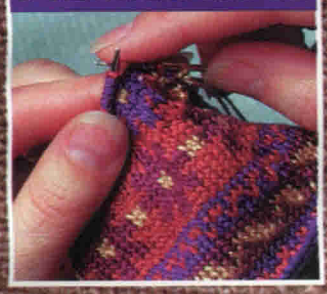
March/April 1993

PIECEWORK

All This By Hand

PREMIER ISSUE



For their hands tell a story, and the works of their hands tell a story — each thread connecting us to those who came before. And the story endures.

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WORK™

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NOTIONS

From the editor

Of the Maker's Self a Part

"The thing that is handmade has no desire to last for thousands upon thousands of years . . . It follows the appointed round of days, it drifts with us as the current carries us along together, it wears away little by little." What is handmade embodies "the heartbeat of human time."
—*Octavio Paz*

When we see raised motifs in a piece of crocheted lace, elaborate embroidery on a folk blouse, a gloomy verse a seven-year-old painstakingly stitched on a colonial sampler, we want to touch the embellished cloth. For the cloth touches us. We want to feel with our hands what was made by hand in a kind of invisible handclasp. Instinctively, we want to know who made it, why, and how it was done. Handwork is a window into people's lives. "Tell me how long it took someone to make a shirt," one woman commented when we described PIECEWORK to her, "and I'll understand what life was at that time in that place."

Handwork reflects people's history, daily lives, and cultures. In this issue's stories, handwork means physical survival, personal hope, and cultural identity. It represents a change in women's education and, as depicted in richly colored fourteenth-century paintings, a change in religious views.

But for all its evocative stories, this new magazine falls short if your fingers don't itch to handle cotton threads, linen fabric, silk yarns, coils of pine needles, and braids of raffia. The importance of handwork lies as much in the process as in the finished item. There is pleasure and comfort and peace in the materials and rhythms of handwork. And the making deepens your understanding of the story from which each project grew.

At times, it has been too easy for much of handwork to be dismissed as "women's work" or relabeled as art to establish its importance. We have come into a new time. We can explore and present handwork in the context of history and culture, portraying and honoring those who made it and taking pleasure in doing by hand what we have time for. "Who thinks they have time to do this?" one friend understandably exclaimed, examining a minutely patterned piece of Japanese *shibori* and thinking of the busyness of all of our lives. We do . . . to keep some of that "human time" in our lives.

The sense that handwork has meaning in our personal histories is reflected in current poetry, such as Eavan Boland's poem in Word-spinning, and fiction. The positive response to Whitney Otto's *How to Make an American Quilt* shows how quilt making—as history, as social process, and as a natural metaphor for piecing lives together—captures our imaginations. In Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Animal Dreams,* a vivid afghan plays a key role as Cosima (Codi), the central character, pieces together her past, beginning with a visit to her father's house. "Folded on a sofa was one thing I remembered well, a black crocheted afghan with red flowers. Hallie and I used to drag that thing around everywhere, our totem against disaster." Later, the afghan becomes part of a ceremony.

In future issues, as PIECEWORK stories range from the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire to Turkish socks, from Hmong needle workers in the United States to three generations of Athapaskan bead workers, you will discover that although historical handwork is often anonymous, it is still personal. It has fingerprints. Each piece "is of the maker's self a part," as Mary Gow Walsworth wrote in 1905, "And tells without her knowing."

Veronica

Veronica Patterson
Editor



How Times Have Changed

I'm glad PIECEWORK will emphasize history. I like your proposed departments such as Wordspinning. Here are some appropriate words from Mrs. Florence Hartley's *Ladies' Hand Book of Fancy and Ornamental Work,* 1859:

> In taking leave of her readers, the compiler of this volume cannot refrain from offering a few remarks on the importance of needlework as a branch of female education. She cannot but regard it as essential to a woman's happiness, not less than her usefulness, in accomplishing this mission of her life. If providence has placed her in a humble or middle station of life, the ability to use her needle *with skill* in useful or ornamental work, enables her greatly to promote the well being and comfort of her family, and to gain and preserve that peace of mind which results from the consciousness of being useful. If she is placed in a more elevated station, her leisure hours may be passed, not only with profit, but with pleasure, in executing those beautiful fabrics of the needle, which contribute so largely to the adornment of her person and her dwelling. She should by no means neglect the cultivation of her mind, by reading and study. But there are many hours in the day when the mind recoils from this species of employment, and turns to those in which the hands are engaged, while the thoughts are free; then the needle is the grand resort, and skill in its use becomes the source of unalloyed happiness.

I'm of course on the side of "unalloyed happiness," but how times have changed!

K. F. Wilson
Rushville, New York

Preservation and Revival

I can hardly keep track of all the recent growth and changes at Interweave Press! Congratulations on your newest venture; PIECEWORK sounds like a winner, and I am excited about it! The historical angle especially appeals to me, since I am particularly interested in the preservation of old textiles and the revival of traditional techniques.

Bobbie Irwin
Price, Utah

The Check Will Be in the Mail

When your announcement of PIECEWORK came in the mail, it was the best news I have had in a long time. The publication will certainly fill a need, and who better to do it than Interweave Press! My check will be in the mail when you announce the subscription cost.

Virginia I. Harvey
Freeland, Washington

Peacework—in Diverse Cultures

Thank you for requesting my comments regarding PIECEWORK magazine. I had already formed some very positive thoughts about your plans for this unique enterprise. I am thrilled with the concept of PIECEWORK (which is often peacework!) as I have been gathering my own information, pictures, and history of handwork from diverse cultures with their related but varying techniques and interpretations, in fiber arts. This interest has also led me to "see for myself" in traveling to South and Central America, Europe, and elsewhere, where often person-to-person contact with artists and craftspeople has been rewarding.

Also, I appreciate the educational aspects of your goals for this magazine: we don't need another publication with superficial, "quickie"

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projects. It is certainly wise to provide easy-to-complete projects, however, so as not to discourage novice "explorers." If interest is then piqued, one can always pursue the technique further with more challenging forms of expression, workshops, etc.

I am looking forward to the inspiration, information, and excitement of this innovative magazine.

Jeanne Schmelzer
Fort Collins, Colorado

A Boon to Living History Museums

Thank you for sending me the exciting news of Interweave's latest magazine, PIECEWORK. A new magazine on textile crafts that includes the historical background of handcrafts will certainly be welcomed by the staff members of living history museums who are so involved in exploring the "dress" of their period and learning the uses of their textile tools in the days of "home manufacture."

I have found museum visitors to be curious by nature: ready to discuss any revelations into the daily activities of earlier times and to marvel at our ancestors' talents and ingenuity.

Miriam Dolloff Chesley
North Scituate, Massachusetts

Promises, Promises!

You have one impatient fan who wonders where the article is on pine needle basketry. He's a forester, he's worked in Georgia, he has a supply of longleaf needles given to him recently, and he's exploring basketry with pine needles. He is sitting in the southwest woods expecting this promised PIECEWORK article to clear everything up for him. Some people are impatient when presented with promises. They want things now.

PIECEWORK is such an intriguing promise that I'm eager to explore it. Do you know what appealed to me the most? The fact that this new publication is multicultural in scope and that it will explore historical context, tradition, and practice. I'm delighted that it won't begin and end with a presentation of projects that can be applied to contemporary usage.

Best wishes on the new publication.

Mary Dieterich
Tempe, Arizona

Bay Area Teeming with Needlework

I am so pleased to hear about your new magazine. Handwork is my favorite activity, so I am really happy that you'll be devoting a magazine to it. I will keep my eyes peeled for appropriate material. The Bay Area is teeming with needlework!

Marilyn Green
Menlo Park, California

Not Nostalgia but History

I'm pleased to hear about your new magazine, PIECEWORK. Particularly appealing to me is its emphasis on the history of handwork. I'm glad it will be historical rather than nostalgic. Nostalgia alone is a kind of looking back through a hazy lens at something in a golden light. And the look ends in that

prettiness. History, on the other hand, lets us look back and celebrate but also try to understand—so that we can go forward with a better knowledge of the past.

I look forward to your article on the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework. I've read a little about the women who started it as a business, but I don't know the whole story.

Virginia Perry
Oneonta, New York

Beyond How—To Who and Why

I thoroughly enjoyed the material about PIECEWORK. I'm pleased to see that you will include projects and that they will let readers try historical techniques to make something terrific. However, I'm even more excited that PIECEWORK will go beyond the "how-to"—to tell the story of the culture of origin and of individual handworkers. I enjoy trying new techniques, and I haunt the craft sections of the magazine racks, but I'm always hungry to have more than directions, to know who did this before me or what a motif means. I'm glad you'll be looking at the roots of these handcrafts; it adds another dimension to what so many of us love to do.

How about exploring an article on Japanese *shibori?*

Judy Hewitt
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Tell Me a Story

I am really drawn to the idea that PIECEWORK will tell stories. So many articles I read about the history of handwork are either too simplistic or too academic. What I like to read is lots of accurate information about a craft and its history. But I don't like to have so many statistics and endnotes in a text that the story of the culture, the people, and even the beautiful materials—from linen threads to basket fibers—gets lost. I always like to know what role handwork played or plays in peoples' lives. Here's to stories!

Mary D. Walton
Madison, South Dakota

It's a Small World, but a Complex One

When I got your materials about PIECEWORK, I had just been reading, as we all do every night in the newspaper, of all the places in the world that are in turmoil. There are so many cultures where a people's identity is being threatened or reestablished. It is a small world in the sense that wherever we live and whatever we do, we affect each other. But it's a large, complex world if you look at closing the gaps in understanding between cultures.

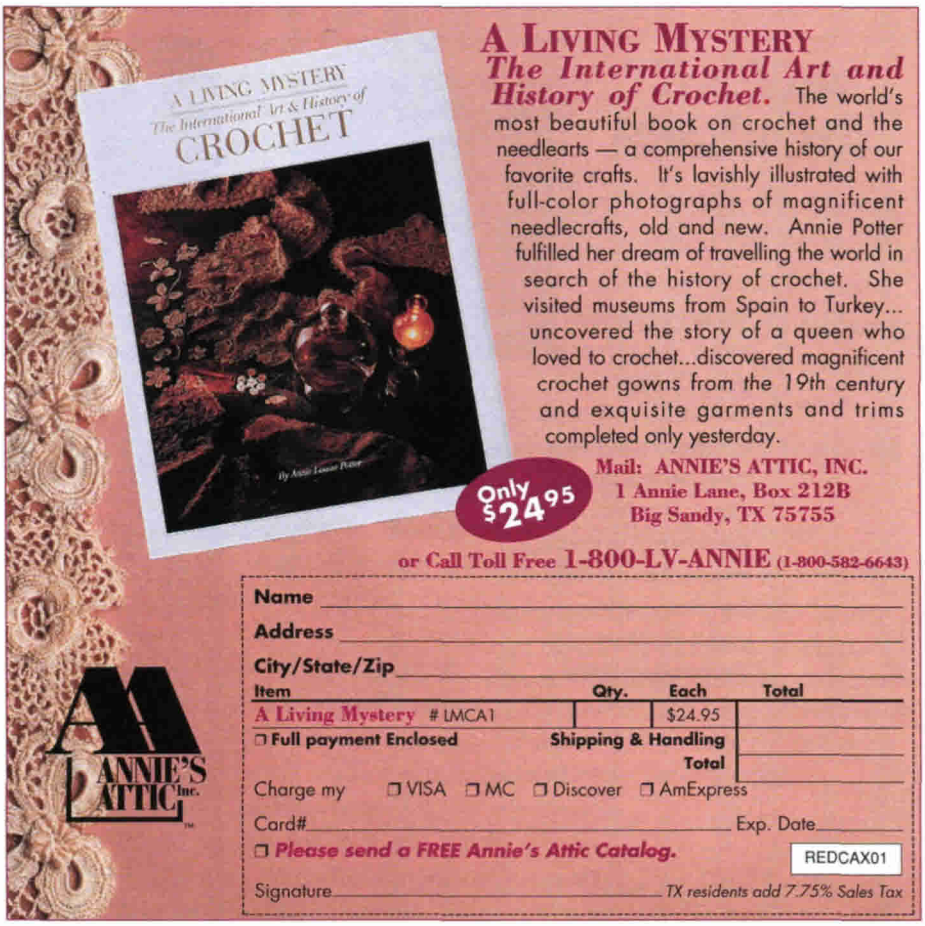
Fabric handwork can offer solid insights into other cultures—their climate, traditions, history, and people. PIECEWORK can only lead to much-needed further celebrations and understanding of other cultures. Good luck with it.

Constance Wilton
Port Arthur, Texas

A Couple of Ideas

Congratulations on the new magazine! PIECEWORK sounds great. I immediately thought of a couple of ideas for the future. One is about some entrancing pieced Korean wrapping cloths I saw at the IBM gallery. They are exquisite leftover fragments stitched together into art. The second idea was based on an Indian beadwork article I saw that explored the many interconnecting links between cultures and their crafts. I will send you the information I have on these two topics and then look forward to PIECEWORK's article.

Nell Znamierowski
New York, New York

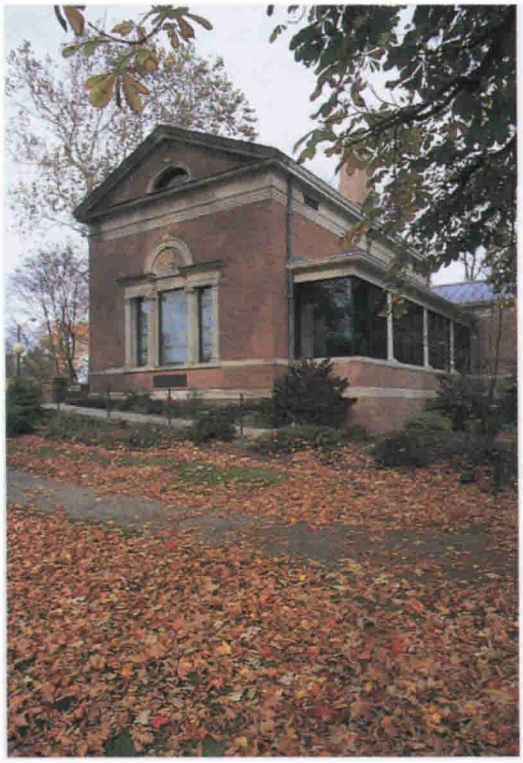




A PLACE TO COME TO

Deborah Cannarella

To Ornament Their Minds: Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy, 1792–1833



Among rolling hills in the heart of Connecticut lies the quintessential white-church-steepled New England town of Litchfield, still looking much as it has since it was settled in 1720. Although its present-day serenity belies the fact, this picturesque spot was an energetic and important center for women's social and educational reform in the early years of the nation.

Here, alongside the country's first law school—founded by Tapping Reeve, one of the first pioneers for women's rights—Sarah Pierce founded the first institution in America for the higher education of women.

From April through mid-November 1993, The Litchfield Historical Society will mark the 200th anniversary of the school's first full academic year with the exhibition entitled "To Ornament Their Minds: Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy, 1792–1833." Director Catherine Keene Fields and historian Lynne Brickley, with the benefit of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, have designed this exhibition to emphasize the significant role of the early female academies in the lives of nineteenth-century women.

The Litchfield Historical Society (pictured upper right), Litchfield, Connecticut, commemorates the 200th anniversary of the founding of Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy with an exhibit (opening April 16, 1993) that offers valuable insights into the history of women's education.

Sarah Pierce was born in Litchfield in 1767. To help support her six brothers and sisters, she went to New York City to be trained as a teacher, the only acceptable career for an eighteenth-century middle-class woman. When she first opened the Litchfield Female Academy, the curriculum was typical of that of a private school for daughters of wealthy families: the ornamental skills of painting, embroidery, and music were taught along with the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Sarah Pierce gradually developed a more rigorous academic program, and in the later years, broadened the curriculum of her school to train women in the faculties of imagination, reason, memory, accuracy, and discrimination.

Ironically, at the heart of Sarah Pierce's experiment in education, enabling its success, were the ornamental arts. She used them as a device for learning. Students created watercolors and needlework of nature, maps and genealogies, myths, Bible stories, and poetry. Half of the more than forty pieces in the exhibition are embroideries and samplers, many titled for their poetic, natural, and classical themes: for example, *Malvina* (a Scottish folk-ballad opera), *Autumn,* and *Pointing the Neophyte towards the City of Knowledge.*

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In a curriculum that combined ornamental and academic studies, the students at The Litchfield Female Academy created needlework from a variety of sources. The silk embroidery (right) was made by Cyrinthia Sacretia Smith in 1802 from *The Cottage Girl,* a print published by J. LePetit of 22 Suffolk Street, Middlesex Hospital, London, June 25, 1799 (left). The embroidered piece incorporates watercolor (for the face, hair, and hands), as well as a variety of embroidery stitches: couching, laid work, split stitch, satin stitch, chain stitch, seeding, and straight stitch.





The rest of the artifacts on display include watercolor paintings and stencil theorems on velvet and paper. There is also a quilt in a variation on the Whig Rose pattern, made by the girls at the Academy as an engagement gift for schoolmate Jerusha Clark. Daybooks, journals, and letters describe the girls' schoolwork, daily activities, and often their needlework projects.

The Cottage Girl, shown in the right-hand photograph above, was made by Cyrinthia Sacretia Smith in 1802. It was also the subject of the work of her schoolmate, Nancy Hale, who wrote in a letter to her sister that same year:

> I spend my time very agreeably And very much engaged about my picture. C. Smith began one when she first came here like mine but I have got some ways before her I shall endeavor to be as diligent as possible. . . . Besides embroidery I study geography and write compositions. I get my lessons in Evening. She [Miss Pierce] does not allow anyone to embroider without they attend to some study for she says she wishes to have them ornament their minds when they are with her.

Sarah Pierce never dropped the study of ornamentals from the curriculum. In a time when a woman's education and social status were measured by her skill in these areas, mastering these arts was essential for a young

woman to take her place in society, and necessary for Academy students who hoped to establish their own schools for girls.

Also, by maintaining the expected curriculum, Sarah Pierce was able to expand the nontraditional curriculum without raising too many eyebrows. Parents wanted a framed piece of needlework to hang on the wall of their home to show they were able to provide their daughters with a fine education. By satisfying this requirement, Sarah Pierce was able to keep her school running successfully and quietly continue her education reforms.

Not the least of Sarah Pierce's contributions was her own example as an enterprising, intellectual, influential woman.

The diplomas themselves are an appropriate document of Sarah Pierce's uniting ornamental and academic studies at The Litchfield Academy. They are small squares of silk, printed by Connecticut engraver Oliver Pelton and trimmed with blue silk ribbon. The printed image depicts a seated female figure with a classical temple to one side of her, a globe to the other, and a stack of books nearby. Often these small diplomas were embroidered or trimmed with lace.

Not the least of Sarah Pierce's contributions was her own example as an enterprising, intellectual, influential woman, a model for the many students who later founded or taught in female schools. In its forty years, The Litchfield Female Academy graduated more than 3,000 girls. Her students went on to open similar schools in at least thirteen states and territories. Among the school's graduates were Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* and her sister Catherine, who founded the Hartford Female Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut.

The exhibition opens April 16, 1993. A series of lectures, symposia, and public programs will be offered in conjunction with the exhibition. A 150-page illustrated catalog is also available from The Litchfield Historical Society (PO Box 385, Litchfield, CT 06759).

The rest of the Society's collection includes 1,500 costume items, 100 quilts and coverlets, and many other local decorative arts artifacts and American paintings. The town of Litchfield also has much to offer the visitor interested in history. In addition to streets lined with ancient elms and stately Colonial homes, other points of interest include the Congregational Church (1828), where Harriet Beecher Stowe's father was pastor for sixteen years, the home of Tapping Reeve (1774), and the Law School (1784). The latter two buildings are owned and interpreted by the Historical Society. Nancy Hale's version of *The Cottage Girl* is part of the collection of The Connecticut Historical Society, (1 Elizabeth Street, Hartford, CT 06105), about an hour's drive from Litchfield.

About the Author. *Deborah Cannarella is a freelance writer and editor living in Southbury, Connecticut.*

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Linen Closet

Linda Carlson

From the Armoire: Edwardian Whites

Opening the doors of an Edwardian armoire, you look into the romantic and feminine life of a lady of the early twentieth century. England's Edward VII, for whom the opulent period is named, reigned from 1901–1910. The closet is filled with delicate whites of linen and cotton. Dresses of sheer cotton lawn and batiste or fine linen are embellished with embroidered floral patterns, lace insertion, and rows of tiny pleated tucks. The dresses have high stand-up collars, and their lines emphasize an S-shaped silhouette, full at the waist in the front of the bodice and in the back of the skirt. It is easy to envision a lovely young lady posing in such a dress for a family portrait or graduation picture.



Elaborate handwork decorates the cuffs of this leno-striped heirloom dress from the collection of Barbara Liebler.

If you have inherited or purchased an Edwardian garment, you will want to care for it in ways that will extend its life and your enjoyment of it. The following guidelines will help you identify its fiber content, and repair, wash, and store or display it properly.

Caring properly for Edwardian whites requires knowledge of the textiles' fibers. Both cotton and linen are cellulosic, derived from plants. Without a microscopic examination of the fibers, it may be difficult to differentiate between the two. Linen is likely to be stiffer, to have what is referred to as a crisper "hand." Cotton will be limp by comparison. Both fabrics require similar care, although linen's stiffer fibers are more likely to deteriorate when creased or folded.

Depending on how it has been cared for, your garment may require cleaning. Generally speaking, all garments benefit from cleaning because soil increases the rate of abrasion of fibers, and stains attract unwanted pests. First, carefully examine the garment. Look for damaged or weak areas, especially around lace. Mend these areas by hand. Avoid fusible backings; the adhesives can be harmful, and the relative stiffness of the mended area stresses the surrounding fabric. Look for stains and evidence of starch. Food stains and starch residue are particularly hazardous; both are food sources for insects and tend to attract them. Hooks and eyes may have discolored the fabric, and the hem may be soiled from use, but these stains are less harmful to the fabric.

Old cottons and linens can be washed, but older pieces like the Edwardian whites require special care. Because agitation and manipulation can cause harm and accelerate deterioration, hand wash garments with a gentle detergent. Look for one of the several detergents on the market that are designed for quilts (see Conservation Supplies, page 12). Avoid extremely hot water, which can unduly open the fibers and accelerate the breakdown of old fibers, and bleach, which can substantially weaken fibers. Oxygen bleaches are gentler than chlorine bleaches, but you probably will want to avoid bleaching altogether. Do not use softeners, which build up and attract soils. Gently wash

If you have inherited or purchased an Edwardian garment, you will want to care for it in ways that will extend its life and your enjoyment of it. These guidelines will help you identify its fiber content, and repair, wash, and store or display it properly.

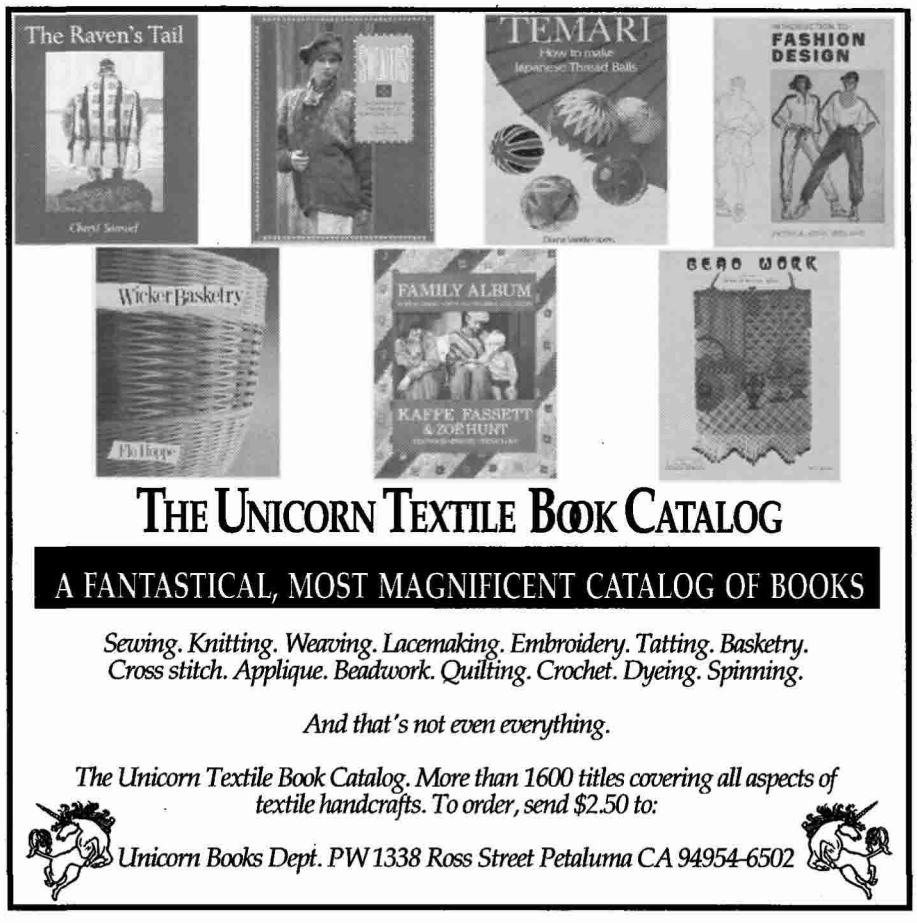
the garment, being careful not to wring it. Rinse thoroughly to remove all detergent and squeeze excess water from it. Lay the garment flat to dry on a towel or drying screen; do not hang it or dry it in a dryer. Iron the garment while it is still slightly damp. Test your iron temperature carefully, and for safety, iron on the wrong side of the fabric or use a press cloth.

After carefully cleaning your "whites," plan how you will exhibit and store them. Displaying your heirlooms is part of the joy of owning them, but do it in a way that doesn't compromise their preservation. Because Edwardian costumes are voluminous, antique dress forms display them best. You can find these at antique shops and garage sales. You also could pad a modern dress form to approximate the Edwardian silhouette. The better the dress fits the form, the less stress there will be on the fabric.

Avoid displaying your garment in direct or intense light because light accelerates the degradation of textiles. And limit the display period. Three months is long enough for valuable textiles. Then let these special clothes rest. If you have several garments, display some and store some, rotating them periodically.

Proper storage will prolong the life of your garment. You may hang a garment in excellent condition on a hanger padded with polyester fiberfill, rounding out the shoulder and neck areas from which the garment will hang. Don't use a purchased padded hanger covered with plastic, because the plastic can give off damaging gases over time. Avoid wire hangers; they crease threads at the shoulder, making them likely to tear. A muslin garment cover provides protection and allows the garment to "breathe." Plastic bags, especially dry cleaners' bags, do not breathe, and any moisture trapped inside can promote mildewing. Also, the plastic may give off harmful gases.

Stuff more fragile garments with acid-free tissue and lay them flat in a drawer or cedar chest. However, do not lay anything directly against the raw wood. Place a buffering layer of



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muslin or cotton sheeting (well washed, without softeners or bleach) between wood and textile. You may line the chest with acid-free paper as well. Both muslin and paper absorb the acid around it, but while muslin can be washed, the paper will need to be replaced at least once a year. If you are storing cotton and linen garments folded, refold them occasionally to prevent damage at the fold lines. Because its brittler fibers are more likely to deteriorate when creased, linens should be refolded every three months.

Edwardian whites have provided inspiration for many contemporary garments. It is a privilege to own an original. Each garment has a story to tell, and if we care for it, it will last longer, and we can listen carefully to what it can tell us of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

About the Author. *Linda Carlson is a lecturer and curator of historic costume in the Department of Design, Merchandising, and Consumer Sciences at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado. She can be reached at (303) 491-1983.*

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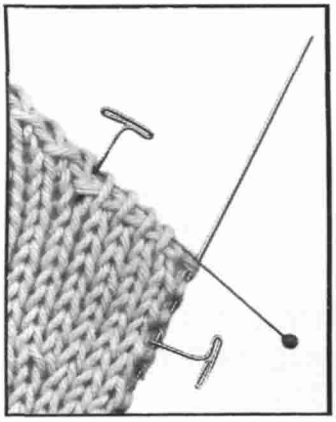
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WORDSPINNING

Eavan Boland



In an essay from the American Poetry Review, *Eavan Boland describes a woman with flour on her hands, going into the garden for the third time to keep her child from putting a poisonous laburnum pod in its mouth. The woman, who is a poet, "wants . . . to write about the laburnum, the heat of the child, common human love—the mesh of these things. But where—says the voice in her ear—is the interest in all this? How are you going to write a poem out of these . . . snips and threads of an ordinary day?" Eavan Boland does so by exploring the ordinary until it reveals its essence.*

PATCHWORK

I have been thinking at random
on the universe,
or rather, how nothing in the universe
is random—

(there's nothing like presumption late at night.)

My sumptuous
trash bag of colors
Laura Ashley cottons—
waits to be cut
and stitched and patched but

there's a mechanical feel
about the handle
of my secondhand sewing machine,
with its flowers,
and "Singer" painted orange
and its iron wheel.

My back is to the dark.
Somewhere out there
are stars and bits of stars
and little bits of bits,
and swiftnesses and brightnesses and drift—
but is it craft or art?

I will be here
till midnight,
cross-legged in the dining room,
logging triangles and diamonds,
cutting and aligning,
finding greens in pinks
and burgundies in whites,
until I finish it.

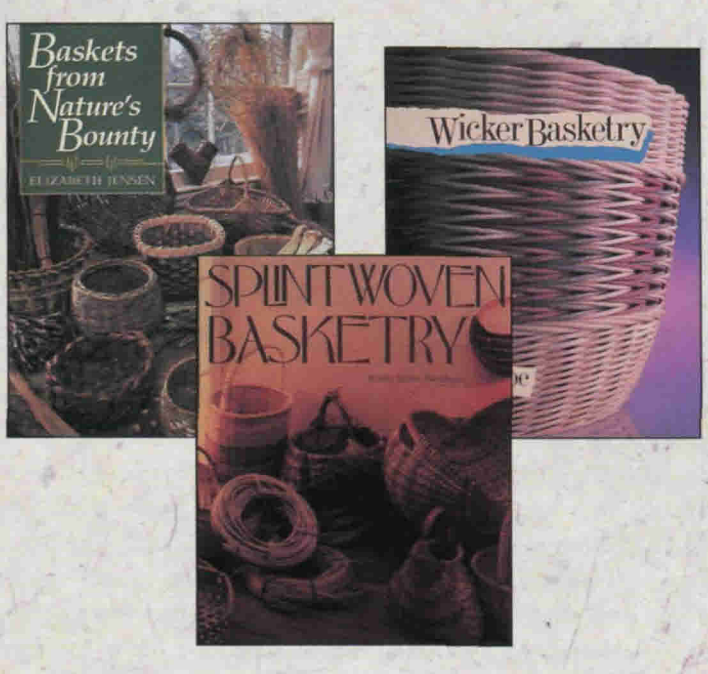
There's no reason in it.

Only when it's laid
right across the floor—
sphere on square
and seam to seam
in a good light—
will it start to hit me:

these are not bits
they are pieces
and the pieces fit.

From *Outside History: Selected Poems 1980–1990*, by Eavan Boland, W.W. Norton and Company, New York and London. "Patchwork" is Section 5 from the poem "Domestic Interior."

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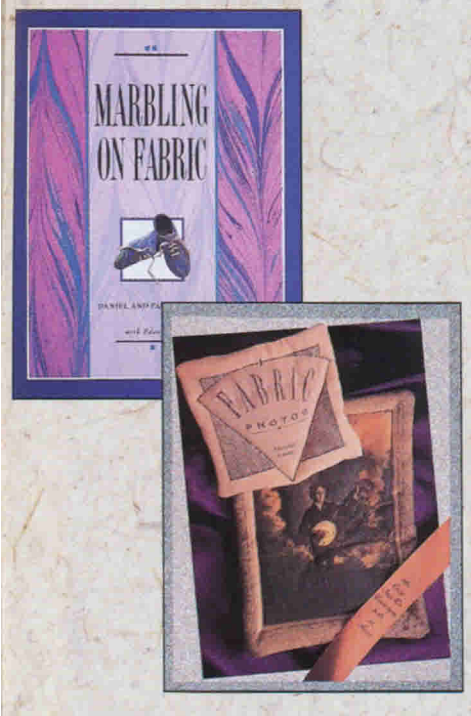


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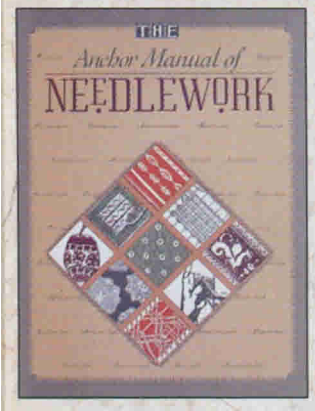
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"A VIRTUOUS SWEAT-SHOP"

The Deerfield Embroidery Story

Condensed and excerpted from *Deerfield Embroidery* by Margery Burnham Howe



Above: Margaret Christine Whiting, 1860–1946. Photograph probably taken about 1895. Margaret Whiting and Ellen Miller were the founders of the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework.

THE STORY OF THE DEERFIELD SOCIETY of Blue and White Needlework has so many strands that it is difficult to choose which to follow first. It is a needlework story, a preservation story, a business story, a women's story, a New England story, a technical story of patient experiments with dyes, and a tale of living out and adapting Victorian theories about society and work. Yet it began simply enough.

In 1893, Mr. and Mrs. Sylvanus Miller moved with their two daughters, Ellen and Margaret, to Deerfield, Massachusetts, from Hatfield, a town fifteen miles to the south. Two years later, the widowed Mrs. Calvin Whiting, who already knew the Millers, moved to town with her two daughters, Julia and Margaret. All four young women were in their thirties. Three had had art training: Margaret Whiting and Ellen Miller had studied at the New York Academy of Design, and Margaret Miller at Cooper Union in New York. Before they founded the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework, Ellen Miller and Margaret Whiting had written, illustrated, and published *Wildflowers of the Northeastern United States* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 1895), a book still valued today. Margaret Miller had also written and illustrated a smaller book, *My Saturday Bird Class* (Boston: 1893).

To Make One Replica

Margaret Whiting and Ellen Miller probably discovered the few pieces of eighteenth-century crewel embroidery in the Memorial Hall Museum soon after settling in Deerfield. They were captivated by the vitality of a decorative art lost for over a hundred years. Their initial intention, as Margaret reported in a talk she gave in 1898, was limited to preservation: "to make one replica of each of the pieces in the collection." They found the wool in the museum pieces moth-eaten and the whole fabric fragile, but they were drawn to the vigorous New England designs. Carefully, they worked out the stitches. "There were many variants in feather stitch and herringbone, in square and diagonal lattices, in knots and crosses, in buttonhole, outline, and chain stitches," Margaret wrote, "but the craftswoman placed her main dependence upon a 'laid [Roumanian] stitch' for use in work that must bear frequent washings."

Their curiosity stimulated, Margaret Whiting and Ellen Miller sought additional examples of early needlework with determination and delight, driving around the countryside behind the Millers' driving horse, Letty (making landscape sketches as they went), meeting families and examining heirloom fabrics. They were interested in the stitches, the designs, and the natural dyes, whose original brightness showed true on the backs of some fabrics.

Art, Honesty, Utility

Margaret Whiting and Ellen Miller began their own embroidery, and as their skills grew, they found their work in demand. The idea evolved for a village industry, to be based on Englishman John Ruskin's (1819–1900) utopian theories. Although attracted to his idea that employers were responsible first to their employees, next to the quality of the work, and only last to profits, Margaret (Whiting; Margaret Miller, who was also involved in the business, was referred to



The Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework's name is reflected in its early embroideries using indigo-dyed linen thread to thwart moths, which had damaged much of the colonial crewel-wool work Margaret Whiting and Ellen Miller first wished to replicate.

The Society's work quickly evolved to include more color. Upper right, behind the Deerfield embroidery with its signature "D," is the fragile colonial fabric with the remains of crewel-wool designs on which the Society's linen embroidery was based. Upper left are paper patterns Margaret Whiting and Ellen Miller used in their design process.



A small front parlor in the Miller house, with a flax wheel hanging over the side door, became a showroom for the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework.

Photo: Allen Sisters, courtesy of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association.



Three women work on an embroidered coverlet.

Photo: Allen Sisters, courtesy of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association.

as "Miss Sec'y" to acknowledge her administrative work and to distinguish the two) and Ellen had their own strong ideas about what would make a village needlework industry successful. They insisted that benevolence and social reform be separated from craftsmanship. "It is not charity but art which founds and maintains a craft," Margaret wrote. "If art is served, honesty remembered, and utility not forgotten, a craft needs no more encouragement than it ought to find on the open market where it may squarely meet and demand public recognition for its inborn merits." In 1896, the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework was founded. The organization's dedication to quality as the foundation of business was evident in the "D" embroidered on those finished pieces that met the Society's standards for workmanship.

The formation of the Society couldn't have come at a better time for Deerfield residents. Deerfield had been experiencing difficult economic times as young men left to try their fortunes in the West and industrial progress brought wealth to the eastern cities, but drained it from the small rural towns. A small industry at once unique yet suited to the village's quiet life would be a boon to Deerfield, and it would soon grow in unforeseen ways to involve much of the village.

"From the beginning," Margaret wrote, "the Society had a distinct aim and was governed by a considered plan: To avoid the doubtful value of advertising beyond the intrinsic worth of its output; to demand and get a return which should make the effort profitable; to produce the best possible work and to keep it up to that standard. Mindful of future destruction by moths, crewel threads were discarded and flax became the material chosen for both stitchery and fabrics."

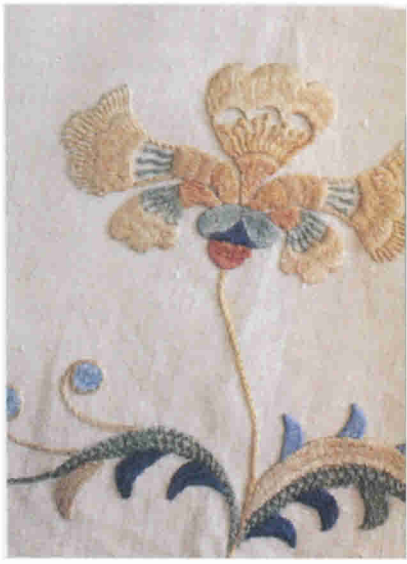
The following excerpt, from *Deerfield Embroidery,* by Margery Burnham Howe, describes the beginning of the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework.

A Very Small Business

"A few skilled needlewomen were found who were willing to give their services, waiting for payment until such time as there were sales," Margaret Miller wrote in an article about the Society in the July 1901 issue of *Modern Priscilla.* "A very small amount was invested in materials so the beginning was made practically without capital. . . . The enterprise grew steadily although it is difficult to tell exactly how the impetus was gained. By acquaintances and summer visitors the news was spread and the first orders obtained. Then a newspaper took it up and the enterprise was on its feet." The newspaper was *The Springfield Republican,* its editor Margaret's brother Charles, and her sister Julia writing some of its columns.

The small group of women first trained by Margaret and Ellen must have worked diligently, because within a year fifty-four pieces of embroidery were sent to an exhibit at the State Memorial Museum of Norwich, Connecticut, the first of many such shows from coast to coast. A list found in the papers of the Society notes exhibits at the Institutes of Art in Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Detroit, St. Louis, Baltimore, and Rochester; the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo, New York, 1901 (silver medal for color and design); and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, California, 1915 (gold medal).





Equal Pay for Hand and Mind

A satisfactory financial arrangement was worked out: "The full price of each piece is divided into ten parts; five parts go to the embroiderer; two parts to the designer; two parts to the 'fund' which is used to pay running expenses of the Society, and the one remaining part covers the expense of materials used. It will be seen that the proportion of the payment for the work and the design is reckoned on the common basis of the labor involved. This proportion is founded on a belief that the hand and brain work are interdependent and should receive equal money returns. We asked prices that would allow us to pay twenty cents an hour for skilled labor and we produced only pieces that our foremothers would have approved. This arrangement is an experiment and has no theories of social economics behind it." Out of the "fund" very small salaries were paid to Margaret and Ellen for executive work and to Margaret Miller, "Miss Sec'y." Time studies were methodically kept and there is a dog-eared notebook in which rough sketches of patterns are drawn with notes: "Mrs. Cadwell's time, 2 hrs. 50 minutes," "E.M. snail trail, 56 inches, 25 minutes" among many others. Mrs. Cadwell and Ellen apparently worked at what was considered to be an average speed, as their

names occur most often. In this way an estimate could be made of what another worker might do on the same pattern when work was given out. The only financial record found in the small handful of correspondence and business papers remaining from the Society lists the names of thirty-one workers in 1901 with the amount paid to each. The receipts for that year were $2,126.76 and the total amount paid to workers including Margaret, Ellen, and Miss Sec'y was $1,597.12. The difference, $529.64, must cover the cost of materials, linen, thread, dyes, and mordants together with correspondence and mailing. The highest amount paid to one worker was $139.00 and the lowest was $.75. The income of the Society varied from year to year. One set of table linen alone, for instance, brought over a thousand dollars.

Many of the initial pieces were table mats of all sizes that were popular at the time. Also embroidered were coverlets, curtains, valances, door hangings as well as other linens.

Margaret Whiting wrote to her friend Emily Balch, who taught at Wellesley College, about the trials of starting a small business:

> The effort to establish an industry in Deerfield is leading Ellen Miller and myself a dog's life but since it is having some success, and we have a hope or two for its future, we must not be disconsolate. It's really very interesting and rather exciting to engage in starting a business even on a very small scale, and if we only get a permanent market we shall be very happy over the enterprise. . . . There are seven women in what Ellen calls our 'virtuous Sweat-shop' every day. Like the Red Queen I find myself running very hard to keep in the same place.

In addition to working on their own business, when the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework's success helped spawn a larger craft movement in Deerfield, Margaret and Ellen were there to assist.

Something Very Like Perfection: The Deerfield Craft Revival

Within a year of the Society's founding, other Deerfield residents were reviving numerous other early crafts. Weaving (from rag rugs to excellent linens), palm-leaf and raffia-and-grass basketry, ironwork, and

—continued on page 24





Polly's Parrot and Aunt Bek's Pears

Part of the delight of Deerfield embroidery lies in the creativity individual embroiderers brought to their work—both the eighteenth-century embroiderers whose work Margaret and Ellen used as reference material and their nineteenth- and twentieth-century counterparts. The largely blue-and-white work soon expanded to include robust pastels and eventually richly colored art nouveau designs. The following excerpt from *Deerfield Embroidery* describes the detective work involved in tracing the designs back to their early roots.

> At some time the paper patterns of the Society were sent to Memorial Hall and there they were stored in an old leather-covered curve-topped trunk, but there was no room to spread them out and look at them. In 1970 the Historic Deerfield Library joining Memorial Hall was opened. . . . In 1972 the long and absorbing task of sorting the patterns was begun. . . . With the help of an expert museum conservator, very simple equipment was set up for cleaning, de-acidifying, and stabilizing the paper patterns, many of them tattered and dirty, and all of them in need of care. Volunteer workers established a system for sorting the material into categories: circles, squares, and sprigs for smaller embroideries, and larger flower clusters and borders for use on coverlets, head curtains, valances, and door hangings. In the small designs a brown paper marking pattern was usually pinned to several white paper diagrams of stitches and colors since the same design was never worked twice in the same way. Sometimes directions were written along an edge and the initials M.C.W. or E.M. were added. Finally the rolled-up patterns of the largest designs were carefully flattened out. . . .
>
> 
>
> With the help of [an unpublished manuscript Margaret Whiting wrote in 1930], the last stage of detective work began. Going over the larger pieces first, the names of Keturah Baldwin, Sarah Snell, and Aunt Bek turned up with several others. Presently smaller patterns marked "Lucy Lane," "Polly's parrot," "Sarah's leaf," or "Aunt Bek's pears" fitted into the picture. . . . There was one other source of help. Collected in folders and scrapbooks were photographs of finished embroideries as well as pencil sketches, often very rough, sometimes with the title of a pattern and its price written on the back. More careful drawings had apparently been sent out to prospective customers and were marked "Please return." Most important were several excellent photographs of a coverlet marked "Ruth Culver Coleman." There was a sketch in colored pencils of a second coverlet with the same name together with a detail drawing of a corner design of carnations. All of this was a small gold mine, but there were still many questions unanswered.
>
> The documented designs in the trunk were few compared to the many that Margaret Whiting and Ellen Miller had made during the life of the Society, combining elements from many of the different sources. It became a game to identify Sarah Snell's little pagoda, but as soon as Betsy Clark's thistle was assigned to her it turned up again in a slightly different form on Keturah's valance. Lucy Lane's mothflower was worked many miles away and in a more elegant style by Ruth Coleman. All of the needlewomen stitched the rose and carnation, the useful grapes and acanthus leaf and pomegranate; they were the common coin of the eighteenth-century embroiderer. "The family likeness between patterns used in widely separated country towns which could have little or no communication is so strongly marked as to form a distinct school of design," Mary E. Allen wrote in "Blue-and-White Needlework," in the April 1898 issue of *The House Beautiful*, "yet the individuality of each worker is clearly shown."
>
> Rooted in the creativity of eighteenth-century craftswomen and produced with the embroidery, design, and dyeing skills Margaret Whiting and Ellen Miller brought to their own work and their business, the best of Deerfield embroidery is remarkable for its rich colors, engaging designs, and high-quality workmanship.

"I pound flinty indigo . . ."

If you want to colour beautifully, colour as best pleases yourself at *quiet times*, not so as to look as if it were clever or difficult to colour in that way, but so that the colour be pleasant to you when you are happy, or thoughtful. When you are fatigued or ill-tempered you will not choose them so well.

John Ruskin

One key facet of the Deerfield embroidery story is the beautiful naturally dyed linen—both whole cloth and threads—that gave the Society's work its richness. Although much of the dyeing was done on the kitchen stove, the dedicated investigation evident in the careful dye records indicates the intensity and importance of this process to the success of the business. Margaret and Ellen found information on vegetable dyeing in several small old treatises and in Sir William Crookes's 1874 volume, *A Practical Handbook of Dyeing and Calico Printing.* In addition, Winthrop Durfee, Consulting and Manufacturing Chemist, Boston, gave valuable advice and helped them obtain dyes in the small amounts they needed. The following excerpt from *Deerfield Embroidery* recounts the challenges in dyeing the Society faced.

> The matter of color became the chief test of the Society's continued existence. Aniline dyes were in general use after the Civil War, but with the exception of blue, the colors were harsh and unsatisfactory. At first commercial aniline blue threads were used but they soon proved not to be sunfast, and since the earliest colonial embroideries were done in indigo, the development of a "blue tub" became the initial effort in what grew to be the most engrossing task for the two manager-designers. Old stores of the best Bengal indigo in small quantities could still be obtained

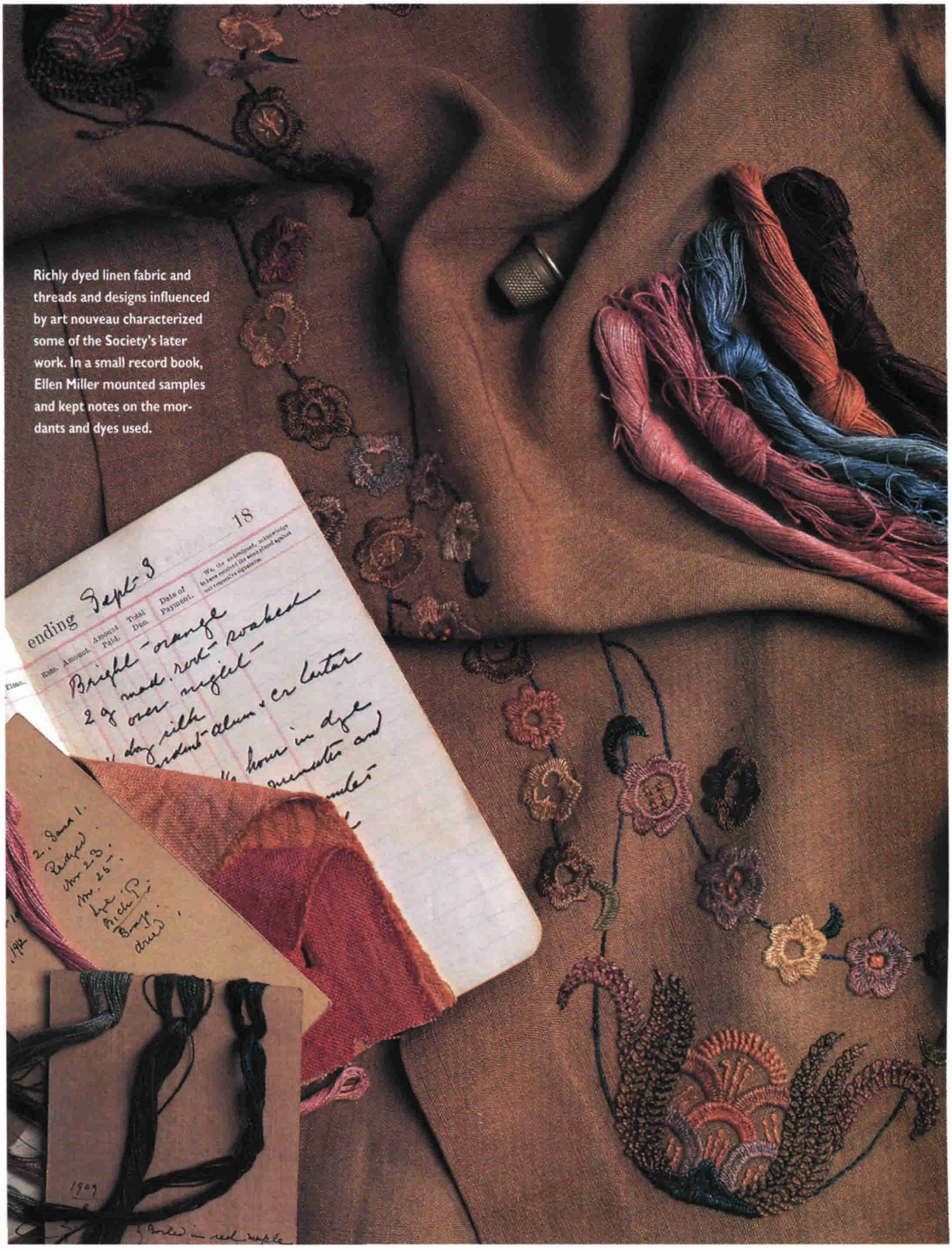


from the dealers in synthetic dyes who, a few years earlier, had furnished cloth for Civil War uniforms. Margaret wrote to a friend, "And so I pound flinty indigo in an old mortar and pestle until I curse my fate."

They hunted for the old hand mills in which painters had once ground their pigments but which had been done away with by modern machinery that Deerfield could not afford. . . . "Old rules of thumb used by great-grandmothers were too vague to be helpful especially as applied to linen. This fibre was well described by an old chemist as of 'a cold and deadly nature,' a trait which makes it fight against absorbing color but has its compensations in the quality of tone when it finally capitulates to the dye vats."

At first indigo was the only dye used; a neighbor remembers Margaret running across to her yard on a windy day, her hands full of muddy green cloth and asking if she might hang it on her line since the Whiting lines were full. When material is first taken from the indigo vat it is green and only turns blue when exposed to the oxygen in the air—not to sunlight. The labor involved in those early experiments is hard to imagine. Sometimes water was pumped from the well but more often buckets were carried from the rain barrel at the corner of the shed; the soft rainwater produced a better blue. In good weather the indigo tub stood on the side porch of the Miller or Whiting house, since it was a cold dye and needed no boiling. By repeated dipping of the material, sometimes as many as twenty times, all the shades from lightest blue to almost black were possible. It wasn't long before Ellen began to experiment with other dyes which involved the kitchen stove. A young relative who visited the Millers remembers that "dinner was cooked around the dye pots because they couldn't be moved." A hot and steamy business in summer.

In addition to indigo, Ellen seems to have experimented most with other dyes, particularly madder for roses, red, and crimsons; logwood for purples; fustic for yellows; cutch, black walnut, butternut, red maple, and sumac for tawny shades and browns. She kept good records, sometime exposing swatches in a south window as long as six months to test their colorfastness. In a small account book with the used pages removed, Ellen mounted swatches with brief notes on what mordants and dyes she had used.



Richly dyed linen fabric and threads and designs influenced by art nouveau characterized some of the Society's later work. In a small record book, Ellen Miller mounted samples and kept notes on the mordants and dyes used.

silver and copper work with semiprecious stones were among the skills renewed. Mary and Frances Allen's portrait and genre photography, a new art rather than an old, became part of the village's craft-based economic success. Margaret and Ellen gave everyone help and encouragement in the use of color and design. In July 1911, *The Christian Science Monitor* noted of the Deerfield crafts: "Perfection was the unbending rule and the consequence was that something very like it was obtained."



In 1926, after years of success and recognition, the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework was disbanded. "For reasons strictly personal to Ellen Miller and the writer," Margaret Whiting wrote, "they set away their dye pots and shut the old portfolio. Having weathered the Great War and outlasted most of its early contemporaries, this revival of a distinctive form of art with its long pedigree came to a close, quite as complete, it would seem, as that which befell it a hundred years before." Personal reasons included the decline in Ellen's health and Margaret's vision, and the inability of many of the older original workers to do the work any longer.

But the story survives.

A Note of Thanks. We thank Timothy C. Neumann, executive director; Suzanne Flynt, curator; and Jeannette Blohm, curatorial assistant, of the Memorial Hall Museum in Deerfield, Massachusetts, for their assistance with this story. The Museum's extensive collection of Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework materials, both on display and in storage, are important characters in this story. We also thank the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association for permission to excerpt from *Deerfield Embroidery*, and Margery Burnham Howe for writing the book and discussing the Society's story with us. The Memorial Hall Museum offers *Deerfield Embroidery* as well as several Deerfield crewel embroidery kits for sale (see information on page 68).

About the Memorial Hall Museum. The Memorial Hall Museum, on Memorial Street in Deerfield, with period rooms, historical crafts, and extensive holdings from the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework, was opened in 1880. The Memorial Hall Museum collection includes the vast majority of holdings of the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework, including the patterns used, records of the Society, and other archival materials. There are pieces of the Society's work in the collections of Historic Deerfield, the Rhode Island School of Design, and other museums. The Museum is open from May 31 to October 31, seven days a week (Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 12:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.). Please call the Museum before you visit to verify hours and exhibits. (413) 774-7476.

Further Reading

Davis, Mildred J. *The Art of Crewel Embroidery.* New York: Crown, 1972. A readable how-to book with an excellent historical chapter.

Enthoven, Jacqueline. *The Stitches of Creative Embroidery,* revised and enlarged edition. West Chester, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing, 1987.

Harbeson, Georgiana Brown. *American Needlework.* New York: Bonanza Books, 1961. Subtitled "The History of Decorative Stitchery from the Late 16th to the 20th Century," Harberson's book offers a well-written, scholarly, although somewhat outdated survey of stitchery and its part in American domestic life.

Landon, Mary Taylor, and Susan Burrows Swan. *American Crewelwork.* New York: Macmillan, 1970. After its useful historical introduction, this volume is largely instructional. Regional design preferences are explored.

Needle Arts. American Country Series. Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1990. Accurate, recent information coverage of the Deerfield story in the context of American needlework.

Safford, Carleton L., and Robert Bishop. *Quilts and Coverlets.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972. Beautifully illustrated, Safford's book covers all types of bedcoverings, including a chapter on crewel embroidered bedcovers.

Stearns, Martha Genung. *Homespun and Blue.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940. Subtitled "A Study of American Crewel Embroidery," Stearns' is a well-documented historical work that covers the Deerfield revival.

Wheeler, Candace. *The Development of Embroidery in America.* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1921. Candace Wheeler, herself an important figure in embroidery and decorative arts, sets out to show how needlework reveals the "inner story" of women's lives.

Portions of the annotations are from Beverly Gordon's Domestic American Textiles: A Bibliographic Sourcebook.

An Embroidered Vest

Inspired by the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework

Designed by Jean Scorgie

Carnations, snowdrops, and sweet clover join flowers of the imagination on this creamy linen vest. Embroidered motifs adapted from the work of the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework are worked in muted shades of pearl cotton resembling madder, indigo, and leaf green. New England laid stitch, also known as Roumanian stitch, forms the leaves, buds, and some parts of the flowers. Herringbone stitch worked with small tie-downs over the crossing threads makes a lattice-work on other flowers. Stem stitch is used for its namesake, while French knots add tiny accents. All the stitches are economical in their use of thread, most of which lies on the face side with small stitches showing on the back. Shades of each color add dimension to the rich surface texture of the stitches. The embroidery proceeds quite rapidly due to the boldness of the thread and the size of the motifs. The motifs were embroidered before sewing the vest, but a purchased vest could be substituted.



Here are instructions for making the vest inspired by embroideries of the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework.

- Style Pattern #1766, View 1. Sizes 6–16.
- Linen Suiting, 1½ yards of 45"–54" fabric L-54 from Testfabrics, Inc., PO Box 420, Middlesex, NJ 08846. (908) 469-6446.
- DMC Pearl Cotton size 5, one 9-meter skein each beige #543, light pink #754, medium pink #758, light blue #747, medium blue #519, dark pink #518, light green #503, dark green #502.
- Small embroidery hoop.
- Crewel needles, size 6.
- Disappearing ink pen.
- Lining fabric, interfacing, buttons, and thread for making the vest, as specified in the pattern.

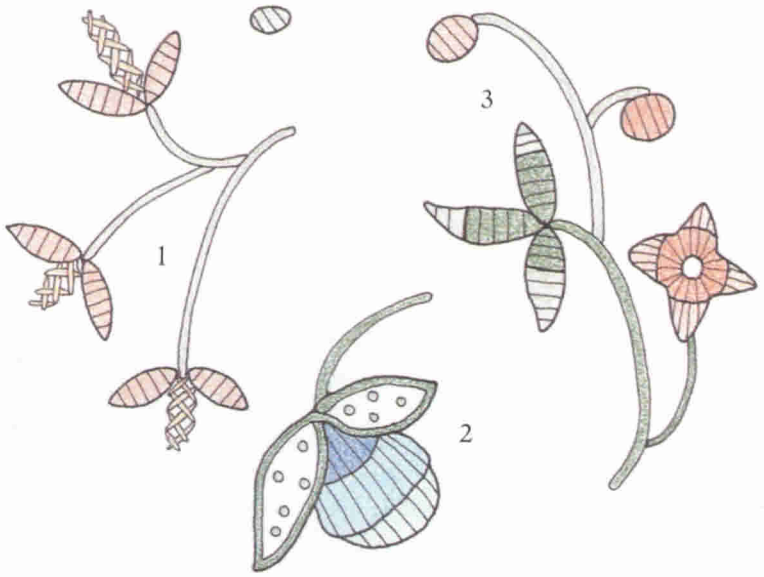
Preshrink the linen fabric and press thoroughly while damp. Cut out the vest except for the front facings, which will be embroidered. Thread trace the cutting lines of the front facings with long basting stitches, and cut out leaving excess fabric at the lapel edges for using a hoop. Zigzag or serge the edges of the front facings.

On pattern paper or a large sheet of drawing paper, copy the left and right front facings. Trim off the seam allowances and fold back the lapels.

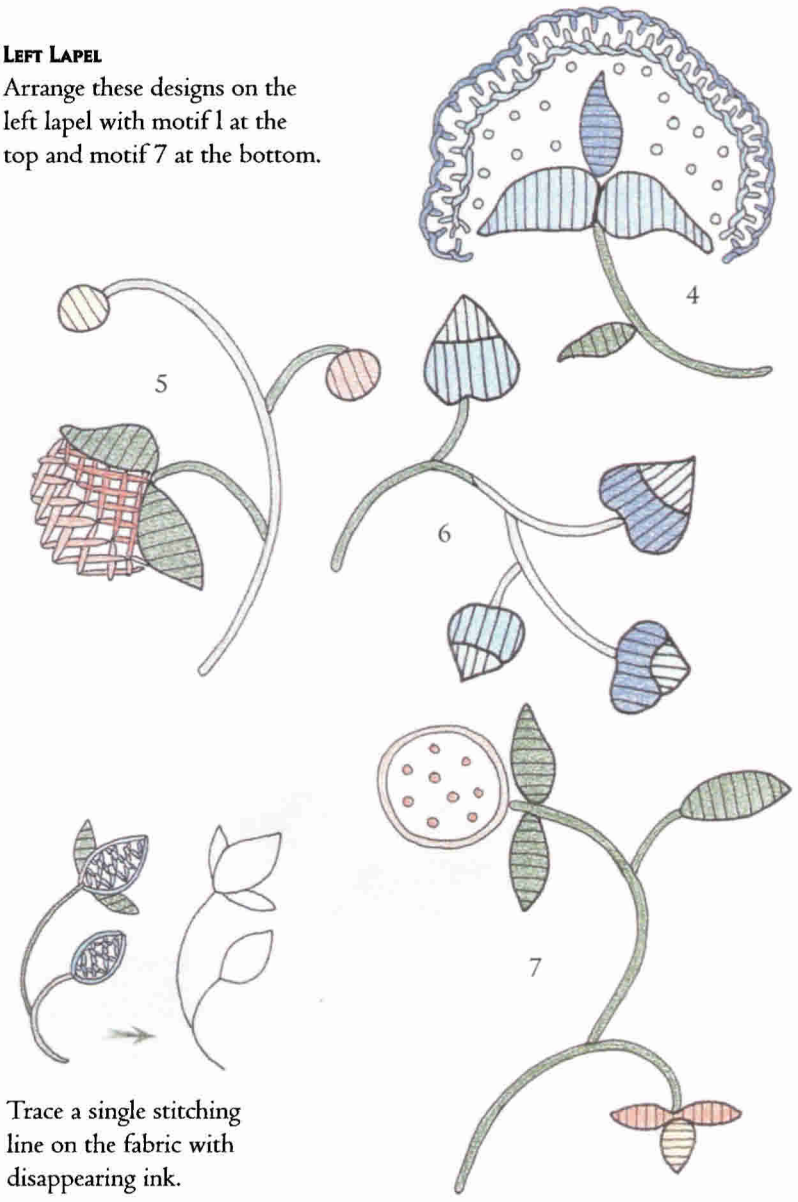
Copy the embroidery designs on tracing paper or with a copy machine. Cut the designs apart and arrange them on the pattern-paper lapels. The designs are labeled for placement on left or right lapel and numbered from top to bottom of each lapel. When you are satisfied with the placement, trace with a heavy black line or photocopy the arrangement before placing the fabric on top.

With a disappearing ink pen, trace the drawings with a single stitching line on each stem and around each major shape. Place the fabric in an embroidery hoop, and refer to the designs for color and stitch placement.

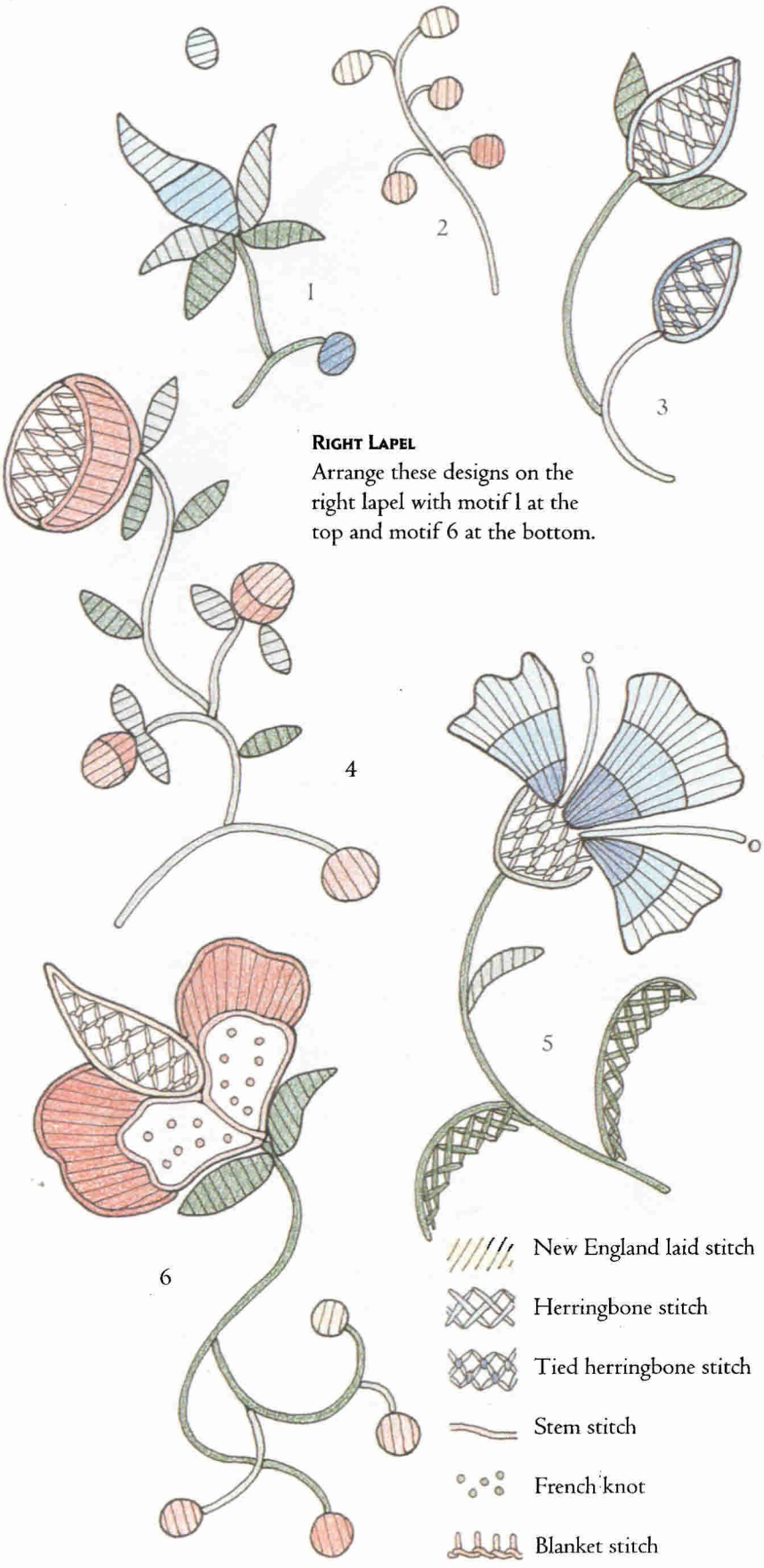
When the embroidery is completed, dab remaining traces of ink with cold water; then steam press on the wrong side over a padded surface. Compare the thread-traced cutting line with the pattern and adjust if necessary before trimming the lapel edges. Assemble the vest following the pattern directions.



Left Lapel
Arrange these designs on the left lapel with motif 1 at the top and motif 7 at the bottom.



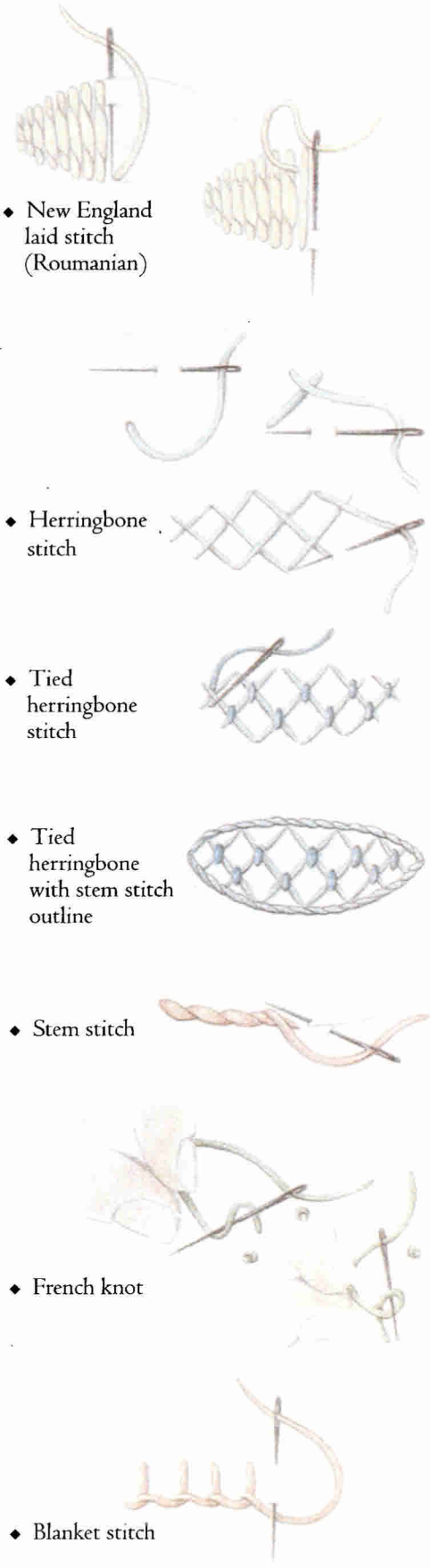
Trace a single stitching line on the fabric with disappearing ink.



RIGHT LAPEL
Arrange these designs on the right lapel with motif 1 at the top and motif 6 at the bottom.

Motifs adapted by permission of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, Deerfield, Massachusetts.

STITCHES



- New England laid stitch (Roumanian)
- Herringbone stitch
- Tied herringbone stitch
- Tied herringbone with stem stitch outline
- Stem stitch
- French knot
- Blanket stitch

A MOTHER'S CARE:

THE KNITTING MADONNAS

by Richard Rutt, excerpted from A History of Hand Knitting

DURING THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, both art and literature became increasingly concerned with the human and emotional elements in the life of Christ. Paintings of the Madonna and Child began to emphasize the tenderness of the mother-and-child relationship, and to introduce imaginative suggestions of the domestic background of the Holy Family. A few of them show Saint Mary knitting.

The brothers Lorenzetti painted in Siena, Italy. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, active from about 1319 to 1347, was the brother, probably the elder brother, of Pietro, and both are thought to have died in the Black Death, which ravaged Siena in 1348. The knitting madonna now in the Abegg Collection at Berne was probably painted at the very end of Ambrogio's life. It belongs to the type of painting known as *Madonna dell'umiltà*, "Madonna of humility," because it portrays the Blessed Virgin seated, not on a chair or throne, but on the floor. The "knitting madonna" shows a domestic interior. Saint Joseph sits at the right-hand side looking at Mary and at the little boy Jesus, who sits with one hand on his mother's arm. She is knitting in the round with four needles and purple yarn, but it is impossible to see what she is making. The needles are held under the palm. She carries the yarn over her right forefinger, and yarns of various colors are wound on a dozen or so spools or bobbins. The spools stand upright on pegs on a circular board, which may be a revolving "lazy susan" set on the floor before her. The yarn could be either silk or wool.

The evidence must not be overinterpreted. It shows that knitting was known in northern Italy before 1350, and that the Lorenzetti brothers knew how knitting was done. It suggests that knitting was done at home by women, but does not tell us whether it was an occupation for ladies of leisure or a common pursuit, whether it was cheap or expensive.

A second knitting madonna, a photograph of which appears in the table of contents, is in the Poldi-Pezzoli Museum in Milan. It is the work of Vitale degli Equi and dates from the second quarter of the fourteenth century, possibly a little earlier than the Lorenzetti picture. Our Lady is shown sitting on the ground before a bench covered with a red fabric patterned with blue flowers. She is dressed in a blue robe brocaded with gold. Behind the seat are Saint Catherine and another woman martyr. The little boy Jesus sits at her left side, putting out his left hand to pick up a spool of yarn from a two-tiered table. He looks at his mother and grasps her free needle with his right hand. She holds her knitting in her left hand and with the index finger of the same hand tickles his chin as though coaxing him not to play with the spools. Her knitting is on three, four, or more needles and has a floral pattern in two colors, too wide for a stocking, too narrow for a child's vest. It may be a bag like the knitted relic bags of the same period now kept in Switzerland.

Yet another northern Italian painter of the same period, Tommaso da Modena (1325–?1375), has left a knitting madonna, probably painted in Bologna between 1345 and 1355 and now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale at Bologna. This picture is one of three panels, each of which shows Mary seated on a chair or throne. In one, she is without the child and has a book on her knee; in one, she is suckling him; and in one, he sits in the chair beside her as she knits. She is knitting in the round on needles (apparently five) held under her palms, carrying the light-colored yarn on the right hand. Only a few inches of knitting have been completed, and she holds it in front of her as she works so that we see the work forming a hollow square, slightly rounded. The yarn is on spools on a round board like

What was she knitting?
A shirt for the Christ child, stockings, a vest?
And were these holy lives also homely?



In the painting of the Buxtehude Madonna by Master Bertram of Minden, painted probably shortly before 1400, Mary's knitting is juxtaposed with the instruments of the Passion.

Reproduced with permission of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany.



Our Lady knitting is a panel of a triptych by Tommaso da Modena (1325-?1375). *Reproduced with permission of the Pinacoteca Nazionale di Bologna, Bologna, Italy.*

THE SEARCH FOR MEDIEVAL PICTURES OF KNITTING HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN, AND NOT ONLY OF THE MADONNA.

the ones in the Lorenzetti pictures, but here the board is on Mary's lap. All three pictures have the golden backgrounds of Byzantine icons and early Italian paintings of saints.

The best known of the knitting madonnas, however, is the one painted by Master Bertram of Minden, probably a little before 1400—about fifty years after the three northern Italian pictures already described—for the Benedictine nuns of Buxtehude. It is on the right-hand side of a triptych altarpiece, and is significantly different from the Italian pictures. Bertram had a long career in Hamburg (where the picture is now in the Kunsthalle), from 1367 to about 1415. He was a forerunner of fifteenth-century realism and the tender style of German painting called the Soft Style or International Gothic.

In this picture, Saint Mary sits in an elegant room, knitting a crimson shirt on four needles held out to view. She has almost finished the garment, and is ready to cast off around the neck. Three balls of yarn lie in a straw basket beside her, and she is using two yarns, apparently both carried over her right hand. The boy Jesus lies on the grass in the garden with an open book before him and a whip and top at his side. He does not look at his mother but over his shoulder at two angels who stand behind him, one carrying a cross and three nails, the other a spear and a crown of thorns—the so-called "instruments of the Passion." The whip and top, too, are doubtless a reference to the scourging of Christ by order of Pontius Pilate.

Although this picture is commonly called *The Visit of the Angels,* it is really an example of a "madonna of the Passion." It belongs to the same iconographic family as the Russian icon called *Strástnaya* or the Greek *Kardiótissa.* This icon is a development of the much older Greek icon called *Hodigítria* (usually translated as *Our Lady of the Way*) and well known from the Russian example called *The Smolensk Mother of God.* In the Smolensk icon, the archangels Michael and Gabriel are painted in the upper corners of the icon. At a later period, the archangels were shown bearing the instruments of the Passion of Jesus, and the face of the child was turned to look at them over his shoulder. This was being painted as the icon of *Our Lady of the Passion* in Serbia by 1400, which is the probable date of the *Kardiótissa* icon that has become most widely known in the West—the so-called *Our Lady of Perpetual Succor* (now kept in the Church of Saint Alfonso in Rome). It is believed to have emanated from the Creto-Venetian school of icon painters and was probably painted shortly before Master Bertram's picture.

This iconographic and theological background to Master Bertram's picture explains the little garment that Mary is making. Such a coat was frequently included among the instruments of the Passion by fourteenth-century artists, who assumed that the seamless robe stripped from Christ before his crucifixion must have had sleeves. Here we have the earliest occurrence of the idea that the seamless robe may have been knitted. However, further study has shown that the garment, a *khiton* (ancestor of a modern priest's alb) worn next to the skin, comprised an oblong piece of fabric that wrapped around the body and was fastened at one or both shoulders—and would naturally have been woven.

One other picture has been treated as a knitting madonna. It is an engraving of the Holy Family by the German sculptor Veit Stoss (1440/50–1533), and shows our lady dressing a child's vest on a cross-shaped frame. The engraving dates from 1480 or soon after. The Passion symbolism is evident, but it is not at all clear how Mary is dressing the vest, or even whether the vest is knitted or woven.

The "knitting madonnas" show that knitting was known in Italy and Germany during the fourteenth century. Beyond that, little can be said. The Passion symbolism means that the pictures cannot be taken as social records of the time. We cannot even assert that knitting was done in Siena, Bologna, or Hamburg—the artists could have known of knitting because it was done elsewhere. It may have been done much or rarely, by the wealthy or the poor, by housewives or nuns.

The pictures suggest that knitting was done in the round on four needles (though some of them could be

Mary calmly knits in the round in this painting of the Holy Family attributed to Ambrogio Lorenzetti (c. 1345) of Siena, Italy.

Reproduced with permission of the Abegg-Stiftung collection, Riggisberg, Switzerland.



interpreted as showing five-needle knitting); that the working needles were held under the palm of each hand; that the needles were not hooked; that the yarn was carried on the right hand; and that more than one yarn could be used. We cannot be certain of the needles' material.

The search for medieval pictures of knitting has only just begun, and not only of the Madonna. Some of the virgin saints surrounding the Madonna and child in a Spanish painting on wood in Saint Mary's Church at Borja, near Zaragoza, are performing textile crafts, and one of them is knitting a stocking with colored patterns on five needles. The painting is attributed to Jaume Lana, 1492. It adds little to knitting history, but is of great charm. More pictures will doubtless be found.

About the Author: *Richard Rutt, now retired, was the Bishop of Leicester, a town which has played an important part in the British knitting industry. He served as a Japanese translator in the Navy during the Second World War, and after studying medieval and modern languages at Cambridge, went to Korea as a missionary priest in 1954. In 1966, he was consecrated Bishop.*

His previous books have been about Korean and Chinese literature. Upon returning to England in 1974, he resumed his boyhood interest in knitting and has become a considerable authority on the subject. Finding that there was no history of handknitting, he wrote A History of Hand Knitting, *published in 1987 by Interweave Press.*



KNITTED SILK RETICULE. The rich colors of this small silk bag, suitable for gift-giving or storing special treasures, suggest stained glass. It is patterned after one of six fourteenth-century Swiss bags or purses knitted to hold the relics of saints. There are five such bags in the treasury of the ancient cathedral at Sion in western Switzerland and one in the cathedral in Chur in eastern Switzerland; all six probably came from one source, which is unknown. All are knitted in the round, of spun silk, at a gauge of 17 to 18 stitches per inch (our bag is knitted flat at 11 stitches per inch). The historical bags measure approximately 8 to 13 1/2 inches high and 6 to 10 1/2 inches long, and are patterned in red, green, blue, violet, beige, and white. Their bottom edges are adorned with tassels and the top openings finished with drawstrings, usually with two tassels. Instructions follow.
Design by Liza Prior Lucy; yarns courtesy of Halcyon Yarn.

• A KNITTED SILK RETICULE •

The flower or star motif in the main body of the knitted bag (previous page) is copied from a Swiss relic bag at Sion, with a minor change so that no row requires carrying more than two colors. The borders are adapted from those of the historic bag, and the picoted cast-off adds a decorative finish.

According to the preceding story, a Renaissance knitter would most likely have worked a bag like this one in the round on four or more double-pointed needles. Because the yarn is so slippery and the diameter of the bag so small, we've knitted our version flat, working the color-stranded pattern on knit and purl rows alike, and carefully seaming it into a tube.

If you prefer to work in the round, be careful to keep your stitches snug when changing needles. We suggest 4-inch (10-cm) double-pointed sock needles, instead of the more usual 8-inch (20-cm) lace needles, for easier handling (see Sources).

MATERIALS: Halcyon "Gemstone" silk, size 12/2 (item 158), 1/2 ounce each of colors 1 (amber), 10 (deep amethyst), 8 (garnet), and 3 (jacinth) (see Sources). Alternatively, use DMC #12 pearl cotton in similar colors.

TOOLS: #0 (2-mm) straight or #0 (2-mm) double-pointed needles. Blunt, large-eyed tapestry needle for seaming.

GAUGE: 11 sts = 1 inch (43 sts = 10 cm).

FINISHED SIZE: 4½ inches wide × 5¾ inches high (11.4 cm × 14.6 cm).

KNITTING: The bag is knitted in stockinette stitch throughout. If working flat, K1 row, P1 row; if working in the round, K every row. Using color 10 (deep amethyst), cast on 96 sts if using double-pointed needles or 97 sts if using straight needles (1 extra st for seaming). Work 1 row in deep amethyst, then begin the chart, starting at the bottom and reading left to right. The chart represents half the number of stitches in the bag; work each row twice. If working flat, work the first stitch again at the end of the row.

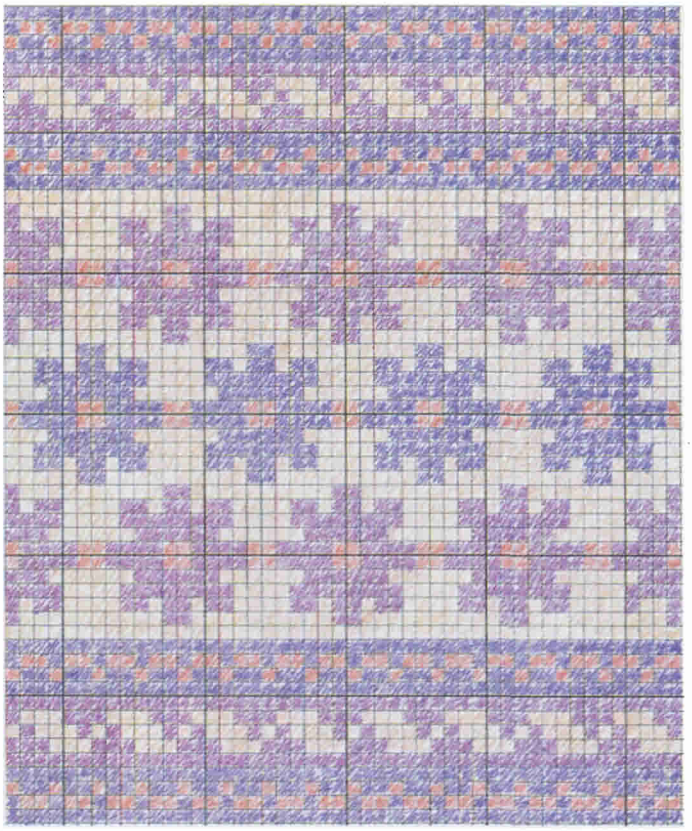
When you've completed the chart, work 2 more rows in deep amethyst.

Next row, make eyelets for silk cord: In deep amethyst, K5, YO, K2tog, *K10, YO, K2tog* rep between *s 6 more times, K to end of row. Work 7 more rows in deep amethyst.

Change to color 1 (amber) and work 2 or 3 rows ending ready to begin a wrong-side row.

BIND OFF: Working knitwise, bind off 2 sts, *slip st on right-hand needle back onto left-hand needle, cast on 2 sts, bind off 4 sts*, repeat between *s to end.

FINISHING: If you knitted the bag flat, seam sides together, matching pattern. Place the seam in the middle of back. If you knitted the bag in the round, place the jog stitches in the middle of back. With right sides together, seam bottom with a back stitch. Turn right side out and steam press.



12-st repeat

SILK CORD: Using garnet, measure five lengths 62 inches (157 cm) long, folding at the ends rather than cutting. Have a friend hold one end tightly while you pull the threads taut and twist to the right until the cord is very tightly twisted and begins to kink back on itself when you release tension slightly. Holding the center of the cord, fold it in half, still keeping it under tension. Let go of the center and let the cord twist on itself. Tie an overhand knot 3 inches from each end and untwist and trim the ends to make tassels. Thread the cord through the holes, having the ends meet at center front. Tie in a bow.

SOURCES

Four mini-cones of silk yarn in the colors shown and 10-inch #0 straight needles are available for $17.95 ppd. from Halcyon Yarn, 12 School Street, Bath, ME 04530. Ask for the Silk Reticule Kit. Yarn only (no needles) is $14.95 ppd.

Five 4-inch #0 double-pointed needles are available for $7.50 ppd. from Schoolhouse Press, 6899 Cary Bluff, Pittsville, WI 54466.

PIECEWORK *is a new bimonthly magazine which celebrates, explores, and promotes historic and ethnic handwork by offering articles and selected projects in knitting, quilting, crochet, cross stitch, embroidery, appliqué, basketry, beadwork, needlepoint, lace making, dyeing, and fine hand sewing.*

We hope you enjoy this premier issue, and will join us, beginning with the September 1993 issue, in a celebration of those who have done and continue to do "all this by hand."



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And I Continue

The Embroidered Life of Anna Kuczma

MARILYN MURPHY

In this modest apartment, white cotton and linen fabrics with decorative stitching spill from the edges of china cabinet shelves. The chair in the living room is not for sitting but to enthrone brightly patterned embroidered pillows. The icons on the walls are framed by *rushnyky* (singular, *rushnyk*), rectangular ceremonial cloths that are draped over them.

This is the home of 82-year-old, Ukrainian-born Anna Kuczma, a master embroiderer. In 1991, the state of Illinois awarded Anna a Master Craftsman's Grant in the Ethnic and Folk Artists category for her exceptional pursuit of traditional Ukrainian embroidery.

Anna began to embroider when she was fourteen, and she has maintained her enthusiasm for embroidery all her life. She still embroiders every day except Sunday. Her daughter, Jaroslava "Lialia" Kuchma (variant of Kuczma) Babij remembers her mother carrying her stitching everywhere. Summer days at the beach, while the children swam, Anna embroidered. Between cooking, housecleaning, and social and church functions, she stitched. To Anna, embroidery was a way to control a small part of life and to keep some of the historical roots that had been taken from her. Through her embroidery, she has found an equilibrium of heart and soul that has helped her survive many difficult years.



Anna Kuczma with her children at a detention camp in Germany (1945) before relocation to the United States. *Courtesy of Lialia Kuchma.*

In 1944, when Communist forces threatened her husband's life, Anna and her family left Ukraine. Thinking that someday they would return to their village of Pidhajchi, in western Ukraine, Anna packed only part of her personal belongings, including some of her embroideries. Together with her two small children and her husband, Hryhorij, she spent three months on the road, then lived in an American detention camp in Germany for three years, awaiting relocation to the United States. In camp, women passed their time knitting and crocheting. Wool was available, but cotton embroidery thread usually was not. Occasionally, when thread could be obtained through the black market, Anna and others could embroider. Besides those left behind in Pidhajchi, Anna lost many embroideries during the months of traveling. Also lost were many of the Pidhajchi traditional patterns. Hryhorij spent his time in camp recording traditional patterns from the embroidered fabrics of the other detainees. He painstakingly graphed them all, so that the traditional needlework could be kept alive in a new country.

In the Evening, We Did the Threads

During the 1920s, when Ukraine was under Polish occupation, there was a movement to reestablish a national identity that had been suppressed during the years of Austrian control. Ukrainian centers in the larger cities sent professional educators to the villages to teach economic survival skills and traditional crafts. Many of the crafts had been forgotten, and this group of educators reintroduced the skills to whoever wished to learn them. The teachers came for four weeks twice



Many of Anna's finest embroideries, like the one she holds, are given to the church, which has always been central in her life.
Photograph by Lialia Kuchma.

a year, teaching every day and living with families in the village. The classes were free, and parents could choose which ones their children would attend.

"We gathered in the evenings," Anna remembers. "We had to work the fields in the summer, but in the winter we did the threads. Materials and instructions were hard to get. Ethnic arts weren't taught in the schools—the traveling ladies from Lviv taught us when they came to the village."

Every young girl learned a craft—embroidery, knitting, crochet—and other skills, such as cooking. The threads they used and the cloths they embroidered were produced in the village. All the villagers grew flax, and during the winter, village women spun it by hand, and then took the linen thread to the local professional weaver, a man, who charged by the yard to weave it into cloth. Depending upon the quality of the cloth, it was made into everyday household articles or into garments, some of which were embroidered with traditional designs. Embroidered clothing was worn on special occasions, Sundays, and holidays. Anna remembers only one village in which the men wore embroidered shirts with decorated collars every day. Each region of Ukraine developed characteristic ways to use colors, motifs, and stitching techniques (see Stitches Used in Anna's Region of Ukraine). Patterns were so distinctive that one could tell someone's home village from his or her clothing. The oranges, golds, rusts, reds, and black that Anna uses, and the geometric and floral designs, were characteristic of the region near Pidhajchi.

Embroidered Evenings

In the fall, the local women's organization sponsored dinner and dance events called "Embroidered Evenings," when all the new embroideries could be shown off. The evenings helped to keep the tradition alive. Anna started attending them when she was eighteen.

"These evenings became so competitive that the women wouldn't lend their designs to each other," Anna recalls. "They always wanted to show off differ-







A gathering of Anna Kuczma embroideries. Above left: a cross-stitched table runner. Middle: the sleeve of a blouse also worked in cross stitch. Right: one of many elaborately embroidered pillows in Anna's apartment. Below: a fine example of a border worked in a Ukrainian stitch called the *nyz'* stitch. *Photographs courtesy of Lialia Kuchma.*



ent embroidery. I remember seeing a woman in church copying a design from another woman's blouse because the woman wouldn't share her design." "Embroidered Evenings" are still carried on in the Ukrainian community in Chicago where Anna now lives, but today, only the older women do embroidery as it was done in the old days. For many years, Anna taught younger women the needlework skills that are her passion. She taught them that the embroidery is part of their history. But though they learn how to do it, they don't continue to do it, finding it too time-consuming. Anna says she never considered not embroidering, even as she became older.

"This is my tradition," she says with conviction. "You cannot forget this. I love to embroider, and not many women are still doing it. I don't want this to be forgotten. I do this for my family and for people who come asking for a Communion dress or a christening gown or for the church because we have to have embroidery in the church."

Anna has always donated embroideries to the church, not only here but in Ukraine as well. The church received many of her first embroideries when she was young. A letter from the Ukrainian bishop in Chicago, thanking her for the beautiful altar cloth that she donated to the church, sits on the bureau. Anna can't remember when she started the altar cloth, it was so long ago. She estimates that it would ordinarily have taken her two years to complete, but she had started too many other projects.

Anna organized the group of women that worked on the church cloths, gathering the materials and the designs and distributing them to the women. A number of women would work on a large piece together. Eventually, all the altars and the vestments were covered with embroideries that replaced the previous paper flower decorations. The fabrics speak of permanence.

The *rushnyky* that hang over the religious icons and images of important national figures in Anna's apartment are decorative forms of reverence. The one draped over the painting above the couch is the first textile Anna points to. *Rushnyky* are always rectangular, with identical patterns across the ends (and sometimes with designs along the sides), but their size depends upon their intended use. At one time, these ritual cloths were a symbol of life and its passages; they were used in all ceremonies marking life changes, from birth to death. For example, a *rushnyk* might be draped over a coffin, or if a mother had sent one with her soldier son as he went off to war, its return meant that he had been killed in battle. The patterning, once specific to the occasion, has gradually become more generalized. Today, *rushnyky* are most often used during wedding ceremonies. Anna explains that traditionally a bride makes three *rushnyky,* two of which are given to the master and mistress of the wedding, who wear them for the ceremony. The *rushnyky* are worn draped over the right shoulder and fastened at the waist. The bride and groom stand on the third during the ceremony.

Anna showed me one *rushnyk,* a reproduction of a piece lost during the war years, embroidered at each end with a large floral motif. Although the uses of the *rushnyky* are traditional, the designs, often geometric or floral, are the embroiderer's choice. In addition, words such as "Glory to Ukraine" might be stitched on a *rushnyk* draped over an acclaimed Ukrainian's portrait.

Design: You Must Watch Everything

In planning a new design, Anna spends a long time contemplating her pattern. She looks at many traditional patterns and at patterns she may have used previously and from which she may want to incorporate an element in a different way. She may repeat an element of a pattern several times or enlarge the element within the piece. It is important to leave a field of white throughout the cloth to show that the design is embroidered, not woven. Anna makes a sample of the design with her color selection and then evaluates it. If she doesn't like the overall effect, she pulls the threads out and starts again. The chosen pattern is counted out in the woven linen or cotton (she usually uses a fairly fine 24-count fabric), and its outlines are marked

Stitches Used in Anna's Region of Ukraine

Anna no longer works on handwoven linen fabric but uses the commercial linen and cotton she buys at an import/export store in her Ukrainian community. Most of the stitches she uses will be familiar to embroiderers.

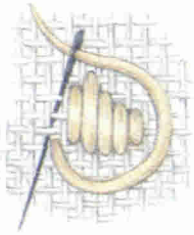
Cross Stitch



This stitch is the traditional cross stitch familiar to embroiderers, worked diagonally over two horizontal and two vertical threads. In many cases, the design is outlined with a black thread. Anna works primarily on a 24-count cotton ground.

To embroider on fine-gauge fabrics, Anna places an evenweave canvas on top of the ground cloth as a guide for stitching. When the embroidery is complete, she pulls out the canvas threads one by one.

Satin Stitch



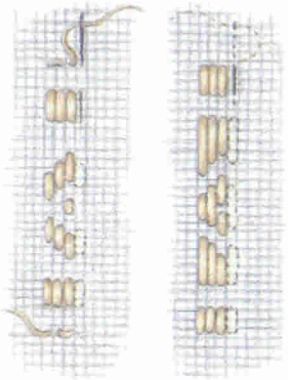
The familiar satin stitch moves in a circular motion through the background fabric, creating a smooth surface as threads are laid straight and parallel to each other.

Diagonal Satin Stitch



The diagonal satin stitch, which Anna uses frequently, is worked diagonally on the ground cloth. The same length of stitch is used throughout a motif.

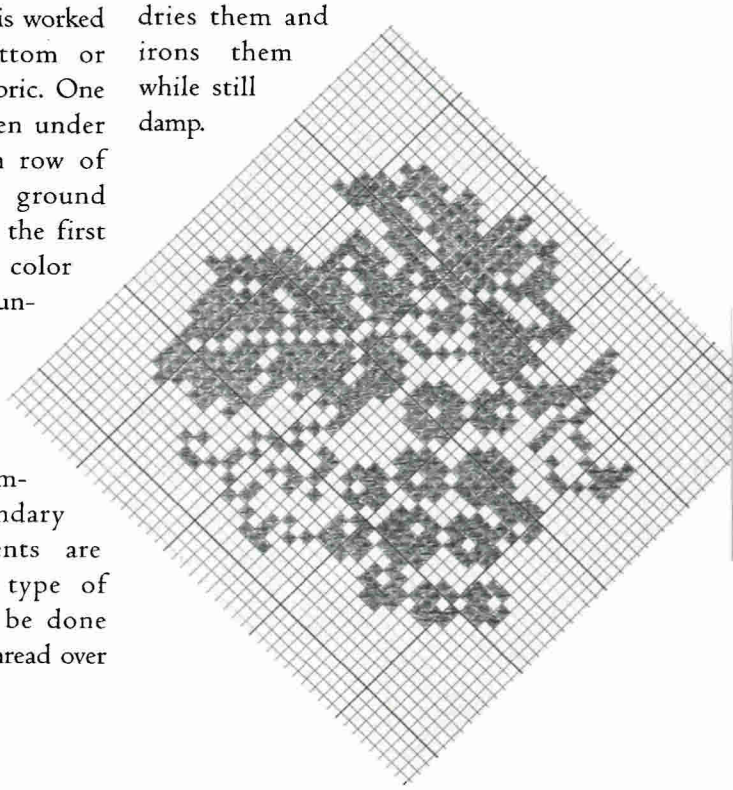
Nyz', also called nyzynka or nyzz'a.



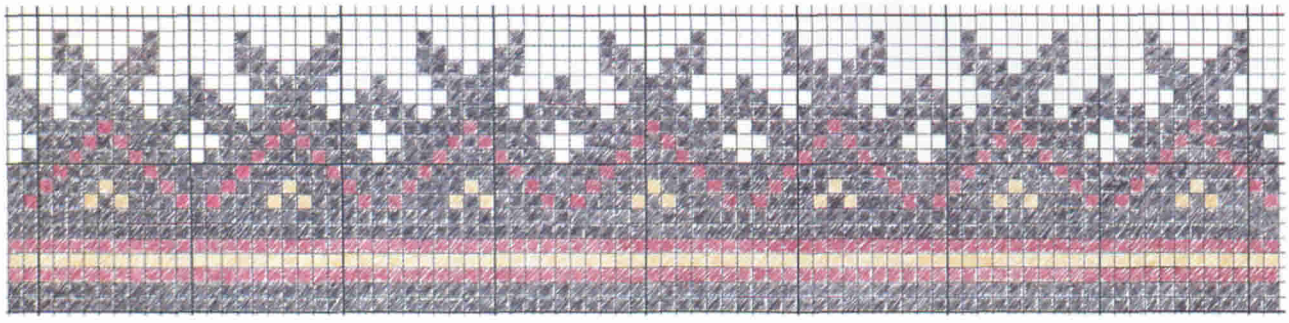
back *front*

In Ukrainian, the word *nyz'* means bottom, and this stitch is worked from the bottom or back of the fabric. One thread is woven under and over each row of thread in the ground cloth to make the first row. The first color used is the foundation color; it is woven throughout the design area. Once completed, secondary design elements are added. This type of stitching can be done with a single thread over single ground threads, or two threads (accomplished by stitching twice rather than by doubling the thread) over two ground threads. The latter is called "double nyz."

Anna hand washes her finished embroideries in a very mild detergent. A little vinegar in the final rinse helps keep the color fresh. She starches them with a mixture of water and flour, then air dries them and irons them while still damp.



Right: a chart for a floral pattern Anna might adapt for her designs.
Below: a chart for a traditional geometric pattern.





An icon in Anna's apartment draped with a traditional *rushnyk*.

Photograph courtesy of Lialia Kuchma.

with sewing thread. For a blouse, all the pattern pieces are cut out and embroidered, then assembled. Anna takes great care to make sure all the patterns work together. As she proudly admits, "Not everybody does good work. You must watch everything. Someone who understands embroidery will look at the back to see the quality."

The hand finishing of each piece is as important as the stitching. Instead of zipper or button closures, the pillow covers have tiny, intricate handmade eyelets on the side through which braided threads are laced and tied. Intertwined knots finish the edges of the *rushnyky* and table linens. Anna loves doing the knotting and incorporates some regional Ukraine drawnwork and openwork into her designs as well.

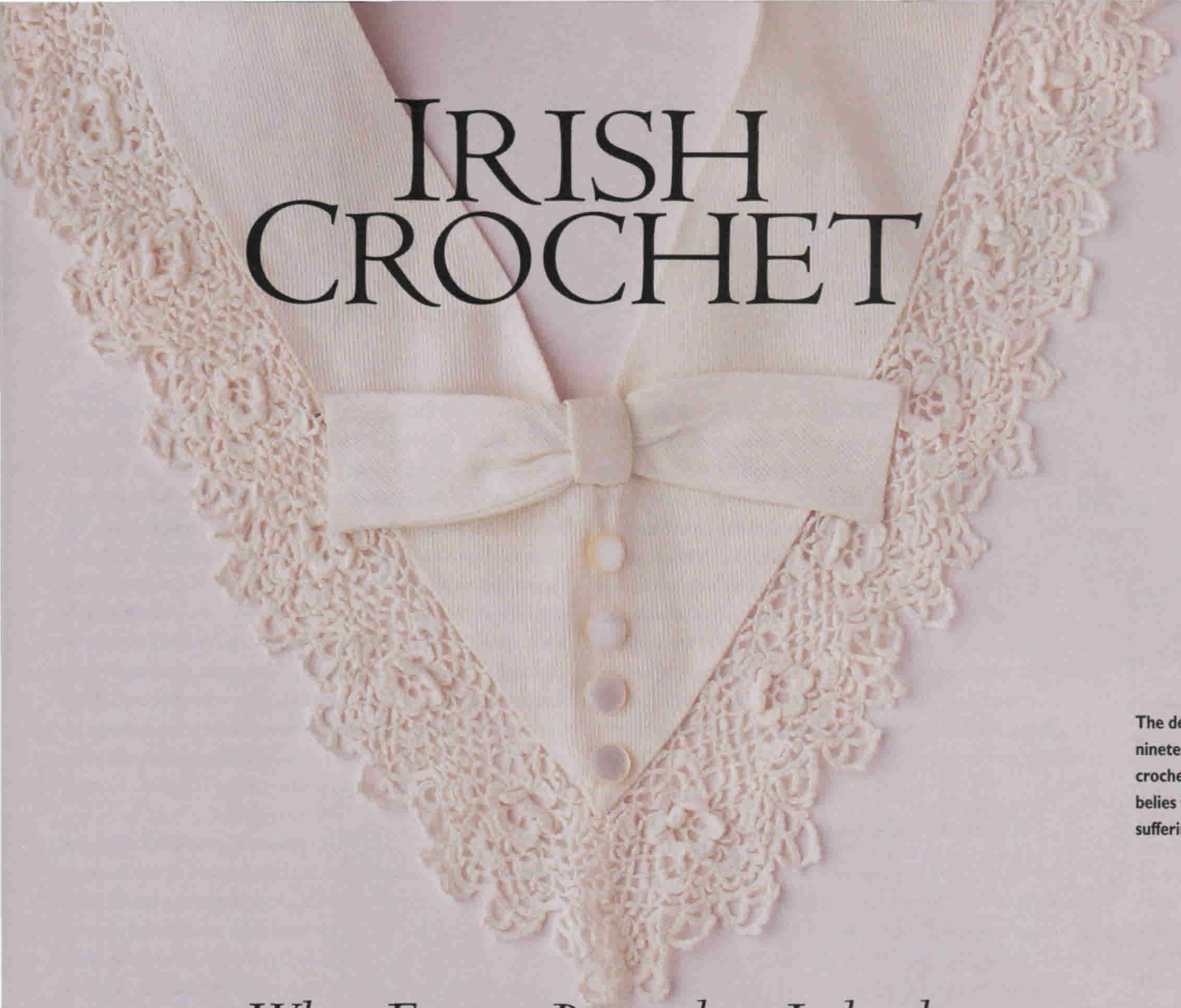
Anna would never identify herself as the master embroiderer of her community. Among the few exceptional needleworkers in her circle, none would want to be singled out. Despite their competitive spirit, the women share their designs now. A friend of Anna's, slightly older, also embroiders every day, but their work differs in color, motif, and stitching style.

From the drawers and drawers of embroidered cloths, Anna is hard pressed to pick a favorite. She wears one sheer, heavily embroidered blouse to most important community and church events. When she was in Rome, strangers on the street came up to her and admired it. She rotates the pieces of embroidery displayed throughout her home. She is presently on a campaign to finish all the pieces she has started over the years rather than start new ones, but she finds that difficult. "For me, embroidering is good. I forget many bad times and I look at the work and know from where I come, and I continue."

My thanks to Lialia Kuchma Babij for translating for her mother. Lialia has not carried on the tradition of embroidery from her mother but is a dedicated tapestry artist, photographer, and calligrapher. She has studied under a Ukrainian master ornamental woodworker, Petro Iwachniuk. I continue to find both Anna's and Lialia's dedication to their arts a powerful influence in my life.

About the Author. *Marilyn Murphy is the owner of the Weaving Workshop in Chicago and founder of the not-for-profit Textile Arts Centre. Her goal and the Centre's is to promote and educate people about the textile arts, inclusive of their historical, ethnographic, and contemporary forms.*

IRISH CROCHET



The delicacy of nineteenth-century crocheted Irish lace belies the story of suffering behind it.

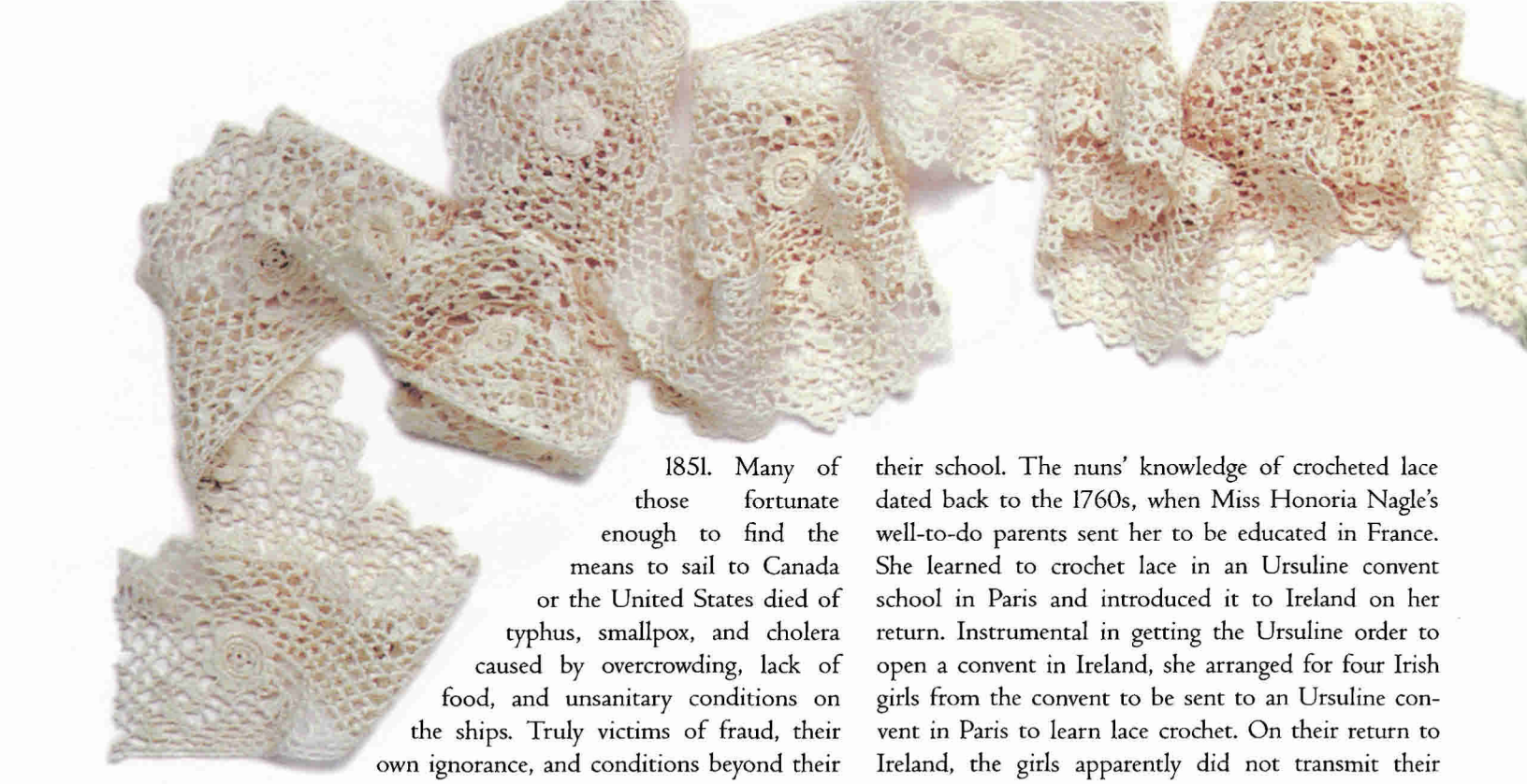
When Famine Ravaged in Ireland

Kax Wilson

VISUALIZE A CREAMY COTTON lace collar sprinkled with daisies, corded trefoils, curving leaves, and three-dimensional roses, connected with a fine web of looped thread. Imagine the spiritless poverty that spawned this treasured textile in nineteenth-century Ireland, then give credit to a few charitable women who helped destitute peasants earn a little money for food or passage to America.

In *Victorian Lace,* historian and lace researcher Patricia Wardle places Irish crocheted lace in historical context by quoting from an 1887 *Art Journal* article by Mabel Robinson: "The lace industry of Ireland is the successor to no ancient school, nor can Erin boast of any laces of her own invention. . . . Poverty is the mother of the Irish lace industry; for Irish lace existed, and still exists, not to supply the commercial demand for it, but to enable a poverty-stricken population to earn a meal of porridge or potatoes." It is easy to associate lace with ample leisure possessed by both maker and wearer, but often their lives were radically different. The story of Irish crocheted lace presents a stark contrast between the hovels where it was produced and the fashionable world where it was worn.

In the early nineteenth century, potatoes and porridge constituted the main diet of the Irish peasant and working classes, as they had for centuries. In 1845 and 1846, a blight destroyed much of the potato crop. At the same time, other factors, including the British government's manipulation of grain supplies, contributed to general misery for the lower classes. By 1847, Ireland was a land of homeless, starving paupers. Grass was often the final meal before people crawled into workhouses to die. Of the population of just over eight million in 1841, 25 percent had either died or emigrated by



1851. Many of those fortunate enough to find the means to sail to Canada or the United States died of typhus, smallpox, and cholera caused by overcrowding, lack of food, and unsanitary conditions on the ships. Truly victims of fraud, their own ignorance, and conditions beyond their control, Irish peasants were either ignored or blamed for being immoral, degenerate, and beyond redemption by most of those who could have helped.

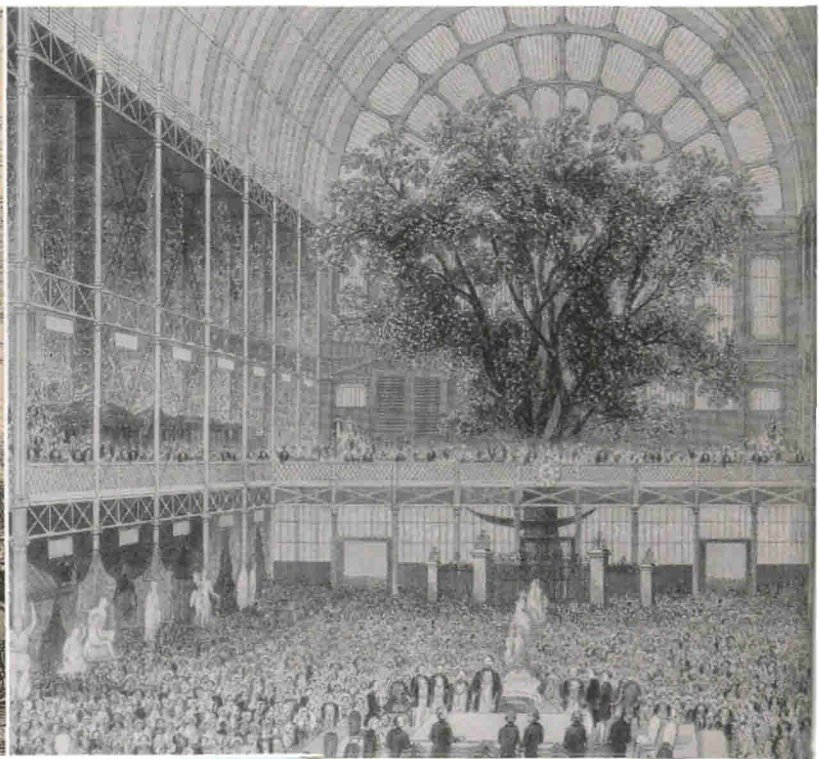
Below left: The Irish famine—scene at the gate of the workhouse. Engraving. Below right: The closing of the Great Exhibition in London's Crystal Palace (1851), where Irish crochet was introduced to the Victorian fashion world. Engraving. *Courtesy of the Bettmann Archive.*

A Perfect Clamour for Employment

One small group of compassionate nuns and upper-class women did help some girls and women by teaching and arranging for the sale of crocheted cotton lace. In the 1840s, before the worst years of the famine, Ursuline nuns started a lace school in their convent in Blackrock, County Cork, in south Ireland. This probably was an expansion of the small business they had established selling lace made by children already in their school. The nuns' knowledge of crocheted lace dated back to the 1760s, when Miss Honoria Nagle's well-to-do parents sent her to be educated in France. She learned to crochet lace in an Ursuline convent school in Paris and introduced it to Ireland on her return. Instrumental in getting the Ursuline order to open a convent in Ireland, she arranged for four Irish girls from the convent to be sent to an Ursuline convent in Paris to learn lace crochet. On their return to Ireland, the girls apparently did not transmit their knowledge to women outside the convent, and little crochet was made in the eighteenth century outside its walls. Miss Nagle also helped start a non-Ursuline convent, the Presentation Convent in Youghal, County Cork.

Nuns usually had the primary responsibility for designing and teaching lace, but by 1847, lay women had started several schools and centers. In County Monaghan, in northeast Ireland just south of the present border with Northern Ireland, Mrs. C. Hand, wife of the rector of Clones, was instrumental in making Clones a major center for crochet. She sent teachers and the best workers into villages and individual cottages throughout her district, where, at that time, even







Above: Yards of Irish crocheted lace trimmed Victorian everyday dress.
Courtesy of the Gustafson Gallery, Colorado State University.

Below: Skilled Irish crocheters using cord to give three dimensions to their motifs achieved a uniquely dense and intricate lace.
Courtesy of Kax Wilson.

men and boys were eager to learn the craft.

Many of the teachers hired by Mrs. Hand were taught by Mrs. W. C. Roberts, another lay woman dedicated to finding some way to relieve the famine in her own region, County Kildare, midway between Cork and Clones. Realizing that there would be a good market for this cotton imitation of expensive continental linen bobbin and needle lace, Mrs. Roberts opened a school in which she trained crochet instructors who were then sent to many distressed regions. Crochet was quick to do and required little skill, physical exertion, or equipment (a hook could be made easily and cheaply by inserting a stiff wire into a small piece of wood or cork). Machine-spun cotton yarn was cheap. Crochet was a perfect cottage industry for people with few means and little stamina.

Mrs. Susannah Meredith is credited with expanding crochet lace production from the convents into Irish homes in southern Ireland by opening a school in Cork and sending her former students out as teachers. Mrs. Meredith wrote in her book, *The Lacemakers* (1865): "When famine ravaged in Ireland in 1847, women were found inspired with an energy to work that was truly surprising. . . . The eagerness to obtain a means of support was so pressing, that a perfect clamour for employment arose."



Looping, Chaining, and Knotting

Crochet is a technique for building a fabric by looping, chaining, and knotting a single thread with a hooked needle. The word crochet is French for "small hook" (from *croche,* "crooked" or "bent"). The technique probably originated in France in the seventeenth century as a method for connecting sections of bobbin lace, and then some creative woman figured out how to make individual solid forms with her hook. The next step was lace in which floral motifs, often with centers worked over a padding cord, were joined by a knotted background and given a plain or scalloped outer edge after the individual sections had been basted to a pattern traced on paper or silk. Crocheted lace is sometimes called free lace because the motifs can be linked in any number of different arrangements by brides (bars) or reseaus (networks).

Irish workers specialized; some worked in the lace schools completing the lace, while others made roses, leaves, or some other pattern at home. A distinctive Irish crocheted lace style developed over time. The common complaint of boredom sometimes led the more adventuresome to stray from established patterns and create new ones. These new designs—for example, a rose turned into a deformed shamrock—were not always successful.

One problem with unsupervised production was that of keeping the lace clean in the squalor of the lace makers' homes; it usually had to be washed before it could be sold. Imagine a young wife trying to find time for her crochet while cooking, washing, and caring for several children. She might sit on her doorstep in good weather but would have to huddle inside next to a can-

dle or peat fire when it rained. If she were conscientious, she would store her lace in a piece of fabric or in her bed while tending to her other duties, but it would be hard to find a secure place in a tiny cottage.

The Great Exhibition

Marketing the lace was the crux of this home industry. At first, the good ladies such as Mrs. Roberts, Mrs. Meredith, and others bought and cajoled their friends into buying it. Charitable organizations like the Irish Work Society of London and the Ladies' Industrial Society of Dublin promoted Irish lace. Unusual as it may seem, nearly all of the money received was returned to the lace makers. Later, professionals got into the business as fashion proved to be a profitable promoter of lace, and the dealers took their share of the profits.



Molly Brown, the "unsinkable" daughter of an Irish immigrant, wears a dress lavishly trimmed with Irish crochet. *Courtesy of the Colorado Historical Society (negative F-4715).*

Irish crocheted lace made its debut into the fashion world in 1851 at the Great Exhibition in London's Crystal Palace. Crochet took its place among some 14,000 displays superintended by Prince Albert. Queen Victoria expressed great interest in the many different kinds of lace exhibited and actively promoted the lace industries. The six million visitors could see fabulous handmade bobbin laces from France and Belgium as well as good machine copies. Craft laces including crocheted ones were popular because people could easily learn to make them at home.

Everyday dress was soon loaded with lace—capes, collars, cuffs, head coverings, ruffles, and flounces. Not all of it showed. Ladies' underwear was thoroughly embellished with lace, as it continued to be into the twentieth century. Crochet was especially popular for underwear: yards and yards of narrow edgings adorned chemises, corset covers, and petticoats.

By the late 1860s and early 1870s, Irish crochet had gradually become coarser, quality had declined, and demand had fallen off. It was difficult for lace makers to find good new designs. Workers were often careless and rushed to meet the demands of the professional lace dealers who had replaced many of the charitable ladies. Fortunately for the Irish industry, a small boom occurred in the late 1870s when supplies of continental laces were cut off during the Franco-Prussian War.

Quality in design and craftsmanship revived in the next decade when government-supported art schools began to distribute new patterns to lace makers and hold contests to encourage fine work. A few dealers also took an active interest in improving quality: Haywards, a prominent company, commissioned Royal Irish Guipure, a copy of Venetian Gros Point, to be made in Clones, Cork, and Waterford.

Some individual workers could be identified by their work. According to one story, a group of Irish girls passing Bloomingdale's department store in New York were able to tell who in Ireland had made the motifs and who had done the joining work on the crocheted dress in the window.

From Hovel to High Fashion—to Today

After the 1880s, true Irish crochet faced a lot of competition. The newly invented schiffli embroidery machine imitated crochet by working a lace pattern in cotton on a background of silk fabric that was then "burned out" with caustic soda. Further competition soon included handmade crochet from China, India, and Australia.

Middle-class women, especially Americans, were avid lace crocheters. Patterns circulated widely, and *Godey's Lady's Book* was an especially important source of ideas. I have noticed while traveling that many historic houses in the United States have large quantities of late-nineteenth-century crocheted lace, but examples of fine Irish crocheted work are rather rare. Now, when we look to fiber artists for new and intriguing products of hook and thread and to fashion designers for new ways to wear lace, it is lace that represents a life of ease and comfort, not disease and starvation.

About the Author. *Kax Wilson, the author of* A History of Textiles, *taught textile history at Colorado State University. Now retired, she is a freelance writer who lives on Canandaigua Lake in New York.*

Further Reading

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A Delicate Irish Crocheted Pincushion

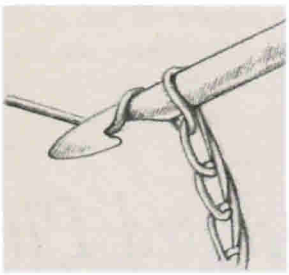


DESIGNED BY LINDA LIGON

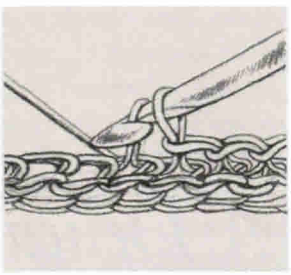
Irish crocheted lace at its simplest: a rose medallion surrounded by a delicate network of chain stitch and picots, embellished with appliquéd leaves. Work such as this was produced in sweatshops, cottages, and genteel parlors for a half-century and more. It was used for trim on corset covers and other unmentionables as well as for bedspreads, ball gowns, and banquet cloths. Countless antimacassars and doilies depended on the simple stitches of Irish crocheted lace; they became an emblem of a whole era of interior decoration.

This small pincushion could easily be a fragrant sachet if stuffed with potpourri or lavender buds. Instructions follow.

Scissors courtesy of the Loveland Museum and Gallery.



CHAIN STITCH (ch)
Make a slipknot on the hook. Then pass the yarn over the hook and draw it through the loop of the slipknot. Repeat, always drawing the yarn through the last loop formed.



SLIP STITCH (sl st)
Insert the hook into a stitch, yarn over the hook, and draw a loop directly through the stitch through which you have inserted the hook *and* through the loop on the hook.

The stitches of Irish crochet are simple; what strikes the beginner to this delicate craft is the sheer number of them required to make the smallest piece. The little lacy square with rose center and leaf appliqués shown here, of the sort our grandmothers made by the gross to join into banquet cloths and full-sized bedspreads, requires nearly 2,000 stitches. Its 12-inch length of simple edging, also of the sort our grandmothers worked by the furlong to trim bed and table linens, hankies, curtains, corsets, and petticoats, is fashioned of more than 1,200 individual stitches.

But let us repeat: the stitches are simple. This small pincushion top, like most Irish crocheted lace, employs only the chain, the slip stitch, and the single and double crochet, no more (see stitch illustrations). Yet these simple manipulations have been used over the years to produce fantasies of airy delicacy and encrustations of opulence. All it takes is thread, and time.

Classic Irish crocheted lace, of the type shown on page 43, was made of individual motifs, often worked over a heavy padding cord for a dramatic sculptural effect. Those motifs were basted to a sheer silk ground fabric (which was later cut away) and joined together by a network of chain stitch with picots. The motifs were typically worked in a very fine crochet thread—measuring perhaps 10,000 yards per pound—and a network thread twice as fine.

Our little pincushion takes some shortcuts. The center rose is worked from the center out; its petals have detached edges which provide the three-dimensional effect that we associate with Irish crocheted lace. The background network, rather than being worked separately, is worked continuously outward from the last row of rose petals. The leaf motifs are worked separately and appliquéd in place to the finished piece.

If you are new to crocheted lace, this small project will give you a taste of how such work was done and a sense of the time and attention it commanded. If you are familiar with the fundamental stitches, you can expect to spend perhaps four hours on the rose square and an equal amount of time on the edging. Stitching up the small cushion takes only a matter of minutes.

MATERIALS

A small ball of DMC crochet cotton, #30, in ecru

Two 5-inch squares of 28-count even-weave linen in ecru

Sewing thread to match

Small amount of polyester fiberfill

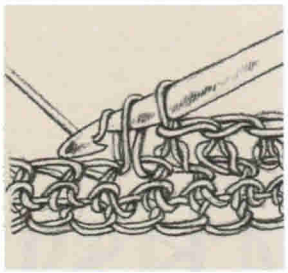
TOOLS

#13 or #14 steel crochet hook The finer hook is more challenging to work with, but produces a firmer and more delicate lace.

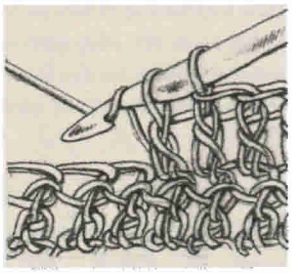
Needle for hand sewing

Sewing machine for constructing cushion (optional)

ABBREVIATIONS
ch—chain
st—stitch
sc—single crochet
dc—double crochet
sl st—slip stitch
rnd—round
lp—loop
sk—skip
beg—beginning
sp—space



SINGLE CROCHET (sc)
Insert the hook into a stitch, yarn over the hook, draw a loop through the stitch, yarn over the hook, and draw it through both loops on the hook. The British call this double crochet.



DOUBLE CROCHET (dc)
Yarn over the hook, insert the hook into a stitch, yarn over the hook and draw a loop through the stitch (three loops on hook), yarn over the hook and draw it through two loops (two loops on hook), yarn over the hook and draw it through the remaining two loops on the hook.

Rose Motif

Beginning at center of rose, ch 7, sl st in first ch to form ring.

Rnd 1: Ch 1, 16 sc in ring. Join in first sc of rnd with sl st.

Rnd 2: *Ch 5, sk 1 sc, sl st in next sc, repeat from * around—8 lps.

Rnd 3: (1 sc, 5 dc, 1 sc) in each lp around. Sl st in joining st of last lp.

Rnd 4: *Ch 6, sl st in back of work between next 2 petals, repeat from * around, ending with sl st between last and first petals.

Rnd 5: (1 sc, 6 dc, 1 sc) in each lp around. Sl st in joining st of last lp.

Rnd 6: Repeat rnd 4.

Rnd 7: (1 sc, 7 dc, 1 sc) in each lp around. Sl st in joining st of last lp. This completes the rose.

Network

The following stitch sequences recur throughout the network:

ch 6-picot: ch 6, sl st in 6th ch from hook.
ch 3-picot: ch 3, sl st in 3rd ch from hook.
picot loop: ch 3, ch 6-picot, ch 3, ch 6-picot, ch 3.

Rnd 8: *(Ch 3, ch 6-picot) twice, ch 3, sc in sp between next 2 petals, (ch 7, ch 6-picot) twice, ch 7, sl st in same sp between petals (corner), (ch 3, ch 6-picot) twice, ch 3, sc in sp between next 2 petals, repeat from * 3 times, ending with sl st in joining st of rnd 7.

Rnd 9: Sl st to center of next lp, keeping picot to front of work, *picot loop, sc in next lp between picots, repeat from * around, sl st in last sl st at beg of rnd.

Rnd 10: Sl st to center of next lp, keeping picot to front of work, *picot loop, sc in next sc at corner, (picot loop, sc in next lp between picots) 3 times, repeat from * around, ending with sl st in last sl st at beg of rnd.

Rnd 11: Sl st to center of next lp, keeping picot to front of work, *picot loop, 1 sc in next lp between picots, repeat from * around, sl st in last sl st at beg of rnd. End of motif.

Leaf

(Make 4): Ch 10, sc in second ch from hook and in each of next 7 ch, 3 sc in last ch; working on opposite side of ch, make sc in each of next 6 ch, *ch 3, turn; working in back lp of sts, make sc in each of next 6 sc, 3 sc in next sc, sc in each of next 6 sc, repeat from * 4 times. End off.

Edging

Row 1: Make a chain at least 16 inches long (the edging will take up, depending on how tightly or loosely you work), turn.

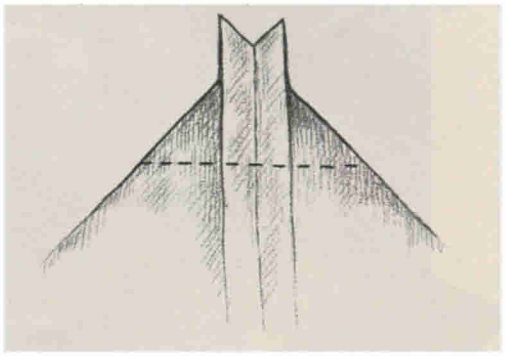
Row 2: 1 sc in each st of chain. Ch 5, turn.

Row 3: Sk 2 sc, 1 dc in next sc, ch 3, repeat across row. Ch 5, turn.

Row 4: 1 sl st in top of first dc from end, *ch 5, sl st in top on next dc, repeat from * to end of row. Ch 1, turn.

Row 5: *Working *over* each ch 5 (not inserting needle into lps, but rather passing needle under chain and working over it), 3 sc, ch 3-picot, 3 sc. Repeat from * to end of row. Steam lightly.

Finishing



Pin rose square face down on a softly padded surface, placing a pin in each edge picot to shape a uniform square. Block by holding a steam iron just over the surface of the work. Let dry thoroughly before unpinning. Measure square.

Cut two pieces of even-weave linen as large as lace square plus 3/8-inch seam allowances on all sides. Seam sides, leaving a 2-inch opening on one side for stuffing. Miter corners as shown. Turn work, stuff, and hand stitch closed.

Pin crocheted square to top of cushion and stitch in place. Appliqué leaf motifs to cushion corners as shown in photograph. Stitch edging in place over seam.

WHAT'S AT HAND:

Using Cotton Sacks in

PAT L. NICKOLS



When today's quilter decides to make a quilt, she selects as much new fabric as she needs at a local yardage shop from a wide range of prints in a rainbow of colors. She has sufficient money from her own earnings or from the family account to spend for fabric and batting to make a quilt that will satisfy her creative nature. The need for a warm bedcover is of minor concern; reasonably priced blankets and machine-quilted comforters are readily available.

Quilters of the past, however, were often limited by the remoteness of stores and fabric sources, and dependent on mail order or traveling peddlers for any bright new material. Money for family purchases had to cover many needs: staples, seed, and items not usually produced at home, such as shoes or eyeglasses. Little new fabric could be purchased exclusively for quilts. Quilters, however, were resourceful in finding fabric for the quilts the family needed for cold winters in homes heated only by a fireplace or stove. Feed and flour sacks were an available and excellent source. I have examined antique quilts, quilt tops, and quilt blocks, interviewed quilters, and read letters and periodicals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and have found widespread use of feed and flour sacks in quilts. The detective work has been fruitful and exciting.

I do remember now that we used to pick out feed sacks and flour sacks. They were made of good strong cotton, good enough for everyday quilts. We sewed sacks together to back quilts with when we didn't have any other backing, and we would pick out different brands of flour depending on how good the sacks was.

—from *The Quilters: Women and Domestic Art*, Patricia Cooper and Norma Bradley Buferd

QuiltMaking













Quilts from Salvage

A mid-nineteenth-century quilt (number 10.302) in the collection of the Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont, is an early example of feed-sack use. Margie Gorrecht, thought to have lived in York, Pennsylvania, made this finely quilted Irish Chain, with the stencil printing of the contents of the early bags still visible on some of the white patches. A solid red-and-white pieced Cross and Crown quilt from about 1850 noted in a 1982 article by Margaret Malanyn belongs to the Dearborn Historical Museum. Its backing includes flour and sugar-sack backing fabric with a stamped design from BB & Knight, Providence, Rhode Island.

Well into the twentieth century in rural America, women often made quilts of material salvaged from the farm household, but urban dwellers also purchased many of their foodstuffs in cotton bags. The bags held staple goods: especially flour but also sugar, salt, rice, split peas, pearl barley, rolled oats, and cornmeal. Feed bags held poultry grains and other animal feed. Cotton bags were recycled as containers for homemade noodles or corn and apples grown on the farm—and then recycled again for their fabric. Women used sack fabric for clothing (dresses, shirts, pajamas, aprons, sunbonnets), for towels, and for patches and quilt blocks for quilts and quilt backing. Local bakers were often glad to sell flour sacks cheaply.

Women held bag parties so that friends and neighbors could exchange plain sacks for colorful print sacks, or vice versa, to suit their needs. Thelma Campbell Butts, who grew up in Shawnee, Oklahoma, and moved to Kansas City, Missouri, in 1911, remembers her mother's attending the Farm Club once a month to quilt or piece or do whatever handwork the hostess wanted done. She recalls her mother's trading print

Identifying Cotton Sack Fabric

To determine whether a quilt contains sack fabric, the following descriptions of sacks will be helpful:



FEED SACKS
Plain color similar to unbleached muslin; coarser and heavier than dress goods; plain weave—when new and unwashed is flat and even, but after washing may appear uneven or bumpy; may have row of stitching holes (see below); may be printed in a variety of patterns (for example, floral, calico, geometric, or checked).



FLOUR SACKS
Plain weave; flat surface, even after washing; medium weight, similar to dress fabrics; may be unbleached, bleached, or printed in a solid color or a wide variety of patterns (for example, floral, geometric, or checked).



SUGAR AND SALT SACKS
Plain weave, flat surface, fine thread; fabric may be flimsy; thinner than dress goods, like lawn; white or patterned (for example, red-white-and-blue stripe, or blue ground with small white floral motif).



TOBACCO SACKS
Similar to sugar and salt sacks except always lightweight; 3 by 4½ inches. These small Bull Durham sacks held the tobacco used to "roll your own" cigarettes.

The bag manufacturer used heavy thread similar to string to chain-stitch the bag together. The big needle used in stitching the bag together made large



holes in the fabric, and the shifting contents pulled at the stitching to make the holes even bigger. Evidence of these holes, often still visible after many washings, on the backing fabric or on quilt tops and blocks indicates their origin as grain, flour, or other sack material.

The sack material was sewn together along one side and the bottom or along both sides. Another row of stitches across the top closed the bag after filling. These stitches are usually in an arch because they were sewn around the sack contents. The chain stitching was easily removed by pulling a thread, a job often given to children. The heavy thread was wound into balls for use in tying quilts, quilting, crocheting, raveling for sewing thread, and other household needs.





sacks for white sacks to make tablecloths and towels. The most unusual source of sacking I found was the muslin used to wrap rubber tires. In the 1920s, Susan Harriman Grover's son, Fred, brought her tire wrappings from the Ford garage in Rice Lake, Wisconsin. She bleached the fabric and made her Double Wedding Ring quilt top from it, as noted in a 1985 survey by the Evergreen Quilters of Bellingham, Washington.

Worn sacks provided a foundation for the pressed work construction of log cabin, crazy, and string patchwork. In one unfinished crazy quilt in my collection, colorful delegate ribbons dated 1896–1898, from Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin, as well as a wide variety of bright silk are sewn to a backing made from Pillsbury Best XXXX feed sacks. Realizing that this foundation cloth would be covered by the quilt backing, the maker did not remove the red and blue lettering of the Bemis Bag Company.

Today, you can sometimes read the remaining print on a fabric, or the fabric may reveal the shapes and colors of company logos. Quilters had trouble removing the black ink used to print the early bags, although they used kerosene, lard, bleach, lye soap, and boiled the fabric, as Barbara Brackman describes in "Quilts from Feed Sacks" in the October 1985 *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine.* The remaining stamping or printing may provide a clue as to the contents and where it was milled. Because the mill was usually located near the quilter's home, this information together with information on the the national, regional, or local distribution of a mill's products can suggest where a quilt was made. For example, in my collection I have a mid-western LeMoyne Star scrap quilt with sack material on the back that when held to a mirror read, "Pillsbury XXXX Feed, Clinton, Iowa," a probable geographical point of origin.

A quilt found in central Missouri had black printing on the side of the orange sashing clearly showing the distinctive design of Purina Feed Chow, from the well-known St. Louis milling company. The seven-pointed String Stars had been appliquéd on salt and sugar sacks easily identified by the print remaining on the back of the blocks. The quilt top was built on the wrong side of the flour sack and the front of the sack covered with batting and backing.

Other quilters used the vivid flour-sack logos as the block design for their quilt tops—including flowers, animals, birds, Indians, bread and biscuits, fields of grain, and farm scenes. Eva Amanda Brown Morgan, of Center Hill, Texas,



Left: Four bags opened to display colors and patterns. Below: Seven point string star top with Purina gold sashing.

The State Quilt Projects

According to an update on state quilt projects presented in *American Quilter's* summer 1992 issue, as of January 1992, twenty-eight states and the District of Columbia have completed state quilt surveys. Several states have completed more than one. More than 137,000 quilts have been documented. Illinois surveyed the largest number, with a total of 15,500—followed by Kansas with 13,007, and North Carolina with 10,000. Twenty-six publications have resulted from individual state projects and the quilts and information they discovered, and many more publications are in progress. In addition to many exhibits, state projects have supplied quilt researchers and authors with information otherwise unavailable.

The careful documentation of those involved in state quilt projects has helped all scholars and enthusiasts who wish to know more about the history of quilting in the United States. The documentation and the publications of many of the projects have been important to me in my search for evidence of the use of cotton sacks in quilting.

I am particularly grateful for the information in the following state quilt project publications for information on cotton-sack use in quilts: Marsha MacDowell and Ruth D. Fitzgerald, *Michigan Quilts,* (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Museum, 1987); Arkansas Quilter's Guild, Inc., *Arkansas Quilts* (Paducah, Kentucky: American Quilter's Society, 1988); Ruth H. Roberson, ed., *North Carolina Quilts* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Rogers Historical Museum, *Stitches in Time: A Legacy of Ozark Quilts* (Rogers, Arkansas: Rogers Historical Museum, 1986); Bets Ramsey and Merikay Waldvogel, *The Quilts of Tennessee* (Nashville, Tennessee: Rutledge Hill, 1986).

In the Depression years of the 1930s as well as the war and postwar years of the 1940s, bag companies were able to increase sales. Customers who needed or wanted to economize found cotton sacks an excellent source of material.

cut 7-inch by 8-inch blocks from the fronts of twenty-five-pound cornmeal sacks showing the smiling face of Aunt Jemima. She pieced these with alternate blocks of solid red during the cold winter of 1919 in Center Hill, Texas, to make her quilt (documented by the Texas Heritage Quilt Society in *Texas Quilts, Texas Treasures*). Romona Randles Crosley of Liberal, Kansas, set the colors by soaking the flour sacks in a salt-and-vinegar solution overnight, a practice she learned from her grandmother, Lula Dawkins Randles. Grandmother Randles was born in Collinsville, Texas, in 1877 and homesteaded in Turpin (Beaver County), Oklahoma. An active quiltmaker, she taught Romona to quilt. During the 1930s, as quilters saved flour sacks, they sometimes competed to see who could gather the most sacks from the greatest distance. After her grandmother died in 1970, Romona Crosley made two flour-sack quilts, using her grandmother's leftover flour sacks, which had been stored in an upstairs trunk. The quilts, which are in her collection, were documented as part of the Kansas Quilt Project in 1986.

State quilt projects have uncovered many quilts that include feed- and flour-sack material. Although some sacks still bore manufacturer's marks, others had most of the printing removed and some were home-dyed or otherwise decorated. Mary Midgett Bridgman (1845–1928), of Hyde County, North Carolina, made an orange-and-black Melon Patch quilt in 1902 using dyed sack fabric (Ruth H. Roberson, *North Carolina Quilts*). Bertie Yoder Miller, of the Conservative Mennonite branch south of Hutchinson, Kansas, tells how her mother, Edna Nisley Yoder, made quilts for Bertie and her four sisters in 1951. Edna Yoder embroidered plain feed sacks with green crochet thread to make five elaborately quilted spreads without battings (Judy Schroeder Tomlonson, *Mennonite Quilts and Pieces*).

The Bag Companies Respond to Customers

Bag manufacturers listened and responded to their customers' complaints about the difficulty of removing the black ink used to stamp the mill company's name, contents, and weight on the cotton bags. About 1900, the companies began using col-

The Bemis Story

In 1858, Judson M. Bemis founded the Bemis Bag Company in St. Louis, Missouri. Increased cotton fabric production and the development of the chain-stitch sewing machine in 1846 were important factors in his decision to manufacture bags. Bemis was the first company to produce machine-sewn bags as well as the first to close filled bags by machine. These developments led to greater production at lower cost by replacing time-consuming hand labor. As the market for cotton bags increased, Bemis established cotton mills and a bleachery to provide material for its growing business, which by 1910 had expanded to eleven bag factories.

Of the bags I studied that had the manufacturer's name printed on them, those of the Bemis Bag Company occurred most often, followed by those of the Chase Bag Company, and Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills. Bemis was the largest producer and distributor of the sack fabric, known in the textile trade as "greige goods" or "gray sheeting," and its company logo, the Bemis cat "Biddy," was a familiar mark on feed and flour sacks. The 1950 edition of *Davidson's*, the blue book of the textile industry, listed thirty-two bag goods companies under Cotton Manufacturers; the Bemis Bag Company produced the largest number of bags.



The Bemis Company's logo: the cat "Biddy."

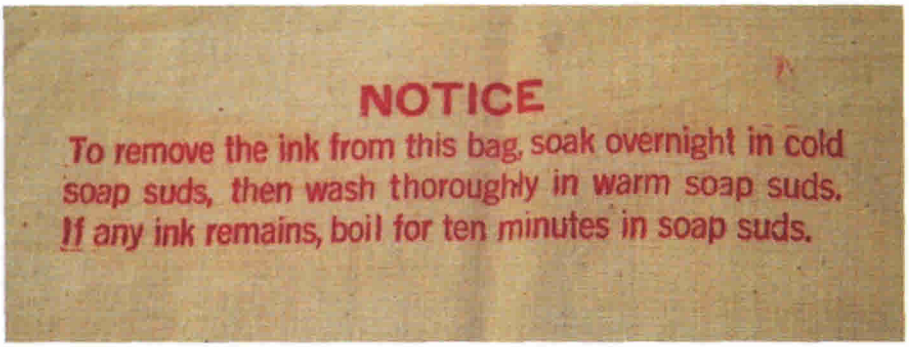
ored inks that were easier to remove. Washing instructions were prominently printed on the back of the bag near the top of the bag. Bags to be recycled for quilts still had to be soaked, washed, and perhaps bleached to remove all traces of the ink. In the 1920s, again responding to their customers, the companies began printing all information on a wide paper label glued to the sack or caught in the side-seam stitching—in either case easily removed.

In the Depression years of the 1930s as well as the war and postwar years of the 1940s, bag companies were able to increase sales. Customers who needed or wanted to economize found cotton sacks an excellent source of material. The demand led the bag companies to offer patterned bags printed in popular pastel colors in calico, floral, and geometric designs as well as solid colors. The paper wrapper or small paper label could be removed to let a woman create a garment and use the scraps in her quiltmaking. As homemakers nationwide economized by using what was readily available, they increasingly used sacks to create garments and bedcovers.

The size of the bags determined the amount of piecing needed for quilt backing. I measured more than one hundred bags and found widely varied dimensions. One 100-pound plain, unbleached grain bag measured 40 by 42 inches, another bag was 37 by 53 inches, and a third, 38 by 46 inches. About 1920, sacks for some products, such as flour, were standardized, which made the quiltmaker's calculations easier. Flour was sold in uniform-sized bags and by standard weights, such as 5, 10, 25, 48 or 49, and 100 pounds.

The Daintiest Little Quilt Imaginable

In the 1920s, the Textile Bag Manufacturers' Association, headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, printed a fifty-two-page, well-illustrated booklet, *Sewing with Cotton Bags,* which they offered to homemakers, sewing instructors, home demonstration agents, club leaders and







Top: Washing instructions.

Middle: Cotton flour sack with an offer of a quilting booklet.

Bottom: *Sewing with Cotton Bags* was a popular booklet of ideas for using cotton sacks.

others to show what could be done with what was apt to be regarded as a waste material. It presented more than fifty items, including clothing, mattress covers, pillowcases, comforter covers, bedspreads, and quilt covers, and cost five cents, (patterns sold for ten cents each or three for a quarter). The popular booklet was revised and available into the 1960s.

Pattern and idea booklets also were available from the National Cotton Council, Memphis, Tennessee. One two-page booklet, *Comforts and Quilts,* suggested using both printed cotton bags and plain ones that could be dyed pastel shades. It offered instructions for removing chainstitching, sewing the bags together, tying or tufting, appliqué, and cutting patches. To date, I have found twelve different editions of these booklets.

People continued to seek uses for cotton sacks. Mrs. G. C. Clark of Washington wrote to *Needlecraft Magazine* in March 1929, asking for ideas for using dozens of ten-pound oatmeal and cornmeal sacks "that were all nicely washed with no lettering on them." The editor responded with directions for "the daintiest little quilt imaginable . . . of just such small sacks, cut in squares, with a quaint nursery rhyme or fairy tale outline design to be done in the simplest stitchery."

Thrifty and creative quiltmakers, rural and urban, used cotton sacks from the mid-1800s into the 1970s. Although the sacks were used nationwide, more were produced and used in the South, Southwest, and Midwest than in other areas of the country, and they were used in those areas for a longer time. Manufacturers both supported and exploited the use to promote their business. The humble idea of reusing feed and flour sacks in quiltmaking is a sturdy thread that can be followed through well over a century of the country's economy.

About the Author. *In 1977, Pat Nickols began quilting in an adult education class in Missouri. After moving to southern California, she attended lectures, read widely, and began collecting quilts. Intrigued by antique and especially scrap quilts, she has published articles and lectured extensively about them. Currently, she is writing a book on charm quilts. Photographs on pages 49–54 courtesy of the author.*

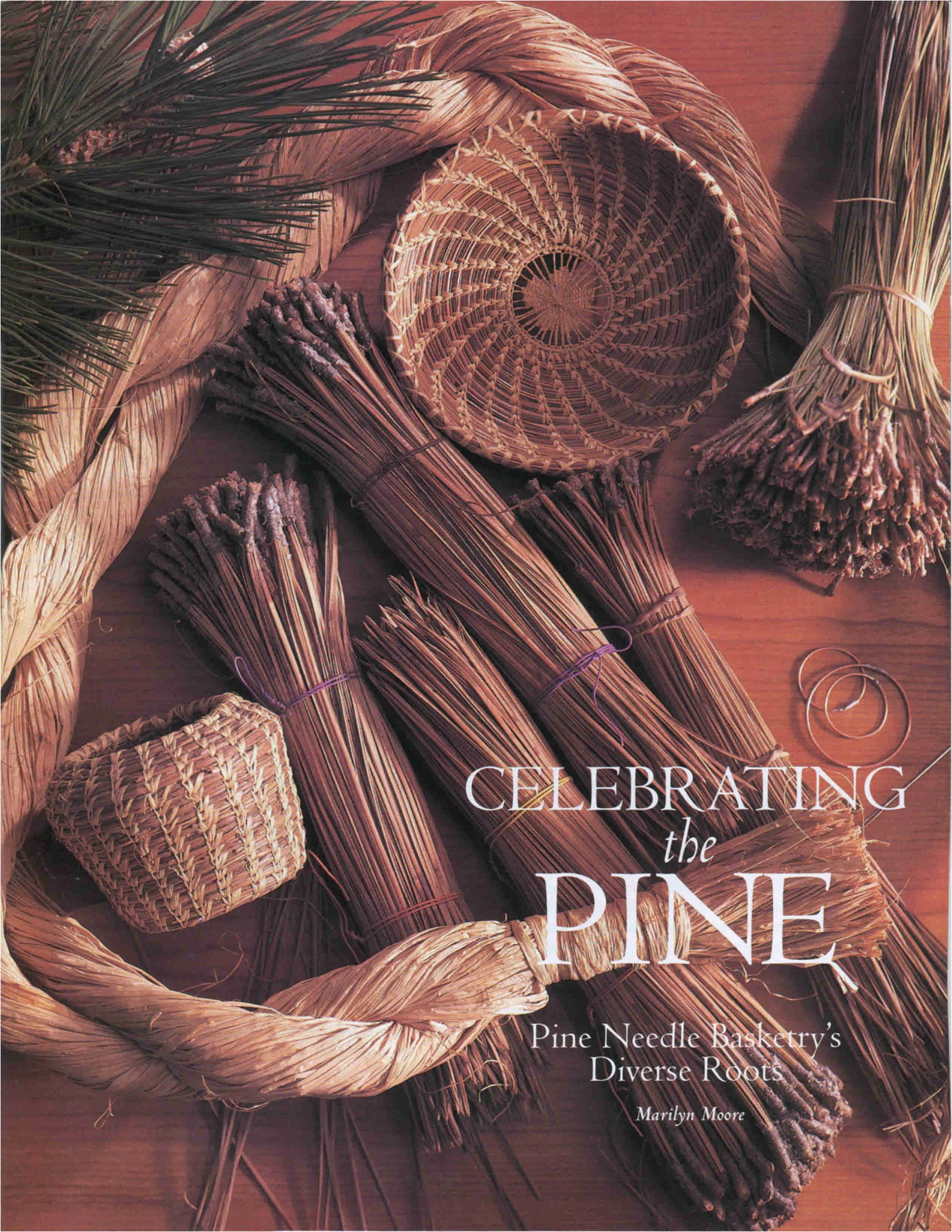
An earlier version of this article appeared in Volume 9, 1988, of *Uncoverings,* the annual publication of the American Quilt Study Group, 660 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94105-4007.

The Paper Bag War

In the late 1940s, the competition from cheaper paper bags greatly concerned the cotton bag industry. A committee consisting of thirty bag and fabric manufacturers, textile merchants and converters, representatives from the raw cotton industry, and a staff member from the National Cotton Council met in the spring of 1948 to formulate a plan to halt the declining sales of cotton bags. The results were reported in the Business and Finance section of *Time,* January 31, 1949:

> PAPER WAR. Since war's end the papermakers have been edging high-priced cotton out of the bag market. But when twenty states passed laws forbidding the reuse of any bags for food, cotton men finally got up off their bales. With cotton bags at 32 cents (per 100-pound bag) vs. 10 cents for paper bags, cotton-bag makers had been getting by only because bakers were able to use cotton bags three and four times over in handling flour. . . . Feed and flour bags have been used for years by farmers' wives for aprons, dresses, etc., but the cotton men decided to go after city folks too. A tougher and more important job was to sell cotton bags to wholesale bakers: They didn't give a hoot about prints.
>
> IN THE BAG. So cotton men dropped in on secondhand dealers in key U.S. cities and convinced them that they could profitably boost their business by buying used bags from bakers, processing them into tea towels, selling them through retailers. Bag dealers were soon buying bakers' used cotton bags for as much as 25 cents apiece, thus cutting the original cost to bakers to around 7 cents—well under paper prices.

The committee successfully promoted reusing flour and feed sacks. In the same article, *Time* noted that "Macy's in Manhattan was hawking an odd item, dish towels made of old flour bags, selling 30,000 in ten days." Sears, Roebuck catalog sales of used flour sacks were also brisk. Across the United States, thousands of women were using a "special pattern book" to turn bags into clothes, curtains, tablecloths, quilts, and slipcovers.



CELEBRATING *the* PINE

Pine Needle Basketry's Diverse Roots

Marilyn Moore

It is the poet who makes the truest use of the pine, who does not fondle it with an axe, or tickle it with a saw, or stroke it with a plane. It is the poet who loves it as his own shadow in the air, and lets it stand.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

THE POET is not alone in having a true appreciation for the pine, especially for several species of long-needled pines. The pine needle basket maker uses the fragrant needles without injuring the tree—to make functional and beautiful baskets that celebrate the pine's natural beauty.

In the United States, the converging cultures that blend people and traditions from all over the world are reflected in pine needle basketry. The dominant material, pine needles, can be found in the southern pine forest as well as the northern woodlands and in the West. The pine needles are coiled for basketmaking, with from one or two needles to several clusters in each coil depending upon the fineness of the work. Different materials have been used for binding the coils. One of the most traditional binders for pine needle baskets, raffia, imported from Madagascar, is inexpensive and seemingly plentiful. Coiled pine needle basketry has been influenced by both Native American and Afro-American cultures. A third cultural influence on pine needle basketry—Teneriffe embroidery—is European in origin. Teneriffe embroidery offers the design for the lacy medallions that often form part of the base of a pine needle basket. A merging of materials, designs, and techniques has produced an exquisite style of basketry.

Pine Needle Basketry Unfolds

Dating back thousands of years, basketry developed from necessity. The styles and techniques of early basketry were determined by the materials available in the basket maker's environment and by the purpose each basket was to serve. Even though pine needles were plentiful in many locations and baskets probably were made from them, historical documentation of pine needle basketry is sketchy and often contradictory. It is still arguable who first used pine needles for basketry in this country—the Seminoles of southern Florida, slaves from West Africa, and Mrs. M. J. McAfee are all candidates for the honor. In the southeastern United States, longleaf pines provided a readily available resource. The Seminoles seem to have been the earliest group to use pine needles in their baskets, stitching the coils of needles together with swamp grasses, fern roots, or sisal. These early baskets were used for everything from cooking and food storage to traps for wildlife.

Several native groups have become known for their pine needle baskets in more recent times. Members of the Coushatta tribe, now living in Louisiana, are probably the most prolific pine needle basket makers. They make and market small baskets with tight-fitting lids, in animal shapes such as frogs, turkeys, and alligators. The Coushatta have become well known for their baskets, which use raffia as the binder. They use commercial dyes and dye soaked out of crepe paper to produce the bright colors that add variety to their work. The Alibamu also do basket work with pine needles, and other tribes, including the Choctaw, Cherokee, and Yuchi are adding pine needles to their already rich basketry traditions.

In the early 1700s, slaves were brought from West Africa to the southern United States to work the rice plantations in South Carolina. The slaves brought their basketry techniques and traditions with them. In need of baskets for tending and harvesting rice, they formed them from materials available in the new country. First made from rush and bound with palmetto or white oak strips, the baskets eventually were made from a wider variety of materials including sweet grass (or sea straw) and pine needles. The "Gullah" or sweet-grass baskets (of sweet grass, pine needles, and palmetto strips) created by descendants of former slaves have evolved from strictly practical and useful pieces to include decorative or "show baskets." The baskets capitalize on the strong patterning that results from the juxtaposition of green or brown pine needles with the straw-colored sweet grass. These baskets are now sold at the marketplace in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, and at roadside stands along U.S. Highway 17 north of Charleston. Mary Alice Scott, a basket maker who sells her work at a stand on U.S. 17, said, "My mother taught me and her mother taught her," as



A lidded pine needle and raffia basket.
Courtesy of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild.

Louise Lione noted in a 1988 article in *Fiberarts.* In turn, Scott has taught five granddaughters to make baskets. This rich basketry tradition rests upon the skills passed down through the generations. The economic necessity of supplementing the family income also helps keep the tradition going. Early Afro-American basket makers from Africa's west coast are, like the Seminoles, sometimes given credit for the earliest and most extensive use of pine needles in this country.

Resources Near at Hand

During the Civil War, Mrs. M. J. MacAfee of southern Georgia made hats for several members of her family. Lacking other materials, she used those which were available on her plantation: "Coats Thread (No. 50)" and the brown "pine straw" lying on the ground. Throughout the war, she made baskets for friends and later claimed to be the originator of pine needle basketry in this country. After the war, she set aside her pine needle work until her grandchildren, hearing stories of her hat and basketmaking, urged her to revive her craft. She made hats and baskets for each of them, and because she enjoyed it so much she started to make baskets to sell. "All shapes and sizes. I have never sold even a small basket below 75 cents. Usually $1.00," Mrs. MacAfee reported in an interview (*The Basket,* October 1904), "The highest I have obtained is $5.00." Mrs. MacAfee introduced the use of raffia for stitching pine needle work when she taught a summer-school basketry course at the University of Tennessee.

A 1917 government pamphlet entitled *Pine Needle Basketry in Public Schools* by William C. A. Hammel, Superintendent of City Schools in Greensboro, North Carolina, urged readers to discover "resources near at hand" and to accept and develop "native materials, especially when the results that may be accomplished are of equal or even greater merit than those achieved with foreign materials." This free resource (pine needles) was, according to the author, "going almost wholly to waste."

Like other contemporary pine needle basket makers, I am often surprised at the number of people I meet at craft fairs who learned to make these baskets as children in school or at summer camp. Most of them are old enough to have grown up before or during the Depression, when pine needle basketry was one technique by which people could make their own accessories. Baskets, trays, purses, hats, and even lamps were among the pine needle creations.

Raffia Lace: Teneriffe Embroidery

Teneriffe embroidery probably was incorporated into the tradition of pine needle basketry in the 1920s, but the record is unclear. This lace-making technique, which dates at least to the early 1500s, went through some evolutionary changes and travels before it influenced pine needle basketry. Teneriffe, one of the "sun" laces popular in sixteenth-century Spain, eventually found its way to Latin America. Called "sol lace" because the threads used for the warp in the needle weaving radiated out like the sun, the technique was taken up by the residents of Tenerife, the largest of the Canary Islands, just off the coast of Spain.

Traditionally, the lace is made by pinning cotton or linen threads tightly to a pillow or form, then weaving them into medallions, which are then attached to each other or to fabric. In 1920, Lenna Leohr Millikin published a book that shows the first use of a wire wrapped in raffia for the center of a basket, a technique that would be important for incorporating Teneriffe into pine needle basketry. Pine needle basket makers adapted the Teneriffe lace-making technique, using a wire form as a frame, attaching spokes to the frame, and then weaving the medallion. The use of Teneriffe embroidery in pine needle basketry seems to have peaked in the 1950s and early 1960s, as evidenced in books by Veronica Walsh, a German-born resident of Florida. Her intricate designs, which incorporated Teneriffe embroidery extensively, found their way into such practical objects as trays, purses, lampshades, napkin holders, and even whisk broom holders. A book published in 1963 by Adelaid M. Loofborough,

also of Florida, showed many Teneriffe designs in the body of the baskets, adding a contrasting lacy element to the sturdy coils and the beautiful symmetry of pine needle work.

About the Author. *On first seeing pine needle baskets, author Marilyn Moore, of Seattle, Washington, felt drawn to their beautiful materials and designs. A student and teacher of basketry techniques for fifteen years, Marilyn has shown her baskets nationally, and her basket designs have been featured in basketry books.*

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Longleaf and Loblolly:

Pine Needles for Basketry

There are more than one hundred species of pine growing in the world today, most of which are in the Northern Hemisphere. In the Southern Hemisphere, the pines that grow in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (mostly red pine or slash pine) are not native but introduced. Only the slash pine *(Pinus elliottii)* has needles of a sufficient length for basketmaking.

In western North America, four species of pine have needles long enough for basketry. The digger pine *(P. sabiniana)* of California has 6- to 17-inch (17- to 43-cm) needles, three per cluster; the Coulter pine *(P. coulteri)*, also in California, has 6- to 12-inch (15- to 30-cm) needles, three per cluster; the Jeffrey pine *(P. jeffreyi)*, which ranges from southern Oregon through Baja California, and west to Nevada, has needles 7 to 10 inches (12 to 25.5 cm) long in clusters of three or sometimes two. The most important basket-making pine in western North America is the ponderosa *(P. ponderosa)*, which ranges from southern British Columbia to Mexico and is seen as far east as South Dakota and Nebraska. Its range is predominantly west of the Rocky Mountains. Ponderosa needles are 4 to 11 inches (10 to 28 cm) in length in clusters of three or two needles.

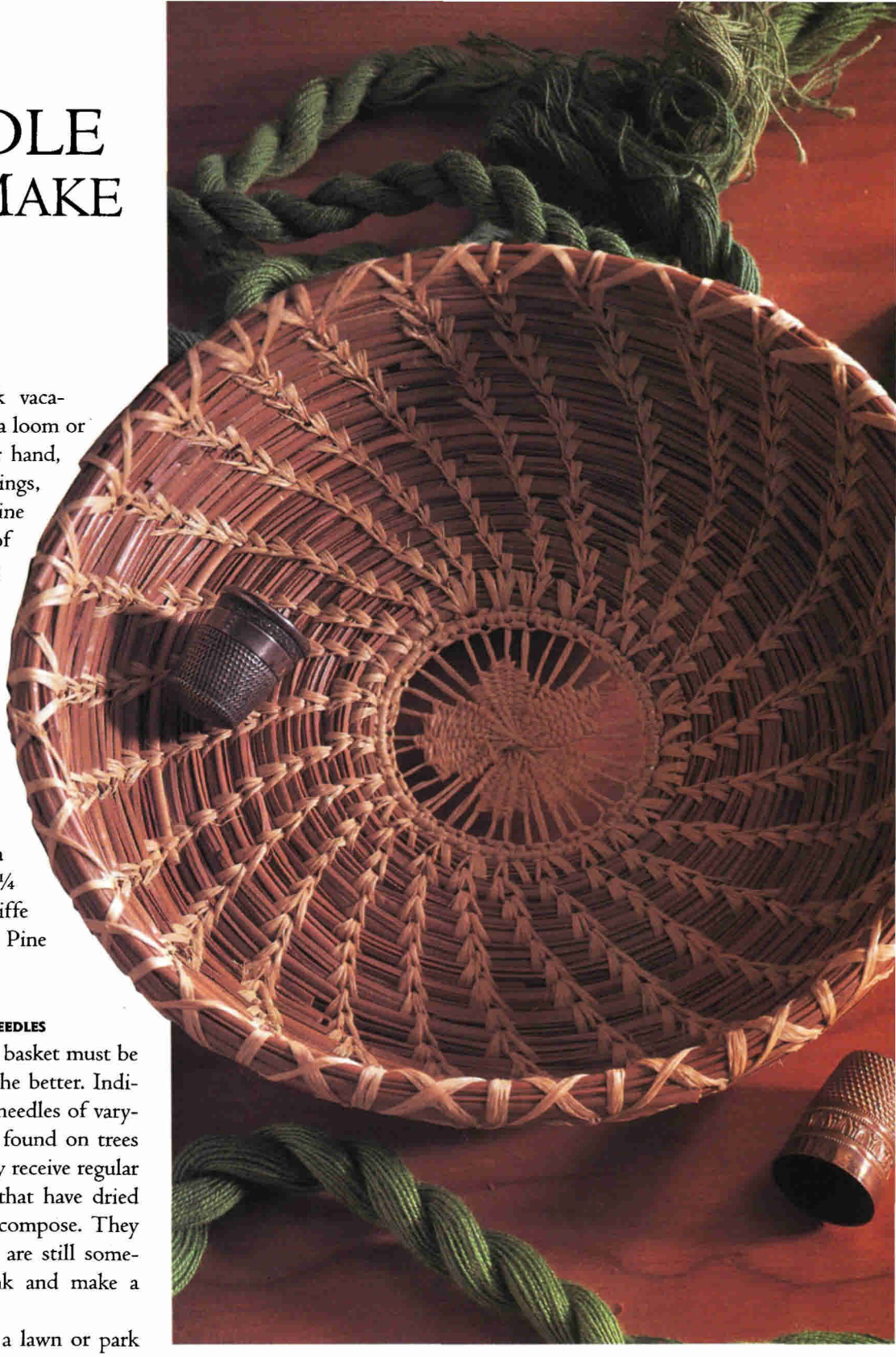
Eastern North America is blessed with the longest pine needles in the world. The longleaf pine *(P. palustris)*, which grows from southern Virginia to Florida and west to eastern Texas, has 8- to 18-inch (20- to 45-cm) needles, three per cluster. These needles are collected commercially and can be purchased from some craft stores. The Great Lakes–St. Lawrence region has an abundance of red pine *(P. resinosa)*, which has needles 4 to 6 inches (10 to 15 cm) long with two per cluster. Slash pine *(P. elliottii)* grows from South Carolina to Florida and west to Louisiana, with two or three needles per cluster. Growing in the same forests as the longleaf and slash pines is the loblolly pine *(P. taeda)*. Its needles, in threes, are 6 to 9 inches (15 to 23 cm) long.

While collecting pine needles, it is best to observe several individual trees, as there is a great range of needle length within each species. After some searching, I found the ponderosa I use most often; its needles average 11.5 inches long (29 cm), beyond the range usually given for the species.

Adapted with permission from *Fragrant Basketry: The Pine Needle and Raffia Handbook,* by Katherine L. Armstrong (see Further Reading).

A PINE NEEDLE BASKET TO MAKE

Robin Taylor Daugherty



ON AN AVERAGE two-week vacation, it's difficult to take along a loom or a potter's wheel. On the other hand, it's easy to pack a few needles, copper rings, scissors, and some raffia for making pine needle baskets. I have a fond memory of my husband, aunt, and uncle crawling around our campsite on the north rim of the Grand Canyon gathering pine needles for me. I made two souvenir baskets on the long drive home to Colorado. We keep toothpicks in one, and the other went home to England with my aunt and uncle.

The following instructions will guide you in preparing materials and making a small pine needle and raffia basket, about 1¼ inches high and 4¼ inches in diameter with a lacy Teneriffe design in its base (see Materials for a Pine Needle and Raffia Basket, page 60).

Gathering and Preparing Pine Needles

The needles you gather to make a basket must be at least 6 inches long, and the longer, the better. Individual trees of a given species will have needles of varying lengths. The longer ones are often found on trees growing in parks and gardens where they receive regular fertilizer and water. Use pine needles that have dried naturally but have not yet begun to decompose. They tend to have an even brown color and are still somewhat flexible. Fresh needles will shrink and make a loose, wobbly basket.

If the tree you gather from is in a lawn or park where dead needles are picked up regularly, all the needles under the tree should be usable. If the tree is in the wild, choose from the top layer of needles only as the rest are decomposing. You can usually get your hands under the edge of the top layer and literally roll it up.

For ease of storage and later use, sort the needles into bundles, with all the sheaths at one end and both ends bound by rubber bands to keep the needles straight. I make my bundles as big around as my thumb and index finger touching, about an inch and a half in diameter. Store the needles in a cool, dry place.

The day before you begin your basket, soak the needles in cold water for one-half hour, then wrap them in a damp towel, place them in a plastic bag, and store them in the refrigerator overnight (or as long as a week). This process "mellows" the needles and makes

A small coiled pine needle and raffia basket with a Teneriffe medallion in its base.

them pliable without waterlogging them. Frequent soaking and drying do not appear to harm the needles. When you are ready to begin, remove a quarter of the needles from the towel, cut off the sheaths, and place the needles, cut end down, in a vertical container such as a can or water glass.



Blanche M. Foster, of Boone, North Carolina, learned how to make pine needle baskets from her mother and has made them for more than thirty years.
Courtesy of the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild.

Selecting and Preparing Raffia

Raffia is the underside of the leaf of the raffia palm *(Raphia farinifera)*, which grows only in Madagascar. Raffia varies in quality and preparation, and it pays to buy the best you can find to make the Teneriffe raffia medallion for the base of your basket. Look for long, pale, supple strands of untreated natural raffia, which is usually sold in a pigtail. Untwist the pigtail but leave the end tied so that you can hook it on a nail or knob. Pull about twenty individual strands from the bundle and soak them in warm water for five to ten minutes. Then split some of the strands into narrow strips to use in covering and warping the metal ring on which you will weave your Teneriffe medallion. With the tip of the needle, puncture the raffia at intervals of no more than 1/16 inch; pull off these strips and sort into two piles. Many of the strands have a hard outside edge ideal for covering and warping the ring. Strips from the softer inside of the strands are best used for weaving the Teneriffe design. To cover and weave the Teneriffe ring, you will need three or four of the harder outside pieces and one or two inside pieces. Store the raffia in plastic bags to keep it damp. It will keep in the refrigerator for at least a week. It can also be dried out and rewetted.

Materials for a Pine Needle and Raffia Basket

- Pine needles 6 inches or longer—one bundle about 1½ inches in diameter
- Natural raffia—one pigtail is enough for several small baskets
- 1½-inch Teneriffe wire ring or metal curtain ring

Tools

- #5 cotton darning needle for the Teneriffe
- Darning or large crewel embroidery needle for stitching the basket
- Sharp pointed scissors
- Needlenose pliers
- Gauge—our sample is a 3/16-inch brass compression sleeve (look in the plumbing department of your hardware store), or a piece of plastic straw, or a bead with a 3/16-inch hole
- Thimble (some stores sell a leather thimble with a velcro closure)
- Tape measure
- Tall container to hold the pine needles (finally, a use for the ornate olive oil can I couldn't throw away)

Optional Finish

Mix shellac and denatured alcohol half and half and brush lightly on your basket. The mixture keeps for only about six months.

Suppliers

Allen's Basketworks, 8624 SE 13th, Portland, OR 97202. (800) 284-7333.

Basket Beginnings, PO Box 54, Newark, CA 94560-0054. (510) 226-0941.

The Basketry School, 3516 Fremont Pl. North, Seattle, WA 98103. (800) 879-3283.

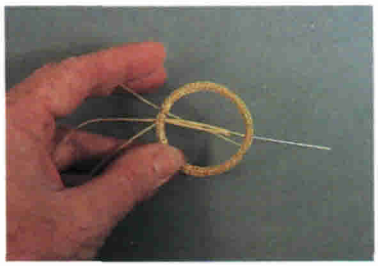
Plymouth Reed and Cane Supply, 1200 West Ann Arbor Rd., Plymouth, MI 48170. (313) 455-2150.

Ozark Basketry Supplies, PO Box 599 PW, Fayetteville, AR 72702-0599. (501) 442-9292

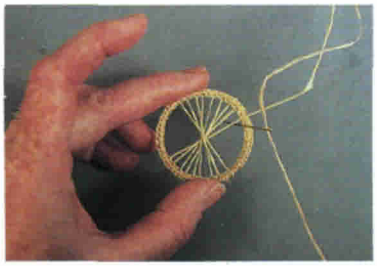
MAKING A TENERIFFE AND PINE NEEDLE BASKET



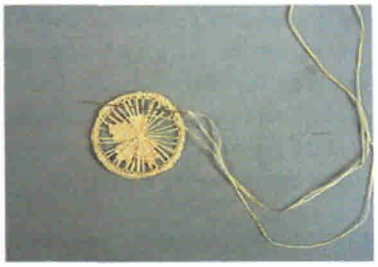
STEP 1. Covering the ring: Tie a lark's-head knot onto the wire ring using the center of the longest piece of outside raffia (left). Tighten the knot and pull one end over to the left. Tie half hitches, alternating the two ends until the ring is covered (right). Make the knots tight but let them space themselves naturally; don't cram. If you need to add more raffia, hold the middle of the new piece behind the last stitch and work the old and new ends together as one for a few stitches. Then cut off the old end. When the ring is covered, if the raffia ends are long enough, you can use them to make the spokes. If not, thread one on the needle and stitch in and out of the loops a few times and cut it off. Repeat with the other end.



STEP 2. Making the spokes: If the raffia ends are long enough, thread one on the needle and stitch through a couple of the inside loops. To add a new piece, stitch through a few outside loops and then one inside loop. Leave the little end hanging for now so that it won't pull out. You can cut it off later. The number of spokes you need is determined by your pattern. Our example is a five-petaled flower, with one petal larger than the others for design variety. There are thirty-two spokes, or a total of sixteen stitches across the ring. You will have to "eyeball" the spacing. Stitch through the inner loop directly across from where the raffia is anchored. Bring the needle back up through the second or third loop to the left and then stitch directly across the ring.



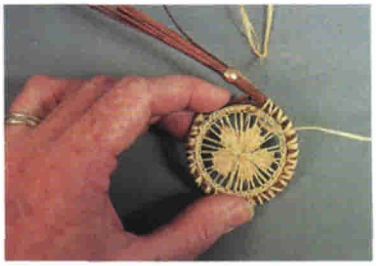
STEP 3. Completing the spokes: Continue around the ring, spacing the spokes as evenly as possible. If you need to end a piece and begin a new one, do so by stitching through the loops a few times as described in step 2. When you have completed the spokes, bring the raffia back along the last spoke (doubling it), past the center, down between two spokes and back up beside the doubled spoke. Now take a stitch through the top of the loop you just formed. This creates a half knot in the center. If the raffia piece is soft enough, you can weave with it. Otherwise, take a stitch or two through the center and cut it off.



STEP 4. Weaving the raffia: Add a new piece of very thin soft raffia by tying the tip through the center of the spokes. Now begin weaving back and forth—over one and under one—among six neighboring spokes, working from the center of the ring out. Use the needle to pack down your weaving. You can pull the raffia tight to distort the base of the flower petals or leave the base fairly straight as in our example. When you have woven about halfway to the ring, leave out the spokes on either edge and weave among four. After a few rows, drop down to two spokes. End by stitching down along a spoke to the center and begin another petal. When you come to the doubled spoke, treat it as one. The last petal has eight spokes, so weave among eight, six, four, and finally two spokes. When your medallion is finished, bury the raffia ends and cut them off unless one is long enough to begin stitching the coil. In that case, take it back to the ring through a petal and stitch it to the outside. Otherwise, begin with a new piece of raffia by stitching in and out of several outside loops.



STEP 5. Beginning to coil: Take five or six dampened pine needles, hold them with the pointed ends to the right and stagger the ends as pictured. Put the gauge on the pine needles (it will be loose at first). Hold the pine needles at the top of the medallion where the raffia is attached. Stitch the raffia around the pine needles, front to back, coming up through the same loop on the ring. Pull the loop very tight by grasping the raffia with your hand. Don't pull the loop tight while holding the needle; the raffia will fray and may break. Repeat the same stitch. Now stitch over the coil again and back up through the loop above the second spoke to the left. Continue to stitch into the loop above every other spoke all the way around. Because you are coiling a flat base, stitch each new row in the same plane as the first row. Any deviation makes the base begin to cup.



STEP 6. The wheat stitch: There are two parts to each wheat stitch. Stitch over the coil and back up through the last stitch, making a vertical loop around the

NOTES:

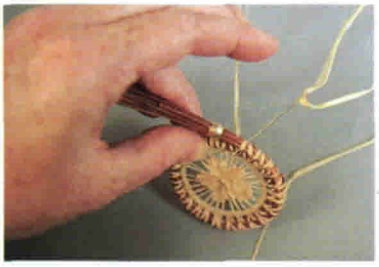
A. To prevent a lot of fraying and splitting, always thread the stem end, which is wider, coarser, and often darker, into the needle and anchor the tip end in your work.

B. If you are left-handed, reverse the working direction in the step-by-step directions.

pine needle coil. Then, always working to the left and front to back, go over the coil and come up through the loop above the second spoke to the left and back to the front, which creates a diagonal loop. Every time you complete a wheat stitch, add another pine needle by pushing the pointed end through the gauge in the center of the coil, until the gauge is full. When you begin to meet the loose ends of the beginning pine needles, tuck them under your bundle and continue stitching. Continue to add needles every stitch or so to keep the gauge full. Cut off the ends of pine needles in the coil to stagger them for a more uniform coil.



STEP 7. The marker stitch: End your first row of wheat stitch by stitching right over the top of the first wheat stitch (arrow). This large double stitch acts as a marker as you work around the basket, indicating where to start up the sides and where to end the rim. As you make the second half of the large "first" stitch, push your needle through the top third of the previous row, splitting the vertical (right-hand) stitch. Follow this pattern for the next row: A. Stitch back to front, coming out through the same hole as the previous stitch. B. Stitch through the top third of the previous row, splitting the next vertical stitch to the left as the needle comes out to the front. Complete the second row.



STEP 8. Adding raffia: Stitch the remaining end of raffia (held by fingers in the photograph) through the coil from the bottom up. Tie a knot at the tip end of the new piece of raffia. Stitch it through the top of the coil and out at the same place as the last stitch. The coil will hide the knot and ends when it comes around the next time.



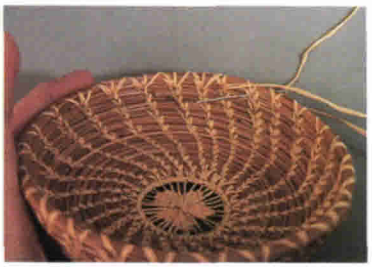
STEP 9. Straight or spiral: Now you make a choice. You have been stitching into the vertical half of the wheat stitch, which makes the rows of stitches go straight up the sides of the basket. If, instead, you want the rows to spiral, as in our example, stitch into the slanting stitch from now on. Add pine needles as needed to keep the gauge filled.



STEP 10. Building the sides: When the base of your basket is the size you want, (ours is 4 1/4 inches across), start the sides. Wait until your coiling is above the "first" stitch, and then begin rolling the coil up and toward you a bit every stitch, always working on the far side of the basket. The photograph presents the work turned to show you how the outside of the far side looks as the coil moves up. Since this is a low basket with sloping sides, make the progression from horizontal to vertical gradual.



STEP 11. When you reach the desired height for your basket (ours is 1 1/4 inches high), locate that "first" big stitch again (arrow). Continue coiling until you are three-quarters of the way around the perimeter. Stop adding new pine needles. Taper the remaining core by cutting the pine needles in a staggered progression so that the last few needles end 2 to 3 inches past the "first" stitch. Continue with the wheat stitch until you reach the "first" stitch and then stitch over the stitches of the previous row until you run out of pine needles. Note: if you add raffia on this top row, bury the old end and the knot of the new piece under the coil.



STEP 12. Finishing: Feather-stitch the top row by stitching back to the right through the same holes as the last row. This creates a diagonal stitch to the right and makes a good, firm border. Trim off protruding pine needle and raffia ends.





From the collection of Agnes Scorgie.

CALICO BUTTONS

Calico buttons—popular in the second half of the nineteenth century—were named for the calico cloth first brought to Europe in the seventeenth century from Calicut, India. The buttons were originally covered in the calico fabric designed with tiny leaves and flowers or geometric dots and lines. However, because the cloth covering the buttons faded and frayed, the buttons were impractical.

Then in the 1840s, an English inventor developed a machine that could produce porcelain buttons from dry china-clay powder. A second process, developed in England and called decalcomania, transferred designs from special paper onto glass or ceramic surfaces, which were then fired in a kiln. Calico designs could easily be transferred to button bodies.

At least 200 and possibly as many as 600 different calico designs were copied onto the porcelain buttons. Buttons measured from 3/16 to 1¼ inches across and had two, three, or four holes. Four-holed calicoes came in different shapes and were named for objects they resembled, such as inkwells, dishes, and saucers. "Rimmed calicoes" were trimmed with brass rings; "jeweled calicoes" were set in metal collars.

The daintily patterned buttons are colorful "finds" for today's button collectors.

Nancy Arndt

SMALL DELIGHTS: THE STANHOPE VIEWER

Stanhope viewers, or "peepers," as they are nicknamed, are tiny glass rods embedded in small objects such as sewing notions. They are named after Charles Stanhope, the third Earl Stanhope, born in 1753, who invented the circular glass rod about 3 mm in diameter and 8 mm long, convex on one end and flat on the other, that formed a microscope lens. If one looks lengthwise through the convex end, transparent objects on the flat end are greatly magnified.



From the collection of Loene McIntyre.

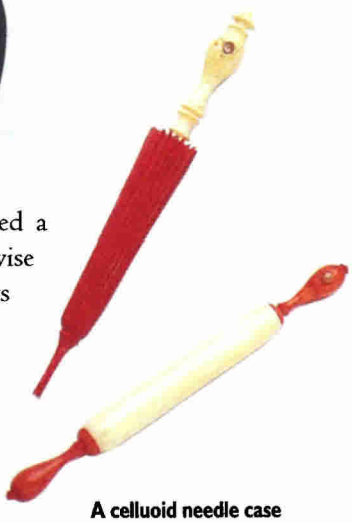
The other "ingredient" of the Stanhope viewer—microphotography—was developed in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Stanhope lens combined with the microphotograph resulted in the Stanhope viewer, and the small trinkets and souvenirs into which it was soon incorporated were known as Stanhopes. When Queen Victoria began wearing pieces of jewelry with viewers in them, their success was assured.

Eventually, a wide variety of objects—pens, paper knives, crosses, sewing aids (like those shown), charms, and miniature binoculars—held viewers. The views were often of tourist attractions; events, religious subjects, or historical figures.

Stanhopes vary in value with the material (ivory, bone, wood, metal, plastic), the rarity of the object, and the view.

Veronica Patterson

Douglas Jull's Collecting Stanhopes *provided excellent information.*



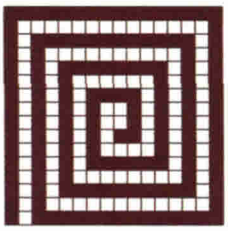
A celluoid needle case in the shape of an umbrella has a Stanhope viewer in its handle. The view, although not distinguishable in the closeup at the left, shows public statuary in a New Jersey resort town.

Readers are invited to send identification questions to PIECEWORK, c/o Interweave Press, 201 East Fourth Street, Loveland, CO 80537. We will answer selected questions in Legacy.

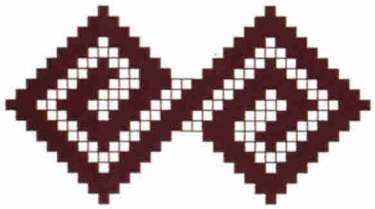


Sigrid Piroch

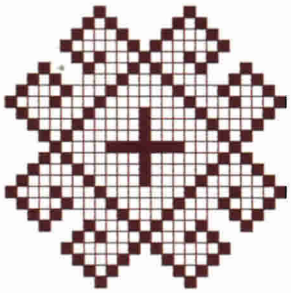
Stalking the Ram's Horn Motif in Slovakia



A simple ram's horn



A variation: The sideways "S"



A ram's horn elaboration

The ram's horn motif is a set of mirrored spirals that represent a ram's curved horns. As ancient as domestication efforts (sheep were domesticated at least 7,000 years ago), the ram's horn motif is both pictographic, portraying a part of a familiar animal, and symbolic, probably representing the essentials for survival sheep provided—meat and milk for nourishment, bone for tools, and skins and wool for warmth and protection. The motif appears among the earliest preserved artifacts found throughout Europe and many other parts of the world.



More recent surviving textiles that frequently incorporate the ram's horn motif show that it has been especially popular in the folk cultures of Eastern Europe. Many of these textiles are from the height of the decorative evolution in Eastern Europe (in Slovakia, from the end of the nineteenth century through the first decade of the twentieth, approximately 1880–1910), a period that produced elaborate folk designs of a complexity that probably will not be seen again.

How the ram's horn motif developed and how its use spread are uncertain. The meaning of such an ancient motif also can't be defined with certainty. The ram's horn in particular has come to serve as a multipurpose embellishment. How an embellished fabric is used and where on it the motif is placed are likely to govern its meaning. For example, if the ram's horn pattern is embroidered along the edge of the decorated end of a Slovak baby shawl, it takes on the traditional function of the border, probably to keep evil out.

In Slovak textiles, the ram's horn is combined with other motifs, its sprightly spirals appearing atop birds' heads for plumage; atop women's headdresses with flowers, leaves, and hearts; as frills on borders; and as "filling" to pattern empty areas.

In Čičmany, a small village nestled in the foothills of the Tatra Mountains of west-central Slovakia, yellow predominates in the folk-dress patterning, with motifs including the ram's horn often in harvest oranges and browns. But the ram's horn can appear in quite different colors because each Slovak village has its own characteristic palette.

A Note on Interpretation

Textile researchers must be careful not to interpret an image without verifying its historical development with a valid sampling of its occurrences and exploring the image's meaning with current members of the culture. To gain perspective on Slovak textiles, I talked with people from various villages, sifted through private and museum collections, examined rare books in libraries, and worked with translators of both Slovak and the languages of bordering countries. I and my University of Pittsburgh colleagues found that the Slovak villagers do call the ram's horn motif by that name. But researchers also must be alert for what people do *not* tell them. For example, if you ask a young Slovak girl the meaning of a chicken motif woven into an apron, she may just giggle. The older women will tell you that it is generally thought to be a symbol of fertility.

About the Author. *Sigrid Piroch, of Meadville, Pennsylvania, is a textile artist, historian, and author. She has a wide range of fiber skills and a strong commitment to the preservation of our textile heritage.*

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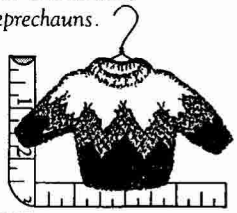
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Book Marks

Books in review

"This quilt holds poignant memories for the present owner. Her great-grandmother was raised as a foster child by the quiltmaker, Elizabeth Clark, after her own mother died following her birth. The quilt was made as a gift for the motherless child and it included fabric from a dress of her natural mother."

Caption for a LeMoyne Star Quilt, made about 1837.

New York Beauties: Quilts from the Empire State
by Jacqueline M. Atkins and Phyllis A. Tepper

New York: Dutton Studio Books, an imprint of Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1992. Softbound, 150 pages, 203 photos, $24.00. ISBN 0525-485-988.

> It's something to look forward to; to sit down at the end of a hard day's work and see something not only beautiful but useful growing beneath my fingers. That's how I have always felt about quilting and always will feel, I guess.
>
> *Caroline Eppel Ayres*

New York Beauties, part of an "ongoing status report" on the New York State Quilt Project, is divided into five chapters, the first of which traces New York's history from about 1610 through 1940. As the authors work to connect historical facts to quilts and quilters, their history can seem lopsided. For instance, to set the context for the Grandmother's Fan quilt that Lillian Russell's wardrobe mistress, Hattie Whiting, made from scraps of fabric from Lillian's costumes, the authors devote almost as much space to the theater as part of New York City's heritage as they do to New York's role in the War of Independence.

The second chapter, which becomes pretty technical, traces the development of discharge printing, block printing, and roller printing. However, several quilts shown in this chapter are among my favorites, including an unusual silk and velvet Log Cabin quilt made from lining scraps from the quilter's husband's tailoring business.

The authors consider a variety of influences on quilt making in the third chapter, from mourning rituals and memorial quilts to the ties between quilting, churchwork, and fundraising. I knew that the sewing machine had changed quilters' lives and their quilt making, but much earlier than I imagined, women were appliquéing by machine. Mary Armstrong Curry machine-appliquéd a Basket of Tulips quilt *in 1876.*

A brief fourth chapter presents quilts made by men. Two of the three examples are original designs; the third is a beautiful silk and velvet crazy quilt.

My favorite chapter is the last, which focuses on quilt patterns and their rise and fall in popularity. They also discuss and illustrate vividly how individual quilters interpret the same pattern in markedly different ways.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I like the wealth of information the authors include in each of the photo captions. I also like the way they admit that they chose the New York Beauty pattern as the logo for the project, thinking they would be able to research it and "discover more of its elusive history." Then, although few New York Beauty quilts turned up on the special "quilt days," scheduled at various locations to document quilts in that area, they retained the name as the title—with good reason, as readers will see.

—Trish Faubion

The Magnificent Thai Textiles

Textiles and the Tai Experience in Southeast Asia
by Mattiebelle Gittinger and Leedom Lefferts

Washington, D.C.: The Textile Museum, 1992. Softbound (also available in hardcover), 264 pages, $45.00. ISBN 0-97405-030-8.

Thai Textiles
by Susan Conway

London: The British Museum Press, 1992. Softbound, 192 pages, $35.00. ISBN 0-7141-2506-7.

These two books on Thai textiles complement each other nicely, providing a well-rounded look at the incredibly beautiful and

complex fabrics produced by the Thai-speaking peoples of Thailand, Laos, Burma, Vietnam, parts of eastern India, and southern China. Western museums have few examples of native Thai fabrics; we rarely see them outside of their regions, yet textiles have always been intricately connected with life in these village societies. In *Textiles and the Tai Experience,* Gittinger and Lefferts offer the cultural historians' perspective, while in *Thai Textiles,* Conway provides the viewpoint of artist, photographer, and recorder of the contemporary scene.

Both books present the social context of the fabrics with a combination of historical and contemporary photographs showing their use in rituals and in the daily lives of Thai peoples from birth to death. Women's roles in Thai cultures are defined by their knowledge of spinning and weaving.

Textiles and the Tai Experience in Southeast Asia

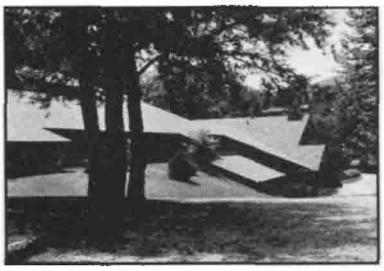
Gittinger and Lefferts have produced a well-written and absorbing catalog for an exhibition organized in Thailand and cosponsored by The Textile Museum, Queen Sirikit of Thailand, the Thai government, and the Thai private sector. The exhibition was shown in Bangkok, in the United States at the Los Angeles County Museum and The Textile Museum, and in Canada at the Royal Ontario Museum. Hundreds of examples are illustrated, the most opulent and intricate ones in color. Detailed appendixes present information on looms and natural dyes. A glossary and an extensive bibliography are provided.

Thai Textiles

Artist and photographer Conway became interested in Thai costume and textiles while making photographic records of old temple paintings in Thailand, the main surviving records of early Thai costume and textile use. Interested in the techniques used to produce these magnificient cloths, she returned to school in England to earn a degree in weaving and dyeing, continuing her research in Thailand each summer. Conway's more personal overview offers descriptions of silk and cotton production, dyeing, and weaving supplemented by color photos of contemporary weavers and spinners at work.

The work shown and celebrated in both books is superb and inspirational, and the texts are engaging. I recommend both.

—*Karen Searle*



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Crazy Quilt

Events, news, and things

In the Danger Cave on the western edge of the great Salt Desert in Utah, archeologists found a fragment of a net pouch believed to be 6,000 years old. It was spun from the fibers of milkweed.
Bette Hochberg,
Spin, Span, Spun

All my scattering moments, are taken up with my needle.
Diary of Ellen Birdseye Wheaton, 1816–1858 in
Anonymous Was a Woman

A "husher" was a finely worked often crocheted piece of fabric our ancestors fitted over the cover of a chamber pot to eliminate the clang of crockery upon crockery that could ring through the house in the quiet hours of the night.
Charles Haywood,
Yankee Dictionary

During World War II, knitting clubs were popular and even celebrated in a musical hit, "Knit One, Purl Two," recorded by band leader Glenn Miller.
Anne L. Macdonald,
No Idle Hands

Margery Howe and Deerfield Embroidery

Margery Howe, who wrote *Deerfield Embroidery,* moved in next door to one of the founders, Margaret Whiting, in 1930, a few years after the Deerfield Society of Blue and White Needlework had been disbanded and a year after the death of Ellen Miller, another of the founders (story begins on page 16). Margery vividly remembers her first encounter with the Society's work.

> *One day when I was smocking a little dress she [Margaret Whiting] said, "I think I may have some threads you could use. Come and see," and she opened a drawer in the highboy in her front hall. There is no way to describe the glowing beauty of those skeins. Then came the 'backlog,' the special embroideries that were saved for exhibits and that were destined for the museum. So I began to learn about the Society of Blue and White Needlework . . .*

In October of 1992, I visited Margery Howe, now in her nineties, in her duplex on a quiet lane in Northfield, Massachusetts. She maintains a sharp sense of humor and clear memories of her former next-door neighbor, Margaret Whiting.

The highlight of the visit was hearing Margery talk about Margaret Whiting and the Society as we went through a basket of embroideries and richly dyed linens and threads.



Deerfield Needlework Kit #5

Although Margery is modest about her accomplishments as an author, *Deerfield Embroidery* tells its story well—setting the geographical, historical, and ideological context; introducing the people involved; presenting stitches, designs, and dyeing processes; and offering supply information—all with the care due such a unique story.

Veronica Patterson

Deerfield Embroidery by Margery Burnham Howe is available in hardcover from the Memorial Hall Museum for $26.50. Needlework kits including pattern, linen, yarn, and instructions are available for $7.95–$12.95, patterns only for $3.95. Shipping costs are extra. For more information, contact Memorial Hall Museum, Museum Shop, Attention: Kathleen Heckel, Memorial Street, Deerfield, MA 01342. (413) 774-7476.

Things

Quilter's Thimble

A handy quilter's thimble designed with a deeply indented metal top set in leather has been introduced by JHB International, Inc., and can be purchased at quilting or other fabric-related shops.



Making History

Textile Reproductions offers kits for reproducing historical items, such as crewelwork New England "pockets" and embroidered samplers, handwork books, notions, workbaskets, materials such as vegetable-dyed thread for fiber projects, and more by mail order. For a catalog, contact Textile Reproductions, Box 48, West Chesterfield, MA 01084.

Books Noted

Temari: How to Make Japanese Thread Balls, by Diana Vandervoort, offers instructions for the dazzling balls traditionally given on auspicious occasions—for example, by mothers to daughters at New Year's. Japan Publications Trading Co., distributed by Kodansha America through Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 19 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003, 1992. Paperbound, 121 pages, $14.95. ISBN 0-87040-881-X.

Country Quilts for Children, by Cheryl A. Benner and Rachel T. Pellman, features Noah's Country Ark and Country Circus quilts patterns for crib quilts. Good Books, Intercourse, PA 17534, 1992. Paperbound, 224 pages, $12.95. ISBN 1-56148-063-0.

The Rug Hook Book: Techniques, Projects and Patterns for This Easy, Traditional Craft, edited by Thom Boswell, offers techniques, projects, and patterns for making hooked rugs. Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 387 Park Ave. S., New York, NY 10016-8810, 1992. Hardbound, 144 pages, $21.95. ISBN 0-8069-8358-2.

Baltimore Bouquets, by Mimi Dietrich, presents appliqué instructions and twenty full-size patterns for appliquéd floral bouquets based on antique Baltimore Album quilts. That Patchwork Place, Inc., PO Box 118, Bothell, WA 98041-0118, 1992. Paperbound, 71 pages, $18.95. ISBN 1-56477-010-9.

Florida Quilts, by Charlotte Allen Williams, is an elegantly designed book that presents quilts from the five-year Florida Quilt Heritage project, which registered and documented more than 5,000 quilts. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611, 1992. Hardbound, 244 pages, $44.95. ISBN 0-8130-1163-9. Paperbound, $24.95. ISBN 0-8130-1164-7.

Strips That Sizzle, by Margaret J. Miller, shows quilters how to design quilt blocks with strips of fabric, focusing on color as value to design pieces with lights and darks. That Patchwork Place, Inc., PO Box 118, Bothell, WA 98041-0118, 1992. Paperbound, 111 pages, $24.95. ISBN 1-56477-009-5.

I WISHED THAT I MIGHT GROW UP TO MAKE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL QUILTS IN THE WORLD, TO MARRY A COWBOY, AND TO LOOK DOWN ON THE TOP OF A CLOUD.

Grace Snyder,
No Time on My Hands

C A L E N D A R

◆ SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
Through April 25, "Beads: Ancient, Traditional, Tribal and Trade." Contact San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum, Landmark Building A, Fort Mason, San Francisco, CA 94123-1382. (415) 775-0990.

◆ CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
The Swedish American Museum Center presents "Weavings by Gun Johanson," May 6–July 1; "Swedish Folk Costumes," July 1–September 14; and "Textiles by Britta Idestrom and Karin Anna Lindberg," September 16–November 21. Contact Swedish American Museum Association of Chicago, 5211 North Clark St., Chicago, IL 60640. (312) 728-8111.

◆ INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
August 2–7, the 40th Anniversary annual convention of International Old Lacers, Inc. Send a business-size SASE to Carolyn Regnier, 2409 South 9th, Lafayette, IN 47905. (317) 474-1176.

◆ LITCHFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS
April 16–mid-November, "To Ornament Their Minds: Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy, 1792–1833," Contact The Litchfield Historical Society, PO Box 385, Litchfield, CT 06759 (see page 6).

◆ STURBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
May 22–31, Old Sturbridge Village presents Wool Days. Contact Old Sturbridge Village, 1 Old Sturbridge Village Road, Sturbridge, MA 01566. (508) 347-3362.

◆ WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS
April 22–May 9, the Salisbury Mansion hosts the 6th Annual Needlework and Quilt Show. Send a SASE to Worcester Historical Museum, 30 Elm St., Worcester, MA 01609.

◆ MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
March 21–June 20, "Images of a Queen's Power: Royal Tapestries of France." Contact The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2400 Third Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55404. (612) 870-3046.

◆ FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA
May 19–22, the North Carolina Quilt Symposium. Send a large SASE with 52 cents postage to North Carolina Quilt Symposium, Polly Hagle, 616 Levenhall Dr., Fayetteville, NC 28314.

◆ NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK
May 12–16, The Great American Quilt Festival at Pier 92 presents "Signs and Symbols: African Images in Quilts from the Rural South," and "Always There: The African-American Presence in American Quilts." Admission free. Museum of American Folk Art/Evan and Morris Feld Gallery at Lincoln Square, Two Lincoln Square, New York, NY 10023-6214. (212) 595-9533.

◆ ATHENS, OHIO
June 30–July 3, Quilter's Holiday Workshop, Memorial Auditorium, Ohio University, Athens, OH 45701-2949. (614) 593-1775.

◆ MADISON, WISCONSIN
April 15–May 16, "Identity in Cloth: Continuity and Survival in Guatemalan Textiles." Contact the University of Wisconsin-Madison Gallery of Design, 1300 Linden Dr., Madison, WI 53706. (608) 262-8815.

◆ ALBERTA, CANADA
July 5–9, Olds College's Fibre Week with courses in quilting, sewing, and weaving. Contact Olds College Extension Department, Olds, AB T0M 1P0, Canada. (403) 556-8281.

◆ BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA
May 12–17, The Embroiderers' Association of Canada presents "Our Embroidered Heritage." Contact Arleen Lundin, 3139 Compass Court, Coquitlam, BC V3C 3Z9, Canada. (604) 941-6747.

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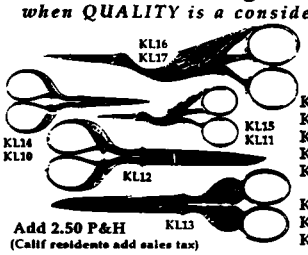
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Such Good Friends

Miriam Dolloff Chesley

Addie Jane

My Grandmother Dolloff's old rag doll lived in a nook under the stairs in my grandparents' farmhouse in Standish, Maine. Grammie had stored her collection of old toys there for the entertainment of seven grandchildren who might tire of monitoring adult activities. The rag doll was my favorite. When you look at her picture, this may be hard to understand, so let me explain.

Addie Jane, smiling and submissive, was a perfect companion.



To begin with, Addie Jane, whom I named for my grandmother, was delightfully soft, unlike my bisque and composition dolls at home. Her wig, made from a lamb's pelt, was a mass of woolly curls. With her nonspecific face and form, Addie could be anyone I imagined. In her own white dress, she was a tow-headed baby to be held. With a change of clothes from a small red chest of drawers, she became a blond playmate, a mother, or a white-haired grandmother.

The landing halfway up the stairs had a small window by which we sat and enjoyed a picture book together or played a board game by my own easy rules. As the youngest of my generation, I had perfected imaginative solo play, and Addie, smiling and submissive, was an ideal companion.

After my grandparents died, the toys were stored in a series of barn attics. The next time I saw Addie, her wig had been ravaged by mice. The toys had been taken to our family's cottage on Watchic Lake in Standish as a bit of family history for my sister's and my children and later for our granddaughters.

In the summer of 1991, the Standish Historical Society organized its second doll show in the Old Red Church and invited doll enthusiasts in the area to reserve a box pew in which they could display their old dolls. With our three granddaughters, my sister, Charlotte, and I used our own composition dolls from the 1920s with their carriages, cribs, and chairs to set up a playroom scene. We added Addie Jane, labeled as a nineteenth-century farm doll. Vacuuming the doll the evening before the exhibit, my sister was intrigued by her simple construction. She copied Addie Jane's pattern by molding tissue paper over the parts of the doll and tracing the seam lines.

After the show, we made a doll with the pattern. As I laid out the pattern pieces, I immediately suspected that the doll had been professionally designed. There were only four pieces, to be cut in duplicate. A single curved dart at the top of the head and cutting the arms and legs "on the fold" minimized sewing, yet produced a doll that was as lifelike as any I had made.

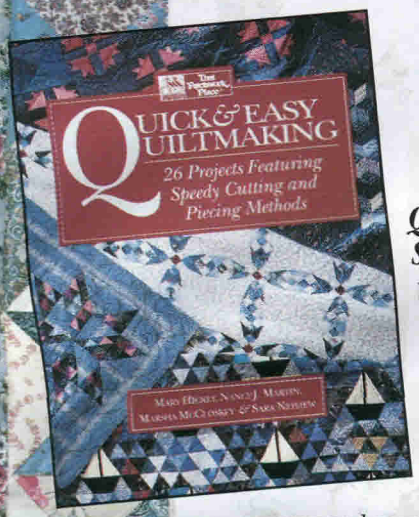
My theory was strengthened when I saw a calendar photo of twin rag dolls nearly identical to Addie. My grandmother's Aunt Lydia, who had helped raise her after her parents died, was a dressmaker with her own shop in Portland, Maine. With access to commercial doll patterns, she could have made Addie Jane.

When I look at Addie Jane, I realize that her appeal lies in my imagining the joy of both the maker and the recipient, who must have found her doll a perfect companion so many years ago.

About the Author. *Miriam Dolloff Chesley demonstrates historical tape weaving and has made fashion dolls to teach Colonial costume. If you have a similar doll or know where the pattern came from, please write to* PIECEWORK *c/o Interweave Press, 201 East Fourth Street, Loveland, CO 80537.*

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