embroiderers contributed to spreading what the museum describes as a "specific idea of German identity."

According to display notes, the Austrian folklorist Franz C. Lipp (1913–2002) described the combination of red embroidery thread on white linen as "dominant" for the late nineteenth century in Austria, especially in Upper Austria and Styria. The contemporary Austrian costume expert Gexi Tostmann observes that the red color of the embroidery thread commonly found in



An alphabet stitched in monochromatic red embroidery predominant in samplers dating from the end of the nineteenth century.
Photo courtesy of the author

Austrian embroidery is symbolic of fertility and considered protection against the evil eye.[5] The museum display advises that, even now, "Cherry-red pearl cotton No. 47 is the twisted thread that is most commonly used for cross-stitch work in Styria."

Although cross-stitch embroidery was taught in Styrian schools until the 1980s, samplers slowly disappeared from school curricula starting in 1900, because in the emerging New Education program, "samplers were now considered purposeless." However, even after 1945, Austrian folklorists have continued to promote cross-stitch embroidery with red thread on white linen in connection with what the museum identifies as "broad efforts to 'Austrianise' culture."

The Graz Folk Life Museum Today

Today, the Folk Life Museum continues its mission to collect, research, and present materials relating to Styrian folk culture. Moreover, the museum has expanded its focus, taking up "current socially relevant topics and integrating them into the existing collection by means of reference objects . . . that document the changes and upheavals in contemporary society."[6] Thus, it has recently featured objects relating to the COVID-19 epidemic, various migration patterns, and changes in the work world. ❖



Detail of a colorful cross-stitch characteristic of the eighteenth century to 1880 in the museum's exhibition *Counting Culture. Photo by JJ Kucek, courtesy of the Universalmuseum Joanneum*

Notes

1. *Counting Culture: Cross-Stitch from the Past to the Present*, Folk Life Museum, Graz, Austria, accessed February 23, 2026, museum-joanneum.at/en/folk-life-museum/our-programme/exhibitions/event/counting-culture.
2. Christiane Rainer, "Kloster-Tollhaus-Museum" (Monastery-Madhouse-Museum), in *Volkskundemuseum am Paulustor* (Folk Life Museum at Paulustor), ed. Eva Heizmann, trans. DocuGlot (Verein Freunde des Volkskundemuseums, 2023), 26.
3. Silvia Stecher, *"Schicht um Schicht (Layer by Layer),"* *Franz Konrad*, trans. DocuGlot, accessed February 23, 2026, franzkonrad.com/schicht-um-schicht.
4. Birgit Johler, "Inszenierungen und Einordnungen: Der Trachtensaal im Volkskundemuseum Graz" (Staging and Classification: The Trachtensaal in the Graz Folk Culture Museum), in *Volkskundemuseum am Paulustor* (Folk Life Museum at Paulustor), ed. Eva Heizmann, trans. DocuGlot (Verein Freunde des Volkskundemuseums, 2023), 86.
5. Gexi Tostmann, "Material und Auszier," in *Tracht in Österreich: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, eds. Franz C. Lipp, Elisabeth Langle, Gexi Tostmann, and Franz Hubmann, trans. DocuGlot (Austria; Brandstätter, 1984), 162.
6. "History," Folk Life Museum, accessed February 23, 2026, museum-joanneum.at/en/folk-life-museum/about-us/history.

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In September 2025, she was privileged to visit the Folk Life Museum in Graz, Austria. She would like to thank Natalie Varney for her assistance in translating German-language reference materials for this article.

Austrian Elegance

Lace Stockings Inspired by the Graz Folk Life Museum

MIMI SEYFERTH

These monogrammed women's lace stockings were inspired by a pair of similar early-twentieth-century stockings on display in a cross-stitch exhibit at the Graz Folk Life Museum (see page 42). The museum stockings, which incorporated a leaf lace pattern, were knitted from fine white cotton yarn and monogrammed with red embroidery thread in cross-stitch.

The museum display notes, "In the 19th century, during the rise of the bourgeois society, the practice of using monograms became very popular." Monograms were used to identify ownership, and elaborate monograms showed wealth and social status.

According to the museum display, white stockings were intended to reflect cleanliness or purity as well as elegance. Red cross-stitch embroidery on a white background has been traditional in Austria since the 1880s.

MATERIALS

- Cascade Yarns *Heritage Silk* (85% superwash merino wool/15% silk), 437 yd (400 m)/3½ oz (100 g): 2 skeins of #5682 White
- DMC *6-strand Embroidery Floss* (100% cotton), 8.7 yd (8 m)/skein: 1 skein of #498 dark red
- Needles: size 00 (1.75 mm), two 16" to 20" (40 to 50 cm) circular, or size needed to obtain gauge
- Stitch markers
- Tapestry needle
- Embroidery needle
- Grosgrain ribbon, ⅛" (0.32 cm): white, 2 pieces 36" (91.4 cm) long

Finished Size: 7¼" (18.4 cm) foot circumference, unstretched; 12½" (31.8 cm) cuff circumference; 9¼" (23.5 cm) foot length; 16¼" (41.3 cm) leg length (top of cuff to bottom of heel); foot and leg lengths are adjustable.

Gauge: 38 sts and 57 rnds = 4" (10.2 cm) in St st; 41 sts and 54 rnds = 4" (10.2 cm) in Leaf Lace pattern.

Visit pieceworkmagazine.com/abbreviations for terms you don't know.

SPECIAL STITCHES

Leaf Lace (13 sts to 11 sts to 13 sts)

Rnd 1: Knit.

Rnd 2: Yo, k1, ssk, k2tog, k1, p1, k1, ssk, k2tog, k1, yo—11 sts.

Rnd 3: K5, p1, k5.

Rnd 4: Yo, k1, yo, ssk, k2tog, p1, ssk, k2tog, yo, k1, yo.

Rnd 5: Rep Rnd 3.

Rnd 6: Yo, k1, k2tog, yo, ssk, p1, k2tog, yo, ssk, k1, yo.

Rnd 7: Rep Rnd 3.

Rnd 8: Yo, k4, yo, sl1, k2tog, psso, yo, k4, yo—13 sts.

NOTES

These directions are written for knitting in the round using two circular needles.

The stitch count in the Leaf Lace pattern does not remain constant. In Rounds 1 and 8, each panel of the Leaf Lace pattern has 13 stitches. In Rounds 2 through 7, each panel of the Leaf Lace pattern has 11 stitches. Unless otherwise noted, stitch counts are given for rounds in which the panel size is 13 stitches, as for Rounds 1 and 8.



Women's knitted stockings with red monogram at the top. *Photo by the author, courtesy of the Graz Folk Life Museum*



Delicate white lace meets a bold red monogram in these reimagined traditional Austrian stockings inspired by a pair in the collection of the Graz Folk Life Museum. *Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted*

INSTRUCTIONS

Socks

Make 2

Leg

CO 127 sts using the long-tail method and divide sts with 64 sts on first needle, 63 on second needle.

Join to work in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts; the beg of rnd is at the back of leg.

Purl 3 rnds.

Eyelet rnd: *K2tog, yo, rep from * to last st, k1.

Purl 3 rnds, knit 15 rnds, purl 3 rnds—piece measures 1¾" (4.4 cm).

Sl the last 3 sts from end of first needle to beg of second needle—still 127 sts; 61 sts on first needle, 66 sts on second needle.

Establish Lace Pattern

Set-up rnd: On first needle, k30, pm, work Rnd 1 of Leaf Lace chart over 13 sts, pm, k5, pm, work Rnd 1 of chart over 13 sts; on second needle, [k5, pm, work Rnd 1 of chart over 13 sts, pm] 2 times, k30.

Shape Leg

Note: The length of this leg section is not adjustable because of the shaping; changes to overall leg length can be made when working the cuff later.

Working marked sections in Leaf Lace patt and rem sts in St st, work 4 rnds even.

Dec rnd: On first needle, k2tog, work to end; on second needle, work to last 2 sts, ssk—2 sts dec'd at back leg.

[Cont in patt for 5 rnds, then rep dec rnd] 15 times, ending with Rnd 8 of lace patt—95 sts total; 45 sts on first needle, 50 sts on second needle; 96 rnds (twelve 8-rnd reps) completed from start of lace patt.

[Cont in patt for 3 rnds, then rep dec rnd] 12 times, ending with Rnd 8 of lace patt—71 sts total; 33 sts on first needle, 38 sts on second needle; 144 rnds (eighteen 8-rnd reps) completed from start of lace patt.

Next rnd: Cont in patt for 1 rnd (Rnd 1 of lace patt)—piece measures 12" (30.5 cm) from CO.



Personalize the back of the cuffs with a bold cross-stitched monogram.

Heel Flap

Knit the first 18 sts at beg of first needle onto end of second needle, then sl the first 20 sts from beg of second needle to end of first needle—still 71 sts; 35 sts on first needle, 36 sts on second needle.

The heel flap is worked back and forth in rows on the 36 sts of what was formerly the second needle; the 35 instep sts rest on the other needle until they are needed again.

Row 1 (WS): Sl 1 pwise wyf, purl to end.

Row 2 (RS): *Sl 1 pwise wyb, k1; rep from * to end.

Rep the last 2 rows 15 more times, then work WS Row 1 once more—33 rows total; flap measures about 2" (5.1 cm) long.

Heel Turn

Row 1 (RS): K20, ssk, k1, turn.

Row 2 (WS): Sl 1 pwise wyf, p5, p2tog, p1, turn—34 sts; 13 unworked sts each end of needle.

Row 3: Sl 1 pwise wyb, knit to 1 st before turning gap of previous row, ssk (1 st from each side of gap), k1, turn—1 st dec'd.

Row 4: Sl 1 pwise wyf, purl to 1 st before turning gap of previous rows, p2tog (1 st from each side of gap), p1, turn—1 st dec'd.

Rows 5–14: Rep Rows 3 and 4 five more times—22 sts; 1 unworked st each end of needle.

Row 15: Sl 1 pwise wyb, knit to last 2 sts, ssk, turn.

Row 16: Sl 1 pwise wyf, purl to last 2 sts, p2tog, turn—20 sts.

Gusset

Set-up rnd: With RS facing, sl 1 pwise wyb, knit to end of heel/sole needle, then use the same needle to pick up and knit 18 sts along selvedge of heel flap; on the instep needle, k2, sl m, work Rnd 2 of chart over 13 sts, sl m, k5, sl m, work Rnd 2 of chart over 13 sts, sl m, k2, then use the same needle to pick up and knit 18 sts along selvedge of heel flap; sl the 18 sts just picked up to beg of sole needle, then knit to end of sole needle—87 sts total; 31 sts on instep needle with 11 sts in each marked chart panel, 56 sts on sole needle; rnds now beg at start of instep needle.

Dec rnd: On instep needle, cont in established patt; on sole needle, k1, ssk, knit to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1—2 sts dec'd on sole needle.

[Cont in patt for 1 rnd, then rep the dec rnd] 9 times, ending with Rnd 5 of chart—67 sts total; 31 sts on instep needle with 11 sts in each marked chart panel, 36 sts on sole needle.



Back of the lace stockings shows the center seam, heel, and gusset.

Foot

Cont in patt as established until foot measures about 7½" (19.1 cm) from center of heel flap, or 1¾" (4.4 cm) less than desired length, ending with Rnd 8 of chart—71 sts total; 35 sts on instep needle, 36 sts on sole needle.

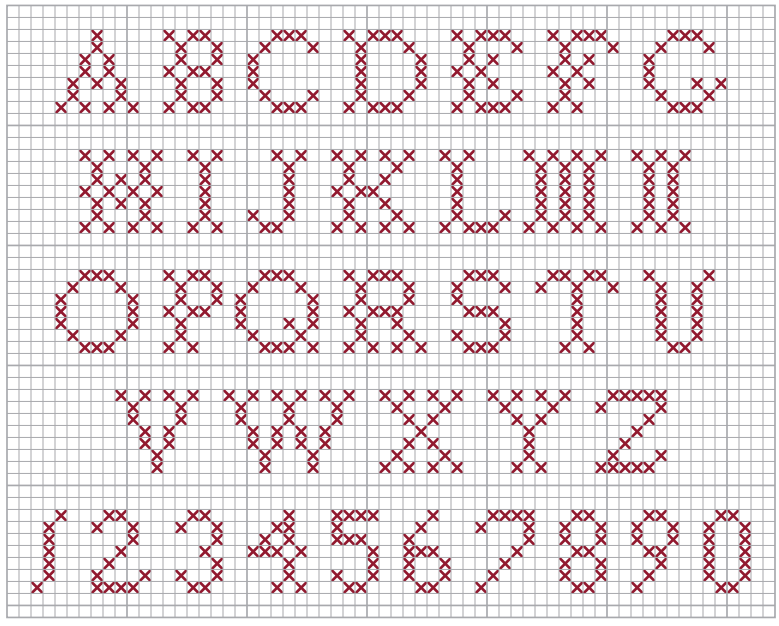
Note: If adjusting foot length, work more or fewer foot rounds here. Every 3 to 4 rnds added or removed will increase or decrease the foot length by about ¼" (6 mm). In order to finish the pattern with Rnd 8, you may need to end the lace pattern early, then continue in St st until reaching your desired length.

Shape Toe

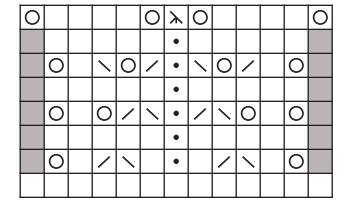
Next rnd: On instep needle, knit; on sole needle, k17, k2tog, k17—70 sts total; 35 sts each needle.

Dec rnd: On first needle, *k1, ssk, knit to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1*; on second needle, rep from * to *—4 sts dec'd, 2 sts dec'd each needle.

Alphabet/Number chart



Leaf Lace



13 sts
dec'd to 11 sts on Rnds 2 through 7
(see Notes)

knit
purl
yo
k2tog
ssk
sl 1, k2tog, psso
no stitch

[Knit 1 rnd, then rep the dec rnd] 9 times—30 sts total; 15 sts each needle.

Work the dec rnd 3 more times—18 sts total; 9 sts each needle.

Knit 1 rnd.

Graft sts.

Cuff

With RS facing and beg 8 sts after the start of the first leg rnd, pick up and knit 126 sts along CO edge, then arrange sts with 59 sts on first needle and 67 sts on second needle.

Set-up rnd: On first needle, [k5, pm, work Rnd 1 of Leaf Lace chart over 13 sts, pm] 3 times, k5; on second needle, work Rnd 1 of chart over 13 sts, pm, [k5, pm, work Rnd 1 of chart over 13 sts, pm] 3 times, omitting last pm at end of second needle.

Working marked sections in Leaf Lace patt and rem sts in St st, continue as established until Rnds 1–8 of chart have been worked 3 times—24 rnds completed in lace patt; cuff measures 1¾" (4.4 cm) from pick-up.

Note: If adjusting leg length, work more or fewer 8-round repeats here. Every repeat added or removed will increase or decrease the leg length by about ½" (1.3 cm).

Knit 1 rnd, purl 3 rnds.

Eyelet rnd: *K2tog, yo; rep from * to end of rnd.

Purl 3 rnds—cuff measures 2¼" (5.7 cm) from pick-up.

BO all sts kwise.

FINISHING

Weave in ends. Block.

Using embroidery needle and floss, embroider monogram letters from Alphabet/Number chart, in the stockinette-stitch band between the cuff and leg.

Note: In the sample socks, the monograms were placed approximately 4 to 5 stitches to the right of the center back leg of each sock.

Beg and ending at center front, weave a length of ribbon through the eyelet holes at the start of the leg section for each sock and tie into a bow. ❖

MIMI SEYFERTH, a retired lawyer, lives outside Washington, DC. In September 2025, she was privileged to visit the Folk Life Museum in Graz, Austria.

Colonial Revival Style: Humble Rugs in a Grand Setting

A Broken-Bargello Hooked Mat

JUDITH COPELAND

The Hamilton House in South Berwick, Maine, described as a "high Georgian mansion," was built around 1785 and is now owned and maintained by Historic New England. Perched on a bluff along the Salmon Falls River with a commanding view and easy access to the Atlantic Ocean, the house was once the hub of Jonathan Hamilton's timber and shipbuilding enterprises. Hamilton's death in 1801 and shifts in the New England economy brought inevitable changes to the property. The Goodwin family bought the property in 1839, converted it to a farm, and planted an orchard. For two generations, they farmed and raised sheep there. When the rise of the railroads made it hard for New England farmers to compete with the food grown more easily in the fertile Midwest, the Goodwin farm struggled, and the family found it difficult to keep the once grand house in repair. By the end of the nineteenth century, the house was in dire need of a third act.

That third act came when Maine was discovered as a fashionable destination for wealthy "summer people" from places such as Boston. Two of those summer people, Emily Tyson and her stepdaughter Elise, purchased the vacant property in 1898 and took on the project of renovating it just at the time when Colonial Revivalism was gaining greater attention.

The Colonial Revival style has been described as a response by affluent white Americans to increased urbanization and industrialization and to their fears about the waves of immigrants arriving in the United States at the time. Homes became places of refuge and were often furnished with artifacts and antiques that reinforced a nostalgic, if somewhat eclectic, vision of the American past. The style can best be described as a grab bag approach to design that grasped at just about anything its practitioners deemed "colonial." If an object, such as a spinning wheel, evoked a feeling of simpler, more old-fashioned times, then it might find a place in this décor.

We see this response in some of the choices the Tysons made. One of the surprises in visiting the elegant house, with its fine woodwork and mahogany window seats, is its collection of hooked rugs—some of them quite humble in both design and execution. Although decorators of the era seemed to associate hooked rugs with the colonial period, it is generally thought that rug hooking did not come to prominence in America until the second half of the nineteenth century, long after the days of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton.

There is a certain whimsical charm in the hooked rugs collected by the Tysons. Some depict animals, others masted ships such as those once built on the property, and some were likely "scrapbusters," abstract designs fashioned to use up odd bits of leftover wool. The one that caught my eye was a runner on display in one of the bedrooms, one that I have described here as a "broken-bargello" pattern.

The mat I have designed (a good beginner's project) takes its design cues from the Hamilton house rug and, like the original, is made from repurposed materials whenever possible.



The original rug, here seen in one of the bedrooms of the Hamilton House, is a runner-style rug measuring just over 40 inches (102 cm) in length. *Photo by the author, courtesy of Historic New England, bequest of Elizabeth R. Vaughan, 1949.1004*

Materials

- Backing fabric suitable for rug hooking (linen, burlap, rug warp): 1 piece, 22" × 22" (56 × 56 cm)
  Note: The linen piece I used was from a previous project started and abandoned by another maker. One can see the enlarged holes where I pulled out the wool strips already hooked, as well as some of the lines marking out the original design. The original rug was likely hooked on burlap, although many hookers today prefer linen or rug warp because they are easier on the hands and do not rot the way burlap may if it gets wet.
- Assorted wool fabric from previous projects, pieces cut from recycled garments, and/or lightly felted new items
- Assorted wool yarn (DK weight and heavier)—various weights of yarn are acceptable, as they can be doubled or tripled as necessary
  Note: About 14–16 ounces (400–450 grams) of wool and yarn will be needed (exclusive of the wool yarn used to bind the edges)
- Briggs and Little *Regal* (100% wool), 272 yd (249 m)/4 oz (113 g): 1 skein of color to coordinate with rug (for binding the edges)
- Rug hook, size 5.0 mm
- Rug hooking frame or sturdy quilt hoop, 18"–20" (45.7–50.8 cm) square or circular
- Scissors, fabric
- Tapestry needle, size 18
- T-pins or quilters' binding clips
- Permanent black marker, such as a medium-point Sharpie
- Sewing machine or serger (optional)
- Rug hooking cutter (optional)

Finished Size: 14" (35.6 cm) square.

Notes

Rug hooking is simple to learn. It's a matter of holding a hook in your dominant hand on top of the work, while at the same time positioning a piece of wool underneath the foundation fabric with your nondominant hand so that the hook can be pushed into a hole to scoop up the wool and pull it through the foundation fabric to the top in a small loop. Loops are generally pulled about as high as the wool strip is wide. Holes should be skipped as needed so the loops don't get too tightly packed. When you come to the end of a piece of wool or a place where you want to change colors, the end should be pulled to the front of the piece and snipped level with the hooked loops. No additional steps are needed to secure the wool strips. The tension of the wool pieces pulled up side by side will hold the loops in place as the rug is filled in.

Instructions

Bargello Mat

To prepare the foundation fabric, serge, machine zigzag, or hand whipstitch the raw edges of the foundation fabric. Do not skip this step, as the loose weave of the foundation fabric makes it especially prone to fraying.

Using the permanent marker, mark a 14" (35.6 cm) square centered with 4" (10.2 cm) borders on all sides on the foundation fabric, taking care to follow the grain of the weave. Divide the central square into 4 equal vertical columns, 3½" (9 cm) wide, using the marker. All marked lines will eventually be covered by the rug hooking wool. Mistakenly drawn lines can be redrawn. Draw horizontal zigzag (stair-stepped) guidelines for the bargello or chevron pattern every 3" (7.5 cm) or so, slightly varying the intervals to create more visual dynamics. The peaks and valleys should rise and fall at about 90 degrees. It is easiest to draw in the initial guidelines as straight diagonal lines (see page 56) and then sketch in the staggered step pattern.

Mount the marked foundation fabric on the rug hooking frame or quilting hoop, making sure the fabric is held taut and that the fabric grain is straight.

To prepare the wool, sort the collected wool fabric strips and yarn by color. In this case, I created four piles—Whites/Creams, Browns, Pinks, and Blues. One of the strengths of this design is its mottled color blocks, so make sure to include various shades of each colorway, including some plaid fabrics or tweeds and variegated yarns, if possible. This is a great opportunity to use up small pieces of wool and lengths of yarn from your personal stash. This mat, for instance, includes some pink lopi yarn that I used to knit a sweater in the 1970s, a few bumpy yards of my very first homespun, and the sleeve of a Pendleton blazer that a friend spotted at a thrift store. This collecting process can be great fun, and a surprise color might occur.

Wool yard goods from previous projects or from recycled garments should be cut into strips (sometimes referred to as worms or noodles). If you are including repurposed fabric, be sure to machine wash and dry it before you cut strips. Slightly felting the



The broken-bargello hooked mat captures the elements of Colonial Revivalism using repurposed materials. *Photo by Matt Graves*



Hooked mat in progress, showing the guidelines as drawn and enlarged holes where material from a previous project has been removed.
Photo by the author

wool in this way will prevent the noodles from fraying as you pull them through the foundation fabric. Rug hooking strips are numbered according to width, with higher numbers indicating wider cuts. This mat was done with a few #4 cuts from a previous project, but mostly #5 cuts. A #4 cut measures ⅛" (3 mm) and a #5 is 5⁄32" (4 mm). In a project of this make-do nature, absolute precision is not required. Wool should be cut straight in a selvedge-to-selvedge direction if you can identify that from the scraps; if not, don't worry about it. Length can vary. Obviously, there will be fewer cut ends and stops and starts if the strips are longer, but even pieces as short as 5" (12.7 cm) can be valuable to create shading and texture.

Begin by hooking a single row around the outside border of the piece in one of the darker shades of wool. Next, work in a few white (or light-colored) stripes. These are important design elements because they provide illumination to the piece and help create an overall rhythm. Create an improvised, jagged,

stair-step design following the chevron pattern previously drawn on the foundation. This ziggurat-like shape can be sketched in with a marker or worked by eye as you go. Try to stagger the steps in a loose and somewhat uneven manner, varying the height, width, and angle of each step's rise and fall. As is the case with creating most so-called random patterns, this is harder than it looks! In my sample, I hooked mostly double rows, expanding occasionally into triple rows in a few shades of white and cream, varying the distance between the whitish bands. This broken-bargello design falls adjacent to a category of rugs known as "hit or miss." Its color blocks are more controlled than a true hit-or-miss pattern (wherein wool pieces are pulled from a pile at random), but it does loosely follow the hit-or-miss mantra of "dark, light, dull, bright."

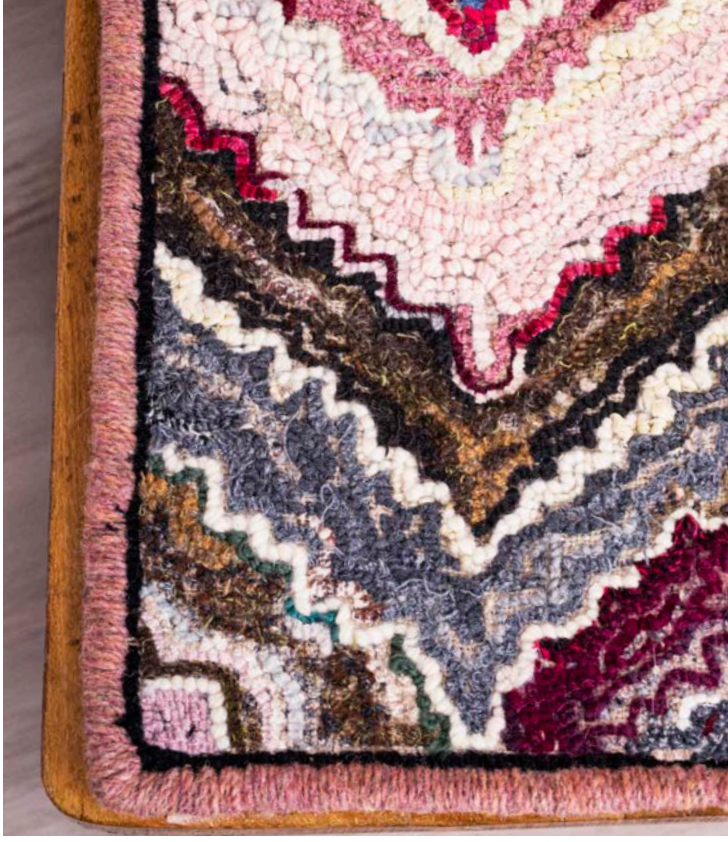
Once some of the "grid lines" have been worked, begin filling in the colored stripes between the white zigzags. Again, a color-controlled version of random is what you are striving for. Fill in the spaces by pulling up loops in multiple shades of the color you have chosen for each section, creating free-form shapes or islands within each stripe.

This is a design that is best worked intuitively, deciding what the piece needs next as you go along. Trust your eye to tell you when you need more or less of a certain shade or when you have fallen into a too-regular or symmetrical pattern. Fortunately, pulling out a row of hooking is easy and does not damage the foundation fabric. However, don't obsess and pull things too early. Keep going even when you are not entirely sure about a section you have just hooked. You may be surprised how much better something looks when you get the surrounding areas filled in.

FINISHING

Once the hooking is complete and checked from the back for "holidays" (accidental bald spots that will need to be filled in), the piece should be steamed. Place the mat right side up on a flat surface (ironing board or rug-covered floor) and cover it with a moderately damp towel. Using a hot iron on the wool setting, methodically work your way across the piece, pressing the iron flat on each section for approximately 10–15 seconds, allowing it to steam. Remove the towel and allow the piece to dry flat in place.

Machine stitch around the mat 1" (2.5 cm) away from the last hooked row, working diagonally across the corners. Trim away the excess foundation fabric just outside the stitched line. Starting along one side (not at a corner), make a double-fold hem, enclosing the cut edge of the foundation fabric to the inside and bringing the folded edge adjacent to the hooked work on the front of the piece. Secure with clips or T-pins, paying particular attention to easing the fabric around the corners.



A tidy row of binding stitches completes the mat. *Photo by Matt Graves*

Thread the tapestry needle with the yarn intended for binding the mat. Do not knot, but secure the yarn into the fold with a running stitch or two, then leave a 2"–3" (5–7.5 cm) tail to be woven in later. Starting along one side, sew upright, overhand whipstitches, bringing the yarn from back to front, to create a neat row of closely parallel binding stitches. At each corner, stitch in the same holes several times to provide total coverage. Secure any loose ends by running the yarn into the center of the binding, and trim them. Steam the finished mat one more time. ❖

A onetime handspinner and knitter whose main focus has turned to embroidery, **JUDITH COPELAND** was introduced to rug hooking by members of her embroidery guild (the Southern Maine Chapter of the Embroiderers' Guild of America) and was drawn to it for the way it allows for rich explorations of color. Judith lives in New Hampshire and is a member of the White Mountain Woolen Magic Rug Hooking Guild. She posts about her needlework and rug hooking explorations on Instagram at @nhstitching.

Threads Through Time

The Samplers of Anna Ruby

ROWENA ZUERCHER

In 1875, 12-year-old Anna Ruby carefully stitched her name onto her small, tidy sampler. Over the next six years, she would finish at least three more, most notably a show towel that held significance in her Amish community in Ontario, Canada. Over one hundred years later, her samplers have created the throughline for a story that travels from the late nineteenth century to the present day.

The Old Farmhouse

In 2012, the family farmhouse outside Tavistock, Ontario, had to come down. It had stood since the mid-1800s, and time had taken its toll. Before the demolition came the careful task of excavating every nook and cranny of the house. Generations of family members living in the same home had led to many items tucked away in the backs of drawers, in closets, and in corners of the attic. While many books and papers had suffered from years in storage, to everyone's surprise, four beautiful textiles emerged in perfect condition. These textiles were samplers and a show towel, made by my great-great-grandmother Anna (Ruby) Zehr.

Anna Ruby was born in 1863 to Joshua and Magdelena Ruby. Magdelena passed away when Anna was 24, and as the youngest unmarried daughter, she likely stayed home to keep house for her father. After her father passed away, it's believed that she moved in with her oldest sister's family. In 1899, at the age of 35, Anna married widower Peter Zehr.

When Anna and Peter's daughter Lena (my great-grandmother) was tragically widowed, they moved to the farm where Lena lived with her newborn son and three-year-old daughter (my grandmother). Unfortunately, Peter died only a few months later, leaving Anna, Lena, and the two small children on the farm. After Anna passed away in 1938, Lena married Andrew Zehr and moved with her children and family belongings to the Zehr family farm. The farm eventually passed to my great-uncle Vernon, and then later to his son, Dave, who farms the land to this day.

Anna's samplers traveled with her to each home: from her parents' house, to her sister's house, to her own home as a married woman, and then to her widowed daughter's farm. After Anna's death, the samplers traveled with Lena to the Zehr farm, where they remained carefully tucked away for nearly 75 years. Though the house no longer stands on the land, Anna's samplers remain to help tell the story of a bygone era.

Amish Samplers and Show Towels

In the nineteenth century, samplers were a common form of needlework throughout the world. Regions and cultures influenced the themes, colors, and motifs. This, of course, is also true for the needlework done by Amish and Mennonite women in Ontario during this time. The text and pictorial motifs have similarities to Fraktur, a common folk art style also used in Pennsylvania at the time by German-speaking immigrants. Many Amish and Mennonite people immigrated to Ontario from Pennsylvania and other parts of New England, bringing their European customs with them. A unique and notable textile art among Amish and Mennonite women in nineteenth-century Ontario was the show towel (*paradehandtuch*). The show towel demonstrated a woman's skill and precision with a needle and thread and usually included some of the same motifs as samplers. A woman would have stitched her show towel as a teenager or in her early twenties before marriage. These towels were hung on doors on Sundays—a rare display of visual art in Amish and Mennonite homes during this period. Some homes even had a special hook where they could be displayed. Anna Ruby finished her show towel in 1881, at the age of 18. Her samplers were made in earlier years, likely as practice for her show towel, and one dates to 1875, when she was just 12 years old. The other two samplers, undated, were likely completed after 1875 but before 1881.

Amish show towels tended to be less decorative and elaborate than Mennonite towels, but similar themes were found in both. First, many of the motifs and styles were borrowed and copied from earlier works, and from family members. Pride and



Anna Ruby's show towel, completed in 1881 at age 18. *Photos by Fred Lichti unless otherwise noted*

individualism in one's art was not commonly seen in nineteenth-century Amish and Mennonite art. The other common theme was the *memento mori* (remember death). The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a revival in Pietist art, especially among the Amish and Mennonites. Humility and deference to God's will were, and still are, important tenets in many traditional Amish and Mennonite communities. In nineteenth-century samplers, the initialism, OEHBDDE is the most common memento mori: *Oh Edel Herz*, *Bedenk Dein End* (Oh Noble Heart, Ponder Thy End). Another memento mori is

the following poem: *Das Gras ist Grin*, *Die Ros ist Roth*, *Hir stet mein Namen*, *Nach meinem Tod* (The grass is green, the rose is red, here lies my name, when I am dead).

Both the initialism and this poem are found on my great-great-grandmother's samplers and show towel. The respected Ontario historian and genealogist Lorraine Roth believed that these humble poems were put on show towels specifically because the act of hanging them up in the home for others to view was close to being prideful. The poems helped offset one's pride, through the reminder of mortality.

Motifs and Styles on Samplers and Towels

Geometric designs and elements from nature were, in general, the most common motifs. The motif of four tulips and two birds was especially popular in Waterloo County, Ontario. Other common motifs were the eight-pointed star, plants emerging from pots or urns, crowns, houses, the tree of life, hearts, a four-flower wreath, and the OEHBDDE initialism in a spider-like motif. Samplers were made almost exclusively in counted cross-stitch, but this varied slightly with show towels. At first glance, I thought that the flowers rising from the pots in Anna Ruby's show towel were made with a variation of satin stitch. At closer look, I realized that every stitch is a cross-stitch, unbelievably tiny and even. Dyed cotton thread was most common until the middle of the nineteenth century, when silk and wool became popular. The ground fabric could be either handwoven or mill-woven. I've heard that handwoven cloth was easier to use for cross-stitch because the warp and weft of the plain weave was easy to see.



Anna Ruby made this sampler in 1875, when she was 12 years old. Anna Ruby's samplers and the show towel are in the collection of the author's great-aunt.

Schneider Haus National Historic Site

One of the best places to view an excellent collection of show towels is the Schneider Haus National Historic Site in downtown Kitchener, Ontario. The Schneider Haus is part of the Region of Waterloo Museums, and the site includes the historic house museum, rotating galleries, and several other historic buildings. The Schneider Haus is a community museum, and its collection reflects the unique folk art and traditions of the area. With a focus on local Germanic folk art, it holds more than 7,000 items, including 50 show towels, both Amish and Mennonite. One show towel from the collection was made by Anna Burkhartt in 1825. Though 56 years older than Anna Ruby's show towel, similar motifs and colors are obvious. The OEHBDDE initialism is nearly identical to the one Anna Ruby made.

Revisiting Anna Ruby

Fred Lichti, a historian, genealogist, and family friend in Ontario, was a wonderful resource for my research. Surviving Amish show towels and samplers are much rarer than their Mennonite counterparts, and through Fred's connections and generosity, I've been able to view more family show towels. The show towel by Anna Ruby's mother, Magdalena (Roth) Ruby, still survives in a private collection. Magdalena finished her towel in 1838, at the age of 20, and it seems clear to



The top portion of a show towel made by Anna Burkhartt in 1825 in the collection of the Schneider Haus National Historic Site. *Photo courtesy of the Region of Waterloo Museums & Archives*

me that Anna used elements of her mother's work in her own towel. Anna had four older sisters, and Fred has seen two of their surviving show towels. They are similar and include the red rose poem. Her sister Catharina (Ruby) Bender's show towel is on page 29 of *The Language of Paradise: Folk Art from Mennonite and Other Anabaptist Communities of Ontario* by Nancy-Lou Patterson. Various cousins in the family used the same motifs and styles, and Fred believes that when members of the extended family began arriving in Ontario in the 1820s, they brought these patterns and designs with them from their Amish community in the Alsace region of France. How far back in time these motifs go is unknown.

I grew up watching my grandma's steady hands with an embroidery needle and thread. She taught me to embroider, and I cherish that I can still connect with her in this way, even more than a decade after her death. I don't know if my grandma ever saw or even knew of her own grandma's show towels and samplers, but I hope that she did. Anna's needlework and the textile collection at the Schneider Haus have given me a connection to my family's past that resonates with my family's present. Every thread that the hands of my ancestors stitched into fabric is a reminder of the enduring power of craft and storytelling. Maybe in the future I'll make my own parade-handtuch to display on a hook—though of course, not



Anna Ruby likely finished this sampler between 1875 and 1881. It features two bird and four tulip motifs in addition to the initials OEHBDDE.

too pridefully. After all, Das Gras ist Grin, Die Ros ist Roth, Hir stet mein Namen, Nach meinem Tod. ❖

Resources

Bird, Michael S. *O Noble Heart/O Edel Herz: Fraktur and Spirituality in Pennsylvania German Folk Art*. Marceline, MO: Walsworth, 2002.

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Patterson, Nancy-Lou. *The Language of Paradise: Folk Art from Mennonite and Other Anabaptist Communities of Ontario, September 14–October 23, 1985*. London, Ontario: London Regional Art Gallery, 1985.

Schneider Haus National Historic Site, regionofwaterloo museums.ca/visit/schneider-haus-national-historic-site/.

ROWENA ZUERCHER is a book editor living in northern Indiana. She is passionate about heritage textile crafts and techniques and can be found with some sort of thread or yarn in her hand most of the time. You can see her craft explorations on Instagram and Facebook @homesaponified.

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A Costume History Gem

The Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University

KARIN J. BOHLEKE

All collections start with an inspiring artifact that triggers the passion to learn and the desire to acquire more items. For Dr. Elizabeth Thompson (1927–2003) of the Sociology Department of Shippensburg University, that object was a silk taffeta dress. This treasure was a gift identified as "Miss Ella Martin's best dress when she was eight or nine years old." The style was so different from anything Dr. Thompson had encountered that it fascinated her, and she was further astounded that someone would dress a child in silk taffeta and expect the wearer to keep it clean. This dress launched Dr. Thompson into costume history research, and what started with one dress became a selection of objects used to illustrate classroom lectures, then grew into a rack of items in her office, which then burgeoned into a private collection in her home.

Recognizing the interdisciplinary academic possibilities that dress history offers, Dr. Thompson began campaigning for an official collection space on campus. Dr. Gilmore Seavers, university president (1970–1980), agreed that she could have her space if she secured the Stanway collection. Margretta Stanway, wife of the president of the Hotel Association of Canada, had retired in nearby Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, but had traveled widely with her husband and had attended so many official functions that she kept a dress diary to avoid accidentally wearing the same outfit to an annual event more than once. She patronized a Canadian designer named Rodolphe and had other custom outfits made. Dr. Thompson successfully secured the collection in 1979, including the dress diary, and the Fashion Archives was officially born in 1980.

Building a Collection

Initially, Dr. Thompson considered restricting the collecting policy to clothing made in Pennsylvania and those items worn in Shippensburg. But she quickly realized that residents donned clothing from many national and global sources and that the outsourcing of labor offshore was shutting down domestic garment manufacturing, including in Pennsylvania. Instead, she maintained an open collections policy to include men's, women's, and children's clothing and accessories that encompassed a range from working-class to elite garments. Dr. Thompson's local interest did result in a significant collection of items with Shippensburg and county provenance as well as housing the university's historical textiles, which feature a white batiste graduation dress worn in 1896 and the 1923 victory banner—and bloomer uniform—of the women's champion field hockey team.



Miss Ella Martin's red-and-white check silk taffeta dress, circa 1897, with puffs on the upper sleeves topped by self-fabric and deep lace flounces. The bodice is gathered at the waistline and through tucks on the upper chest. *All photos courtesy of the Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University*



Maria Griest Tyson's wedding dress of gray silk taffeta, restyled, circa 1866. Maria's Quaker faith encouraged her to choose a sober color for her gown.



Cotton mull gown, candlewick hand-embroidery, circa 1805, with Massachusetts provenance.

Dr. Thompson further understood that the collection needed reference materials to be academically useful and to support research needs, so she established a fashion-history reference library that included modern scholarship and original nineteenth-century items such as issues of *Godey's Lady's Book*, *Peterson's*, and a large collection of mail-order catalogs and fashion-related paper ephemera.

The collection has grown to include Coptic textiles from Egypt (second to ninth century CE), while the oldest complete garments date to the eighteenth century, starting with Hanna Breck's wedding shoes from September 1737. Many items showcase stunning needlework techniques, such as a little girl's trained formal gown, circa 1805, completely covered with candlewick embroidery. Even shoes display fine needlework, as seen on a pair of girl's shoes from the 1840s, likely imported from France. While many have heard of the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1–3, 1863), they may not realize that almost no civilian garments from the place and time of the battle survive, but the Fashion Archives houses three dresses. Two of them belonged to Maria Griest, who married Charles Tyson on May 3, 1863. Sentimental about their wedding clothes, the Tysons hid them in a trunk in the basement of some friends, not knowing that the Confederate Army would occupy the town and requisition the house. Luckily, the soldiers never went downstairs, and the clothing escaped the pillaging Southerners, who often seized goods to send home to friends and family suffering under the Federal blockade.

Continuing the Vision: A Half-Century of Fashion History

Much has changed in the nearly 50 years of the collection's existence, but Dr. Thompson's vision in critical aspects has remained constant, starting with the annual exhibits for which the Fashion Archives is renowned, and many feature an accompanying exhibit catalog. During the COVID-19 shutdown, as current director, I arranged to have several catalogs made available as free downloadable PDFs from the Fashion Archives website. Visitors have enjoyed costume history journeys through themed exhibits that included different time periods, needlework and embellishment techniques, fashions from famous novels such as *Jane Eyre* and *Cranford*, and even songs about clothes. The collection's 1960s go-go boots, for example, were definitely "made for walkin'," and more than one elegant woman "wore blue velvet." For America's 250th, the grant-funded exhibition *Happy Birthday! American Milestones from Lafayette to Today* explores how Americans celebrated in 1826, 1876, 1926, 1976, and today, and it includes fashions from the times as well as commemorative souvenirs.

From Fragile to Fabulous: Conservation Volunteers

When visitors view the garments on exhibit, often amazed by their beauty and condition, they are unaware of the conservation and stabilization that many need beforehand, which ranges from minor to extensive. Without the volunteers who work on the

garments under my supervision, many items would never see the light of day. For example, Sarah Eyre Blair Glover (1861–1929) wore a stunning asymmetrical evening gown, circa 1923. The pale purple silk lining had split and shattered. Upon locating matching silk, a volunteer relined the gown. Another magnificent gown of rich purple watered-silk arrived with the day and evening bodices virtually intact, but the skirt and its trims had been disassembled during the nineteenth century and rolled onto a cardboard tube, and water had damaged some of the skirt panels. Volunteers stabilized the water-weakened areas and repaired the trim, reassembled the skirt, reattached the trim, and installed a new waistband using nineteenth-century techniques and handsewing throughout. The Fashion Archives is very fortunate to have these dedicated volunteers because outsourcing the conservation work would be beyond its operating budget.



Watered-silk evening gown, altered between 1865 and 1870, shown with the circa-1870 day bodice.

A Collection with Global Influence and a Campus at Its Core

The Fashion Archives collection is well known in regional museum circles, and its extensive resources have supported other exhibits through object loans, including the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum in Washington, DC, and the Car and Carriage Museum at the Frick in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Costume history fans can also find Fashion Archives garments in the book series by Dr. Lydia Edwards: *How to Read a Dress*, *How to Read a Suit*, and *How to Read a Wedding Dress*. The rich holdings have also drawn researchers studying specific garment types.

Dr. Thompson was foremost an educator, and that aspect of her vision has grown with the relocation of the Fashion Archives in 2015 to its current campus location. The museum is integrated into the applied history master's program and undergraduate public history curricula and serves as an essential hands-on learning environment that has attracted students to the program. Student workers, interns, and volunteers learn how to catalog new acquisitions, use museum cataloging software, install and take down exhibits, write exhibit labels, perform light conservation, and interact with visitors to the exhibits and the museum store. Those interested in developing more specialized skills can begin to learn sewing stabilization techniques to prepare objects for display. I also teach graduate classes within the Fashion Archives. For the course Museum Education, students create online instructional modules for teachers; for Textiles and Museums, they create digital exhibits and garment studies, and they are available on the Fashion Archives website for all to use. Undergraduate classes visit regularly for specialized talks as well as exhibit and garment viewings. Between the student workers, community volunteers, and streams of visitors, the Fashion Archives is a vibrant hub of activity. ❖

Resources

Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University, fashionarchives.org.

Follow the Fashion Archives on Facebook and Instagram @fasharchsu.

KARIN J. BOHLEKE is the director of the Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University and serves as an adjunct professor in Shippensburg University's applied history master's program. She lectures on costume history, serves as a consultant to museums and historical societies, and applies her skills to textile conservation. She and her husband live near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

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The Angels Project

Big Impact for Small Collections

LEON WIEBERS

For many small museums and historical societies, costume and textile collections are among their most fragile—and most meaningful—holdings. Clothing, accessories, samplers, quilts, and other textiles can illuminate social history better than almost any other artifact, yet they are often the most vulnerable to deterioration. They require specialized handling, careful documentation, and storage conditions that many small institutions, with limited budgets and minimal staff, struggle to provide.

Recognizing this need, the Costume Society of America (CSA) created a unique initiative nearly two decades ago: the Angels Project, an intensive, one-day, volunteer-driven event designed to provide hands-on assistance and expert guidance to small institutions that need it most. What began as a way to match professional expertise with pressing collection-care needs has since become one of CSA's most beloved and impactful programs—an annual tradition of service, stewardship, and shared learning.



Margaret Ordoñez (*left*) and Eileen Trestain (*right*) work together during the Flight Path Museum Angels Project in 2025. *All photos courtesy of the Costume Society of America*

How the Angels Project Began

The Angels Project originated in 2006 when conservator Margaret Ordoñez recognized a gap in the preservation landscape and partnered with Susan Jerome to organize the first event. Martha Grimm partnered in leading the effort in 2007, and thereafter numerous CSA member-volunteers joined each year to lend a hand. While many museums conduct regular conservation assessments and hold collection-care training sessions, small local institutions rarely have the staff, time, or resources to implement extensive undertakings. In many cases, a museum's entire textile collection might be overseen by a single part-time curator, or even by volunteers.

CSA leaders imagined a solution that paired the organization's deep pool of dress and textile experts with museums that could benefit from their help. From this idea came the Angels Project: a one-day, high-impact volunteer and grant program held annually in or near the city hosting the CSA National Symposium. The project would harness the enthusiasm of symposium attendees—scholars, conservators, costumers, curators, collection-care staff, archivists, collectors, and students—while also giving the host city something meaningful in return.

Each year, CSA selects one small institution to receive both the labor of volunteer "Angels" and up to $2,500 in supplies or equipment funded through the CSA Endowment. Donations of archival materials from the museum supply industry, including TALAS, Gaylord Archival, University Products, Archival Methods, and Testfabrics, supplement this support. The program is skillfully led by Margaret Ordoñez, Leon Wiebers, and Marie Schlag, building on the legacy of longtime leader Martha Winslow Grimm, who retired from the project in 2025. The late Patti Borrello, whose dedication shaped the program for many years, is fondly remembered.

How the Project Works

Each fall, in the city of the National Symposium, CSA invites small museums, historical societies, university departments (theatre, fashion, and textile departments), and historic house sites in the upcoming symposium region to apply. To qualify, institutions must meet several criteria: a limited annual budget, small staff size, a reliance on volunteers, nonprofit status, and a regularly open public schedule. They must also have adequate workspace for the Angels team and be close to the symposium hotel.

Once selected, the institution works with CSA's Angels leadership team to identify goals. These might include documenting garments and accessories, rehousing fragile items in archival containers, cleaning or surface-vacuuming textiles, labeling and photographing objects, stabilizing or supporting items with basic conservation care, training staff, and improving storage systems.

On "Angels Day," CSA volunteers arrive ready to work. They set up documentation tables, photography stations, vacuuming areas, labeling corners, and storage-prep spaces. They also unpack supplies and review work plans, and teams disperse to tackle the day's objectives. Some Angels teams process hundreds of items in one day, leaving institutions with improved storage and documentation and a stronger foundation for future care.



A volunteer makes padded hangers during the St. Catherine University Angels Project in 2022.

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Past Recipients: Stories of Impact

Lincoln County Historical Association (Wiscasset, Maine)—2017

The Lincoln County Historical Association (LCHA) was selected when the CSA Symposium was held in Portland, Maine. The organization, located in a historic jail built in 1811, houses an exceptional collection of schoolgirl samplers, quilts, and accessories. Volunteers documented, photographed, labeled, cleaned, and rehoused items with the help of new supplies funded through the Angels grant. The project provided a much-needed boost to LCHA's preservation efforts and reignited attention to its sampler collection.

Issaquah History Museum (Issaquah, Washington)—2019

In 2019, Issaquah History Museums hosted the Angels Project during the Pacific Northwest symposium. Volunteers worked on surface cleaning, documenting uncatalogued garments, rehousing fragile pieces, and improving labeling systems. Volunteers processed more than 250 items in one day, accelerating preservation work that would have taken the institution months to accomplish alone.



Terri Balogh takes photographs of an item in the collection of the Flight Path Museum Angels Project 2025.

St. Catherine University (St. Paul, Minnesota)—2022

In May 2022, CSA Angels supported St. Catherine University's historic dress collection, aiding Assistant Professor Jacqueline Parr in preserving over two thousand garments used in fashion education. Nearly 20 volunteers cleaned, photographed, documented, and stitched custom hanger covers for fragile pieces dating to the 1850s. The project marked the first formal preservation effort for the donation-based collection. Volunteers worked in pairs to vacuum and assess garments, contributing expertise and camaraderie. A dedicated photo studio ensured continued documentation and care for this vital teaching resource in fashion history.

Flight Path Museum (Los Angeles)—2025

In 2025, CSA Angels landed at the Flight Path Museum at LAX, bringing their signature blend of precision, care, and camaraderie to collections stewardship. As per the well-honed workplan, each item was vacuumed, photographed, tagged, documented, and archivally packaged—ready for long-term storage and future research. Thanks to meticulous planning by staff and the dedication of every volunteer, the team completed the full slate of tasks within the allotted time. This year marked a technological milestone: For the first time, Angels entered data directly into the museum's documentation system, transforming the workspace into a hub of laptops and live updates. ❖

RESOURCES

Learn more about the Angels Project, including eligibility and application guidelines, costumesocietyamerica.com/csa-angels-project.

LEON WIEBERS is an internationally award-winning costume designer and Fulbright Scholar to South Korea (2012). Some recent credits include *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *School of Rock* for the Tuacahn Center for the Arts; *13 Fruitcakes* for the Edinburgh Festival, Seoul Performing Arts Festival, and La MaMa ETC; *Oslo* for Pioneer Theatre; and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* at St. Louis Rep and Cincinnati Playhouse. Other companies include the Hollywood Bowl, California Music Circus, San Francisco Opera Center, English National Opera, Theatre du Chatelet in Paris, and the National Theatre of Korea. Leon is a member of United Scenic Artists, 829; a president of the Costume Society of America; and a full professor at Loyola Marymount University, where he has served as chair of Theatre Arts and as Faculty Senate president.

Tips for Caring for Historical Dress Objects and Textiles

- Keep textiles in stable environments.
- Limit exposure to UV light; store items in the dark when possible.
- Use acid-free boxes, tissue, and muslin.
- Use freshly washed hands to handle textiles on a clean surface.
- Wear nitrile gloves when handling other artifacts.
- Store flat when possible; if hanging, use padded hangers.
- Vacuum with low suction and a protective screen.
- Avoid sharp folds; pad folds with tissue, as space allows.
- Support accessories with archival forms.
- Maintain detailed photographic and written documentation.
- Inspect storage areas for pests and mold regularly.