September/October 1993

PIECEWORK™

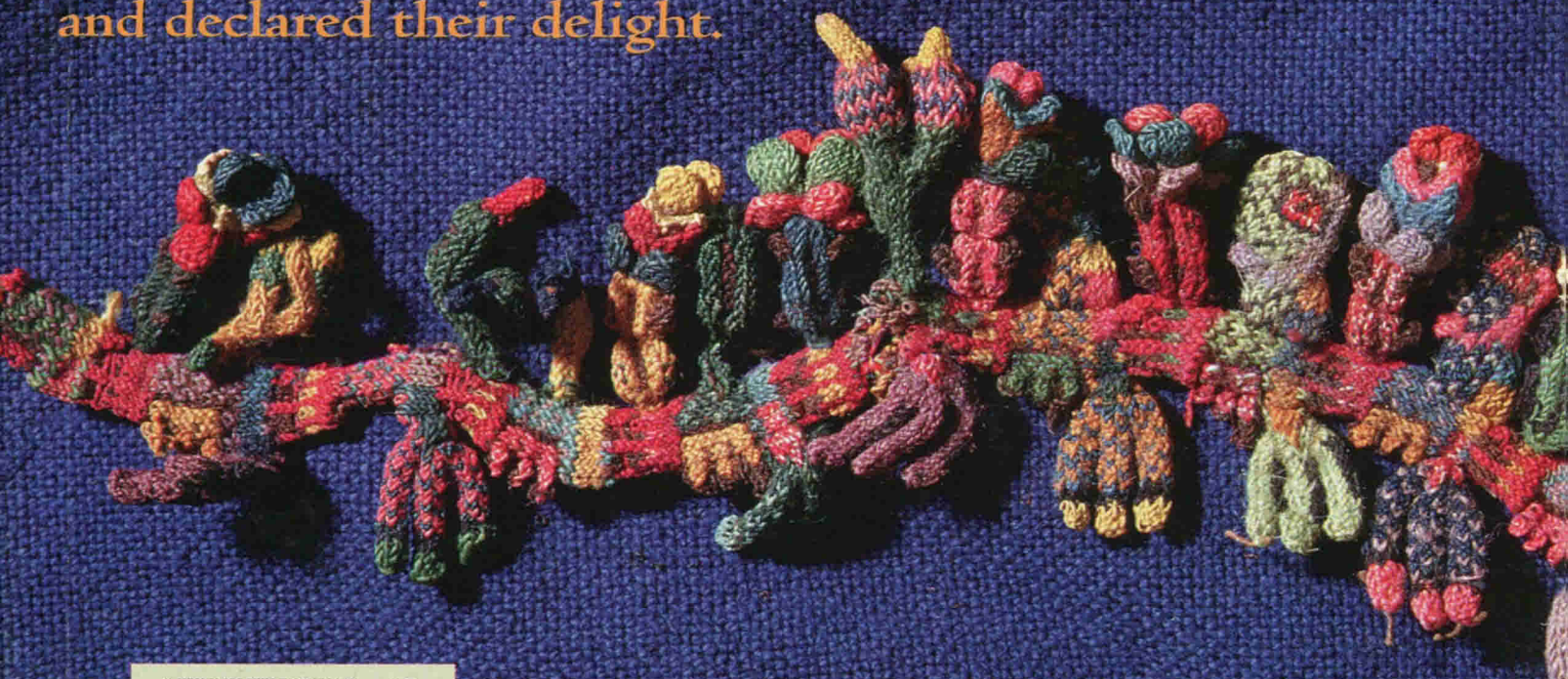
ALL THIS BY HAND

SARAH SORENSON
TROUBLEMAKER

And the works of their hands

clothed the living, brightened the dark, honored the dead,

and declared their delight.



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$4.00/£2.60 CANADA $5.50

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PIECE

See page 72.

DEPARTMENTS

See page 86.

Yea, till the world be quite
dissolved and past,
So long at least,
the Needles use shall last.

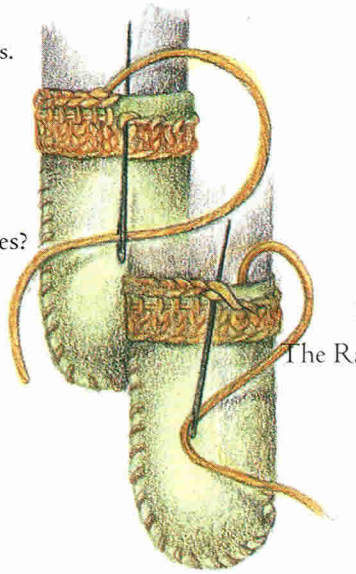
John Taylor, 1580-1653,
Anonymous Was a Woman

See page 28.

WORK™

ALL THIS BY HAND

See page 80.



See page 39.

COLUMNS

NOTIONS

From the editor

All Handworked Cloth Is Story Cloth

> For two years, we hid in the jungle. My oldest brother died during that time when I was only twelve years old, so I took care of his little daughter. I carried my bundle of embroideries around my waist and my niece on top of the bundle.
>
> Ia Vang, *Hmong Voices in Montana*

IA VANG, a member of the Hmong hill tribe people who live in Laos, spent years in the jungle and in refugee camps before immigrating to the United States. She and others who found refuge in Montana speak often of the traditional Hmong embroidered cloths—of cloth and flight, cloth and survival, cloth and ongoing life events, cloth and remembering. Handworked cloth, especially the embroideries Ia Vang's grandmother told her she must carry with her no matter what happened, is alive and integral to their lives. During their flight, their immigration to the United States, and now in Montana, embroidered cloth connects them to the past and maintains their identity today.

Not long ago, a man called who had seen the story of Ukrainian embroiderer Anna Kuczma in PIECEWORK's first issue. He described a collection of Ukrainian handwork that had been brought to the United States from Ukraine when Communists came into the country. The Communists' intent was to destroy folk materials that established a people's separate identity. He described a special shirt made for each Ukrainian man at the time of his marriage. Embroidered by the man's fiancée, it was to be worn for all the special occasions in his life; at the last, he would be buried in it. One reason we still have shirts from that era is a sad one. When men were seized for political reasons from their homes and sent into exile, they were separated from their shirts.

The phrase—"to be separated from your shirt"—arrested me. I began to think of the shirt without the man, the man without the shirt.

The ancient Peruvian needleknitted fringes presented in this issue come from carefully layered grave bundles excavated from the shifting sands of coastal Peru. Over the years they have been removed from the graves. Interrupting someone's eternity seems a serious matter.

PIECEWORK will sometimes be dealing with handworked textiles from interrupted lives and even deaths. How should we behave toward them? Clearly, we should handle them with care and be accurate about what we know and what we don't know about them. Yet we also want to bring their stories alive.

We want to help readers learn how to make and embellish fabric in traditional, even ancient, ways. Through the techniques, we participate imaginatively in the past and create something that participates in the future.

Threads live because handworked cloth is suggestive. It suggests the lives and worlds of those who make it and those who wear or use it.

> Ia Vang's story continues:
> [After my niece died,] I gave her an apron, an embroidered sash, and a jacket which I had torn apart and sewn smaller to wear for her funeral. These came from the bundle that my grandmother told me to carry. . . . About a year later, I got married and used one of my mother's collars and a sash as part of my wedding costume.

As Ia finishes her story, she lists the embroideries that remain from her bundle. Each piece will carry its history and meaning on into the lives of family members and friends.

All handworked cloth is story cloth; it can't help but be.

Veronica

Veronica Patterson
Editor

◆ With this September/October issue, PIECEWORK begins regular bimonthly publication. If you have March/April, you haven't missed an issue.

◆ Vivian Sorenson, granddaughter of Sarah Sorenson, whose story begins on page 46, is making a documentary film about her grandmother's life. If you would like further information about her project, write to her c/o PIECEWORK, 201 East Fourth Street, Loveland, CO 80537.

◆ Thanks to Kathryn Andrew for permission to use a section from colorful socks she knitted as the the small photograph on page 94.

Do It Yourself "Pretty"

Thank you for such a splendid magazine, a veritable feast!

The feed-sack piece was a heart tugger. My dear papa would make sure that there were at least two sacks of each pretty print—two sacks would make a dirndl skirt for a young girl who loved pretty things. He was a country parson, paid with farm produce and good wishes. "Pretty" was hard to come by. I can still remember the excitement when a new load of feed came home— I remember clearly two of my favorite prints. Thanks for the memory!

Now I am the wife of a rural pastor. Pretty still comes in a do-it-yourself form. Your articles were an encouraging reminder that beauty is often born of adversity when the spirit refuses to die.

Ruth Davis
Westport, Washington

A Cotton Sack Lesson

The cotton sacks article in your premier issue revived my memories of the first time a load of grain was delivered to my dad's general store with several bags of beautifully printed muslin included in the lot. The patterned bags were piled at random, floor to ceiling in the grain shed, mixed in with all the plain muslin bags printed with their contents label only. A gigantic patchwork montage was created.

Well, news spreads fast in a small town, and in no time wives accompanied their husbands on grain and feed shopping trips to pick out their materials for sturdy aprons, curtains, and children's play clothes. Difficulties arose when more than one bag of the same print was required for the project at hand. My dad and the husband would have to shift around the one-hundred-pound sacks to comply with the lady's request.

Rest assured that the *next* time the grain was delivered, all the patterned sacks were set aside and arranged by pattern in their own long, low pile.

Miriam D. Chesley
North Scituate, Massachusetts

Exploring the "Why"

The premier issue's in-depth scholarship is a wonderful surprise. For over twenty-five years, I have been involved with textiles and have subscribed to many publications, but PIECEWORK wowed me. With several bookshelves already bulging with technique books, I hope PIECEWORK will go light on "how to" and instead focus on theory, history, events, and personalities: the "why."

Fawn Valentine
Lindside, West Virginia

Thai Handwork

I love the concept of presenting historical articles and including some projects. Handwork is my favorite pastime, and I also enjoy history. Just *my* kind of publication.

I have a suggestion for a future article. I am learning how to tat through a community education class (taught by a Thai lady, Panit Ohl, who speaks limited English, which makes learning more of a challenge). She has told us (and showed us Thai directions) for another type of thread work made with a hook like an afghan hook—except that the tool has hooks on both ends. It makes something that looks similar to tatting. I would love to know more about this craft.

Good luck on this venture. I look forward to future issues with anticipation!

Linda Simonson
Cass Lake, Minnesota

We're intrigued. So far, we have found only a reference to an oriental form, makouk, *used to refer to tatting. Please send a copy of the background information you have. We invite any readers familiar with this craft to direct us to resources.*

Send your comments and ideas to "By Post," c/o PIECEWORK, 201 East Fourth Street, Loveland, CO 80537.

Piecework Meant Sweatshop

I read the premier issue of PIECEWORK and loved every minute and word. I have been involved in working with threads since learning to knit at the age of five. I am now sixty-one, and still love the fabric and lace arts—from knitting (including lace) to bobbin lace to sewing my own designs in clothing.

I have one complaint about your magazine—its name. In the minds of those who have gone before us, piecework is not equated with the fiber arts but with sweatshops and hard work. After my father's death in 1941, my mother worked at the Luxuray factory. Her job as a "hemmer" was to sew two hems in each pair of rayon underpants in each bundle the "floor girl" dropped in her bin. She was paid by the dozens of pants (twenty-four hems), sometimes at three cents per dozen. Piecework meant sticky fingers trying to run rayon cloth through a dusty machine on a hot summer day or working long days and bringing home barely enough money to feed, clothe, and house her family. Mother loved to crochet, but never called her crochet piecework.

Yes, your magazine is delightful, but the name does not suit the copy you offer.

June L. Sekoll
Culpeper, Virginia

Thank you for your piecework story. When we conceived and named the magazine, we wanted the name—PIECEWORK: ALL THIS BY HAND—to suggest handwork, but also to suggest the social and economic contexts in which the people and work we admire were created. We hope you respond to the Triangle Fire story and the portrait of Sarah Sorenson in this issue; over time, we will include that "sweatshop" thread—that real-world context—in the fabric of PIECEWORK.

Project China

I have been traveling in China for 3½ years, visiting the hill-tribe villages. Representatives of the Chinese government have asked me to design for the Miao workshops in Guizhou. The women do the most incredible handwork in the world—embroidery, weaving, and batik. They need to earn money, and I am hoping to form a bridge that will present them to the world with the full honors and recognition that they deserve.

Hanah Exley
Los Angeles, California

We wish you success. We admire the many people and organizations whose aim is to help people around the world in concrete ways and to preserve traditional crafts. Our November issue will feature a story about the Hmong hill-tribe people who now live in the United States and their handwork, but we hope you will report more on your travels and work. No story we tell is ever finished. . . .

No One-Hour Projects!

I was very excited when I received the invitation to subscribe to your *wonderful* magazine, and when my premier issue arrived it was everything and *more* that I hoped for! I have been a needleworker for over fifty years, and I love history. I have never liked (although I realize there *may* be a need for) quick, easy, done-in-an-hour projects.

Please consider doing a piece about Rose Wilder Lane. She is the daughter of Laura Ingalls Wilder and in 1961 wrote the *Woman's Day Book of American Needlework.*

Margaret Browne
Cincinnati, Ohio

The Importance of Process

I am enchanted. PIECEWORK is what I hoped—but was afraid to expect. In your "Notions," I found a kindred thought—especially in the sentence "The importance of handwork lies as much in the *process* as the finished item."

Although I enjoy knitting, spinning, crocheting, quilting, embroidery, watercolor, and piano, bobbin lace is my *passion!* I adore making it. The

fact that there is a lovely product—well, that is a bonus.

Because I lecture on lace making and the history of lace, I love the historical aspect of your magazine! Keep up the very good work.

Arlene McKinnell
Brecksville, Ohio

Stoplight Stitches

The earliest memory I have of doing handwork is embroidering a bib for my sister Katy's kindergarten teacher, when she was about to have a baby. I must have been only three. I sometimes wonder just what that little bib looked like!

I've never stopped learning and loving all of these arts. My work bag goes with me everywhere, and I've even been known to knit a stitch or two at a red light (but don't tell the California Highway Patrol). Like everyone, I dream of more projects than reality and time allow, but I love the dreaming. Thanks for giving me another source of inspiration.

Margaret Westerman
Columbia, California

Peace Work

PIECEWORK is beautiful—not only in appearance, but also in content. I love the idea of PIECEWORK being "peace work." Weaver Mary Meigs Atwater talked, many times, of the peace and reward of handwork.

Mary Jo Reiter
Salt Lake City, Utah

Good Things

When my daughter was in college, she brought home a nice young man to dinner. We had a casserole dish, a beat-up Italian terra-cotta affair, which we passed him and he pronounced the contents delicious—as if he had a choice!

Several nights later, he came to dinner again, and the same terra-cotta vessel appeared, with different contents. "Ah," he said, "I *know* what good things come out of that dish!"

Well, I know good things come out of Interweave Press. Congratulations on PIECEWORK.

Dee Jones
Nevada City, California

"Inside Story" on Storing Fabrics

Bravo! Your premier issue arrived, and I devoured it.

To expand upon the information on storing handwork in "Linen Closet": chests of drawers and other furniture made from pine and other soft resinous woods can be detrimental to textiles; the resins discolor the fabric. Furniture made entirely of hardwoods is much easier on textiles—but it is rarer. Often hardwood is used for the case (outside), but pine for the backs, sides, and bottoms of the drawers. The age of the furniture does not mitigate this problem; I have an eighteenth-century pine blanket chest that will turn a white sheet yellow in a matter of months. In all cases, acid-free lining paper is recommended. Our grandmothers knew what they were doing when they lined their drawers.

Louisa A. Jones
Beaufort, North Carolina

Small Treasure

I received *my* copy of PIECEWORK (I snitched my boss's—now I can return it). What a joy! Well-written articles on history, plus *clear* directions to make a small treasure! I'm not sure which I'll enjoy more—probably both!

Special thanks for the directions for the relic bag. The Dean at our church is retiring, and I wanted to make him something different, yet appropriate. It's perfect for the small skeins of handspun I'd saved.

I'm so glad I subscribed! Keep up the excellent work.

Kris Paige
Flemington, New Jersey

A PLACE TO COME TO

Susan Lightstone

Labour of Love: Madeleine Stuart Cassels's Edwardian Trousseau

SHE STARES straight ahead, yet wherever the visitor walks, her eyes seem to follow. Her gaze is level and direct. A smile plays at the corners of her lips. She looks young, lovely, and alive. In fact, Madeleine Stuart Cassels is frozen in time, a framed photograph on a table in the corner of an Edwardian sewing room. Her chair at the table awaits her return; her teacup sits half empty at her place. A piece of white cotton lawn, ready to be worked, hints at her mysterious story. But for her misfortune, this private moment in her sewing room would have been lost over eighty years ago. Instead, this re-creation of Madeleine's workplace is in the most public of spaces—the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, just across the river from Canada's capital city, Ottawa. Madeleine's never-worn bridal lingerie—thirty-two exquisite garments beribboned to a fare-thee-well—is the focal point of "Labour of Love," the premier exhibit in the permanent textile gallery of the museum.

Completed in 1989, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, in Hull, Quebec, was designed by architect Douglas Joseph Cardinal, whose heritage is part Blackfoot. He established his reputation by designing curving brick buildings.

Canadian Museum of Civilization, Negative # S93-2829.

Born in 1891, Madeleine belonged to an Ottawa family prominent in legal circles. Her father, Robert Cassels, was Clerk of the Supreme Court of Canada. She spent her days in the manner of any wellborn young lady of the time. Isabel Jones, curator of this exhibit, traced Madeleine's introduction to the beau monde through the social pages of the Ottawa newspapers. Before her coming-out season, she traveled through Europe. On April 19, 1910, an Ottawa paper reported that "Miss Madeleine Cassels, who has been spending the past year in Munich, is at present in Florence, Italy, and is expected home in July."

Madeleine Stuart Cassels (1891–1984) belonged to a prominent Ottawa family. In her teens, she prepared an exquisite Edwardian trousseau that was never worn.

W. J. Topley, National Archives of Canada.

Upon her return to Ottawa, she filled her days and evenings with a whirl of teas, dances, galas, and balls. Curiously, while Madeleine is mentioned frequently as one of the young buds "among those present" at these events, it would appear that she was never feted with a party in her honor. Her season climaxed with her debut into Ottawa society at the Governor-General's drawing room at Rideau Hall on November 19, 1910. The Governor-General, the head of state in Canada, is the personal representative of the King or Queen of England. Her "coming out" at the Governor-General's indicates Madeleine's elevated place in the social world of her day. *The Evening Citizen* duly reported that Madeleine wore "cream satin with an overdress of cream chiffon, bertha of lace and pearl ornaments, [and carried a] bouquet of lilies of the valley."

"Labour of Love" re-creates an Edwardian sewing room circa 1910, complete with sewing accessories, a treadle sewing machine, and tea for the seamstress.
Steven Darby, Canadian Museum of Civilization.

While details of her clothing are easy to trace, the details of her personal life—her thoughts, hopes, dreams, loves—have faded to near invisibility. In piecing together Madeleine's story, Isabel Jones relied on the recollections of Madeleine's friends and the hints yielded by the garments themselves. It is said that Madeleine was to be married. Her sweetheart went to India, possibly on military service, leaving her behind in Canada. She filled her days sewing her trousseau, aided perhaps by her mother, Emma Torrance Cassels.

Pin Tucks and *Entredeux*

The materials used in the collection—lightweight cotton muslins and lawns—bear out the assertion that the lingerie was to be worn in a warm climate. The fabric, ribbons, and machine-made laces are of the highest quality, possibly acquired on Madeleine's travels through Europe. Her companion is believed to have been an aunt who, as the widow of Samuel Greenshields of the Montreal linen-importing family, would have been knowledgeable about fabrics and sewing notions.

The detailing on the garments reflects Madeleine's needle skills and her pride in her work. She may have been introduced to sewing in domestic science classes in the Ottawa public school system. Acquaintances recall summer vacations when she would sew with her half-sister while their aunt read to them.

The trousseau probably took a year or two to complete, and it was a tour de force. "It is marvelously feminine, with its lace, ruffles and bows, but not excessively so," Isabel Jones comments. "Madeleine was a most skilled needlewoman, both in the execution of the stitching, lace, and embroidery *and* in the planning and fitting of the garments. The attention to detail is to be marveled at."

Chemises, a petticoat, corset covers, nightgowns, and drawers are edged with handmade bobbin lace or handworked eyelet embroidery. Garments are pin-tucked, threaded with satin ribbons, pieced together with *entredeux* (narrow insertions of embroidery or lace with a sewing edge on both sides). Madeleine embroidered many of the pieces with her monogram; others feature floral designs. One particularly pretty chemise, trimmed with pale blue-green ribbon, is embroidered with stylized lilac sprays.

One can imagine Madeleine Cassels spending hours at her sewing table, hands busy and mind far away, dreaming of her life as a young bride in Imperial India. But it was not to be. According to one story, the young man met and married someone else. According to another, the Cassels family found Madeleine's fiancé unsuitable and discouraged the match. Her own reaction to the end of her engagement is not documented.

Although marriage was not the economic necessity for Madeleine that it would have been for most women of Edwardian times, it was a social requisite. The wedding day was portrayed as the high point of a woman's life, even though the bonds of marriage were suffocatingly tight. Under the Canadian legal system of the day, upon marriage a woman and

A corset cover of cotton lawn is finely detailed with ivory satin ribbon, embroidery, pearl buttons, tucks, and lace insertions. The satin ribbon at the neckline is drawn through embroidered eyelets.
Steven Darby, Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Madeleine Stuart Cassels's trousseau contains chemises, a petticoat, corset covers, nightgowns, and drawers, all expertly finished with lace, ribbons, and embroidery. It probably represents between one and two years of work. *Steven Darby, Canadian Museum of Civilization.*

her possessions became the property of her husband. Not until 1918 were Canadian women accorded the right to vote. Eleven more years passed before women were recognized as "persons" in the eye of the law. Until 1929, the word "persons" in legal documents had been understood to refer only to men. Despite the grip of marriage, however, the lot of the unmarried woman was not envied.

After the public whirl of her debut season, the remainder of Madeleine Stuart Cassels's life was intensely private. "Stuart," as she was known to her friends, never married. She lived with her mother until her mother's death. She pursued charitable activities, spent time at her country home on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, and played an avid game of bridge. Her trousseau was never worn but was carefully packed away until Madeleine's death in 1984, when her executor donated the garments to the museum.

Love's Labour Found

In Madeleine's trousseau, Isabel Jones saw not only a collection of painstakingly crafted garments, but also a poignant symbol of love and loss. "Although they demonstrate the contrast between what we wear now and what was required as correct or suitable attire then," Isabel Jones comments, "they also show the continuity of women's handwork through the generations."

The exhibit comprises two intimate vignettes suited to the private nature of its subject. The first vignette re-creates a corner of an Edwardian sewing room circa 1910. The room contains sewing accessories, tools for a variety of handcrafts, and, like most spare rooms, cast-offs from other parts of the home. An étagère holds a variety of sewing artifacts including a sleeve board, embroidery patterns, a darning egg, wire needles for knitting lace, a pillow and pricked pattern for bobbin lace, and a hemming bird (a gadget shaped like a bird that, when clamped to a table, holds fabric in its beak while the seamstress stitches the hem). The treadle sewing machine in the vignette is a Canadian-

manufactured Raymond model.

Framed prints hung on the wall depict themes of women and war, love and loss: *Summoned to Foreign Service,* for example, shows a young woman seeing a soldier off at the train station.

The backdrop for the scene is a Sanderson wallpaper—an abundant cabbage rose pattern in soft pinks and blues. A coordinating wallpaper of ivory and pink stripes with a floral border has been used in the second vignette, which represents Madeleine's bedroom. Here, a porcelain-complexioned mannequin, surrounded by bridal lingerie, sits before a mirror, letters in hand.

How could one woman wear all of these undergarments? A chemise and a pair of drawers would have been the first layer against the skin. Then came the corset topped with a corset cover. The flounced petticoat, embroidered and beribboned, came next. An Edwardian woman might also have added a taffeta petticoat to further enhance her silhouette and to make an elegant rustling. The garments are exquisite in workmanship but as restrictive as an Edwardian marriage.

"Labour of Love" will be on display until September 1994 in the History Hall mezzanine in the Canadian Museum of Civilization, 100 Laurier Street, Hull, Quebec. Admission to the museum is $4.50; children under fifteen are free. Admission is free to all on Thursdays between 5 and 8 p.m. (Tickets to Cinéplus showings are available for an additional fee.) In addition, a theater production entitled *The Letter* is presented on weekends. Contact the museum for current information at (819) 776-7000.

About the Author. *Susan Lightstone is a freelance writer and lawyer living in Ottawa, Ontario. Susan would like to thank Isabel Jones for information and for her dedication in putting together "Labour of Love."*

Linen Closet

Susan Haynes Opdahl

Your Family Quilt Is a Textile Artifact

MY GRANDMOTHER made quilts. They were beautiful, colorful, and meticulously crafted in the popular designs of the thirties: Double Wedding Ring, Grandmother's Flower Garden, Double and Triple Irish Chain. Much of my grandmother's work has been lost or worn out—the fate of many family quilts. Most quilts are functional, and many people initially do not look beyond function, but even when it seems shabby and valueless, a family quilt is a valuable heirloom *and* a "textile artifact." I use the term "textile artifact" to describe family quilts to remind us that our family quilts *are* part of history—and we should treat them with respect.

By looking beyond the superficial wear and tear that time and laundering bring, you can discover the story behind each quilt. When was it made? Is it a product of leisure and abundance, such as the elaborately embroidered crazy patchwork coverlets made with extravagant silks and velvets? Or is it a something-to-keep-you-warm quilt, utilizing the contents of the scrap bag, with a thick batt and purely functional quilting? Perhaps your legacy is a thick wool comforter made from discarded suits, backed with drab flannels and tied with yarn or string instead of being quilted. Whatever you possess, its like will never be seen again. Your quilt, coverlet, or comforter, beautiful or homely, is unique, a tangible link to the past, whether that past is part of your family history or as recent as the garage sale, flea market, or antique shop at which you purchased your treasure. You become a quilt caretaker simply by having one. Educating yourself about its nature and history, and about how to care for it can be interesting and fun.

I use the term "textile artifact" to describe family quilts to remind us that our family quilts *are* part of history—and we should treat them with respect.

Just What Do You Have?

Many quilt guilds have "documentation days" during which, for a modest fee, your quilt can be measured and photographed, and its style, fiber content, methods of construction, probable dates, and other indicators of origin (or provenance) can be recorded for use by researchers and possible inclusion in state quilt histories. A local quilt or fabric store can direct you to a quilt guild or council. Registration doesn't assess monetary value, but it helps assign historical value.

You also can become a quilt detective yourself. Begin by asking questions.

First, determine whether you have a quilt, comforter, or coverlet. A quilt is quilted. Hand or machine stitching joins three layers: usually a top, batting or other filler, and a backing. A comforter substitutes ties or tacks of yarn or thread, occasionally buttons, for the quilting. A coverlet, in this quilting context, is usually lined but has no filler, so ties or quilting are minimal or nonexistent. If you don't know the name of your quilt's pattern, you can look it up in a dictionary of quilt patterns. If a design has many names, one from the region where the quilt was made is preferred.

Examine your quilt to identify the fiber content. Is it cotton, silk, wool or a combination? If its fiber content is not apparent, consult a staff member of a fabric store or quilt shop, an extension agent, a home economics teacher, a good book on textiles or quilts, a quilt guild, or your mother. The fiber content is important as documentation and in determining appropriate care and storage.

Now, look into the quilt's story. Who made it? What is the maker's complete name? Because titles such as "auntie" and "gran" usually are meaningful only to the immediate family, record the maker's full name as well. A quilt labeled "Mrs. John Smith" seems to give the credit for its creation to John, not to Mary Jane Jones Smith, who deserves recognition for her artistry

and craft. Also ask whether the maker quilted her (or his) own quilt. If not, perhaps another individual or church group quilted it, or it was quilted at a quilting bee.

Try to discover where the quilt was made, when, and why. Few quilts have a complete history attached to them, but we certainly wish they did. If your quilt is a foundling, its known history may start with you, so record when, where, why, and how you acquired it. Some information may be attached to the quilt; the rest may be included in a letter or album you keep with the quilt or with your other records of family history.

Making and attaching a cloth label ensures that at least basic information stays with the quilt. Cut a 4-by-6-inch rectangle of tightly woven fabric, such as muslin. You may stencil a simple design on a muslin label to give it distinction or use a colored or patterned fabric that blends with the quilt's own fabrics. However, information on a patterned fabric can be harder to read. To prevent it from shifting as you decorate or write on it, place the label on fine or extra-fine sandpaper glued very evenly to a piece of 8½-by-11-inch foam board or iron it to a piece of freezer paper. Write your quilt information with a permanent pen such as Pigma XPSK fine line 01, NINJI Stylist II permanent, or Pilot SC-UF fine line. After practicing on some scraps, record the basic information you've gathered. Here are some brief samples of documentation from my own quilts. The actual labels are handwritten, which makes them personal.

Log Cabin Sampler #1, created in Tom Lundberg's Fibers class at Colorado State University, 1989, by Susan Haynes Opdahl, using many hand-dyed fabrics.

Log Cabin Crib Quilt. Cotton. Circa 1900. Purchased from an antique dealer in Mead, Colorado, about 1985. Owned by Susan Haynes Opdahl.

Double Wedding Ring Quilt made by Mary Margaret Whitney Haynes in 1890 in Wichita, Kansas, from cotton goods brought from Missouri. Owned by Susan Haynes Opdahl.

When you are satisfied with your label, turn its edges under and blindstitch it neatly by hand to the back of the quilt, catching only the backing fabric, or you may pink the edges of the label and baste it in place.

Don't Save Your Quilt to Death

When storing quilts, neatness doesn't count. Fold them messily to avoid weakening fibers at fold lines and don't leave them stacked for years (or even months) at a time. Wrap the quilts in well-washed cotton sheets or muslin and place them in a dark, dry, accessible (to you, but not to insect pests and mice) chest, cupboard, or closet. Cotton sheets and muslin help buffer the folds of the quilt and protect the fabric from wood stains. Acid-free paper, which is otherwise suitable, gets mussed and torn as you shift and rotate your quilts, and because it is thin, it doesn't cushion the folds.

When displaying your quilts, keep light levels low. Keep them in a room where windows have shades and curtains. If possible, use an ultraviolet film on windows and filters on nearby lights.

If all this responsibility for the care of quilts seems too heavy, you may be tempted to *jam* them into the cedar chest and keep warm by other means. But my intent is to help you document and care for your quilts—and enjoy them. Quilts can be "saved to death," wrapped in plastic and kept in the basement incapable of inspiring and comforting us. Better to use them to keep our bodies warm or our minds stirred.

To learn more about identifying old quilts, I recommend Barbara Brackman's *Clues in the Calico*, EPM Publications, 1003 Turkey Run Rd., McLean, VA 22101, 1989. In addition, *Uncoverings*, the journal of the American Quilt Study Group, 660 Mission St., Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94105-4007, is a valuable source of detailed knowledge and offers a pamphlet on quilt care.

About the Author. *Susan Opdahl is a quilter who lives in Fort Collins, Colorado. A master's candidate in textiles and fibers at Colorado State University, she has taught quilting for more than twenty years.*

Anne Ellis, the author of The Life of an Ordinary Woman *(1929),* Plain Anne Ellis *(1931), and* Sunshine Preferred *(1934), lived from 1874 to 1938, largely in a series of mining towns in southwestern Colorado. Her three books offer her clear-eyed observations of the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century West, as a child and later as a miner's wife and widow. Anne Ellis's life was always economically fragile and often grim, but she was a survivor. She worked as camp cook for telephone construction crews; years later she was elected county treasurer, but she earned much of her living as a seamstress. She brought to that task considerable skill and ingenuity, and drew from it sharp, delightful observations of the people she clothed. Knowing that some readers responded to the hardships of her life by feeling sorry for her, she responded, "I wish they wouldn't. I am really the happiest person I ever met."*

FROM

Plain Anne Ellis

Sometimes I stop with half-drawn thread;
Not often, though—each moment's time means bread.
Old poem

Sewing is like everything else—each day brings its achievements, its disappointments, its funny side, and its tragedy. I always felt worried about my work until I saw it worn. Many a time at a dance or a party, I have—out of the corner of my eye—taken in all my dresses to see if they "hung" or "set" properly. If they did, I was happy; if not, there was no enjoyment in that particular affair for me. I would slip to the wearer's side and say, "Your dress is very becoming, only bring it back tomorrow; I did not get quite all the finishing done." I never made a dress to which I did not give a personal touch, an embroidered button here, a flower there, or bunch of French knots somewhere else.

I sewed good wishes and thoughts into my garments, especially so if they were wedding or graduation dresses.

I like hands—sewing hands, especially my own, willing and faithful. Many times I have been working on a garment—my ladylike, capable hands taking the smallest of stitches, my kind heart full of good wishes—while all the time my clever, unruly tongue, aided and abetted by my brain, which is no better than it should be, would be flippantly discussing the wearer.

These are just a few incidents brought from my garret of memory: A girl, whose fiancé had been absent for a year, fainting when I was fitting her wedding dress; and in a few days giving birth to a child. I felt guilty keeping her standing so long.

Another time I had sewed all day and was nervous and tired—this could be said of almost every day—and had decided to have a good steak for supper. So I stationed Earl, my son, just inside the kitchen door and said, "Now, be ready; the minute Miss Doe pays me, you go get a good steak. No round or chuck this time. Get loin." Finally Miss Doe came for the dress, tried it on and liked it, then gossiped awhile—all this time I was thinking of supper—then she got up to leave. She already knew the price, as she was one of those careful souls who must have all details in advance. "Well, Mrs. Ellis," she said, "it was nice of you to rush on my dress so that I could have it for tonight, and you do look tired. Oh, yes, I can't pay you for a week or two, I spent all my money for new records." It's to my credit I didn't scream; instead, I held onto the door-facing and laughed; told her I hoped she would enjoy her dress and that I knew she would look well in it. (It was red, and she had pimples.)

Another woman was one of those people whom clothes ride. And I heaved a sigh when I was pressing this particular dress with all its doodads and fancy touches—a yoke and half sleeves made of motifs cut from a heavy lace and appliquéd on a finer lace, everything outlined with two shades of piping held to place with French knots. Then there were three sizes of covered buttons, a design on each made of beads. These buttons were sewed in every place where there was excuse or room to sew them, till they looked as though they might have been shot from a gun. The crowning effect was a handmade, two-toned, bunch of roses on one hip. When the woman came for it, I lifted it over her head, hooked it, and smoothed it to place. I could see she was disappointed. I said, "That beautiful blue is just the color of your eyes." She, looking in the mirror, cocked her head like a robin listening for a worm, and said, "Yes, the shade suits me. I just like my clothes different, kinda swell. I only thought"—here she hesitated—"you might have a few little surprises on it for me." And I, knowing nothing could improve that dress except a good fire, said, "Little rosettes up and down the front and upon each sleeve would be artistic. You have such marvelous taste—sort of Frenchy."

There were several women whom I not only had to please, but their husbands as well. A certain woman had very large hips. On one of her dresses I tried to shade these hips a trifle, all the while she was "juberous" (as my mother would have said); but the moment her husband saw it, he fired it back, instructing me to fix it; that he wanted his wife's hips to show. His wife said he thought other men envied him because of her hips. Another man who had to hook his wife into a complicated dress wished I'd "sent a blue-print with it."

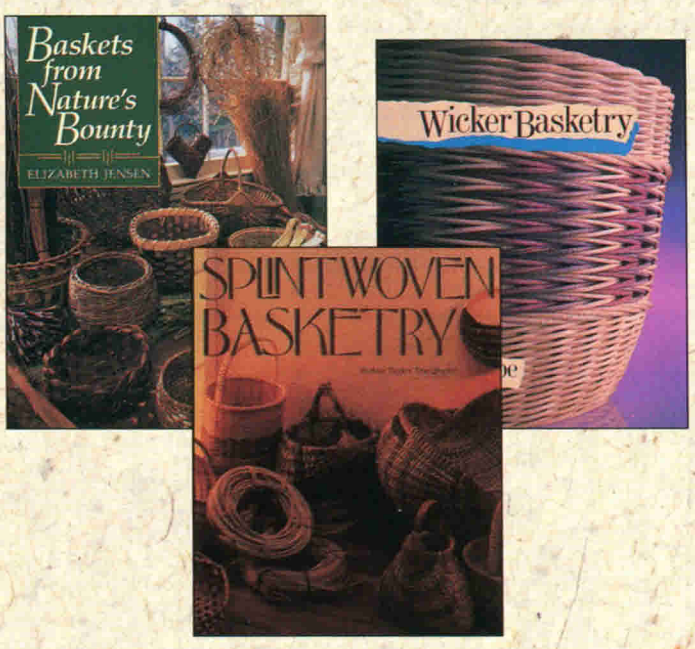
It was a pleasure to sew for most of my customers. One girl in particular was always very enthusiastic and got many favors from life. She gave much pleasure by exclaiming, "Really?" "Grand!" and "Swell!"

Once a woman whose talk, as David Grayson says, "was like a rabbit running in a furrow, no change except when it hopped into another furrow," brought an expensive lace dress to be made. When I tried to cut it, I found there was not enough material; so for one morning I crept (I always cut on the floor) round and round that lace and pattern trying to get it out. This I did, finally, with only an inch or two left, and waited a week or more for the woman to come for a fit. One day she sent for the dress. No mention was made of payment for cutting or basting. Later, she did come and had a real fit. She said that I had cut it too small, and that I had stolen part of the goods; she knew because she had weighed the goods before and after bringing!

Sewing is like everything else, it has its good and its bad side—the good far exceeding the bad. I think one of the most trying things was when women who were making over a garment would come for advice. As it's easier usually to do a thing than explain how to do it, it ordinarily ended in my doing it. There was one woman who would say, "Now just drop your work. I want you to show me how to do this. It will only take you a minute. I've been a week trying to get it out. Besides, it makes me nervous; things annoy me, I'm so sensitive and high-strung." I, trembling, weak with fatigue, would lay aside my work, which I would be paid for, spread her material on the floor and turn and twist a pattern that called for yards more goods than she had. She would then complacently roll it up, saying, "Well, you did get it out. It's so easy for you; only it's not quite as I planned it." To make up for this sort there were many who were especially kind, bringing cream, butter, and eggs. Two women were both considered, by their neighbors, to be "near" and "close," but when I would tell them the price of a dress, they always added a dollar or more.

Reprinted with permission from Chapter Two of Plain Anne Ellis, *by Anne Ellis, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1931.*

Books from Interweave Press



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Susanne Pagoldh

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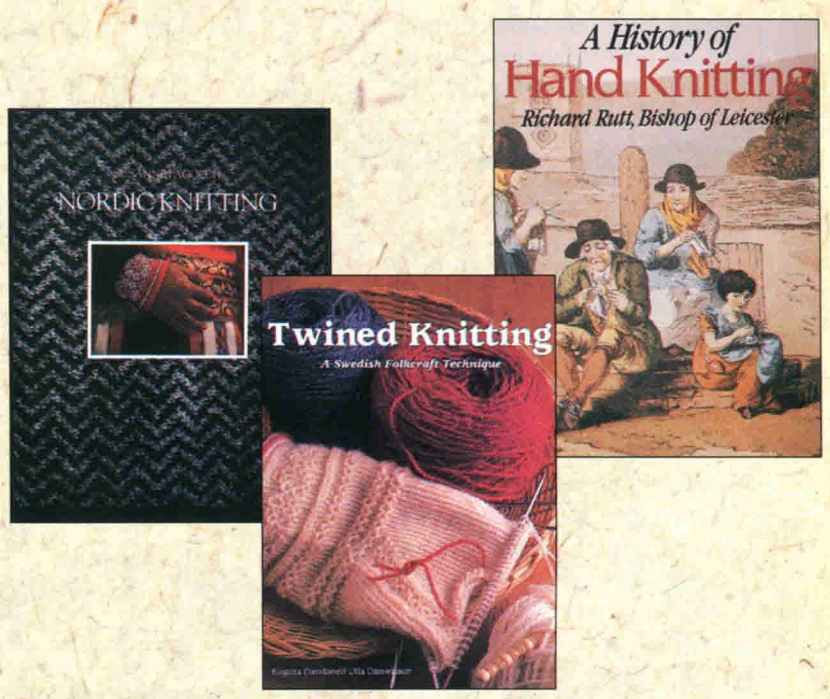

Twined Knitting
Birgitta Dandanell and Ulla Danielsson;
Robin Orm Hansen, translator

Twined knitting is a venerable Swedish folkcraft technique that creates dense, durable, and exquisitely patterned fabric for mittens, caps, gloves, stockings, and jackets. Working with the collection at the Dalarna Museum in Sweden, the authors have unraveled the secrets of twined knitting and present them in this volume along with instructions for a number of handsome projects.

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Richard Rutt, Bishop of Leicester

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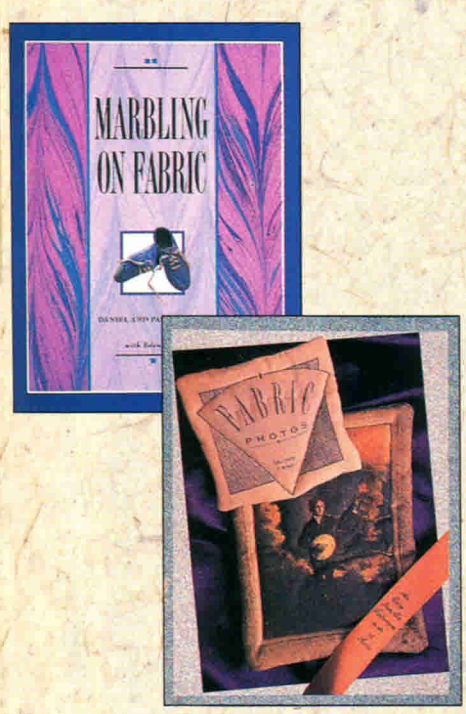

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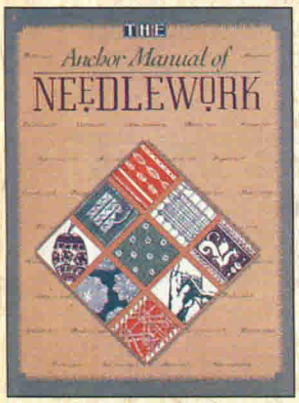

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Crazy Quilt

Events, news, and things

The Dairy Barn: Not Cows but Quilts

On a grassy hillside in the lush Ohio countryside southeast of Columbus sits the Dairy Barn Southeastern Ohio Cultural Arts Center, a 200-foot-long barn with a slate roof, hooded dormers, and three cupolas. Formerly home to nearly 200 prize Holsteins belonging to the Athens Mental Health Center's activity therapy program, the Dairy Barn became an art center fourteen years ago. In addition to regular educational programs and exhibits, four major juried exhibitions are held annually. The Dairy Barn's Quilt National, held every two years in the spring, attracts visitors from all over the world.

In 1977, artist Harriet Anderson sought funding and the help of the Hocking Valley Arts Council to save the seventy-five-year-old barn about to be razed by the State of Ohio. Vacant for several years, the barn was full of dirt, cobwebs, and manure. Volunteers armed with shovels and brooms not only cleaned the barn but bagged and sold the manure to raise additional money for renovation. Among them was a quilter, Nancy Crow, who conceived of a professional juried exhibition that would promote contemporary quilts as an art form. With the assistance of other textile artists to bring the idea to fruition, Nancy saw the first Quilt National open as the premier exhibit at the arts center in the spring of 1979.

Dairy Barn Southeastern Ohio Cultural Arts Center, Athens, Ohio.
Courtesy of Marilyn Dillard.

This year's exhibition, which opened May 29, features eighty-two innovative international art quilts. Quilts selected for Quilt National exhibitions are often two-sided. Fancy labels, photo images on fabric, elaborate piecing, even artists' statements on fabric may be part of a quilt's "back-art." Suspending the quilts from the ceiling away from the walls makes them seem to float in space, and lets viewers walk around each one, observing each dimension.

The Quilt National 1993 collection, on view at the Dairy Barn until September 6, 1993, will be divided into three groups which will begin a thirty-month tour of cities throughout the United States and Canada. Contact the Dairy Barn for a complete schedule. An exhibition catalog, *New Quilts 2*, published by The Taunton Press, is available in bookstores or can be ordered directly from the Dairy Barn Southeastern Ohio Cultural Arts Center, PO Box 747, Athens, OH 45701.

—Marilyn Dillard

An Early Needlework Memory

When I was nine, I found a linen tablecloth half embroidered by my deceased maternal grandmother. It was in a packing box in the back of the closet, and I was fascinated. I asked my mother to take me to Woolworths, where I purchased floss in colors as close to those of the original as I could find, embroidery needles, and a Coats and Clark paperback pamphlet on embroidery stitches. I finished the tablecloth.

S.G., Naples, Florida

An embroidered panel from the Quaker Tapestry. *Courtesy of Philip Gilbert.*

The Quaker Tapestry Project, a crewel embroidery of more than eighty separate panels celebrating the history and spiritual insights of the Religious Society of Friends, started in England as a Sunday school drawing exercise, but became an intergenerational, international effort.

Ann Wynn-Wilson, the British Sunday school teacher who has guided the project since its origin in 1981, set out to create a craft project that could be shared by young and old. She felt that in working together, people of widely varied backgrounds could become better acquainted.

The Quaker Tapestry is modeled on the eleventh-century Bayeux Tapestry in Bayeux, France: a band of cloth 230 feet long consisting of eight 20-inch-high panels sewn together. The Quaker Tapestry's panels measure 25 by 21 inches, and the design is divided into three sections. The handwoven wool background fabric has a regular weave, with a random stripe in the warp to guide placement of the designs. Choosing from 120 natural colors of Appleton's crewel embroidery wools, stitchers use the stem, split, knot, and chain stitches, and a method of laying threads called Bayeux point. In addition, Ann Wynn-Wilson invented a corded stitch, the Quaker stitch, to use in lettering. The Quaker stitch combines split and stem stitches.

Starting September 23, twenty-four of the panels will go on tour. Four panels embroidered in the United States will join the tour when they are completed. From the McCabe Library of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, the exhibit will travel to George Fox College, Portland, Oregon; Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana; Guilford College, Guilford, North Carolina; and New York City, where it will be housed in the gallery of St. Peter's Lutheran Church. The exhibit will return to Britain in March 1994. For more information, contact Philip Gilbert, 174 Kilburn Rd., Garden City, New York 11530.

—Richard Kilburn

Argyles came into fashion at the end of World War II, and women were urged to help their men achieve a "bold look" by knitting them argyles. One woman recalls keeping her father in argyles by starting a pair for each new boyfriend only to have the romance end before the socks were finished. The socks went to her father.

Anne L. Macdonald, No Idle Hands

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, darning samplers were popular. The embroiderer cut small square holes in pieces of linen and then filled the holes with colored thread in a variety of patterned weaves such as twill and herringbone.

Margaret Vincent, The Ladies' Work Tablee

It's so much fun to pick up these quilts and see everybody's dresses in it. . . . We never wasted a bit of cloth . . . used it over and over until it wore out. Waste not, want not.

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

C A L E

♦**FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA**
November 7, 1993–January 2, 1994, "Holidays at Riordan House," an exhibition of quilted and handwoven textiles. Riordan Mansion State Park, 1300 South Riordan Ranch St., Flagstaff, AZ 86001.

♦**ROGERS, ARKANSAS**
November 2, 1993–February 27, 1994, "Woven in Time: Coverlets from the Collections of the Rogers Historical Museum," a display of coverlets, spinning, and weaving equipment. Rogers Historical Museum, 322 South Second St., Rogers, AR 72756. (501) 621-1154.

♦**SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**
July 2–September 4, 1994, "Visions 1994, Quilts: Layers of Excellence," a juried quilt exhibit. Entry deadline is October 18, 1993. For information, send a large SASE to Quilt San Diego, Dept. FM, 9747 Business Park Ave., #228, San Diego, CA 92131-1653.

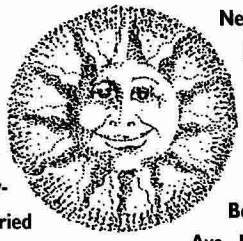
♦**SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**
October 30, 1993–January 2, 1994, "Contemporary Native American Art Forms: Morning Star Quilts." Contact San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum, Landmark Building A, Fort Mason, San Francisco, CA 94123-1382. (415) 775-0990.

♦**DENVER, COLORADO**
September 26–October 1, the American Needlepoint Guild, Inc.'s national convention at the Hyatt Regency Hotel Downtown. Contact Hilda Cook, 4041 South Clermont St., Englewood, CO 80110. (303) 758-1862.

♦**DENVER, COLORADO**
September 29–October 3, 15th Annual Meeting and National Convention of the Smocking Arts Guild of America (SAGA) at the Sheraton Denver Tech Center. Contact Bonnie Book, (303) 423-2912.

♦**WASHINGTON, D.C.**
September 10, 1993–February 27, 1994, "Beyond the Tanabata Bridge: A Textile Journey in Japan," Japanese daily-use textiles from 1615 to 1926. Contact The Textile Museum 2320 'S' St. NW, Washington, DC 20008. (202) 667-0441.

♦**MOLINE, ILLINOIS**



September 24–25, "Worlds of Needlework," 16th Annual Needlework Show of the Mississippi River Valley Chapter of the Embroiderers' Guild of America. Contact Susan Bowman, 4232 Seventh Ave., Moline, IL 61265.

♦**INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA**
August 1, 1993–January 9, 1994, "Romance of Real Lace," an exhibit of historical lace. Contact the Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1200 West 38th St., Indianapolis, IN 46208-4196. (317) 923-1331.

♦**NORTH NEWTON, KANSAS**
Through December 31, "Threads of Life: Mayan Clothing from Guatemala." Contact Kauffman Museum, Bethel College, North Newton, KS 67117-9989. (316) 283-1612.

♦**BATH, MAINE**
October 3–30, "In a Child's Garden," the 2nd Annual Juried Expressions in Fibre Show. For information, send a SASE to Darcy Engholm, RR#2, Box 2084A, Brunswick, ME 04011.

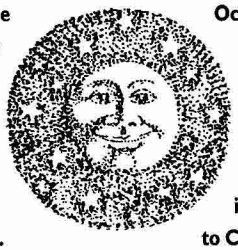
♦**CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS**
Through October 15, "Threads of Life: Weaving in the Ancient Andes," at the

N D A R

Tozzer Library. Contact Catherine Linardos, Peabody Museum, Harvard University, 11 Divinity Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138. (617) 495-2269.

◆MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA
September 8–November 4, "Gun Johansson: Swedish Textile Artist," contemporary fiber art wall hangings. Contact American Swedish Institute, 2600 Park Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55407. (612) 871-4907.

◆AUBURN, NEW YORK
October 30, 1993–January 9, 1994, "Quilts = Art = Quilts," the 12th National Juried Quilt Show. For information, send a SASE to Quilt Show Coordinator, Schweinfurth Art Center, 205 Genesee St., Auburn, NY 13021. (315) 255-1553.



◆BROOKLYN, NEW YORK
"The Paracas Textile," a 2,000-year-old ceremonial cloth on display at The Brooklyn Museum. Museum admission fee. Contact The Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy., Brooklyn, NY 11238.

◆RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA
June 2–5, 1994, Peace College hosts the North Carolina Quilt Symposium. For information, send a legal-size SASE with two stamps to NCQS '94, PO Box 32006, Raleigh, NC 27622-2006.

◆SALEM, OREGON
October 1–2, Capitol Quilters Quilt Show and Textile Festival at Mission Mill Village. Send a SASE to Mabel Griffith, 3736 Kashmir Way SE, Salem, OR 97301. (503) 364-5259.

◆COOKSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
September 7–8, weaving; September 18–19, knitting and crocheting; October 16–17, bobbin-lace making; and October 23–24, Shaker basketry workshops. Send two 29-cent postage stamps to Cook Forest Sawmill Art Center, PO Box 180, Cooksburg, PA 16217.

◆LEESBURG, VIRGINIA
October 22–31, Oatlands Plantation and the Embroiderers' Guild of America–Oatlands Chapter, host the 14th Annual Needlework Exhibition. Contact Oatlands, Route 2, Box 352, Leesburg, VA 22075. (703) 777-3174.

◆RICHMOND, VIRGINIA
October 21–24, The Friendship Circle Quilters and the Japan-Virginia Society host the Japan-Virginia Quilt Show. Admission fee. For information, send a SASE to Carol Miller, 7613 Winkler Rd., Richmond, VA 23294. (804) 270-4137.

◆SPOKANE, WASHINGTON
October 8–10, 15th Annual Quilt Show sponsored by the Spokane Chapter of Washington State Quilters. Admission fee. Send a SASE to Carlene Chase or Manda Benton, PO Box 7117, Spokane, WA 99207.

◆MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN
November 6–8, Multicolored Ethnic Sweaters; November 12–14, The Traditional Handspun Knitting Yarn. Contact The Wool Works, 1812 N. Farwell Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53202. (414) 278-8838.

Please send your event information at least ten weeks before the month of publication to "PIECEWORK Calendar," 201 East Fourth St., Loveland, CO 80537. Listings are used as space is available. While we try to include as many events as possible, we cannot guarantee that your listing will be included.

BOOKS NOTED

World Crafts, by Jacqueline Herald, celebrates the people who have created beautiful and often undervalued pieces of folk art. While the book focuses on contemporary crafts from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, it also explores the history, materials, and original uses for most products—and the lives of their makers. Organized by the type of technique used (embroidery, pottery, carving), the book juxtaposes work from vastly different cultures. Lark Books, 50 College St., Asheville, NC 28801, 1992. Hardbound, 192 pages, $35.00. ISBN 0-937274-66-6.

When I was young
and in my Prime
You see how well
I spent my time.
And by my sampler
you may see
What care my parents
took of me.

Traditional sampler verse

Plain and Fancy: Country Quilts of the Pennsylvania-Germans, by Anita Schorsch, explores the symbolism in each historic quilt and how the quilter's religion affected the style, colors, and motifs she used. Sterling Publishing, 387 Park Ave. S., New York, NY 10016-8810, 1992. Softbound, 128 pages, $14.95. ISBN 0-8069-7432-X.

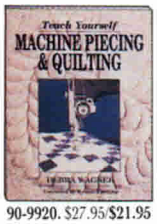
The New Fiberworks Sourcebook, by Bobbie A. McRae, is a valuable tool for weavers, spinners, or needleworkers who have had trouble finding the resources or materials they need. Complete descriptions of mail-order companies throughout the world make this a worthwhile reference. Old drawings, interesting facts, stories, and quotes enliven the lists. Fiberworks Publications, PO Box 49770, Austin, TX 78765-9770, 1993. Softbound, 308 pages, $15.95. ISBN 0-944577-06-7.

Legacy: The Story of Talula Gilbert Bottoms and Her Quilts, by Nancilu B. Burdick. The author, Talula's granddaughter, offers a moving account of the woman, her family, and her experiences. Talula lived in the Civil War South, raised ten children, and made 200 to 300 quilts. Marginal quotations, historical photos, documents, and quilts make *Legacy* absorbing. Rutledge Hill Press, 513 Third Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37210, 1988. Softbound, 176 pages, $18.95. ISBN 0-934395-70-5.

Treasures in the Trunk: Quilts of the Oregon Trail, by Mary Bywater Cross, celebrates the 150th anniversary of the first wagon train to traverse the Oregon Trail by focusing on the experiences of women pioneers and the stories behind their quilts. Not only does this polished book give extensive documentation of the lives of the women, often including pictures, but it also discusses the women's reasons for traveling west, conditions encountered, former roles, and changed roles. Historians and quilters will appreciate the useful appendices, glossary, bibliography, and index. Rutledge Hill Press, 513 Third Ave. South, Nashville, TN 37210, 1993. Softbound, 174 pages, $19.95. ISBN 1-55853-237-4.

The Book of Paper Cutting, by Chris Rich, is a clear how-to book that takes a craft most people learned in elementary school and reintroduces it as a centuries-old art practiced around the world. A long section containing patterns for all occasions, directions, and encouragement for creating patterns follows. Sterling Publishing, 387 Park Ave. S., New York, NY 10016-8810, 1993. Hardbound, 128 pages, $21.95. ISBN 0-8069-0285-X.

52-0971. $39.95/$29.95*
(Counts as two choices)



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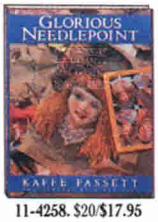

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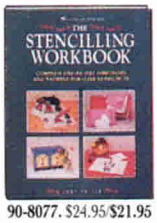

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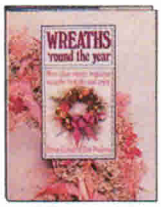

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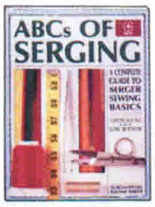

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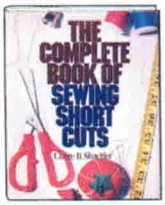

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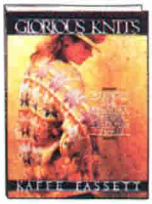

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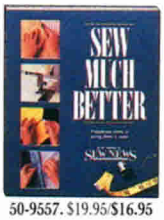

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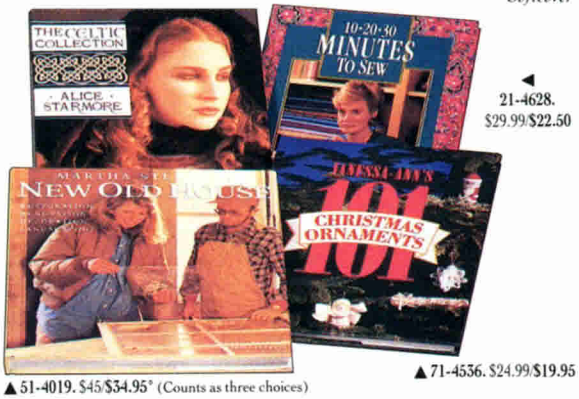

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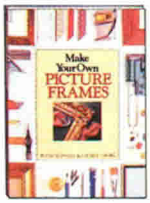

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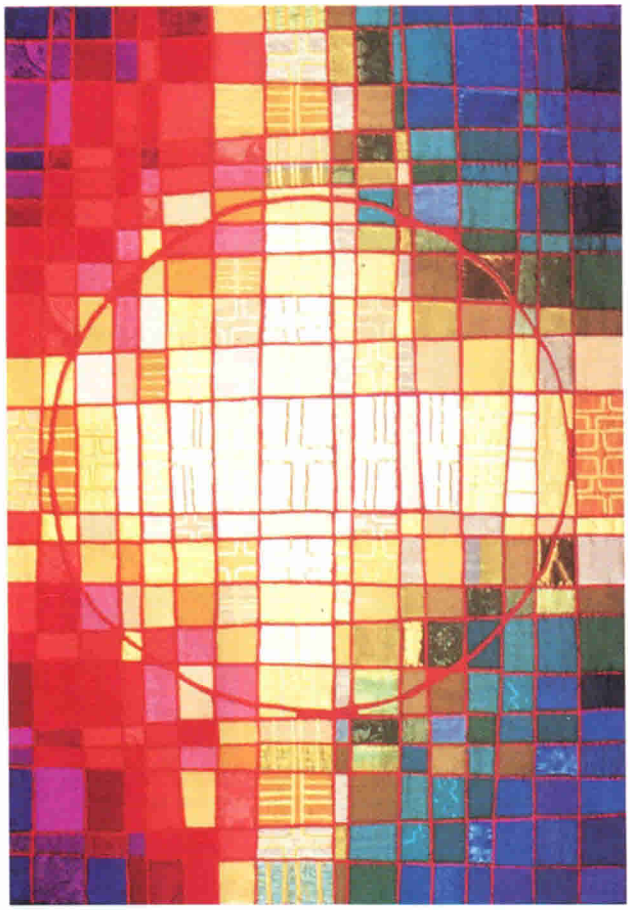


A linen and silk frontal cloth designed and made by Eleanor Van de Water in memory of her grandparents and dedicated at St. Michael's Church.

Courtesy of Eleanor Van de Water.

STAINED-GLASS STITCHES

In 1992, textile artist Eleanor Van de Water, of Vancouver, Washington, designed and made an altar frontal cloth for a small stone church in Wales. St. Michael's Church in Llanfihangel Rhos-y-Corn, South Wales, built in 1280, was the boyhood church of Eleanor's grandfather, John Davies Jones. He immigrated to the United States in the late nineteenth century, probably shortly before he graduated from the Yale Divinity School in 1882. Ordained as a minister of the Congregational Church, he served most of his pastoral time in eastern Washington.

The 3-by-4½-foot padded linen cloth contains geometric shapes of hand-appliquéd silk fabrics in fifty-two different weights and textures on a background surface of douppioni silk. The shapes in the focus are embellished with cotton threads. According to Eleanor, the contemporary stained-glass design "felt right." Given in memory of Eleanor's grandparents, the altar frontal was dedicated on a clear All Saints' Day, November 1, 1992, before a standing-room-only gathering in St. Michael's Church.

While in Wales for the dedication, Eleanor Van de Water found unknown relatives and discovered family connections dating back eight centuries. She placed a stone from the Oregon coastline in the yard of St. Michael's Church and brought home a stone from the ruins of the house where her grandfather was born.

—Nancy Arndt

CLOTH OF MANY PEOPLE

The United Nations has declared 1993 the "Year of Indigenous People." A U.N. team is drafting a document called the "Universal Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," which will set international standards for the protection of the rights of these people to their land, resources, culture, and self-government. "Indigenous peoples" refers to descendants of the original inhabitants of a land who have since been controlled and governed by another people. According to U.N. studies, there are an estimated 300 million indigenous people living in more than seventy countries.

To raise awareness of indigenous peoples and their concerns, the U.N. Center for Human Rights is sponsoring an event that includes a

St. Michael's Church in Llanfihangel Rhos-y-Corn, South Wales, built in 1280.

Courtesy of Eleanor Van de Water.

"Give him an inch and he will take a mile" came from the original "give him an inch and he'll take an ell." Ell comes from the word elbow, and originally meant the distance from the elbow to the fingertips or from the shoulder to the wrist. Before most European countries adopted the metric system in the early nineteenth century, Western Europe used the ell as a length of measure for fabric. The exact length of an ell, however, depended upon one's country of origin.

Gay Ann Rogers, An Illustrated History of Needlework Tools

Some of the neck ruffs worn by Elizabeth I of England contained twenty-five yards of linen lace, two feet wide.

multicultural textile exhibit titled "FiberWorks," organized by Phyllis Ressler of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Four 8-by-8-foot wall hangings created from textiles handwoven by fifty indigenous groups worldwide are being pieced together by Hmong women originally from Laos, now living in Pennsylvania. Cloth of spun and woven camel's hair from Australia joins beaded skins from the East African Masai, bark cloth from the Kulawi in Central Sulawesi, and the Hmong's own handspun hemp.

Seven alternative trade organizations have joined to fund the design and production of "FiberWorks": Self-Help Crafts of the World (U.S.), Community Aid Abroad Trading Pty. Ltd. (Australia), SERRV Self-Help Handcrafts (U.S.), TEAM, Bridgehead Oxfam (Canada), Oxfam America, and Pueblo to People (U.S.).

The exhibit opens in the visitor's lobby of the General Secretariat building on September 21 to coincide with the opening of the United Nation's General Assembly, and will close November 30.

—*Nancy Arndt*

Kax Wilson

Where sand falls like rain:

Needleknitting *from* Ancient Peru

THE BURIAL GROUND on the Paracas Peninsula on the south coast of Peru is a hill of gritty rose-colored sand that sifts into their shoes as searchers glean 2,000-year-old textile fragments that may have worked to the surface. The name Paracas is derived from the Quechua word for the late-afternoon sand-laden winds that scour the surface of the peninsula. It is difficult to imagine that the living could survive in this desolate arid region that preserves the dead so well, but water from Andean torrents directed via irrigation ditches once supported flourishing agriculture here. With an economy supplemented by abundant seafood from nearby bays and by trade, settlements of reed, stone, and adobe dwellings and temples dotted the nearby coastal river valleys as long ago as 500 B.C.

Beans, maize, red peppers, yuca, and peanuts have all been found in burial sites on the Paracas Peninsula. Extensive cotton crops provided fiber for use in a wealth of textiles. The people of Paracas traded cotton and other goods for fibers from highland llama, alpaca, and vicuña. Successful agriculture allowed them time to produce not only utilitarian cloth to meet daily needs but also fabrics that represented the relationships between the people, their environment, and the supernatural. In few cultures have textiles been such a profound focus of activity, such a dominant measure of wealth. In addition to exquisite woven pieces, some of the textiles recovered from the sand and from excavated graves sites bear tiny, intricate three-dimensional plants, birds, animals, demons, and human figures—often wearing masks and ritual clothing or bearing trophy heads and fans. Early inhabitants of what is now Peru, using cactus thorns as needles, worked unbelievable details of costume and feature into figures often less than three inches high and having as many as forty stitches per inch.

These rare old pieces of needleknitting (also known as cross-knit looping) are time capsules that embody the intelligence, imagination, ingenuity, and wit of their makers. Textile archaeologists are still learning how to "read" the images on these cloths. The quality and quantity of plain and decorated textiles recovered from excavated burial sites along with pottery, gold and shell jewelry, feather fans, and food suggest a strong belief in life after death and a corresponding need to honor the dead. Animal and bird images abound, and among the tiny figures are humans seemingly impersonating animals, perhaps to celebrate or placate the vital forces in the people's lives.

At left: Detail of border figure #89 from a mantle known as *The Paracas Textile*, 300–100 B.C. The mantle, made of cotton with a wool fringe, measures 25 by 59 inches. The brilliant, gesturing throng of three-dimensional figures in elaborate costumes that compose the frieze burst with energy.

Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum. Photograph by Justin Kerr.

Close-up of a needleknitted proto-Nasca (200 B.C.–A.D. 200) bird and flower plant frieze. The figures are about 3½ inches tall. The natural images in this transitional textile contrast with the more religious concerns of the earlier Paracas culture.

From a private collection.

We don't know if the work was done in solitary concentration or communal or family workshops. The apparent evolution of technique and the vivid, repeated images, however, suggest a high degree of interaction among the makers.

The figures themselves seem high-spirited, witty, terrifying, and humorous. They suggest the costumed rituals of impersonators and the dancing, drinking, coca-leaf chewing, and chanting that might invoke sacred spirits.

Making just one mantle about 44 by 97 inches might have required 1,342 hours, according to Rebecca Stone-Miller in *To Weave for the Sun.* Of this time, 118 hours are allotted to weaving and 1,224 hours to embroidery, including needleknitted fringes. Together, the textiles in one mummy bundle might have taken from 11,000 to 29,000 hours to create. We don't know who did the work, whether women or men, specialized craftsmen or anyone who wanted to try her hand. We don't know if the work was done in in solitary concentration or communal or family workshops. The apparent evolution of technique and the vivid, repeated images, however, suggest a high degree of interaction among the makers.

Most examples of needleknitting have come from mummy bundles found on the south coast of Peru and have been dated to the Late Paracas and Early Nasca periods, roughly 500 B.C. to A.D. 300. (The term proto-Nasca is specifically used to refer to textiles, including many of the fringes, produced between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200). A few pieces dated later (but still pre-Conquest) have been found on the central coast; some are edge trims on Incan textiles. Their state of preservation is remarkable, owing to the very dry climate and centuries of lying undisturbed. Archaeologist Junius Bird wrote, "I have found flies at least 800 years old as perfectly preserved as if recently collected."

In 1925, following the trail of some fine old embroidered textiles sold by *huaqueros* (grave robbers), Dr. Julio Tello, a renowned Peruvian archaeologist, discovered the burial chambers at Cabeza Larga on the Paracas Peninsula. During the next few years, he and his associates excavated two other major Paracas sites, Cavernas and Necropolis. The three sites gave up nearly 500 mummy bundles. Unfortunately, many of the textiles were dispersed throughout the world without complete documentation, although the Necropolis site is credited with the largest number of elaborate textiles, including fine examples of needleknitting.

Who Were They?

In *Paracas Ritual Attire,* Anne Paul offers a vivid picture of rich ceremony in a bleak land. She portrays a leader of Paracas parading against the backdrop of sandy desert in Southern Peru. His ritual clothing might include long headbands with fingerlike appendages at each end, turbans, loincloths, tunics, skirts, ponchos, and mantles. The cloth would be woven with vivid ceremonial figures and finished with borders and fringes. That so many hundreds of mummy bundles rich in these textiles have been found suggests more than a few leaders had access to such wealth.

Portion of a two-dimensional proto-Nasca decorative fringe of camelid wool, 1 inch by 6 inches, over a cotton core. The motif of parrotlike birds looking back over their tails is executed in a very fine stitch and in an exceptional range of colors remarkably bright for its 2,000 years.

A well-to-do ancient Peruvian went to eternal rest in the squatting position so customary in life. The body, dressed in fine garments, was accompanied by baskets of food, rich ornaments, and ceremonial and work implements. It was wrapped with layer upon layer of cloth, a "hill" of cloth, some fabrics plain and others beautifully fashioned, making a giant egg five feet high and five feet wide. Of course, more ceremony and rarer fabrics attended the burial of a chief or shaman. Among the rarest are cotton mantles with wool embroidery and three-dimensional needleknitted fringes.

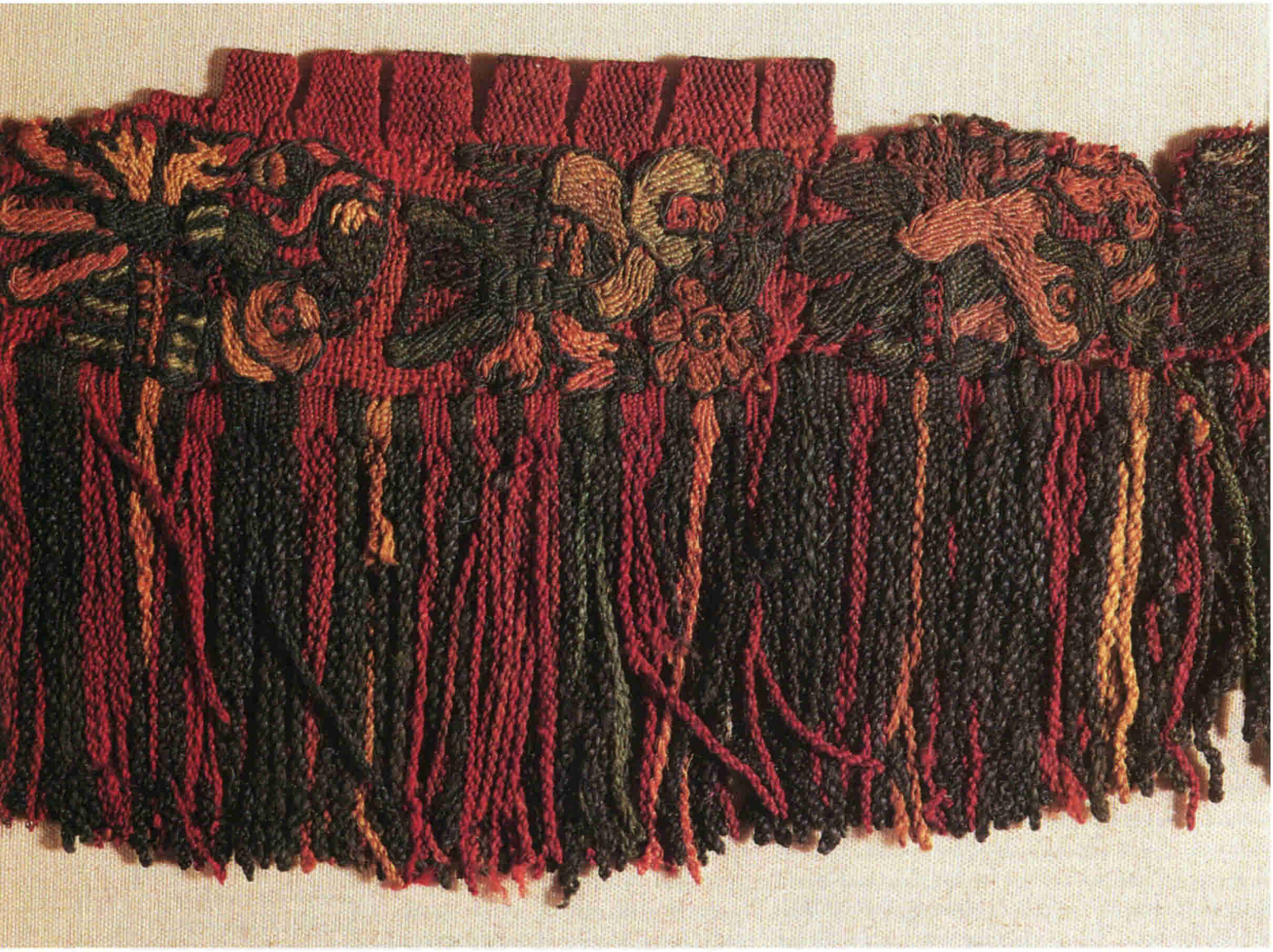
Making The Incredible Fringes

These astonishing needleknitted figures include birds sitting on branches, men holding weapons and shrunken trophy heads, and naturalistic plants and flowers. Cat demons, grotesque creatures that are part animal and part human, and what are probably agricultural deities abound. The three-dimensional figures probably evolved from the embroidery used to decorate flat fabrics with the same fanciful designs. The textile designs are similar to those also found on proto-Nasca pottery and painted cloths. Similar images, embroidered on flat cloth or made into three-dimensional figures, are made with the same basic stitch.

A versatile variant of the stem stitch was used to embroider patterns on plain woven cotton cloth, to cover seams or hold the edges of two cloths together, to bind, strengthen, and decorate neck and arm openings—and to form the three-dimensional figures of a friezelike fringe. Needleworkers fashioned sequences of colors—often yellow, red, and brown—into crosswise stripes, solid-colored blocks, or even simple plantlike patterns. They handled color changes by floating yarns on the back or within the work until needed.

The basic stitch used for needleknitting has been called cross-knit loop stitch, Ceylon stitch, needle-coiling, knit-stem stitch, rib stitch, and loop stitch. It can be worked upon an already constructed fabric and also

Late Paracas/early proto-Nasca fringe using stem-stitch embroidery on a red (wool?) ground cloth, with what appears to be tabs of knotless netting. The fringes are birds with flowers in their beaks. The colors are rich and saturated. Total height of fringe is about 4 inches.



Dyestuffs, too, often came from a distance—the north coast, or the jungle to the northeast. Cochineal insects and a plant related to madder yielded reds. Indigo was used for blue. The bark of the pepper tree as well as a number of other plants gave yellows. A rare mollusk yielded purple.

Portion of a proto-Nasca head fringe of camelid wool over a cotton core, with large, decorative tabs for attaching it to a plain-weave cotton indigo-dyed burial mantle. The heads may be "trophy heads," a common motif for the era, although their neutral expression raises doubts.

used to build fabric. Thus, a small figure can begin on a fabric as embroidery and then be worked into a tube to become a figure that is still attached to but largely standing free from the fabric.

As figures leave the flat surfaces, they become fringes for mantles and shirts, headbands, and decorative tassels for loincloths and belts. Most of the figures seem to be worked over a core of supportive fibers—short lengths of cotton cord or tiny woven tapes.

To make the body, the stitch is worked continuously in a tube. The needleworker starts a new appendage by picking up stitches from the side of the body and working at a new angle, as one would begin a thumb on a mitten.

For needlework yarns, Peruvians used camelid wool acquired through trade. Wool from the highlands was more precious than the cotton grown so easily on the coast. Wool took the natural dyes more readily than cotton; many colors are still vibrant.

Dyestuffs, too, often came from a distance—the north coast, or the jungle to the northeast. Cochineal insects and a plant related to madder yielded reds. Indigo was used for blue. The bark of the pepper tree as well as a number of other plants gave yellows. A rare mollusk yielded purple. The spectrum of colors was extensive: one early researcher distinguished 190 differ-

In addition to embroidery and needleknitting, the Paracas culture is noted for the most extensive variety of textile constructions known within the vast repertoire of Peruvian textiles.

ent hues, although some may have been the result of differential fading.

The wool was probably dyed as yarn; sometimes singles of a two-ply yarn were different colors. Spinners made extremely fine yarns on simple wood or reed drop spindles with or without clay or wood whorls.

Tiny yarns required tiny needles. Raoul d'Harcourt, in *Textiles of Ancient Peru and Their Techniques,* describes old Peruvian needles:

> There were needles with eyes in both curved and straight shapes, of metal, of fishbone, of wood, and of thorns. Some of them must have been very fine, suitable for the close work that still arouses our admiration today.

Cactus thorn needles must have predominated. The needleworker probably used one thorn as a bodkin to pierce another thorn at the thicker end at the moment she needed a needle. In the coastal burial areas, small baskets holding needlework tools sometimes held carved boxes of pelican bone filled with cactus thorns not yet made into needles. Raoul d'Harcourt found one fine cactus thorn made into a needle and threaded with yarn.

In addition to embroidery and needleknitting, the Paracas culture is noted for the most extensive variety of textile constructions known within the vast repertoire of Peruvian textiles. Textiles were status symbols, burial accompaniments, and sacrificial offerings. They sealed bride or armistice arrangements and, indeed, were part of all social, religious, military, and political events. In a culture without metal tools, wheels, or a written language, workers produced fabrics that were as elaborate and fine as the famous figured silks of the great Han Dynasty of China (200 B.C.–A.D. 200).

Clearly, the fine cloths and costumes woven and embellished with images carried great meaning. According to scholar Anne Paul, the embroidered garments are the "text" of the Paracas culture. Without written words, it is difficult to "read" these images on and in cloth accurately. But as scholars of culture, art, and textiles continue to study the Paracas culture, we may one day know much more.

The archaeological discoveries made at Paracas in the 1920s stunned Peru and the world; the exquisite textiles still captivate us today. The profusion of animal and plant figures in needleknitted friezes and fringes are among the most evocative of the textiles. We have only some simple spindles, needles, bits of yarn, and astonishing tiny works of art by which to remember these ancient needlework artists.

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 upstate New York.*

The Stitch by Other Names

Needleknitting is the term some scholars have chosen to designate the rather problematic stitch that is used in the Paracas fringes and shown here. Although the execution of the stitch is closely related to an embroidered chain stitch or buttonhole stitch, and uses a single-eyed, threaded needle, the end result is difficult to distinguish from conventional, continuous-strand knitting on two needles. Junius Bird, in *Paracas Fabrics and Nazca Needlework,* called it knit-stem stitch and thought of it as embroidery. Irene Emery, in *The Primary Structures of Fabrics,* prefers the name cross-knit loop stitch and differentiates the technique from crossed knitting, which looks the same but is achieved with two conventional knitting needles , by working a knit stitch into the back instead of the front of each stitch. Other scholars have related the stitch to basketry and netting techniques, calling it needle-coiling, looped needle-netting, or (mistakenly) knotless netting.

Portions of a proto-Nasca border with tabs. The height of the actual piece is only 1 inch! The motif is "floating shamans," figures with extended limbs and streaming hair, carrying a ceremonial half-moon–shaped knife. This motif is also found on stem-stitch embroidered Paracas mantles. The tabs may represent beans, important food items that are often represented in Paracas/proto-Nasca textiles.
From a private collection.

Further Reading

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Ancient Laundry: Cleaning Pre-Columbian Textiles

LOU HEGEDUS

Born in Ohio in 1943, Lou Hegedus grew up in the Great Lakes snow belt. Having two sisters and no brothers, he learned to embroider. While snowed in during his first- and second-grade winters, he executed a complete set of World War II fighters and bombers in back stitch, chain stitch, and satin stitch.

Lou became a chemist but stayed involved in textiles through his long-standing interest in Oriental rugs and tribal weaving. Three years ago, he saw a photograph of a small textile fragment with strange and powerful images and brilliant colors in HALI, *a periodical devoted to rugs and other textiles. The photograph was captioned "Paracas, Peru, 600–200 B.C." The discovery that textiles of this great age and beauty not only existed but might be purchased excited him: "I wrote every dealer in pre-Columbian textiles who advertised in the magazine, and one, David Bernstein of New York City, replied by return mail." Lou began learning and collecting.*

The question of cleaning the extremely fragile textiles arose—and the problem piqued Lou's interest. David Bernstein agreed to provide fragments of textiles for experiment, as well as to cover the costs of solvents, and Lou undertook the project.

Individual head from a proto-Nasca head fringe, 3½ inches high, of camelid wool over a cotton core. The markings around the eyes and mouth may represent decorative face painting or a mask. Much of the hair has eroded because of the corrosive effect of black mineral dyes.

From a private collection.

Although pre-Columbian textiles are often in remarkably good condition, considering their great age, they are frequently heavily soiled and impregnated with salts from having been buried in the Peruvian coastal deserts for centuries. Often both brittle and fragile, they are a challenge to clean.

Because the textiles may contain both salts and grease, cleaning them may at first seem a Catch-22 situation—especially with conventional cleaning methods and solvents. Although the salts (primarily potassium nitrate) are quite soluble in water, water also penetrates the fibers, causing them to swell, weaken, and sometimes disintegrate, particularly if agitation is required. If the textiles also have a greasy residue, that residue often prevents water from penetrating the fiber to remove the salts. And although conventional drycleaning solvents could remove the greases, the salts—totally insoluble in these solutions—can prevent the solvent from reaching and removing the grease. Because the fragility of the textile precludes heavy agitation in hot soapy water—a process which would remove both types of dirt—the textiles are often left in the condition in which they were found, decreasing both their aesthetic appeal and their value.

However, there are organic solvents with properties that make them ideal for circumventing the problems described above. They dissolve appreciable amounts of both greases and salts, mix with water, and leave the textile dyes stable. They also are readily available, relatively nontoxic, and quick to evaporate, leaving the textile completely dry after a few minutes with no solvent residue. (Note: All solvents must be used with adequate ventilation, and these particular solvents are flammable.) Of the organic solvents tested, tetrahydrofuran (THF), in which greases and to some degree salts effectively dissolve, and acetonitrile, in which salts effectively dissolve, particularly when combined with small amounts of water, were eventually chosen.

The Process

The textiles must be handled with caution according to both their general age and value and their individual characteristics. The following process has worked well, but the description is intended as information, not as a set of directions to be followed. Neither of these solvents should be used without a well-ventilated hood. In those classic cautionary words, "Do not try this at home."

Portions of tiny (inch-high) decorative bird, and dancing figures fringes. The remarkably detailed, colorful birds have open beaks, and tails by which they can be attached to a cloth. The faces of the dancing figures are covered by fans, with just the eyes peeking over. The long black hair normally associated with fringes of this type has completely eroded.

From a private collection.

After the textiles are placed in a resealable plastic bag large enough to accommodate the pieces lying flat, add enough THF to saturate the textiles and leave a 1/2-inch layer of solvent over them when the bag is sealed and laid flat. After they soak for five to ten minutes, agitate the bag. If the textiles are fairly sturdy, alternately lift and lower each side of the bag in a rocking motion. The agitation circulates the solvent both over and through the textiles. For fragile pieces, gently pat the bag, letting solvent flow through the fabric without significant mechanical stress. After five to ten minutes of agitation, pour off the solvent into a container and add fresh solvent, repeating the process until the solvent remains relatively clean.

Proto-Nasca needleknitted or chain-stitch-embroidered bird and bean fringes are often heavily impregnated with salts and therefore particularly fragile and brittle, and often very hard to the touch.

Normally, only two cycles are required. If the textile is blue (the blue dye used is indigo), some of the dye—but an amount too small to be weighed—extracts into the solvent. Usually, the hue in the blue portions of the fabric neither decreases in intensity nor bleeds into other areas of the textile, so it causes no problem. However, because the dye in pieces of some later period is not as stable in the solvent, every piece should be tested in an inconspicuous spot before the textile is immersed.

When the washes remain clear, pour off the solvent, remove the textile from the bag, press it between pieces of paper towel, and let it completely air dry with good ventilation (five to ten minutes).

Then replace the textile in the bag and repeat the above process, using acetonitrile in place of THF. Acetonitrile dissolves the salts, sometimes by itself and increasingly effectively as small increments of water are added. After one acetonitrile wash, replace the pure acetonitrile with acetonitrile that has five percent water added (referred to as five percent aqueous acetonitrile). The percent is raised gradually. Caution is required with aqueous acetonitrile because above ten percent, the solution can wet the fibers, causing frayed ends to flare, the edges of torn areas to open slightly, and some mechanical erosion to occur. If necessary and tolerated by the textile, try a solution of twenty percent aqueous acetonitrile—then soak the textile for five minutes in pure acetonitrile to remove any water that may have penetrated the fiber, pour off the acetonitrile, press the textile dry between paper towels, and allow the textile to air dry.

Although the process removes much of the greasy dirt and salt, it does little to remove sand and mud, which are insoluble in all solvents. If the textile is sturdy enough, it can be placed in pure acetonitrile and the muddy areas stroked gently with a soft brush. However, because eroded wool textiles sometimes disintegrate even when brushed gently, the process is risky. If at all possible, I test a small corner of the textile for stability under *any* of the above conditions.

Caution: Delicate Fringe

Proto-Nasca needleknitted or chain-stitch-embroidered bird and bean fringes are often heavily impregnated with salts and therefore particularly fragile and brittle, and often very hard to the touch. The wool fibers probably have already broken down into very short segments, leaving minimal structural integrity. Putting the fringes into water can cause them to disintegrate into a mass of lint, but a more cautious version of the described procedure has been reasonably successful. Other forms of agitation should be replaced with a five-minute sonic cleaning bath (like those used for cleaning jewelry and dentures), watching for physical damage. Because higher concentrations of water remove more salt but potentially cause more damage, consider in each case whether to use as much as a ten percent aqueous acetonitrile solution before washing the fabric in pure acetonitrile and patting it dry.

The separate portions of these fringes, such as the bird heads and flowers, are often tenuously connected to the central core and may separate from it during cleaning. In some cases, the salt encrustation itself seems to hold them in place; removing it can cause the fringe to separate into pieces although the individual pieces suffer no apparent degradation. Therefore, it's essential to test carefully on small portions.

It is gratifying to help restore the rich beauty of the stunning textiles these ancient cultures produced.

Adapted from "Nonaqueous Solvent Systems for the Cleaning of Pre-Columbian Textiles," from the conference proceedings of the Tenth Annual Conference on Textiles.

About the Author. *Lou Hegedus currently teaches chemistry at Colorado State University. When not cleaning pre-Columbian textiles, he directs a research group of sixteen doctoral and postdoctoral students, writes and reviews books, fishes, ties flies, cultivates his collection of 400 orchids, and plays the oboe.*

Note: PIECEWORK would like to to thank David Bernstein, New York City, and Michael Andrews, San Francisco, dealers in pre-Columbian textiles, for their contributions to this article.

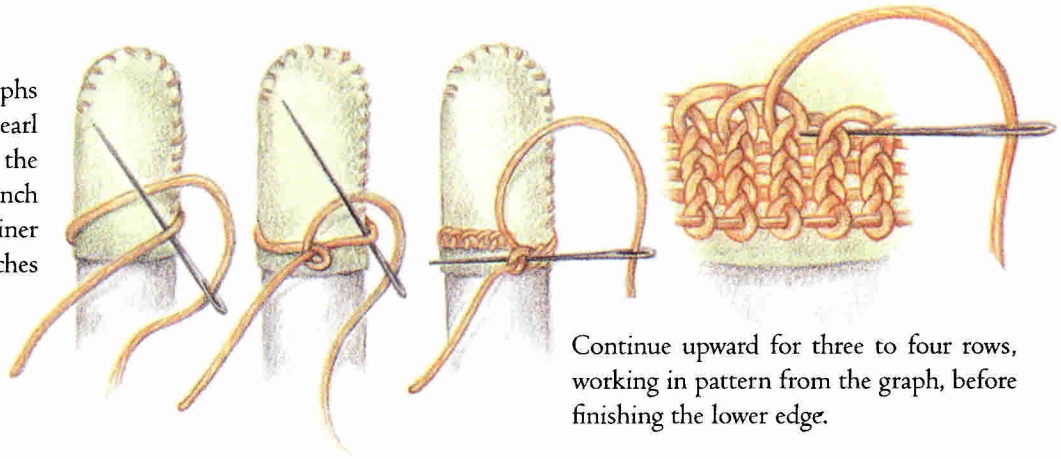
Finger Puppets to Needleknit

Designed by Jean Scorgie

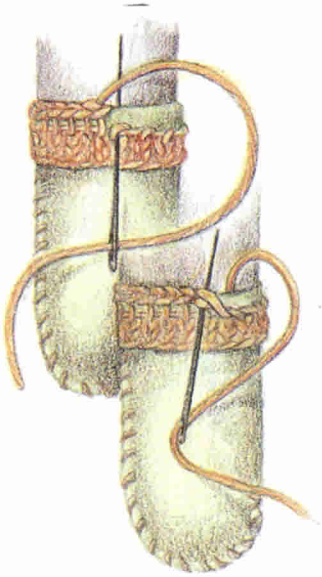
INSPIRED BY FIGURES on ancient Peruvian needleknitted fringes, a masked figure with plied hair accompanies two birds, possibly a bluebird and a quail, and a cactus in bloom. These sprightly finger puppets require only the simplest materials to make: thread, needles, and felt. Instructions begin on the following page.

Working the first rounds

Choose a pattern from the graphs below and thread a needle with pearl cotton in the color you are using for the base of the puppet. Leaving a 15-inch tail, wrap the yarn around the felt liner near the lower edge. Make 18 stitches evenly spaced around.

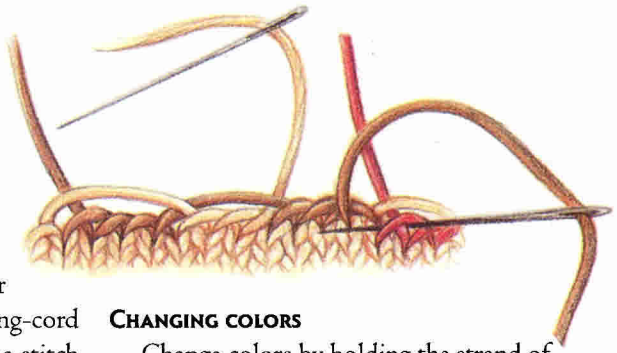


Continue upward for three to four rows, working in pattern from the graph, before finishing the lower edge.



Edge stitch

Use this stitch to finish the lower edge and join the stitches to the liner. Push the rows you have made down until they are even with the edge of the felt. Thread a needle with the 15-inch tail you left at the beginning. Remove the form and place the felt liner over the index finger of your left hand (assuming that you're right-handed). With your palm facing you, curl your finger into your hand so that the puppet is upside down. Bring your thread through to the inside of the felt liner. On each of the following stitches, the needle will enter the fabric from the outside. Working toward the right, take a stitch by pushing your needle through both the holding-cord stitch and the felt liner. Next, take a stitch from left to right under the stitch you have just taken over the edge (subsequent stitches will form a cross with two stitches at the edge, but this first stitch has only a single strand). Stitch through the holding-cord stitch and felt liner as before. Take a stitch beneath the cross on the edge made by the first two stitches. Continue these last two steps around the edge.



Changing colors

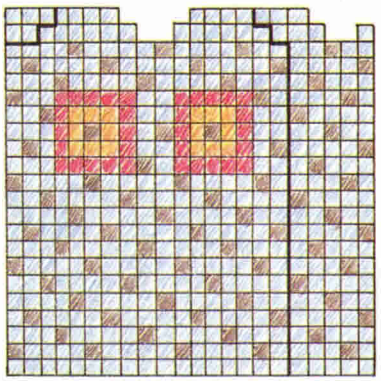
Change colors by holding the strand of the old color out of the way to the right and the tail of the new color out of the way to the left. Take a stitch with the new color as if it were a continuation of the old color; don't worry about the area between the stitches. Carry the unused colors around the felt liner, and when one of them is needed again, bring it down over the strand of the old color.

Materials and Tools

- DMC Pearl Cotton #3, 1 skein each bright yellow #725, gold #783, red #349, light gray blue #926, dark gray blue #930, light green #989, medium green, #987, dark brown #938
- Scrap of felt, 2½ inches square, for each puppet
- Tapestry needle, #18
- Forms. Find a smooth form to work the stitches over that's a little larger than the puppet will be when finished. A large felt-tip marker can be used for the body, and a straight-sided ballpoint pen or a knitting needle will work for the tail pieces.

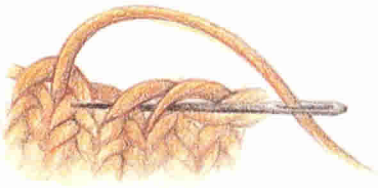
Making a felt liner

Trim the felt square to fit exactly around the body form. Fold the square in half and cut off the upper corners to round them. With pearl cotton, whipstitch around the sides and top of the felt liner. Slide the felt liner over one end of the form.



Finishing the top

To make a round top for the cactus, reduce the number of stitches in the last row by placing one loop over the next and

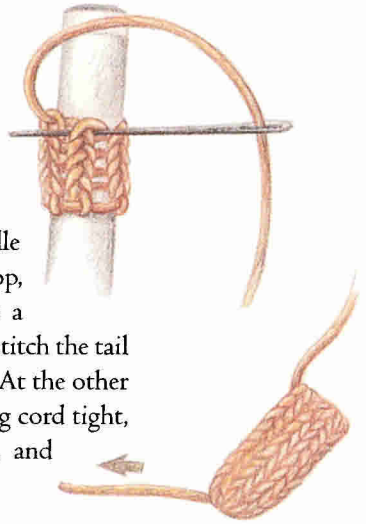


working them as one. Then slip the needle through each loop at the edge and pull tight to close. Take a stitch across the top before burying the end of the yarn between the stitches and the felt liner.

To make a square top for the birds or mask, work the edge stitch across the top. Begin the stitch through both a loop on the front and a loop from the back to bring the two sides together. Complete the stitch by going under the cross at the top edge.

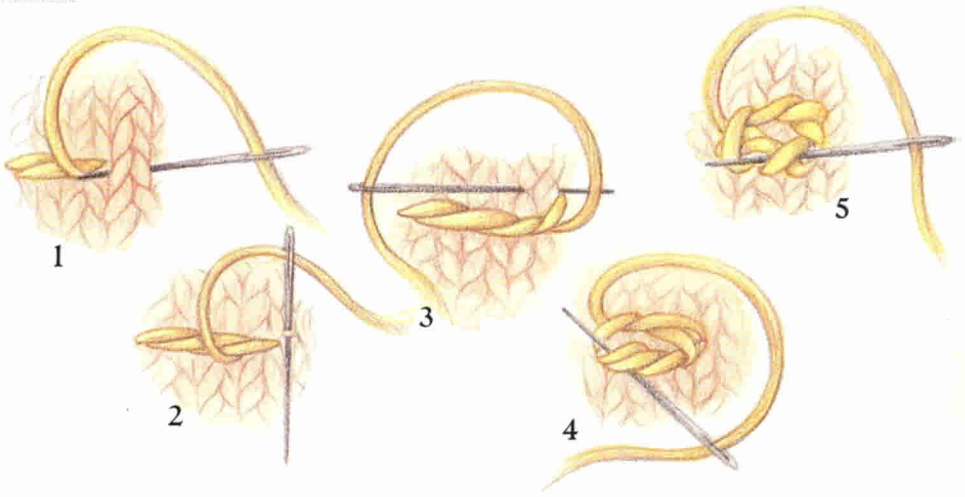
Making tails

Mount a holding cord on a slender form and work six stitches around. Work in rounds until the tail is long enough. Remove the work from the form, slip the needle through each loop at the top, and pull tight to close. Take a stitch across the top and then stitch the tail to the lower edge of the body. At the other end of the tail, pull the holding cord tight, take a stitch across the top, and bury the end inside the tube.



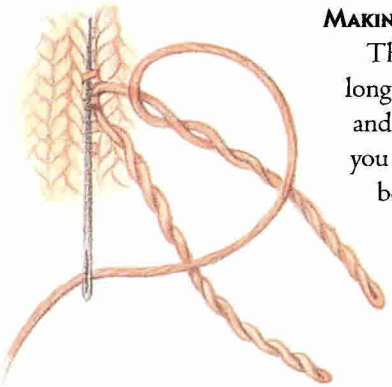
Adding beaks, arms, and flowers

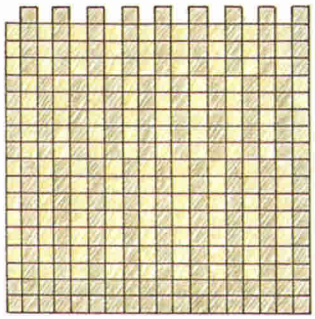
Stitch a small circle of six loops as you did on the holding cord, but go through the body fabric instead. Work stitches away from the body. When the appendage is long enough, slip the needle through each loop at the top and pull tight to close. For the cactus blossoms, work a few rows of loose stitches. The stitches will tend to curl into a rosette.

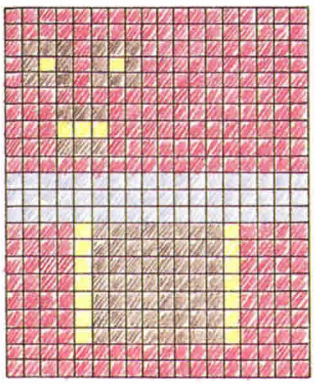


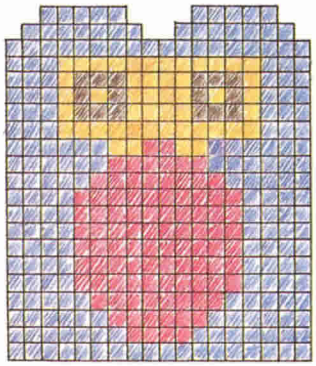
Making plied hair

Thread a needle with a long length of pearl cotton and bring the yarn out where you want the line of hair to begin. Twist about 6 inches of the yarn tightly clockwise until it kinks. Fold the twisted yarn in half, letting it twist back on itself. Take a stitch starting where the last stitch emerged. Repeat the twist for each strand, adding new lengths of yarn as needed.









The Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire, 1911

Reproduced with the permission of the artist, Michael Garland.

DEBORAH CANNARELLA

Most were young women. Most did not speak English. They were garment workers, and they spent more than sixty hours a week in crowded factories, stitching, cutting, paid by the piece.

From Ellis Island, they had arrived on the piers of New York's East River. They stood with just the few necessities or treasures they carried with them. They had come from Italy. They had come from Russia. They were somebody's daughter, somebody's wife, niece, sister, cousin, friend. They stood on the dock of this new land, apprehensive perhaps, frightened, but hopeful that they would find a new and better life here.

What they found was work under hard conditions in the growing and competitive garment industry. "In the shop, we don't have names, we have numbers," one explained. Manufacturers charged workers for the needles and thread they used, as well as for electric power, the chairs they sat on, and shop lockers. They were fined for lateness, for errors, and for losing the tiny work tickets from which their

Pert, pretty Rose Glantz had been one of the first into the dressing room. . . . In high spirits she began singing a popular song, "Every Little Movement Has a Meaning All Its Own." Some of her friends joined in. . . .

Leon Stein, *The Triangle Fire*

earnings were tallied—an average of $5.00 per week. Then, in a tragedy that would change forever the way men and women worked, they fell victim to the dangers and injustices that had grown as the garment industry's work moved from tenements and slum workshops into crowded factories.

Under Control in Eighteen Minutes

Sophie Salemi and Della Costello, neighbors on Cherry Street, embraced as they jumped together. Celia Weintraub, of Henry Street, raised her hands and gestured to the crowd below before falling. Some struggled to remain upright in order to land feet first. One, with a sweep of her arm, sent her broad-brimmed hat sailing before her. Another carefully emptied the few coins and bills from her purse before following them to the pavement. A young man and a girl kissed before he dropped her, then stepped off the ledge himself.

On Saturday, March 25, 1911, in the course of half an hour, 146 garment workers died in the fire at the Asch Building in Washington Square, New York City, the top three stories of which housed the Triangle Shirtwaist Company. Five hundred of the nearly 1,000 employees were there that Saturday, cutting and stitching the fashionable fitted blouses made famous by the popular artist Charles Dana Gibson. The garments were sheer and bouffant, with the precise detailing of a man's shirt, and they were fitted at the waist. The blouses were of a fabric called lawn or "longerine," a lightweight cotton "that burns more rapidly than paper," as the *Daily Herald* reported the next day.

Each floor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company measured about 100 by 100 feet. In this space were about 300 Italian and Jewish immigrant workers—most young women, aged sixteen to twenty-five. Fifteen workers sat on each side of eight long wooden tables that were separated by thirty-inch aisles. About forty cutters sliced sleeves and shirt pieces from stacks of the thin fabric, 180 layers thick. In the aisles stood wicker baskets filled with finished shirtwaists. Beneath the tables were bins of scrap fabric. Six times a year, Louis Levy, a rag dealer, would purchase the accumulated cutaway scraps. When he had last been there in January, he removed over 2,000 pounds of scrap fabric, a known fire hazard.

Just as they did sixty hours every week, sewing machine operators on the eighth and ninth floors stitched blouse pieces together at machines that were damp with oil. No one is certain how the fire started, although the cutters often smoked cigarettes.

When the quitting bell rang about 4:30 p.m., Eva Harris, on the eighth floor, smelled something burning. "I looked to the cutting tables," she said. "At the second table, through the slot under the top, I saw the red flames."

Rose Glantz was among the workers on the ninth floor, where most of the victims worked. "We didn't have a chance. The people on the eighth floor must have seen the fire start and grow. The people on the tenth floor got the warning over the telephone. But with us on the ninth, all of a sudden the fire was all around."

The seventy-foot fire ladders reached only to the sixth floor of the Asch Building, as the fire raged on the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors.
Photograph courtesy of Brown Brothers.

The tapered, circular stairways were thirty-three inches wide, wide enough for only one person to pass. The doors opened inward, and the pressure of the frenzied crowd against them kept them shut. A barrel of sewing machine oil that blocked part of the ninth floor's Greene Street exit exploded. The door to the only other exit was locked, as was usual during working hours—to keep the girls from pilfering spools of thread or shirtwaists, the owners later claimed. Others said it was to keep the union organizers out.

The two freight elevators were not operating that day and were blocked with iron bars. Trapped workers clawed at doors and broke windows with their hands.

"Girls were lying on the floor—fainted," said Rose Cohen. "People were stepping on them. Other girls were trying to climb over the machines. Some were running with their hair burning." Firemen found fifty-eight girls in the ninth-floor dressing room, their faces

raised toward a small window.

"My building is fireproof," owner Joseph J. Asch insisted. In fact, according to New York City's fire codes at that time, the building was considered safe, although it had wooden trim, window frames, and floors. There was no law requiring sprinkler systems or fire drills. The day after the fire, the chief inspector and deputy superintendent of the Building Department said, "This building could be worse and come within the requirements of the law."

The law required a building the size of the Asch Building to have three staircases. When the building was constructed in 1900, the architect claimed that counting the fire escape "practically makes three staircases."

The fire hoses were rotten. Because there had been no fire drills, only a few of the employees knew of the single fire escape. It ended at the second floor and emptied into an enclosed concrete courtyard. Fewer than twenty escaped down it. Sixteen-year-old Abe Gordon, a button puncher, climbed off it into a sixth floor window. "I still had one foot on the fire escape," he said, "when I heard a loud noise and looked back up. The people were falling all around me. The fire escape was collapsing." The heat and the weight of the workers had bent the iron slats and railings and pulled the flimsy structure away from the building.

Conditions at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company were like those of garment workers in sweatshops throughout the city. Hundreds of workers and machines were crowded onto each floor, separated by narrow and cluttered aisles.

Photograph courtesy of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union Archives, Labor-Management Documentation Center, Cornell University.

The operators of the two passenger elevators, Gaspar Mortillalo and Joseph Zito, made repeated trips in answer to the frantic ringing of the bell, most to the ninth floor. "When I first opened the elevator door," said Zito, "all I could see was a crowd of girls and men with great flames and smoke right behind them." Thirty or more people pushed into cars that had been designed to carry fifteen. The two elevators made runs as long as they were able, until the intense heat bent the track of one. The crush of the bodies of young women who had leapt into the shaft made it impossible finally for the other to move.

The seventy-foot ladders of the city's fire department reached only to the sixth floor. The force of the falling bodies was so great, the extended nets were of no use.

According to United Press reporter William Shepherd, by his count, sixty-two employees jumped from the building's roof and windows.

"The girls behind us were screaming and crying," Tessa Benani said. "Several of them, as the flames crept up closer, ran into the smoke, and we heard them scream as the flames caught their clothes. One little girl who worked at the machine opposite me cried out in Italian, 'Goodbye, goodbye!' I have not seen her since."

This was not the Triangle Company's first fire. Insurance records documented eight since 1902.

Ironically, the walls of the "fireproof" building remained intact.

If the Union Had Won

In September 1909, the Triangle Shirtwaist Company had fired 150 workers who admitted they were members of Local 25 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), organized in response to poor and unsafe working conditions and unfair wages throughout the city's garment industry. When advertisements ran the next day for shirtwaist workers to fill their positions, the women picketed the shop. Triangle hired prostitutes to harass the girls and encourage arrests, keeping itself in production by hiring scabs. New York's Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) soon joined the Triangle workers and the strike escalated. On November 24, 1909, more than 20,000 waistmakers—mostly women—walked out of nearly 500 shops in Manhattan and Brooklyn in a strike known as "the Uprising of the 20,000," the first collective action of women laborers.

In February of 1910, when the strike was called off, more than 300 shops had settled with the union, agreeing to, among other things, a fifty-four-hour work week. Workers at Triangle, however, returned to the

factory without a union agreement. Two of their most adamant demands were never even discussed: open, unlocked doors from the seventh, eighth, and ninth floors to the stairwell to the street exit; and adequate fire escapes.

"If the union had won we would have been safe," Rose Safran said. "But the bosses defeated us and we didn't get the open doors or the better fire escapes. So our friends are dead."

On a covered dock on the East River at 26th Street, which came to be known as Misery Lane, police set up a temporary morgue. The coffins were numbered—and jewelry, hair combs, and other personal possessions were put in envelopes with corresponding numbers to help the family members and friends identify the bodies. Thousands of people slowly proceeded through the morgue until only seven bodies remained unclaimed. These were buried in Evergreen Cemetery, along with a coffin containing fragments of remains that could not be identified.

On April 5, police estimated that more than 100,000 working men and women marched in a memorial parade. Many of the working girls wore armbands reading, "We mourn our loss." A crowd of 400,000 watched. The marchers traveled past the charred remains of the Asch Building, located on the periphery of Washington Square Park—originally the city's potter's field, burial ground for the unclaimed dead.

It was pouring rain. A reporter expressed his concern that the bad weather was affecting Rose Schneiderman, who had been a leader in the Triangle strike, but her distress had another source. "As we marched up Fifth Avenue, there they were," Schneiderman told him. "Girls right at the tops of hundreds of buildings, looking down on us. The structures were no different from the Asch Building. . . . There they were, leaning out of the upper windows, watching us. This, not the rain, is making me sick."

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company owners, Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, were twice charged with manslaughter, and were both times acquitted on legal technicalities.

Seared on Minds and Hearts

On March 30, 1911, just days after the fire, Building Department inspectors stopped production at Max Blanck and Isaac Harris's new location—a non-fireproofed building where the owners had rented space to continue production despite the tragedy—because sewing machines blocked access to fire escapes.

But reforms and reformers did come forth.

Two months after the Triangle Fire, the governor of New York named a commission to investigate the fire and make recommendations for improved factory safety. After four years, the findings of the State Factory Investigating Commission led to state legislation to ensure sanitary health conditions, regular factory inspections, and restrictions on child labor and work hours. Today, this legislation forms the basis of New York and other state safety laws.

One of the investigators for the commission was Frances Perkins. She had witnessed the Triangle Fire, almost from its beginning.

"I shall never forget the frozen horror which came over us as we stood with our hands on our throats watching that horrible sight, knowing that there was no help. . . . I felt I must sear it not only on my mind but on my heart as a never-to-be-forgotten reminder of why I had to spend my life fighting conditions that would permit such a tragedy. . . . They did not die in vain and we will never forget them."

In 1933, and three times thereafter, Frances Perkins was appointed U.S. Secretary of Labor by Franklin D. Roosevelt—the first woman to serve as a member of a president's cabinet.

"In Compliance with Law? The fire escape that ends in midair must be abolished." Boardman Robinson in the New York *Tribune*.

quoted from The Triangle Fire *by Leon Stein*

About the Author. *Deborah Cannarella is a freelance writer living in Southbury, Connecticut. She is grateful to Leon Stein for providing the voices of the survivors in his book* The Triangle Fire, *and for the inspiration to tell the story again in memory of her two grandmothers, both garment workers.*

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Sarah Sorenson at thirty-one, circa 1919.

Photograph courtesy of Vivian Sorenson.

Touched by the Flames: Sarah Sorenson, 1888–1992

DEBORAH CANNARELLA

Among the crowd helplessly watching as the bodies fell was a young girl who, like so many of the young women she now saw burning, had made the long ocean voyage from Czarist Russia to Ellis Island in search of a better life.

Sarah Dubow lived with her father, stepmother, and eight other family members in three rooms on Eldridge Street in a Yiddish-speaking neighborhood on the Lower East Side. At age eleven, she had told her father she was going to work. She saw the sign "small girls wanted" and was quickly hired as a thread cutter. In factories like the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, children as young as eight years old were hired to trim the threads from the finished shirtwaists. When inspectors arrived, the supervisors made the children climb into shipping crates and covered them with finished shirtwaists—the children were too young to be working there legally. Sarah worked sixty-six hours a week, for which she was paid $2.00.

Sarah Dubow was now a machine operator at Triangle. Saturday, March 25, 1911, was her day off.

> I did not work that day because it was my turn to stay in the [family's dry-cleaning] store on Saturday, so my father could go to the synagogue. My sister Anna and I were in the store. At 4:00 p.m., I was to meet my aunt so we could shop for material for holiday dresses. She was working that day and was to pick up my pay. On my way to meet her at the Triangle Building, I heard the fire engines, and I started to run to see where the fire was. Two blocks away, the police and the fire department stopped traffic from getting near the building. I was in a place where I could see the building, and I saw the flames and the people jumping out. I remained there until midnight. My parents looked for me but did not find me. At midnight my brother Hymie found me and took me home. . . . On Sunday after 10:00 a.m. we were allowed to go to the morgue to identify the bodies. Some people were recognized by their rings or shoes. . . . We were not able to identify my aunt. . . .
>
> All the groups got together and marched through the garment district. There were 100,000 or more marching. Although it was a rainy day in New York, the wetness on the streets was mostly from the tears of the marchers. Some people collapsed. After the march . . . I went home. My stepmother met me at the door, removed my coat, and asked if I wanted some tea. I said that all I wanted was to die.

Many women who witnessed the fire—such as Frances Perkins—went on to achieve notoriety as social reformers, gain political positions, and make their large voices heard. But there were many, many other voices that rose out of the ashes—quieter but just as powerful. Sarah Sorenson's was one of these.

Wouldn't You Be a Rebel?

Although at that time, "labor union was a bad word," fourteen-year-old Sarah had joined the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) as one of its youngest members, to work for the reform of conditions in the many other sweatshops like Triangle. In 1917, at twenty-nine, Sarah helped the weavers on strike in Paterson, New Jersey. For the next two years, she served on the executive board of the education department of the ILGWU.

Sarah became an active suffragist, and in 1920, was "drunk with victory" as she, together with other women across America, voted for the very first time. "There were tears in my eyes," she said. "I stayed in the booth twenty minutes just holding the ballot in both hands. You don't know what a joy it was. . . ." Her ballot was cast for Eugene Debs, the Socialist candidate, whom she had also worked to help elect. "It wasn't my upbringing that influenced that," she explained. "My circumstances did. My life was difficult."

She worked with Margaret Sanger, leader of the birth control movement, and as an advocate of children's labor laws. "Some children five and six were doing take-out work at home." She also participated in pacifist and socialist demonstrations protesting World War I.

"You know that song 'I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier; / I raised him to be my private joy. / Who dares to put a musket on his shoulder / to go to kill some

other mother's boy'? That was our famous song, but we were not allowed to sing it. I picketed against selling bonds for the war and didn't register when women were supposed to sign up for war work. . . . Look, wouldn't you be a rebel living under those conditions?"

During the antiwar demonstrations, Sarah met her husband, Gene Sorenson, son of Danish immigrants and an organizer of bakers, confectioners, and auto workers for the International Workers of the World. Throughout their life together, she and her husband continued their work for the labor movement.

A Long Line of Troublemakers

Sarah retired at age sixty-five after fifty-four years in the garment industry, and the Dressmakers Club 22 of the ILGWU planted 100 trees in Israel in her honor, "just behind John F. Kennedy's." At sixty-five, she also completed the requirements for her high school diploma.

Sarah Sorenson at ninety-five, circa 1984.
Photograph courtesy of Vivian Sorenson.

At eighty-two, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where she and her husband had settled, Sarah was still fighting for causes she believed in—she lobbied for better health care and transportation for senior citizens, and for the creation of senior centers.

Sarah Dubow Sorenson died on January 28, 1992, at 103. Arthur Alpert, the editor of *Prime Time,* an Albuquerque paper, photographed her four days before her death.

"I hear you're a troublemaker," Alpert said to her in an interview in November 1991. "I was a troublemaker," she said, "and I'm not sorry."

"The work is not done yet," she told a reporter for the *Albuquerque Journal* in 1986. "Once you stop trying it's the end of everything."

Note: Sarah's granddaughter, Vivian Sorenson, remembers well her "feisty, compassionate" grandmother, who carried her sewing machine to work on her head. Sarah once said, "Vivian, you should write a book about my life."

Vivian is now writing and producing a film that will tell the story of her grandmother and the woman of America's labor movement. Troublemakers all.

Survivor's Cento

All through the day rain ever and again.
The quartet from the Elks Lodge sang "Abide with Me."
They lost both daughters, Sara and Sarafine.
Last year I was one of the pickets arrested and fined.
We were striking for open doors, better fire escapes.
Freda Velakowski, Ignatzia Bellota, Celia Eisenberg.
You knew the families from the flowers nailed to the doors.
That's my mama. Her name's Julia Rosen.
I know by her hair. I braid it every morning.
Now the same police who clubbed the strikers
keep the crowd from trampling on our bodies.
Sadie Nausbaum, Gussie Bierman, Anna Cohen, Israel Rosen.
I know that's my daughter, Sophie Salemi.
See that darn in her knee? Mended her stockings, yesterday.
Box one-twelve: female, black stockings, black shoes,
part of a skirt, a white petticoat, hair ribbons.
I would be a traitor to these poor burned bodies
if I came to talk good fellowship: Jennie Franco,
Julia Aberstein, Joseph Wilson, Nicolina Nicolese.
I found a mouse on the ninth floor, took it home,
kept it for a pet. At least it was still alive.
Our children go to work in firetraps, come home and sleep in
firetraps. Day and night they are condemned.
Ninth floor looked like a kindergarten. We were eight,
nine, ten. If the Inspector came, they hid us in bins.
Rose Feibush, Clotild Terdanova, Mary Leventhal.
That one's Catherine Maltese, and those, her daughters.
Lucia, she's twenty. Rosalie—she'd be fourteen.
Those two are sisters. Bettina and Frances Miale. M-I-A-L-E.
We asked the Red Cross worker how to help
and she said bring books—Tolstoy, Shakespeare in Yiddish.
Benny Costello said he knew his sister Della by her new shoes.
Anna Ardito, Gussie Rosenfield, Sara Kupla, Essie Bernstein,
reminders to spend my life fighting these conditions. Antonia
Colleti, Daisy Lopez Fitze, Surka Brenman, Margaret Schwartz.
One coffin read: Becky Kessler, call for tomorrow.
The eighth casket had neither name nor number. It contained
fragments from the Fire, picked up but never claimed.

Cento is Latin for "a garment made of patches."

From *Steam Dummy & Fragments from the Fire,* by Chris Llewellyn, to be published in October by Bottom Dog Press, Firelands College, Heron, OH 44839. This volume contains poems about the Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire as well as about the dry-cleaning industry, the poet's father's business, inspired by her concern about the health hazards presented by the toxic chemicals used in that industry.

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.*

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ENGLISH BAND SAMPLER

A Personal Pattern Record

MARSHA VAN VALIN

She was a Dorcas
Whose curious needle wound the abused stage
Of this lewd world into the golden age,
Whose pen of steel and silken ink enrolled
The acts of Jonah in records of gold.
Whose art disclosed the plot, which, had it taken,
Rome had triumphed and Britain's wall been shaken.

She was
in heart a Lydia, and in tongue a Hannah,
in zeal a Ruth, in wedlock a Susanna
Prudently simple, providently wary,
To the world a Martha, and in Heaven a Mary.

Who put on immortality) in the year of her (Pilgrimage 69 Redeemer 1641

Dorothy Selby's epitaph verses reflected her life as a professional needlewoman in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She would probably have used a pattern band sampler like this one, which I purchased in England in 1992. A detail of the sampler is shown above. The first verse of the epitaph reveals the active woman who participated in history: she is known for disclosing the Gunpowder Plot (1605), a plan to assassinate the King of England and the assembled members of Parliament for their increasing repression of Catholicism. The second stanza captures qualities I particularly associate with these English samplers: prudence and frugality. Both verses assume the importance of good "examples"—for lives and for needlework. Dorothy Selby's virtues compare her to legendary women whose qualities she carried on,

A detail of an English band sampler circa 1625, showing two major arcaded pattern repeats interspersed with repeating dividing bands. Motifs pictured include acorns and daisies worked in a double running stitch.

From the collection of Marsha Van Valin. Photograph by Jay Graham.

and with this verse she, too, becomes an example. I like to imagine that the thoughts of the women of the time, most of whom embroidered for their homes rather than professionally, are captured in these intensely stitched samplers and the embroidered pieces whose designs were selected from them.

I see a woman sitting by her window in the last of the day's light. Perhaps she is embroidering the sleeves and cuffs of her husband's shirt. One band is done. To select another design to circle the same sleeve, she pulls from her workbasket a rolled piece of linen worked in colored silks, her pattern band sampler. It is covered with difficult embroidery patterns stitched across the width of the cloth. Toward the bottom of the band, she finds the new design she has been looking for, in a reversible stitch. Should anyone see the inside of her husband's sleeve, it will look as finished as the outside.

This pattern band sampler consists of thirty-three bands stitched reversibly in Montenegrin and Italian cross stitch; double running stitch; eyelet, straight, running, and cross stitch; in three shades of silk floss: dark blue, green, and rose. There appear to be more than three colors on the front of the sampler, but examination of the reverse side reveals just three main colors—possibly from slightly differing dye batches that have faded unequally over the centuries. (One quite different color is discussed later.)

Dating the Sampler

Although the sampler bears no date, it is fairly easy to pin it down by comparing it to similar pieces in museums. About 2,000 seventeenth-century samplers survive in English, continental, and American museums, and probably several hundred more are in private collections. The majority are of three common types: the cutwork sampler, the spot (random) sampler, and the geometric/floral pattern band sampler. My sampler falls into the third category.

The reversible double running stitch was commonly used to embellish the ends of sleeves, cloaks, and cuffs (in which both sides might show) before 1620. Later on, the use of this stitch succumbed to newer fashions, which suggests that the sampler was made in the first quarter of the century. Although it is not unusual to find archaic motifs and devices on later samplers, most band samplers after about 1630 included a date or some other inscription, and this one has none.

Shortly before 1650, band samplers began to include a whole spectrum of colors and a greater variety of stitches (sometimes fifteen or more), giving more texture and depth to the designs and leading directly to the development of the sampler in the eighteenth century as a more artistic and pictorial exercise. Earlier band samplers were monochromatic or, like mine, have a limited color scheme. They typically were closely stitched, as linen was imported and quite expensive, and not a bit of it should be wasted.

Many seventeenth-century band samplers have survived with excellent color precisely because they were rolled up and tucked away for reference. Some were so expertly stitched on the reverse side that later owners framed them wrong side out, thereby inadvertently preserving the original colors.

My band sampler was worked on imported, bleached 48- or 49-count linen, with stitches taken over three threads, the overall measurement being 34 by 6¼ inches, if I include a 3-inch section where the stitches have disappeared. Standard looms at this time were between 6 and 12 inches wide, and band samplers were typically about 6½ inches wide, allowing enough space for one large pattern, or two to three repeats of a smaller one. Great width was unnecessary because recording stitches and designs was a repetitive exercise. As samplers usually were 20 to 24 inches long, this piece is exceptionally long and ambitious.

Embroidery as a Sign of Wealth

Before 1650, many pattern band samplers of this type were worked by English women of the upper classes, who had the

Stitches over Time

Stitch names can be apocryphal and elusive: they change according to who is using them and where and when that person lived. Double running stitch, for example, is also known as double stitch, Holbein stitch, and Spanish stitch. Hans Holbein the Younger was a German painter of the sixteenth century who was court portraitist to the Tudors in England, among other royal families of Europe. Known for his meticulous detailing, he concentrated on the subject's embellished clothing, which emphasized the sitter's wealth and status. This focus on details to reveal status is especially evident in portraits of Henry VIII. References to "spanysshe work" come from the legend that Catherine of Aragon brought this technique from Spain to England. In fact, it existed in England long before her arrival. The identity of many stitches with colorful names—for example, finny stitch, fisher stitch, braue bredstitch, rosemary stitch, mowse stitch and newstitch—have been lost. The stitches themselves have traveled around the world for thousands of years and probably exist today in slightly different forms, perhaps still recognizable to the ghostly embroideresses of the seventeenth century.

time to spend on them. Sewing skills—both professional and home—were highly valued, as handworked textiles served to soften and warm the harshness of early Stuart interiors overwhelmed by dark wood and/or stone walls and small, mullioned windows. The quantity of embroidered furnishings in a house was an indication of the owner's wealth and status: it demonstrated that the women in the family had the leisure, skill, and education to create the embroidery, and the men had the wealth to pay for the expensive, imported linens and silk and metal threads.

The cost of the materials is reflected in the densely arranged patterns stitched clear to the selvedges, a characteristic of art and fashion that harks back to the Middle Ages, when monks illuminated manuscripts by filling the pages with all manner of foliar and geometric patterns. The practice was referred to as *horror vacui,* or a fear of empty space, but it can also be interpreted as a practical or parsimonious way of using the materials at hand. Parsimony was a Christian virtue that housewives practiced even in their needlework.

The designs in the bands of the sampler shown here are common to most seventeenth-century English band samplers. They include acorns, daisies, peas in a pod, stars, Greek fretwork, carnations, oak leaves, and honeysuckle, many in arcaded (double-sided) bands. The designs were intended to embellish everything from tiny collars to massive bed and wall hangings. They can be found on tablecloths, chair cushions, jewel cases, book covers, purses, cuffs, ruffs, cloaks, gloves, stomachers, and even mirror frames of the period. When embellishing something as important as a dress (in the seventeenth century, all textiles were considered of great value), it was vital to record and practice the patterns and techniques before committing them to their intended fabric or garment. The first known samplers were those pattern records.

I purchased the sampler shown here at an auction in London. It had been framed in a flimsy wood frame, under glass, with the upper and lower two inches folded over to the back side. I suspect that the frame had a previous incarnation and was reused for this sampler even though it was four inches shy in length (at least the width was right). I laid the sampler, which was in remarkably good condition considering its accommodation, between two sheets of glass. I weighted it heavily and uniformly with books, gently pressing out the creases before framing it in a glass sandwich that would show the fine workmanship on both the front and the back.

The disappearance of patterns from the blank three-inch section is a mystery, but I offer two possible explanations. Close inspection of thread fragments left in the space suggest that black silk was used, and a harsh chemical in the dye could have caused the silk to disintegrate over time. On many other samplers, black threads decay before other colors for this reason. A second theory is that the stitcher deliberately picked out the section because it was not executed as well as the rest of the sampler. A small, pale blue section that has not been stitched reversibly points to this possibility. Perhaps the maker let a child try a stitch or motif, intending to pick it out discreetly when she wasn't looking.

I love to find and reproduce seventeenth-century band samplers. Receiving a sampler from England is like finding and unrolling a papyrus that reveals an ancient text. Reproducing the short rows rapidly gives me a feeling of accomplishment, and the visual effect of the intricate bands is stunning. The compressed designs are compelling; the bands are like lines of poetry. The variety of stitches presents a constant challenge, yet the stitches themselves are merely variations on a counted-thread cross. I enjoy stitching as women did centuries ago, women who valued cloth so highly that even the immortality they "put on" was imagined as a garment.

A seventeenth-century band sampler made as a pattern record, measuring 34 by 6¼ inches.
From the collection of Marsha Van Valin. Photograph by Jay Graham.

About the Author. *Marsha Van Valin is owner of The Scarlet Letter, a textile design firm specializing in seventeenth- to midnineteenth-century historic needlework, including reproductions of notable samplers from museums such as the Victoria and Albert in London and the Museum of Fine Arts–Boston. She lives on a farm in Wisconsin with her husband, Tad, where they raise rare and endangered breeds of sheep.*

Note: PIECEWORK thanks Deanna West, formerly of *Treasures in Needlework,* for alerting us to this story.

HAND TOWELS TO EMBROIDER

Designed by Jean Scorgie

These graceful linen hand towels are embroidered on even-weave linen fabric with a delicate band of motifs selected from the seventeenth-century English band sampler, much as they would have been selected from such a sampler over three centuries ago.

FOR EACH TOWEL, cut a rectangle of linen, 13½ inches wide by 22½ inches long. Along each side, hand stitch a narrow hem. At each end, turn under 1/4 inch and crease the fabric, then turn under 1 inch and crease the fabric. With the hem folded in place, pull one crosswise thread out of the body of the towel just above the first fold.

Hemstitch each end using the pin stitch to accentuate the holes. Mark the placement of the embroidery with contrasting thread, basting a short vertical line mid-towel for the center and a horizontal line about six rows up from the pin stitch for the base line.

Count from the center toward the left to find the starting point for the embroidery. Work from left to right, burying the ends beneath the stitches as you work.

Note that each stitch is worked in two steps. Work the first step of several stitches to an endpoint and return to the starting point with the second step. The reverse side of the embroidery should look the same as the face.

MATERIALS

- 1/2 yard of 35-count even-weave linen fabric. We used Golden Streak from The Scarlet Letter, PO Box 397, Sullivan, WI 53178.
- DMC Embroidery Floss in brown #420 and green #3363
- Tapestry needle, #26
- Matching sewing thread for hemming the hand towels
- Contrasting sewing thread for marking the placement of the embroidery
- A magnifier lamp and an embroidery hoop on a stand are helpful.

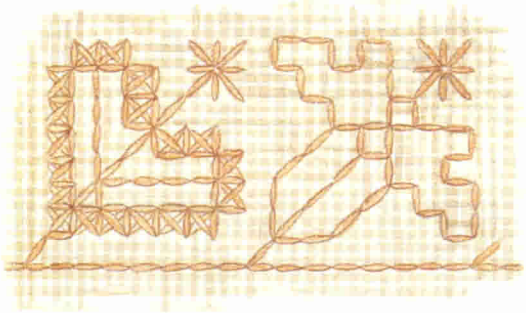
A PATTERN RECORD BAND SAMPLER REPRODUCTION

The entire pattern record band sampler discussed in the article has been reproduced on 35-count linen. Worked over two threads, it measures 29 by 5¾ inches. A kit consisting of hand-dyed 35-count linen, charts, stitch diagrams, needle, silk flosses, and a color photograph of the finished piece is available for $70; with cotton flosses, the kit is $35. Please add $4 for shipping and handling.

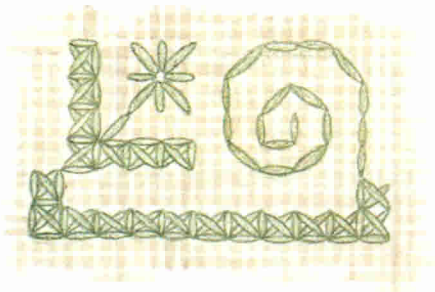
Note: the kit will be available in September.

The Scarlet Letter, PO Box 397, Sullivan, WI 53178
(414) 593-8470; fax (414) 593-2417

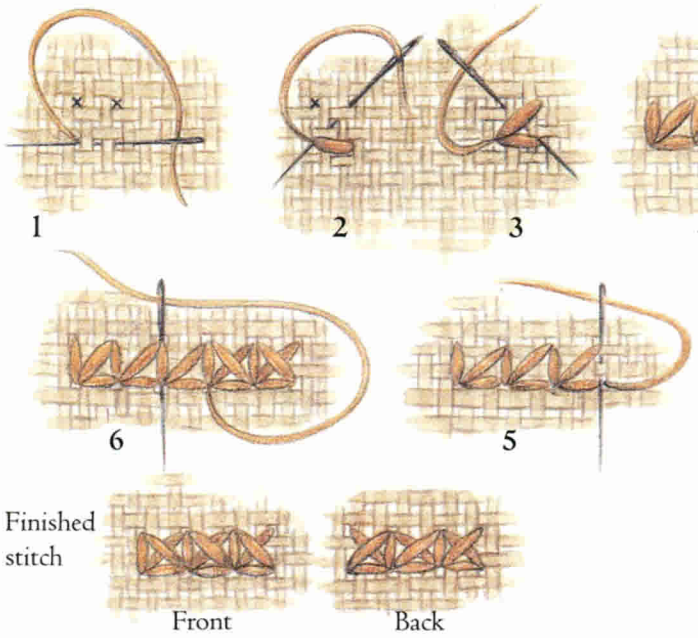
Motif embroidered in brown



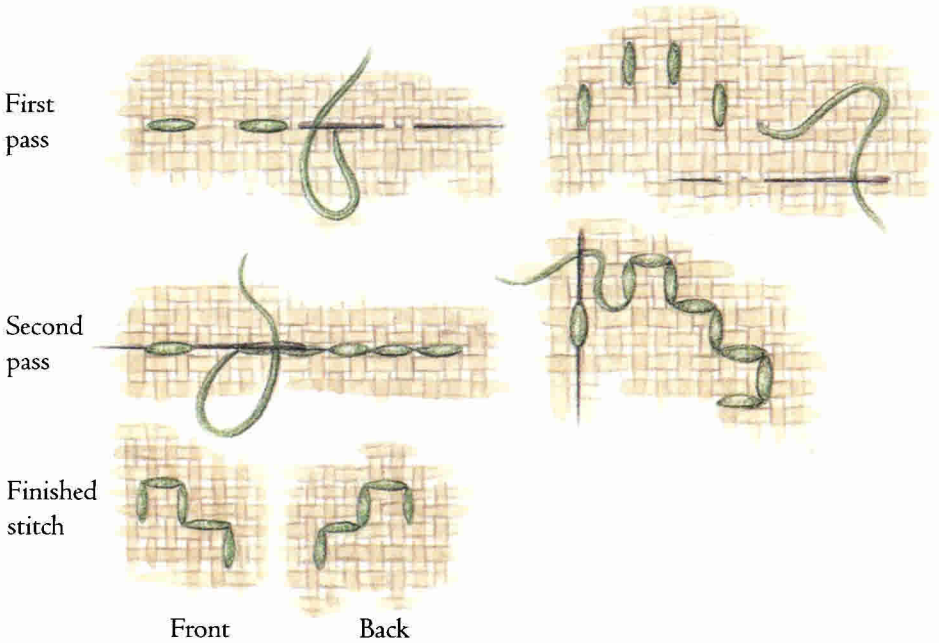
Motif embroidered in green



Two-sided Italian Stitch



Double Running Stitch

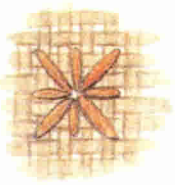


Two-sided Italian Stitch

Work from left to right over two threads in each direction. Each stitch is made in four steps and uses the corners of a square. To start, bring the needle out at the lower left corner. The first step is a stitch from right to left in the lower corners. The second step is a stitch diagonally from upper right to lower left. The third step is a stitch diagonally from upper left to lower right. At this point you can either take the fourth step to finish or repeat the three steps for subsequent stitches and leave the fourth step for the return trip. The fourth step is a stitch from upper left to lower left in each two-sided stitch in turn.

Double Running Stitch

Work a line of running stitches over two threads or diagonally over the square formed by two threads in each direction. At the end, work back to the beginning, filling in the spaces.



Algerian Eyelet Stitch

From a center point, take stitches over two threads in each direction, making an eight-stitch star.

THE RICH TRADITION OF
TURKISH KNITTED STOCKINGS

ANNA ZILBOORG

The rich and rhythmic beauty of traditional wool Turkish stockings.
From the collection of Betsy Harrell.

I BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH Turkish knitting quite by chance. I ordered a book called *Anatolian Knitting Designs,* by Betsy Harrell, without any idea of what it would contain. When the book arrived, its cover made me think it must be a mistake: three rich, Oriental-ruglike patterns that I could not imagine had been knitted. But knitted they were, with as many as twelve colors in a row, at a gauge of nine or ten stitches to the inch, out of rough, hairy, single-ply yarn. I was captivated.

The character of Turkish knitting patterns is decidedly Eastern despite the many elements familiar to Western knitting. Pattern elements such as the little one-three-one-stitch star and the five-three-one-stitch triangle are ubiquitous. The overall Eastern look results partly from patterning copied from rugs, although a great many of the patterns originated in knitting. Whatever their origins, the patterns are rooted in their culture. Because Turkish culture is an Islamic culture, even the knitting patterns share the characteristics of Islamic art. For example, they contain no realistic representations of anything in nature: God's work should not be copied. Islamic art is highly abstract, with complex designs built of simple elements arranged in vari-

ous symmetries. As in carpets, often patterns in knitting are cut off with no apparent reason. These sudden endings may reflect a concept of flowing time, as has been found in the symbolism of Oriental rugs, but stocking patterns probably stop when the leg is long enough. A haphazardly truncated pattern—a serious design error in the West—does not undermine the artistry of the sock according to the Islamic aesthetic.

In Islamic designs, patterns are characteristically surrounded with decorative borders. In stockings, such a combination of patterns probably arises from the method of construction (discussed below), but the combination is also found in carpets, bookbindings, tiles—Islamic art in general.

Familiar to the Fingers

Actually knitting these patterns was a revelation. They look difficult, complex, and demanding, but most patterns I could do without looking at the chart again after one, or at most two, repeats. Many patterns build in a obvious way so that it is clear from the preceding row what the following one should be. Most of the patterns are rhythmic and repetitive as the colors alternate, so that one's hands learn to feel the pattern as much as one's mind learns to think it. It is an odd and pleasing sensation to work with such rhythmic patterns.

How is one to account for the rhythmic nature of the patterns? The beginning of knitting in Turkey goes back to the unknown beginning of knitting itself as an uninterrupted oral tradition. The knitters of Turkey have been, until recently, nonliterate rural Muslim women. Only very recently have these women been taught to read and write and begun to move to the cities in great numbers, thus interrupting village traditions. Of course, they could "read" a design and copy it, which is how they copied patterns from pottery or rugs or other textiles that came by along the ancient trade routes. As they worked these and original patterns over and over, the rhythm of the fingers, predictable alternations, familiar pairings, and the like influenced the way patterns develop. There is no need to record a pattern that easily becomes familiar to the fingers.

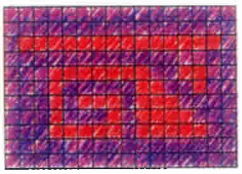
Furthermore, Turkish knitting designs follow the Eastern principle of dark-light design. This is known in the West by the Japanese word *notan* or the Chinese *yin-yang;* we do not have our own word for it. In the West, we tend to place a design on a ground. In the East, the figure and the ground are of equal importance; the shapes in the ground balance and complement the figure. The effect of this kind of knitting pattern is that one is knitting two designs at the same time, one in each color. As you build one up, you shape the other down. In the making, this provides a logic for the fingers—I know no other way to put it—that gives a flowing ease to the working out of the design. Symmetries play an important role in these patterns, as they do throughout Islamic art. Many new patterns grow from reorienting the elements of an existing pattern. A simple hook inverted becomes something more complex to the eye, but the units of the pattern remain the same to the fingers.

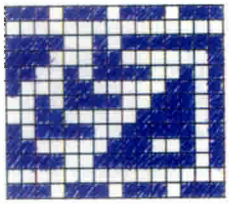
Because Turkish culture is an Islamic culture, even the knitting patterns share the characteristics of Islamic art. For example, they contain no realistic representations of anything in nature: God's work should not be copied.

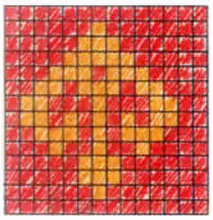
The Riddle of Design and Culture

The women who make these stockings are poor and hard-working. Their houses are often hovels by our standards, their equipment primitive. Their yarn is spun at home from their own sheep, dyed with materials known and used for generations. One gets a feeling for the people from working with their patterns even more than from seeing their products. A certain wit, a cheerfulness, and delight seem to build on the regular, rhythmic repetitions, calm and predictable as a heartbeat.

Within the traditional forms, vitality and individuality abound as they do in American patchwork quilts. The same design and materials take on different life in the hands of different women. Also like patchwork, designs travel from village to village although certain designs predominate in a particular place. Many migrations probably took place as a woman married a man







from another village and took her stocking patterns with her. Turkish women knitted stockings for their trousseaux, just as American women made quilts.

A Turkish woman knits in the traditional style, with the yarn tensioned around her neck.

Reprinted with permission from Redhouse Press.

Like quilt patterns, knitting patterns carry names, and the names vary, with very little loyalty to a particular name. Often, women say a pattern doesn't have a name or they make one up to please the inquirer. This tendency to answer what someone wants to hear is good manners, but it presents a problem for serious investigation. The art professor Kenan Özbel, who made a collection of Turkish knitted stockings and published patterns in *Knitted Stockings from Turkish Villages* (1976), asserted that patterns varied according to all manner of situations and individuals: orphans, unmarried men, marriageable women. Further, he wrote, they had meanings: Some were used as charms against the evil eye or for protection during travel. Betsy Harrell, interviewing women from Sivas Province who had moved to Istanbul at about the same time, heard quite a different story. Patterns meant nothing, she was told; people could wear anything they pleased; no one believed in magic. They did admit, upon being pressed, that certain socks would never be worn by men or would be unsuitable for women.

What the stockings used to mean and what they mean now are probably very different. As the customs of village life undergo radical changes, the role of artifacts in that life changes as well. In addition, the stockings provide fertile ground for a love of storytelling and romance. A rug dealer in Ürgüp who had grown up in a village in Sivas assured me that both the patterns and the colors of the stockings were full of significance. In them were encoded all manner of discourse between young men and women. He told me that when he was fifteen, he was desperate to find out something about girls, but the only time he ever saw them outside his family was fetching water at the village well—and then they were fully veiled. They talked through their stockings. Yellow meant, "I am dying of love."

Turkey is full of knitters, and I exchanged many smiles and nods over my knitting and theirs as I hurried about gathering all the information I could on the traditional stockings. The knitters I met were modern women, however, knitting with acrylic and in Western style, not the traditional knitters I sought. Rural women stay far from strangers. The problem is partly language and partly custom—the mores that separate the lives of women from the public life.

The stocking knitters of Turkey, it seems, are only accessible when their way of life has been radically changed, as with the Sivas knitters Betsy Harrell met in a settlement outside Istanbul. Already, those knitters were part of a different world from that of the village where their knitting had been an integral part of their lives.

I have been writing as though similar stockings were knitted throughout Turkey; this is not the case. The nation that is now Turkey spans the map from Europe to Iran and contains many ethnic groups and traditions. With an ancient craft, as knitting is in Turkey, different characteristics emerge in different areas. In the far East, among the Kurds, stockings are knitted from soft, long-staple wool in the natural colors of the sheep. The patterns are relatively simple, often diagonal. In Sivas Province in central Anatolia, the yarn is tightly spun singles and the patterns the most complex and multicolored of all. In Konya, the original home of Angora goats, the knitters may use mohair in delicate lace patterns. In areas where there is a large Balkan population, the patterns tend to run horizontally more often than vertically and to be angular and brightly colored. Often cotton yarn is mixed with wool or used alone.

The Breakdown of Tradition

This traditional way of knitting is being replaced by contintental-style knitting throughout the country.

All Turkish stockings are constructed in the same way, and that way is very different from the way Western stockings are made. The leg of a Turkish stocking has a front and a back, and the foot has a top and a bottom. A Western stocking, on the other hand, is round or has a left and right side; it is customarily folded so that it looks like a silhouette of foot and leg. Turkish socks fold so that they look like a long mitten with the heel poking out the back. Often, the front and back division is supported by a side pattern that runs from top to toe. The sole, from the end of the heel to the tip of the toe, is often worked in a different pattern from that of the instep. The choice of that pattern may be aesthetic or practical, but the pattern will be simpler. In Turkey, showing the bottom of one's foot is considered ill-mannered.

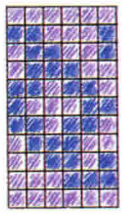
The design characteristics common to all Turkish stockings are intimately connected to their structure. Stockings are begun by casting on just a few stitches at the toe. If there will be side patterns, these are the stitches that will compose them. The toe is then set up on four needles: (1) stitches cast on and worked a few rows; (2) one to three stitches picked up on the side of the cast-on piece; (3) stitches picked up on the bottom of those cast on, equal in number to those cast on; and (4) one to three stitches picked up on the other side of the cast-on stitches (see illustration). A fifth needle is used to knit with.

The toe is now a square of two sides, a front, and a back. Stitches are added every row at the beginning and end of the front and back until enough stitches have been added for the foot. In the most elegant socks made by the most skilled knitters, patterning is begun with the cast-on row so that the side bands are continuous around the toe and the top and sole patterns shape perfectly into the stocking. When one is customarily stocking-footed indoors, as is usual in Turkey, this design and structuring technique shows to its greatest advantage. Indeed, well-made Turkish stockings look wonderful worn, making feet objects of great beauty.

TAKE IT FROM THE TOE

Although all Turkish socks are begun at the toe, they are not all so elegantly crafted. Many people begin by casting on a few stitches on each needle and increasing from there. When the sock is done, the toe is pulled together with the tail of the cast-on thread or threads, which are then made into a little tuft at the tip to hide the break in the pattern. Today, as the tradition breaks down, women are knitting plain instead of patterned toes. They increase four times a round or sometimes—evidently trying to emulate the Western toe—every other round, until sufficient stitches have been added for the foot. Then, the patterning begins.

Knitting continues to the heel, where something must be done. The Turks have solved the heel problem differently from most Western knitters. It is a little hard to get a Turkish sock on over the instep, although it's comfortable enough once on—but the heel has a great aesthetic advantage over the Western heel. The sole pattern can continue all the way to the end of the heel on the bottom of the foot, and the back leg pattern can extend to the bottom of the heel. The result is not only beautiful but practical, as I discovered one frigid evening in Erzurum when I had nothing but sandals with me and socks I had bought to take home. I put on a pair. Almost immediately, I was as warm as though there were central heating.



The technique is simple. The knitter takes off the sole stitches on a holding string and casts on, with a simple half hitch, the same number of stitches in the correct color alternation for the pattern on the back of the stocking. Work then continues up the leg. When the top is finished, the sole stitches are transferred from the string to two needles, and an equal number of stitches are picked up from the cast-on stitches on two other needles. Because the half hitch has been used, these stitches can be picked up so that the join to the leg pattern is invisible. (This cannot be done with the modern Western technique of knitting in an extra piece of yarn when you want a hole surrounded by stitches in your finished piece—as you might to insert a thumb or a pocket or even a heel.) The heel is tapered similarly to the toes of Western socks, by decreasing along the sides. Finishing causes some trouble since grafting (using the kitchener stitch; see diagram on page 63) seems not to have been invented in or found its way to, the East. Usually, the last few stitches—those of the side band if there is one—are sewed together as neatly as possible. It makes a shallow, pointy heel—but a beautiful sock.

One more technique distinguishes Turkish socks from Western ones. They do not end with ribbing. Instead, they typically end with a braid stitch and a tassel. This braid stitch is found, as far as I know, only in Turkey and in the Baltic. The technique is the same as that of Swedish twined knitting, in which two strands of yarn are alternated and twisted between stitches, but it is done with alternating colors and with the purl side facing the knitter. It makes a firm raised braid that Latvians use on mittens and Turks use on stockings.

The Eastern way of knitting differs from both Western methods. The yarn is tensioned neither by the right hand, as in English knitting, nor by the left hand, as in continental knitting. It is tensioned around the neck. Balls of yarn sit in a basket by the knitter's side. The ends come up under the arm and around the back of the neck and down to the work. The yarn is then flicked with the left thumb to make a stitch. Extra colors can be held out of the way with the right hand. Stitches can be made rapidly, and with all the yarns attached to the knitting under correct tension, color changes are easy and frequent. With this arrangement, purling is most natural, so the work proceeds on the wrong side.

Only once did I see a woman knitting English style, but she was knitting with "eyelash" yarn, which lies flat if it is knitted continental-style. Though many women knit in public, even accompanied by a knitting basket, I saw no one, young or old, knitting in the native style. However advantageous continental knitting may be in some ways, it does discourage the use of many colors simultaneously.

The change in knitting technique is only one example of the rampant Westernization that is largely responsible for the breakdown of traditional knitting in Turkey. It began in earnest in the 1950s, and it has spread throughout the country, even to remote villages in Sivas Province. The stockings simply are not wanted anymore by Turkish people who want only Western-style clothing. There is some demand among tourists, and it could be much greater if the market were encouraged, but it is not. Further, the price paid to knitters is so minimal that the fine, excessive, grandiose stockings are not worth making.

Even the government has taken part in the destruction of the Turkish stocking tradition. Professor Kenan Özbel, seeing that they were being lost, had made a collection of Turkish stockings. In 1964, it was exhibited in Istanbul, Ankara, Rome, Paris, and Finland. When it returned home, it was divided between the Anthropological Museum in Bursa and the Saray Museum in the Topkapi Palace. Then, sometime in the 1980s, the government ordered the stockings packed up and stored away, available to no one. What remains today are two paperbound books printed in Turkey, one of them out of print, a few mediocre photographs, and a stocking collection in a basement waiting for the moth that devours all our treasure. ❖

About the Author. *Anna Zilboorg, formerly a professor of Slavic literature at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is now an Episcopal solitary living in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Anna spends most of her time knitting and dyeing. For the past seventeen years, she has been exploring the interaction of pattern and color.*

YARNWINDER: THE COMMUNITY CRAFTS STORY BY BETSY HARRELL

In their shantytown over the hill from Mehmet the Conqueror's fortress and the blue Bosporus, they were all neighbors. Yet that afternoon they pushed and squawked at each other indecorously. They, and we, were huddled in the front room of Fatma's home, sheltering from the blustery wind that swept over the Black Sea and through the hills of Istanbul.

And new arrivals kept bursting in through the door, bearing the colorful patterned stockings they had knitted during the past two weeks (as they stirred the soup, minded the children, and strolled the steep streets to visit each other for a glass of tea). The noise level rose in the narrow room. One of my colleagues was getting a headache. A couple of children were screaming.

Our work consisted of receiving the knitters' handiwork, doing quality control, paying them, and handing out new yarn for the next stockings— as well as chatting with each woman. After all, we Americans who had run Community Crafts for some years were friends with almost all the knitters.

Community Crafts began in the 1960s after an American woman living in Istanbul saw one beautiful pair of Sivas stockings knitted by someone's maid and wanted a pair like it. Business flourished from 1968 to 1978, with the main customers being Americans, Germans, and other foreigners in Istanbul. Modern city Turks were uninterested in village products or in volunteer work in a village atmosphere. The foreigners who ran Community Crafts always wished—but never managed—to turn over the business to the nonliterate and Turkish-only-speaking knitters themselves. For numerous reasons, business dwindled in the 1980s and has withered in the 1990s.

Community Crafts tended to perpetuate the elegant designs known by the knitters, almost all formerly of Sivas Province villages; in modern Turkey, old patterns are disappearing. These knitters knew, loved, and knitted patterns called (in translation) moon stitch, wolf track, kilim design, willow leaf, perfection stitch, diagonal, mirror stitch, hook, crazy curl, yarnwinder, and hard biscuit. The designs are centuries, even millennia, old. Some designs undoubtedly traveled the Silk Road from east to west across the dusty breadth of Asia.

Community Crafts still exists. The shop in the front of Fatma's home can still be visited (Fatma Yamak, Besinci Sokak 32, Rumeli Hisar Üstü, Istanbul). But when I last visited, in the summer of 1992, the selection of patterned stockings was limited, and the knitting quality had declined.

Betsy Harrell is the author of Anatolian Knitting Designs *and a former participant in Community Crafts.* Anatolian Knitting Designs *may be ordered from Schoolhouse Press, 6899 Cary Bluff, Pittsville, WI 54466. (715) 884-2799; or Redhouse Press, Hulya Sowerwine, 77 Court St., Machias, ME 04654. (207) 255-4526.*

TURKISH SOCKS

Designed by Anna Zilboorg

The traditional Turkish socks (left) are a challenging and rewarding project for seasoned knitters. The oddly shaped but well-fitting foot is begun at the toe, with the heel worked after the rest of the sock is complete. The ram's horn socks (right) have the same interesting shape but are worked from top to toe in a manner more familiar to Western knitters. Yarns courtesy of Harrisville Designs.

Sources

Kits containing yarn and instructions for both pairs of Turkish socks shown here are available from Harrisville Designs for $11.95 each plus $3.00 postage and handling, or both for $23.90 plus $3.00 postage and handling. A sample card of 63 colors of Shetland-style yarn is available for $2.00 postpaid. Contact Harrisville Designs, Center Village, Box 806, NH 03450. (603) 827-3333.

11½-inch (29-cm) circular needles in size 4 are available for $4.95 plus a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope from Schoolhouse Press, 6899 Cary Bluff, Pittsville, WI 54466, as well as from local knitting shops.

Traditional Turkish Socks

The method of starting the toe—working in two directions at once with no cast-on—seems, at first try, hopelessly awkward, but perseverance is rewarded. (Perseverance may mean trying this beginning several times to get the hang of it.) Once your fingers catch on to how to handle all the needles, you'll have endless respect for the Turkish women who worked out this clever technique.

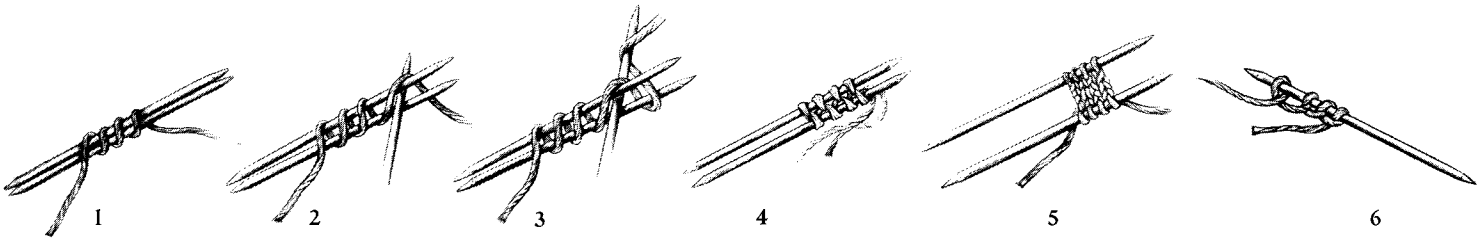
Materials Harrisville Designs Shetland-style yarn, 1 skein each of Aubergine (dark purple), Topaz (red), Gold (gold), Hemlock (green), Violet (violet).

Alternatively, use sport-weight wool knitting yarn in colors of your choice.

Tools Five 8-inch (20-cm) double-pointed needles, size 4 (3.5 mm), or size to achieve gauge below. An 11½-inch (29-cm) circular needle, same size as above (optional). Blunt, large-eyed tapestry needle.

Gauge 6½ sts = 1 inch (26 sts = 10 cm); 6½ rnds = 1 inch (26 rnds = 10 cm). For most accurate gauge count with this yarn, wash gauge swatch before measuring.

Size The feet of these socks at the designated gauge are about 9½ inches (24 cm) long. To make them a little shorter, omit the small instep pattern. To make them a little longer, double the small instep pattern. (Work it the second time in gold on a green ground.) To make them a whole inch (2.5 cm) longer, omit the small instep pattern and work an extra half large instep pattern. To make them a whole inch (2.5 cm) shorter, omit half a large instep pattern. To make them larger all around, work on larger needles at 6 sts/inch (24 sts/10 cm). Adjust length as desired, leaving out or adding patterns. Note that the socks do not have stretchy ribbings or calf shaping; they measure about 9 inches (23 cm) in diameter around the leg and stretch comfortably to fit a 14-inch (36-cm) calf.



Toe With dark purple yarn and two short needles held together in the left hand, wrap yarn clockwise (from front to back) four times around needles (see illus. 1). Hold the tail down with the left thumb. Insert a third needle between the two needles and into the back of the loop nearest the front point of the needles (the fourth loop made; see illus. 2).

Bring yarn up between needles and knit the first loop off the top needle only (see illus. 3). Knit remaining three loops, each time going between the two needles and through the back of the loop on top needle only. Be careful not to let the loops on the bottom needle slide off. Rotate the needles without turning the work so that the needle that was on the bottom is now on the top, and the yarn is coming off the back of the bottom needle on your right. You will have four stitches on each needle with a row of stitches between them (see illus. 4).

In the same manner, knit the four loops through the back off what is now the top needle.

Rotate the needles so that the first needle is again on top and the purl stitches still face away from you. Knit the stitches off the top needle. Rotate the needles so that the second needle is again on top, and knit the stitches off the top needle in the same manner.

You now have a small almost-square rectangle of stockinette stitch with four stitches on opposite sides. These are the side seam stitches (see illus. 5).

Rnd 1 (see chart): On side of rectangle, with third needle, pick up 1 st red, 1 st dark purple, 1 st red (row 1 of instep). With another needle, knit across 4 seam sts with dark purple. With another needle, pick up 3 sts in red (row 1 of sole) on the other side of the rectangle. You will have a rectangle on four needles and will have worked row 1 of the foot chart.

Continue to follow the chart. Increase at the beginning and end of the needles containing instep and sole sts: insert the needle between the two edge sts of the seam in the row below and pick up 1 st. (Only 2 of the 4 edge sts will be visible on the outside of the sock.) Continue until there are a total of 58 sts (rnd 12 has been completed). Rnd 13: Work the instep and sole sts as charted and work the side seam sts as follows: k2 tog, ssk. Two sts will remain on each side (54 sts total).

Foot The toe is complete. You may now switch to an 11½-inch (29-cm) circular needle or redistribute the stitches more evenly on double-pointed needles. Continue to follow the chart for the foot.

When you reach the end of the foot, stop at the beginning of the sole. Place 27 sole sts (25 sole sts plus 1 st from each side seam) on an extra piece of yarn. With dark purple, cast on 29 sts by the simple half-hitch method (see illus. 6). Work across instep with dark purple. Begin leg pattern #1 on the newly cast-on sts. (This will become the back of the leg.) From here on, work leg patterns #1 through #6. On the first row of pattern #7, k2 tog at each side (54 sts remain). Work patterns #7 and #8. On the second sock, stop at the end of #7. Rearrange stitches so that the beginning of the round is on the other side of the sock and then work pattern #8. (This is done so that the tassel will end up at the opposite side from that on the first sock. If you are not making tassels, you don't need to move the stitches.)

Braid Stitch Finish Knit 1 rnd, alternating 1 st red, 1 st gold. Sl 1 st from left needle. Bring yarn to the front. Return slipped st to left needle (to prevent a hole). Turn work so that purl side is facing you. Knit 1 st gold, *k1 red, bringing yarn *over* gold, k1 gold bringing yarn *over* red. Repeat from * around. The yarns will twist with each stitch—it helps to pull out a yard or two of each color before beginning.

When you reach the beginning of the round, work another rnd, continuing to alternate colors with each st, but this time bring the yarn for each stitch *under* the other. This will unwind the twisted yarn.

Sl 1 st. Bring yarns to front. Replace sl st. Turn work. Now bind off, alternating colors, around sock. Cut off yarn, leaving 10-inch (25-cm) tails.

Make a 3-inch (8-cm) tassel with 8 wraps each of red and gold yarn. Slip it over the tails of yarn left on the sock, tie the tassel neck, and twist the tails together tightly. Hold tassel about 2 inches (5 cm) away from the sock on the twisted tails and release the end of the tails so that they twist together on themselves. Cut the long ends and weave them in at the top of the sock. Cut tassel to desired length.

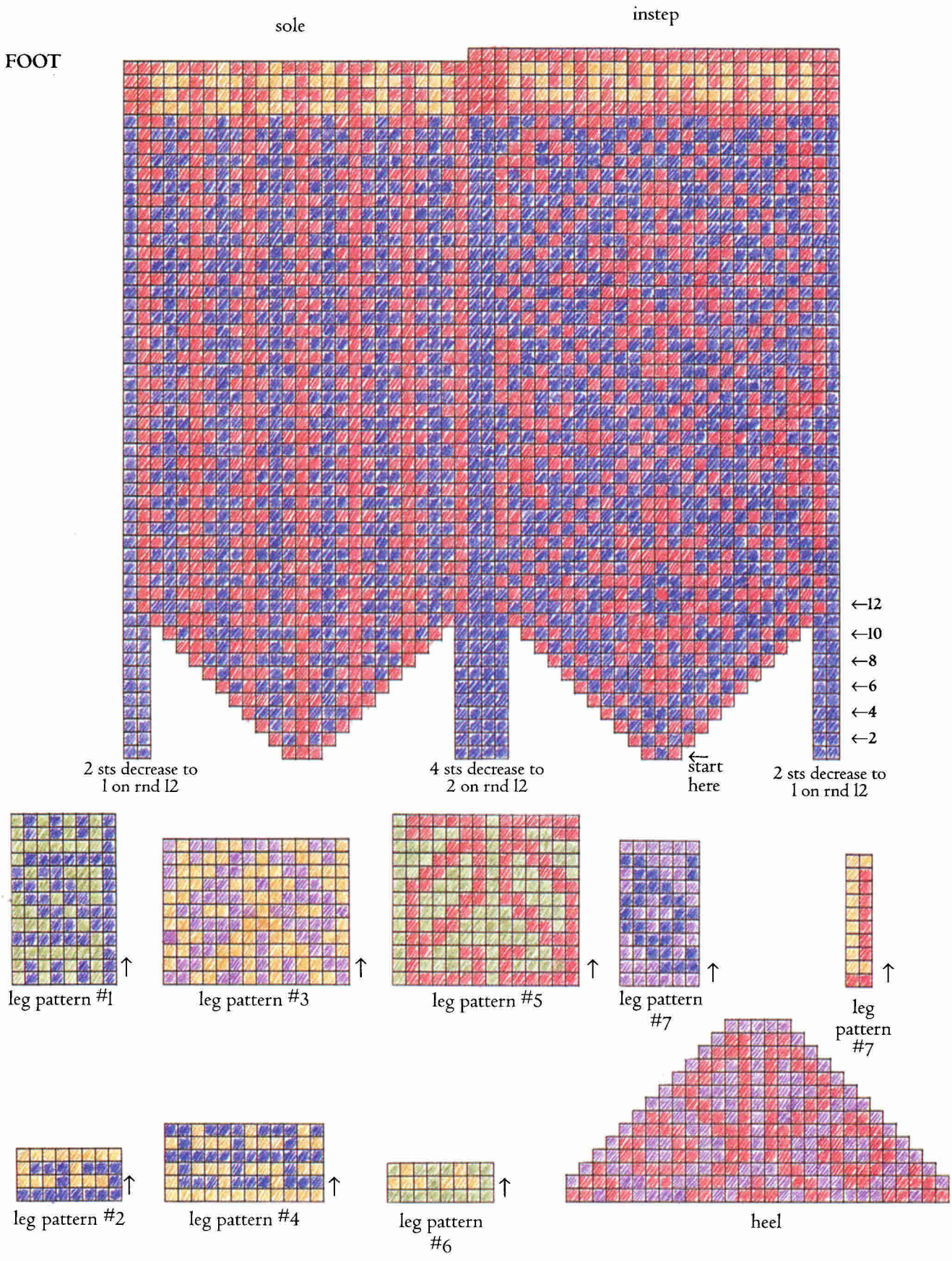
Heel Place sole sts on needle. Work across in established sole pattern with red and violet.

Pick up 2 sts with red in the space in front of the cast-on sts. Pick up 29 cast-on sts, following row 1 of heel chart. To pick up the sts, insert the needle behind the cross of yarn that constitutes each cast-on st. Pick up 2 sts with red in the space before the sole sts.

Next row (row 1 of the chart): Work across sole sts in pattern. K tog the 2 picked-up sts with red. Work across back heel sts. K tog the 2 picked-up sts with red. Sl this st back onto left needle. There are now 29 sts on the back of the heel and 29 sts on the sole, including the picked-up sts.

Work around, following sole pattern and heel chart. Decrease with ssk at the beginning and k2 tog at the end of each sole row and each heel back row. Continue

Traditional Turkish Sock



until 5 sts remain on each side. Break off yarns.

To graft heel sts, rearrange stitches so that there are 5 sts on each of two needles, with the sides of the heel facing each other. Graft with violet (see illustration).

Finishing To finish the sock in the authentic Turkish manner, cut all ends about 1 inch long and let them hang on the inside. Wash socks in warm, soapy water and lay flat to dry. The yarns will fluff up and soften noticeably.

Ram's Horn Socks

These socks are authentically patterned but somewhat Westernized in construction. They start from the top and end at the toe. This construction has one advantage when working a continuous vertical pattern: the stitches that must be picked up for the heel are on the sole of the foot; therefore, any imperfection in the pattern is less visible.

Materials Harrisville Designs Shetland-style yarn, 1 skein each of Gold (gold), Topaz (red), Hemlock (green), Violet (violet).

A kit of these colors in the needed amounts to make one pair of socks is available (see Sources). Alternatively, use sport-weight wool knitting yarn in colors of your choice.

Tools Double-pointed needles and, if desired, 11½-inch (29-cm) circular needle in size 4 (3.5 mm), or size to achieve gauge below.

Gauge 6½ sts = 1 inch (26 sts = 10 cm); 6½ rnds = 1 inch (26 rnds = 10 cm). For most accurate gauge count with this yarn, wash gauge swatch before measuring.

Size The foot of these socks measures 9¼ inches (23 cm). Each pattern repeat measures 1⅜ inches (3.5 cm). If you want to change the length by that amount, add or subtract 1 repeat. You can also work the sock on a larger needle at 6 sts/inch (24 sts/10 cm), making it a bit longer as well as a bit wider. To make it quite a bit wider (for instance, for a large man) you can add up to 3 sts on each side in background color. Note that the socks do not have calf shaping; they measure about 9 inches (23 cm) in diameter around the leg and stretch comfortably to fit a 14-inch (36-cm) calf.

Leg On circular or double-pointed needles, cast on 56 sts with green. *Kl in back of st, pl. Repeat from *. Work 8 rnds. Cut off green.

Begin chart with violet as ground, gold as pattern color. Work 9 rnds. Change ground color to red. After another 9 rnds, change ground to green. Work 3 more pattern repeats in the same color sequence. Work row 1 of seventh pattern repeat in violet and gold.

Foot Mark heel sts: With a piece of contrasting yarn or string, k 29 sts. Slip these sts back onto the left needle. Take up ground and pattern yarns and work across these 29 sts in row 1 of sole pattern.

Continue working the foot circularly, following sole pattern on sole and ram's horn pattern on instep, changing ground color in established sequence at each pattern. Repeat four times.

Shape Toe On the fifth row of the fifth pattern repeat, begin decreasing for the toe as follows: *k1 (the side st), ssk, work 23 in pattern, k2 tog. Repeat from *. Continue in pattern, decreasing in the same way on each side of side sts every row (see chart) until 5 sts remain on each side of the sole and instep (16 sts total). Do not change ground color after 9th row of the 5th pattern repeat. Work last row of toe in gold. Rearrange remaining sts on two needles with the sides of the toe facing each other. Graft toe with gold (see illustration).

Heel With a tapestry needle threaded with contrasting yarn, work a running stitch through the stitches of the first sole row. Run the needle over one side of each stitch and under the other side. This will let you continue the established color pattern on the picked-up stitches.

Carefully pull out the 29 sts of contrasting yarn and pull the two sides of the heel opening gently apart.

Place the 29 sts for the back of the leg on a circular or one double-pointed needle.

Place the 29 sts for the sole on circular or 2 double-pointed needles, following the path of the running stitch and pulling out the running stitch as you go. Some of the stitches will be laid over the needle at an angle. Keep them in their right place by smoothing the loose yarn to the back with your left thumb. When it's time to knit these stitches, knit them through the back loop to correct the twist.

With gold, pick up 2 sts in the space between the sole and the leg. Work row 2 of the leg pattern across the back leg sts. Pick up 2 sts with gold between leg and sole. Work row 2 of sole pattern across sole sts (62 sts total). This completes rnd 1 of the heel chart.

Rnd 2: Continue rnd 3 of ram's horn and sole patterns. (Because you are knitting in the opposite direction on the sole, the direction of the sole pattern will be reversed.) K tog the 2 sts picked up on each side (60 sts remain).

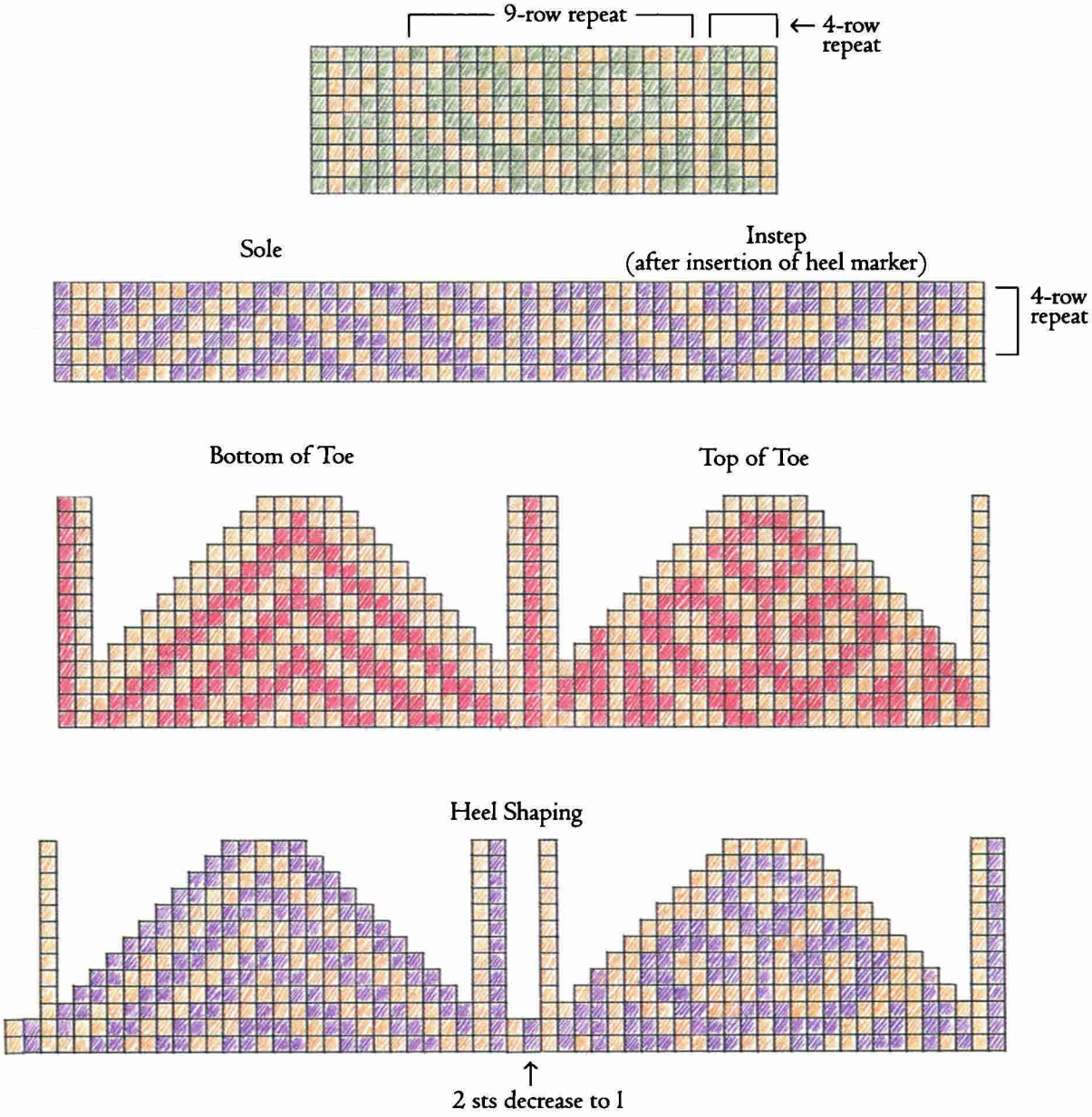
Rnd 3: Work a double decrease at each side on the violet, gold, violet stitches as follows: sl 1 violet, sl 1 gold, knit the next violet st with violet, pass the 2 slipped sts together over the knit st (56 sts remain). The side sts are now like those on the foot and toe.

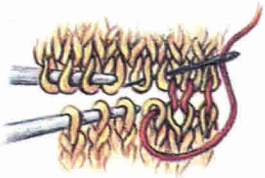
Continue to work around in patterns, decreasing as for the toe, following the heel chart.

When 10 sts remain on each side of heel, break off yarns. Rearrange stitches on two needles so that the sides of the heel are facing each other with 10 sts on each needle. Graft sts together. Pull end through firmly to wrong side. Weave in ends of yarn.

For the second sock, reverse the placement of violet and green, including ribbings.

Ram's Horn Sock





Grafting Stitch: 1. Bring yarn needle through front st purlwise; leave st on knitting needle. 2. Bring yarn needle through back st knitwise, leave st on needle. 3. Bring yarn needle through *same* front st knitwise, slip this st off needle. 4. Bring yarn needle through next front st purlwise, leave st on needle. 5. Bring yarn needle through *first* back st purlwise, slip that st off, bring yarn needle through next back st knitwise, leave st on needle. Repeat steps 3–5 until done.

TWISTING UP A RUG:

THE THRIFT AND INNOVATION OF TWINED RAG RUGS

BY BOBBIE IRWIN

ASKING STRANGERS personal questions is totally foreign to my nature, so it must have been fate that made me apply for a job as a census taker. Otherwise, I never would have met Lillie Sherwood and seen her rugs, a discovery that has impelled me into a worldwide research project and a personal crusade to revive a dying folk art.

Lillie Sherwood's cabin in central Idaho.

All photographs courtesy of Bobbie Irwin.

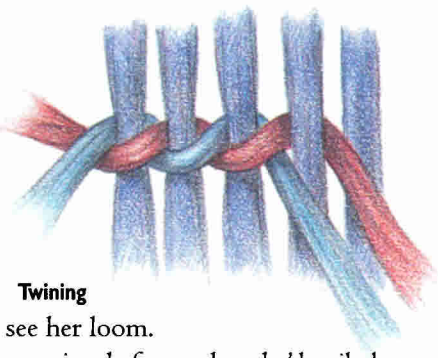
As I approached Lillie's home on a spring day in 1980, I was apprehensive. The long drive on an ungraded dirt road had rattled my nerves as well as my car, and I never knew what to expect when I knocked on a stranger's door. I had already met enough unfriendly "characters" to regret having signed up for the census job, and I always hoped the next house would be vacant.

The appearance of Lillie Sherwood's home, a decaying log cabin that had once served as a schoolhouse, did nothing to bolster my confidence. It was patched with scraps of plywood and tattered plastic. A well-worn path led to an outhouse. The yard was mostly weeds, and the remnants of an unpainted wooden fence provided no protection from three frenzied barking dogs.

I needn't have worried. Eighty-year-old Lillie Sherwood had been expecting the census taker; she hushed the dogs and welcomed me at the door with a broad smile and a cheery greeting. She didn't have many visitors, she said, and she loved company. Despite the rough surroundings, I felt at ease right away.

As soon as I stepped inside, half a dozen of the most beautiful rag rugs I had ever seen met my eyes. I was intrigued; they looked braided or knitted, yet they were rectangular, like loom-woven rugs. Some had checkerboard patterns I'd never before seen in a rag rug. All were made in a fantastic array of bright colors, a startling contrast to the dark and dusty room.

After we had chatted a bit and gone through the census questionnaire, I couldn't help but comment on her rugs. I was delighted to find out she'd made them all herself, and she was equally delighted that I was so interested in them. When I explained that I was a weaver, she invited me into the next room to see her loom.



Twining

Lillie's loom was a simple frame that she'd nailed together from scrap lumber. While I watched, she twisted strips of fabric through a warp of heavy cord. I recognized the technique as twining, yet I'd never heard of a rug twined with rags. Four years after learning how rare these rugs were, I returned to take lessons from her.

LILLIE SHERWOOD, MASTER RAG RUG TWINER

Lillie Sherwood was born in 1900 in Kansas and moved to southern Idaho at the age of ten. Lillie's Danish stepfather taught her how to twine rag rugs in 1913. "We lived in a big tent while our house was being built," Lillie recalls. "Daddy hung the rug frame at the top of the tent when he wasn't using it. Daddy learned how to make these rugs in Denmark and said everybody in Denmark wove on frames. He stowed away on a ship to America when he was twelve years old."

At fourteen, Lillie bought her own homestead and worked her way through business college. Soon after her marriage at age sixteen, she and her husband moved in a covered wagon to Ogden, Utah, where she lived most of her life. After her husband died, Lillie owned and operated a dairy to support herself and her family.

Master twined rag rug maker and friend, Lillie Sherwood.

Finally, age and highway encroachment induced her to move to her cabin on her son's ranch in Idaho, where I met her.

Lillie Sherwood's rugs are unusual because she devised ways of producing patterns using techniques that she apparently invented on her own. I asked if her stepfather had taught her the designs, and she couldn't remember. "After I started my family," she commented, "I was too busy to make rugs, and it was years before I tried one again. I had to teach myself all over again." Her methods and equipment—different from those I've discovered elsewhere—make particularly beautiful rugs. For example, rather than use a frame with nails, she wrapped her warp around the frame or used rods suspended from the frame, which allows the materials themselves to determine the spacing and produces tightly twined, extremely durable rugs.

I was never particularly interested in *any* rag rugs until I saw Lillie Sherwood's, but since then, I have been determined to revive her technique, not only because I appreciate historical textiles, but because this method is so worthy. Few other rag rugs can match twined rugs for economy, ease of construction, beauty, weight, and longevity.

Since 1986, when my research began in earnest, I have gathered information about more than a hundred rugs and nearly as many rag twiners in twenty-two states, Canada, England, Denmark, and Africa. I continue to search out and document as many examples as possible, both old and modern. Along the way, I've met many wonderful people and discovered numerous frame, warping, and pattern variations.

In Search of Twined Rag Rugs

Aware that rag rugs were twined in Utah and Idaho before 1920, I sent a story about my research to every newspaper in Utah and southern Idaho a couple of years ago. I included my address and asked for feedback. Although only a handful of papers printed the article, the response was gratifying; some respondents even thanked me for letting them share their enthusiasm about these rugs. The rag twiners mentioned below represent just a few of the many people who have made these rugs. Nina Whiting, of St. George, Utah, sent me this tribute to her mother.

> My mother, Leona Christensen Lambert, was born in 1893 in northern Utah, of Mormon pioneers. After her marriage, she lived in central Idaho. Despite the never-ending work of ranch life, she was very creative and productive. There wasn't time for frivolity, and her creative talents were directed toward making practical necessities—sewing clothing, stitching hundreds of quilts, and making innumerable rugs.
>
> She made all kinds of rag rugs . . . I loved to watch her short but strong fingers twisting the strips of fabric about the warp, which was usually strips of denim overalls. These rugs were thick and very heavy, ideal for absorbing the mud and snow that came through the doorways on ranchers' boots.
>
> How-to books weren't available, and I am amazed at the know-how—about ranching and about all kinds of handwork—Mother acquired from her forebears. She died in 1990 at the age of ninety-six.

Through rag rug experts Janet Meany and Paula Pfaff, of Minnesota, I contacted Junior Gossell, of Minneapolis, whose father, Fred Gossell, of St. Cloud,

"I always tell people that before they get the first rug finished, they will have made plans for the next one."

Minnesota, twined rag rugs from the time he saw a neighbor's rug in the 1930s until his death about fifty years later at the age of ninety-five. "Dad was impressed with the neighbor's rug because it was so thick, and it stayed put on the floor," his son remembers. "He twined rugs to pass the evenings away. The loom was always handy. When my dad wasn't busy weaving on it, one of us might just go over and weave a few rows on the rug. We could listen to the radio or carry on a conversation and still keep the hands moving."

Like most other American rag twiners, Fred Gossell used a frame equipped with nails at the top and bottom to hold the warp. To maintain straighter selvedges, he twined around rods along the sides of the frame, an innovation of his that I've also seen elsewhere.

"I estimate that my father made at least fifty rugs

THE MANIFOLD ROOTS OF TWINING

Twining, one of the most ancient forms of fiber manipulation, developed apparently independently in diverse cultures all over the world at least 10,000 years ago. Certain groups, notably the Indians of the Pacific Northwest and the Maori of New Zealand, elevated twining to an art form, using plant materials and later, yarn.

As early as the 1840s, the Salish Indians of the Pacific Northwest were incorporating rag strips in blankets twined primarily with yarn and natural materials. Among the oldest and finest twined rag rugs in existence are several Salish rugs collected in the mid-1870s for the Smithsonian Institution. More recently, a revival of traditional Salish and Nuu-chah-nulth (formerly called Nootka) weaving and twining has led to the creation of modern twined rag rugs with astonishing patterns—canoes, whales, and birds. The techniques used are distinct from those used by most other rag twiners.

Twining has long been practiced in Africa. A piece of Somali fencing added to the Smithsonian collection in 1895 includes a few twined rag strips. Its warp of sticks is twined together with fur strips, vines, cord, and fabric.

Lillie Sherwood, who taught me the technique, was certain that her stepfather learned rag twining in Denmark, where, he said, bedcovers were also twined with rags. We do know that bedcovers were made with other rug techniques in Sweden and Norway as well. In the United States, I have found twined rag rugs made by people of Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Russian, Polish, and German heritage, which suggests a Baltic origin for the U.S. rugs. Many rugs have come from Scandinavian communities of the Midwest, although the makers' common ancestry is no proof that twined rugs were once made in northern Europe.

Modern textile experts whom I have contacted discount a Baltic origin for these rugs, yet hearsay evidence continues to point in that direction. The missing link is a rug or frame proven to come from the Baltic region, and I am confident that some day one will be found. Twining frames were definitely used in Slovakia, although I don't know if rags were used there for twining.

Twined rag rugs—like twining itself—may have had several origins. The Salish and African mats appear to be natural extensions of old twining traditions using modern materials. In different times and places, people have devised many ingenious ways of assembling fabric strips to produce an astonishing variety of floor coverings: braided, hooked, punched, crocheted, shirred, woven, knitted, knotted, coiled, laced, looped, stitched —and twined. Rag rug twining was especially widespread in the United States, where it became an American folk art. Proliferating along with other rag rug techniques during the midnineteenth century, rag rug twining was particularly popular during periods of economic hardship. It declined rapidly, however, when mass-produced carpeting became affordable and widely available.

Those who made these rugs rarely used the terms "twined" or "twining." Most people had no special name for the technique. A few publications erroneously used the terms "frame-braiding" or "herringbone weave" because of pattern similarities; however, twining is quite distinct from braiding and is generally different from true weaving although it shares some weaving terminology.

Hours of library research have led me to obscure rug books that mention rag twining and to museums in the United States and Canada that have preserved a few old rugs. I am indebted to many correspondents and friends who have shared their knowledge, rugs, and research leads.

Two of Lillie's unusual twined rag rugs.

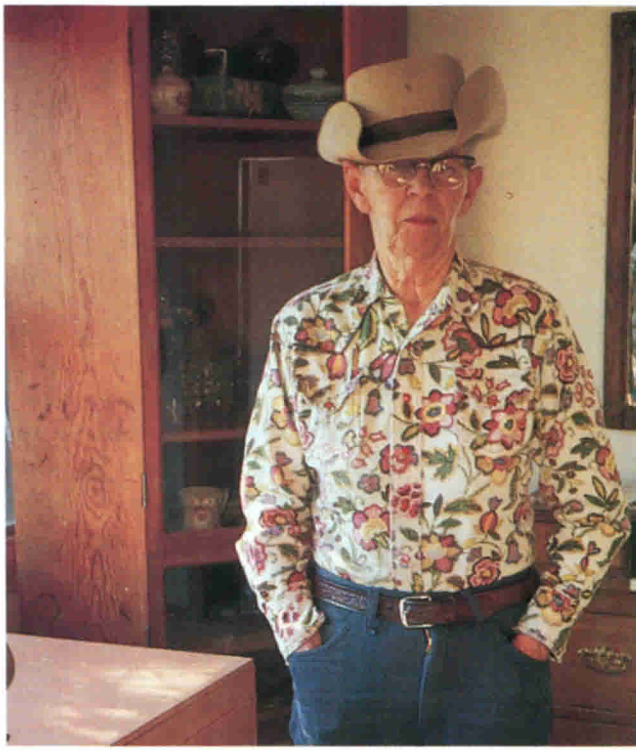
during his later years," Junior Gossell adds. "It's too bad you couldn't have talked to him; Dad would have been in his glory telling someone about his rugs."

I find rug twiners through the classes I teach and the articles I write. My first article on rag twining appeared in *The Weaver's Journal* in 1986, and soon afterward, I received a letter from Virginia Verdier, of Sidney, Ohio, one of a few weavers who have "invented" twined rag rugs on their own. "I got most of my information for twining rugs from a book," she recalls. "Although the author used yarn, I saw no reason why we could not do it with rag strips." Her equipment and methods are virtually identical to those used in traditional rag twining.

Virginia Verdier has taught rug twining in western Ohio and described the technique in *Crafts 'n Things.* "I always tell people that before they get the first rug finished, they will have made plans for the next one."

After she started twining with rags, she discovered that a description of the technique had been published by an Absarokee, Montana, rancher, Grace Kenfield. Virginia contacted Grace and later put me in touch with her as well. Like most rag twiners, Grace Kenfield didn't use the terms "twined" and "twining." In an article in *Profitable Hobbies* (May 1954), she described her methods of "stringing" her frame and "twisting up a rug." She recalled a ranch home in which it was the job of the live-in uncle to make rugs after the outdoor work was finished in the fall. He used the kitchen window frame for twining, and the room got darker and darker as the work progressed.

In a 4-H exhibit at the 1991 Utah State Fair, I saw a twined rag rug made by a girl in Lyman, Utah. My letter to her county extension agent was answered by her mother (and former extension agent), Linda Chappell, who had learned the technique from *her* mother, Grace Durfee.



Montana rancher and rug twiner, Grace Kenfield.

Like many rug twiners, Grace Durfee, of Almo, Idaho, learned the technique from a neighbor in the 1930s. She taught her daughter, who in turn taught rug twining for many years in extension service classes and informally to friends and neighbors. Linda Chappell's daughters continue the tradition; one made the rug that attracted my attention and earned a first-place ribbon at the state fair; another taught the technique to her fourth-grade class. "Twined rugs are just part of my life," explains Linda. All three generations of this family continue to make rugs.

For the most part, however, the method has virtual-

Lillie's twining frame, nailed together from scrap lumber, warped with denim.

ly disappeared. Many of the people who made these rugs have died, and their expertise has been lost. I was fortunate to meet Lillie Sherwood while she was still able to teach me (sadly, Lillie Sherwood died June 6, 1993) and doubly lucky to learn from a master. Although I've now documented many rugs and their makers, I've never discovered any more beautiful, or better made, than Lillie Sherwood's. ❖

About the Author. *Bobbie Irwin is a weaver and writer living in Price, Utah. She teaches workshops in rag twining and is working on a book that documents the history of twined rag rugs and their makers, and includes detailed instructions for numerous patterning techniques. She welcomes additional information about these rugs and their creators. Send to Bobbie Irwin, c/o PIECEWORK, Interweave Press, 201 East Fourth St., Loveland, CO 80537.*

Further Reading

(Although some of the books listed are out of print, they're worth a search—check your library, interlibrary loan systems, or used and rare book search services.)

Aller, Doris. *Handmade Rugs.* Menlo Park, California: Lane, 1953. One of the best how-to references for making twined rag rugs, from the Sunset series of craft books. It describes making a frame, and with clear photos, it shows warping and twining. Out of print.

Cate, Leslie L. "Woven Rug—Braided Effect." *Handweaver and Craftsman,* Summer 1960. Briefly describes and illustrates an unusual three-foot-weft rag rug twined on a standard loom but does not use the term "twining."

Fraser, David. *A Guide to Weft Twining and Related Structures with Interacting Wefts.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989.

Gustafson, Paula. *Salish Weaving.* Vancouver, British Columbia: Douglas and McIntyre, 1980. An absorbing history of traditional Salish weaving (including twining) and its revival. Mentions the use of fabric strips for twining, although there is little about rag rugs.

Irwin, Bobbie. "Danish Twined Rag Rugs." *The Weaver's Journal,* March 1986. Includes basic instructions for twining rugs using Lillie Sherwood's unusual frame and methods of warping and patterning.

——"Twined Rag Rugs Worthy of Effort." *Heddle,* July 1991. Some historical background, with an emphasis on Canadian twiners. Very basic instructions are included.

Kenfield, Grace. "Weaving Rugs the Easy Way." *Profitable Hobbies,* May 1954. Includes considerable detail about constructing a frame, less about the twining itself. Illustrations are good, but article offers little help with edge turns and finishings. The author uses the opposite twist on the first row from what I recommend.

Tod, Osma Gallinger. *The Joy of Handweaving.* New York: Dover, 1977. Chapter Eight describes how to make a frame (with an uncommon nail spacing) and "braid-weave" a rag rug on a string warp from the bottom up. The method illustrated uses the same twist on most rows (I don't recommend it because it causes the corners to curl).

Verdier, Virginia. "Country Carpets." *Crafts 'n Things,* Summer 1981. Good instructions and sketches for making a frame, warping, and twining a rag rug. Reprinted as "From Rags to Rugs," May/June 1991.

Wells, Oliver N. *Salish Weaving, Primitive and Modern.* Sardis, British Columbia: Oliver N. Wells, 1969. Explores the history of Salish weaving (including twining) with an emphasis on its revival. Includes details on traditional materials, patterns, and equipment.

A Twined Rag Rug to Make

DESIGNED BY BOBBIE IRWIN

Approximately 21½ by 15¼ inches (size varies with materials), this rug, which can be finished in a few evenings (about eight hours' total time), will teach you the basics of rag rug twining.

Before you select materials, decide where you want to use your rug. If it may get wet frequently (such as in a bathroom), a heavy cord warp dries faster than a fabric warp. Machine washing is hard on any rag rug but particularly on twined rugs with a rag warp, again, because the warp dries so slowly. Regular vacuuming and surface cleaning are usually enough to keep your rug in service for many years.

Either heavy cord (such as clothesline) or fabric strips can be used as warp; the latter make especially durable rugs. Choose a sturdy, nonstretch fabric, preferably one not prone to ravel. Color is of little importance because the warp is hidden except at the top and bottom edges. Denim, cut in inch-wide strips, is a traditional warp, but it tends to fray; a rotary fabric cutter minimizes raveling.

Although it is easiest to use a single weight and type of fabric, different materials can be combined in a given rug. It is important to cut strips so that they compress to the same size, about the diameter of a pencil.

Start by using two distinct colors of weft so that you can see how the twining is progressing.

Twining is usually worked from the top of a frame downward. Most twiners like to rotate the frame from time to time so that twining proceeds toward the center. It is easier to end a rug away from the edges of the frame.

Most rugs are worked in *countered* twining, in which the twist direction alternates from one row to the next and the weft segments in a given row slant in the opposite direction from those in the rows above or below. The alternating twist makes the rug lie flat for safety.

Tools and equipment

- Two 26-inch and two 18-inch stretcher bar sections (artists' canvas stretchers)
- 46 headless nails (brads), 1¼ inches long
- Needle and thread to match your fabrics
- Crochet hook, size G or H, large enough to accommodate fabric strips
- Safety pin
- Scissors or rotary fabric cutter

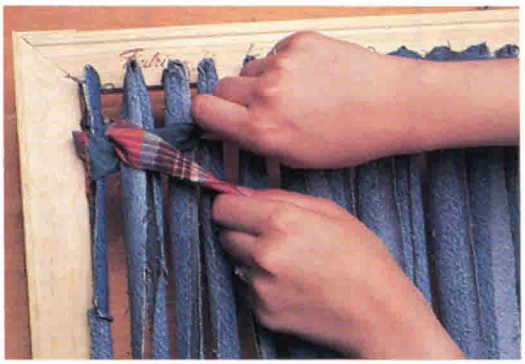
Making this sturdy and cheerful twined rag welcome mat teaches you a technique you can then apply to larger twined rag rugs in a variety of patterns.

Materials

- Weft: 1–4 yards of fabric, cut in strips 1–4 inches wide that will compress to a pencil's diameter.
- Weft: 1–4 yards of fabric, cut in strips 1–4 inches wide
- Warp material or cord, cut in strips, machine-sewn in a continuous strip 19–20 yards long

I used new materials and washed them to remove sizing and make them more flexible. For the warp, I used lightweight cotton cut in strips 2 inches wide. For the first weft, I used the same cotton, also cut in strips 2 inches wide. For the second weft, I chose cotton madras plaid, slightly lighter in weight, cut in strips 2½ inches wide. The plaid provides a pleasing hit-or-miss effect in the rug.

Experiment with cutting and compressing strips



At left: Warping the frame.
Above: Starting the first row of weft twining.
Right: The twining process.

and twine a row before cutting your total fabric supply, especially when combining different fabrics.

Weft strips should be 1–2 yards long. When you come to the end of a weft strand as you work, hand sew another onto it (the same color, unless instructions indicate otherwise) by overlapping the strips by about an inch, turning the ends in, and taking a few overcast stitches.

The total amount of fabric needed depends on its weight and width, as well as how tightly you twine. My mat required about 3½ yards of 45-inch-wide green fabric and 2⅝ yards of 45-inch-wide plaid.

Making and warping the frame

Hammer 23 nails into each of the longer stretcher sections, centered and spaced 1 inch apart and about 3/8 inch from the inside edge of the frame. Nails should protrude about 3/4 inch. Assemble the frame by slipping the corners together.

The wider (26-inch) sections form the top and bottom of the frame. In these instructions, "top" refers to whichever frame section is up; you will rotate the frame occasionally to work rows toward the center and maintain pattern symmetry. Starting at the upper left corner, loop one end of the warp around the first nail, leaving an overlap of about 3 inches. Sew the end of the warp to the fabric that has passed over the nail, forming a loose loop. Zigzag the warp around nails, from top to bottom, to top, to bottom, etc. Wind the warp tightly enough so that it doesn't sag but not so tightly as to bend the nails. The tension usually increases slightly as you work. End in the bottom right corner. Don't cut off the excess yet; overlap and safety-pin the fabric around the last nail and let the rest hang.

You will have 45 vertical warp strands. If the warp tends to slip off the nails as you work, tape across the nails with masking tape temporarily (this will also protect you from scratches). If the tension on a warp strand loosens during the twining, you can sew a tuck in it to tighten it.

When working with a small frame like this one, rest the top of the frame against a counter or table while you hold the frame in your lap.

First row

Sew together two weft strips (one solid and one plaid), one at least 6 inches shorter than the other so that joins will be staggered. I used strips cut across the widths of the fabric.

Start at the upper left corner of the frame about an inch down from the nails. Position the weft join at the selvedge, with the solid-color weft on top of the first warp strand and the plaid underneath. Where the warp is overlapped at its beginning and ending, you will be working over two thicknesses of warp, but elsewhere you will twine around each warp strand separately. Bring the plaid weft back to the surface between the first and second warp strands, resting it horizontally across the remaining warp strands. Pick up the solid weft, bring it toward you (down and away from the top of the frame and below the other weft), under the second warp strand, then back to the surface between the second and third warps. Pick up the plaid weft, which is on top of the second warp, bring it down toward you, under the third warp strand and back to the surface. Continue across the row, alternating wefts, twining the two strips over and under. A weft which is on top of one warp will always go under the next warp, and the twining motion is always away from the top of the frame.

Each time you enclose a warp strand, you create one *weft segment:* every weft segment on the first row should

slant up toward the left. If you have trouble getting the proper slant, pick up the weft you just used and put it *up* out of the way (drape it over the top of the frame), then pick up the other weft and place it under the next warp. Although there is a half-twist between each warp, you do not have to think about twisting; it happens automatically.

Now, check your work. You should have 45 weft segments of alternating colors. The solid weft should be on top of the last warp on the right side. All weft segments should slant up to the left. If one weft shows more than the other, pull on that strand (the looser one) to even them out. Correct any problems before continuing.

At this point, decide if your weft strips are the right width. If they're too narrow, they may not cover the warp adequately, requiring more rows (and more work) to cover the same space. If they're too bulky, the rows may ripple and push the warp out of alignment. In this case, you can start over with narrower strips, or use the ones you have but unwind the warp and remove one or two warp strands. (The directions below assume that you still have an *odd* number of warp strands.) When all looks well, remove the safety pin and sew the overlap, then trim off the excess warp.

Turning at the right edge

Pick up the solid weft, bring it *behind* the plaid weft and back *under* the last warp strand, then back to the surface between the first and second warp strands on the right side, resting it over the top of the frame. Then pick up the plaid weft, bring it *over* the last warp strand, *under* the next warp strand (heading now toward the left), and back to the surface. Continue, alternating wefts. Colors should alternate vertically as well as horizontally, creating a checkerboard effect. The twining motion (always toward the open warp) is the same as on the first row, but because you are going in the opposite direction, the weft segments will slant up to the *right.*

The importance of the slant direction

Because the warp is heavy and is completely covered, twined rag rugs are more durable than most other rag rugs.

(up to the left when working left to right, up to the right when working toward the left) may not seem obvious at first. However, this twist packs each row tightly against the previous row instead of making you manipulate wefts between the previous row and the one you are working on. A rug with the same slant throughout will curl at the corners.

Before completing the second row, push the first row up against the nails. Push each row tightly against the previous row as you work.

Starting the other end of the rug

Before you start the third row, rotate your frame 180 degrees, keeping the nails on the front. Sew together two new wefts of unequal lengths, one solid and one plaid. Starting at the upper left with the join at the selvedge and the solid color on top, twine across as you did before. When you complete the first row, check to make sure you've enclosed each warp strand in the same order as on the opposite end. Make corrections as needed and then continue twining from either end.

Turning at the left edge

Follow the directions for turning at the right edge. The weft on top of the edge warp always goes behind the bottom weft and under the edge warp to start the next row; then the other weft comes over the edge warp and under the second warp.

Creating the stripes

After you have four rows in alternating colors across the top of the frame, do not turn to start the next row. Cut the plaid strip at the selvedge. *Untwine* the weft for a few inches so that you can sew a solid-color weft to the plaid weft you just cut, then retwine the fourth row and make the turn. The join should come right at the selvedge.

You will now be working with two solid-color wefts. Twine exactly as before for three rows, alternating strips. Twine to the end of the third solid row (the seventh row from the top) and, at the selvedge, cut the weft that is *underneath* the edge warp. Untwine a few inches, sew on a *plaid* strip, and work one row (the eighth from the top) with both colors.

At the end of this row, cut the plaid strip and sew on a solid weft, then twine one row of solid color. At the end of the row (the ninth from the top), sew a plaid strip onto the solid weft that is *underneath* the selvedge warp.

The center of the rug is worked with alternating solid and plaid wefts. At each end of the rug, the plaid weft should be on top of the selvedge warp strands just below the last solid row. This way, you will not end up with two solid or two plaid weft segments side by side on the final row.

Finishing the rug

The last rows are tricky because it's harder to manipulate the weft around the warp strands. Use a blunt object to poke the weft through on the last rows.

Weft segments in the final row must slant in the opposite direction from those in the rows above and below, and the warp strands should be completely covered. The bulk of your fabrics and how tightly you twine will determine the number of weft rows in your rug (my mat has 54 rows, 3½ rows per vertical inch).

Because you've worked from the top and the bottom of the frame toward the middle, you will have two wefts coming from each direction. Ending away from the selvedges, sew like-color wefts together to form the last weft segments. With a crochet hook, force the ends of the weft vertically through previous rows (for at least an inch) to hide and secure them, then trim off the excess.

Slip the rug off the nails, ending with the upper left and lower right corners. At those two corners, sew the selvedge warp to the weft with a few stitches to keep the weft from slipping off the warp. Your mat is now ready to use.

A beaded baby belt from the Kutchin, an Athapaskan group from the area around Beaver, Alaska, circa 1920. It has a cotton backing and hide ties. Seed and metal beads are couched onto velvet.

Courtesy of the University of Alaska Museum.

Finery and Bright Colors

Galer Britton Barnes

MANY OF US associate beadwork with childhood memories of summers at camp or the lake house: hot, sandy days sitting at a picnic table stringing colorful glass beads onto fishing line, or perhaps weaving small beaded belts on a simple wooden loom. Our young imaginations connected with a time and a native people of the past. I remember buying glass vials of beads at a trading post in northern Wisconsin as a child, and stringing necklaces from them. There I also saw my first beaded dress—Ojibwa, I think now, but I can't be sure. I was fascinated. Much later, after years of studying native North American beadwork, I am still fascinated.

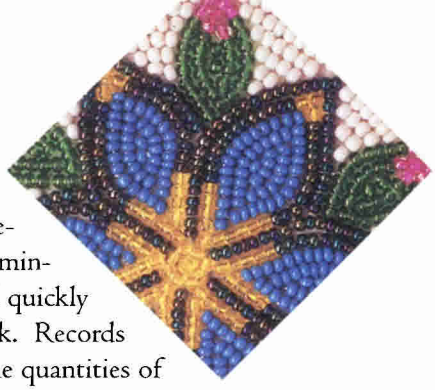
> Without beads and plenty of them you can do little or no good here. . . . There is not an Indian here, and very few even at Peels River but wear fancy beads, that is blue and red of various sizes. . . . To trade here successfully, there ought to be for one year's outfit four boxes of common white beads, one box of red (same size) and one box of fancy (blue of various sizes and colors . . .)
>
> *Alexander Murray, 1847–1848, Hudson's Bay Company*

Native North American women have been embellishing their clothing, household objects, and the trappings of their men's work throughout their history. Using shells, quills, claws, and teeth as well as finely embroidered edgings of dyed gut and sinew, they have made the objects they use the canvas for their art. But like creative handworkers everywhere, Athapaskan women adopted and adapted new materials—such as the beads the Europeans brought—to their uses. Athapaskan beadwork, which often replaced traditional quillwork as beads became increasingly available, includes a broad range of artistic styles.

"Athapaskan" (or Athabascan) refers to groups of native American peoples belonging to a language family which is said to trace back to the natives of the ancient "Déné," meaning "the people." Groups sharing this linguistic relationship lived in the interior of northwestern North America, mostly in the Canadian subarctic region, where many groups still live. Although individuals may have family relations among several tribes, "Athapaskan" identifies them as people of the North. The Navajo and Apache of the southwestern United States, whose languages place them within one of the three primary Athapaskan language divisions (Apachean), probably migrated southward during late prehistory. The native cultures living in the north are diverse: The Northern Athapaskan language division comprises twenty-seven languages.

Early Contact with Europeans

In the seventeenth century, fur trappers of the Hudson's Bay and Russian American companies, along with French trappers and Catholic missionaries moving west from what is now northeast Canada, made the earliest European contact with the Athapaskan people. The Hudson's Bay Company employees, many of whom were Scots, were encouraged to settle the areas in which they worked, sometimes bringing European wives, sometimes marrying native women. The French missionaries established several schools in Canada run by nuns who endeavored to teach languages, needlework, and European "graces" to young native women within



the areas they served.

One effect of the settlers' movement across the continent was a gradual change in native clothing and methods of embellishment. The changes were most pronounced among natives close to European forts. New styles mingled with precontact decoration as native groups interacted with trappers, traders, and members of other native groups acting as guides to the Europeans.

By the end of the eighteenth century, many Athapaskan groups of the western subarctic region had regular contact with the settlements and forts along major rivers and lakes, although some groups remained geographically remote from European influence. Styles emerged that combined aboriginal Athapaskan design traditions with European floral designs and non-Athapaskan native designs. Athapaskan women beadworkers on the eastern edge of the subarctic territory saw beadwork by Ojibwa, Cree, and other tribes of the Canadian prairie. Eventually, exposure to the eastern sources of design styles trickled out to the outer reaches of the subarctic region, where previously only Russian influences had been felt.

The Advent of Beads

Fur trappers and emissaries for the various crowns of Europe seeking to settle the New World brought glass beads with them to give as gifts and to trade for furs. They also traded metal utensils, which the native people used or melted to make other objects, and other "corrupting" goods such as rum and guns. Native artists who had previously worked with shell, bone, and mineral beads welcomed glass beads and quickly incorporated them into their work. Records from the fur trade forts show that the quantities of glass beads traded to the Native Americans were enormous. Between 1720 and 1774, York Factory, a fur trade fort on the southwest shore of Hudson Bay, traded nearly 6,000 pounds of beads to the native population. In 1810 alone, at one Hudson's Bay Company house, Indians exchanged furs for sixty-one pounds of beads, 200 awls, and 230 wool blankets. French and English woolen mills produced blankets for trade and catered to the preferences of the native people in blanket materials. Beads and cloth were often reused: new beads might decorate an older object or be used on first one and then another piece, or blankets might be unraveled and the yarn used for other purposes. As a result, accurately dating artifacts is challenging.

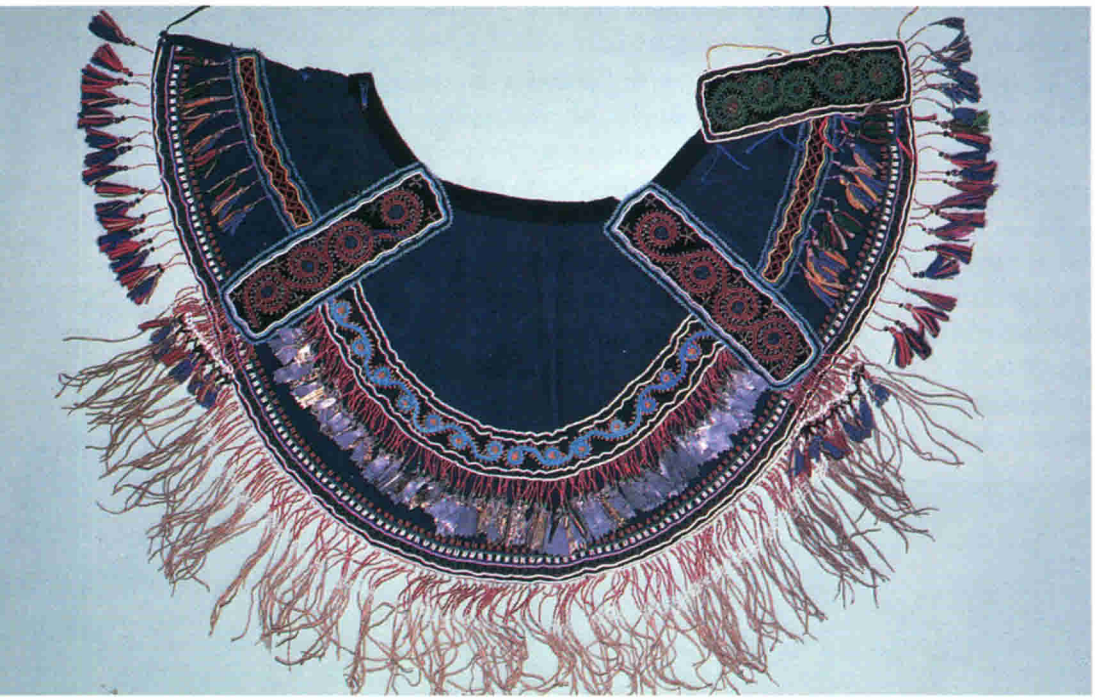
Although contact with European traders and forts was most extensive in the Northeast, the European push west eventually touched even the most remote of the Athapaskan people. Pacific Coast contact with Russian fishing fleets and with native Arctic peoples spread the use of materials from the ocean—baleen from whales and hide and gut from seals and sea lions—as well as techniques for preparing and dyeing them. Russian fishermen and explorers provided such coveted materials as large blue and green

An Athapaskan mother carries her child in a traditional baby belt, circa 1920 (postcard). The mother wears beaded dancing boots protected by moccasin rubbers.

Reprinted with permission of the University of Washington Press.

Tracks in the snow cross the winter landscape on a February night near Ruby, Alaska, an Athapaskan village of about 200 people.

Photograph by Don Doll.



A beaded cape collar, possibly Kutchin, circa 1900. At the turn of the century, women sometimes wore embroidered cape collars over a dress of dark velvet. This collar is made of wool fabric, velvet, hide fringes wound with porcupine quills, seed and metal beads, metal tags, wool yarn tassels, and wool twill fabric edging.
Courtesy of the Fort Garry National Historic Park.

Nomadic groups that moved between summer and winter camps embellished their necessarily few possessions—such as painted hide tepees—with materials gleaned from the hunt: sinew, hides, and porcupine quills. Native women of the Pacific Northwest Coast, whose homes were relatively permanent, excelled at intricate basketry using available materials.

Athapaskan women had a well-developed tradition of embroidery on hides with sinew, gut, and hair—often from moose, caribou, and deer, and occasionally from marine mammals. The women also had long-standing techniques and designs for embellishment with "Russian" beads of Czechoslovakian manufacture, coins, and buttons. Russian explorers also traded some Chinese beads. Through contact with the Russians, a native North American design of abstract repeated circles might become much more elaborate embroidered scrollwork with additional flourishes and symmetries.

Venetian beads were the most common of all beads traded. Native artists traded for beads by the bunch, a bunch often weighing one pound and containing five to six strands of beads, usually of a single color.

Meshing Old Cultures with New

Native women throughout North America had well-established and intricate decorative techniques before European contact. Usually, the techniques evolved directly from each native group's life-style and culture. bird and porcupine quills. Quills are difficult to collect and prepare; they must be split, soaked, flattened, and dyed. Beads, on the other hand, are ready to use. Native women who had once worked with quills soon sought beads from fur traders, and later, from the trading posts and fort stores. At the peak of the active bead trade in the late nineteenth century, the trading post storekeeper might even have color cards of beads from which native beadworkers could select the beads they wanted.

Sometimes, the availability of certain colors influenced the evolution of a design. Fur trading company records show orders for beads in colors the natives prized along with comments on those they spurned. The beads took a long time to arrive, and meanwhile tastes changed. Alexander Murray's journal for 1855–1856 lists amber and crystal beads as newly unsalable.

Small Beads, Large Changes

Although the medium of design was altered by European contact (from shell, mineral, and bone to glass beads), stylistic preferences and techniques from precontact times persisted. Athapaskan beadworkers worked the precontact geometric designs of quillwork alongside the curvilinear floral patterns of European embroidery. Usually, work was sewn, with beads couched onto a background material either with sinew or later with commercial linen or cotton thread. Beads were also woven. By definition, bead weaving produced geometric designs, while sewn embroidery lent itself to geometric as well as floral and other nongeometric designs.

As cloth became available through trade, native women began to fashion clothing and accoutrements from black, red, and green stroud (a wool cloth popular in trade with North American Indians) and from velvet. Beading on dark cloth, which was then attached to a supporting hide or cloth backing or edging gave beadworkers an easier surface to work as well as a strong contrast for the tiny pastel seed beads. Black became a very popular background color. Leaf and vine outlines as well as abstract trails, scrolls, and edgings looked particularly striking beaded in white on black.

Much Athapaskan beadwork exhibits symmetrical placement of floral forms on wool or hide, but the

variety of designs created is enormous. Distinct designs are characteristic of areas, groups, and even individual artists. Vine motifs in double trails of white beads, leaf forms filled in with multicolored beads, and solid white beaded backgrounds are stylistic elements that help identify different Athapaskan groups. Cotton calico, ticking, and wool linings provided attractive interiors and add bulk to support the beadwork.

As tribal identities were increasingly threatened by change, women in some groups deliberately modified borrowed techniques and designs to suit traditional styles and at the same time define a "signature" for their tribe's work. For example, the way a beadworker arranged flower and stem forms (such as numbers of petals or areas of colored fill) or made stylistic combinations (such as ancient circle and scroll motifs along the edge of a garment with a European floral embroidered central motif) identified her connection with a particular group. Fur trim, hide fringe, animal claws and teeth, and feathers were juxtaposed with yarn tassels and satin ribbon trims.

Pigeon Egg and Red Agate

Beads—as barter, currency, and decoration—have been an important part of Athapaskan history. Elaborate bead embroidery on hide dresses, moccasins, gun cases, and gloves reflected the Athapaskan beadworkers' skill. Woven bead belts showed skill with beadweaving techniques as well. Baby carrier belts, dog blankets (tapies), wall pockets, and storage bags bloomed with multicolored pastel flowers on solidly beaded backgrounds or on black or red velvet. Glass beadweaving and bead embroidery reached their peak among Native North Americans during the late nineteenth century. European journals from that period were full of the colors, sizes and names: fancy cut blue, pigeon egg, red agate.

As I studied Athapaskan beadwork, I was struck by the strength and unifying character of the craft. While they struggled to preserve their cultures against overwhelming pressures from European and Euro-American immigrants, beadwork flourished, perhaps as a way to stay whole, to maintain a sense of self. In the 1840s at Cook Inlet, Russian Lieutenant Zagoskin found the Athapaskans "passionately fond of finery and bright colors." Today, bead embroidery and bead weaving has exploded again in a Pan-Indian sharing of the craft. If you happen to see a Native American dancer dancing a shawl dance in a forty-pound beaded dress with a bird-like grace and spirit you have never seen before, you'll sense that beadwork is alive and well.

About the Author. *Galer Britton Barnes is a freelance writer of textile history living in Placerville, California. She holds a master of arts degree in Material Culture Studies from California State University, Sacramento, where her thesis topic was "A Processual Typology for Native North American Beadwork." She is currently working on a study of the Irish Arts and Crafts Movement.*

Two pairs of Athapaskan beaded dancing boots made in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Courtesy of the University of Alaska Museum.

Note: PIECEWORK would like to thank Joyce Herold, Curator of Ethnology at the Denver Museum of Natural History, where the Crane American Indian Collection resides, and Wynn Martens, Public Relations Assistant, of the Denver Museum of Art, for information on Athapaskan artifacts in their collections and assistance with this article.

Further Reading

American Indian Art Magazine. This publication offers current Indian art criticism and scholarship, antique market prices, Indian art fair calendars, and more.

Coe, Ralph T. *Sacred Circles.* Kansas City, Missouri: Nelson Gallery of Art, 1976. This exhibit catalog offers many photographs of beaded objects, maps, and a brief discussion of Native American art.

Duncan, Kate C. *Northern Athapaskan Art: A Beadwork Tradition.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989. This volume is the definitive text on Athapaskan beadwork, historically and artistically.

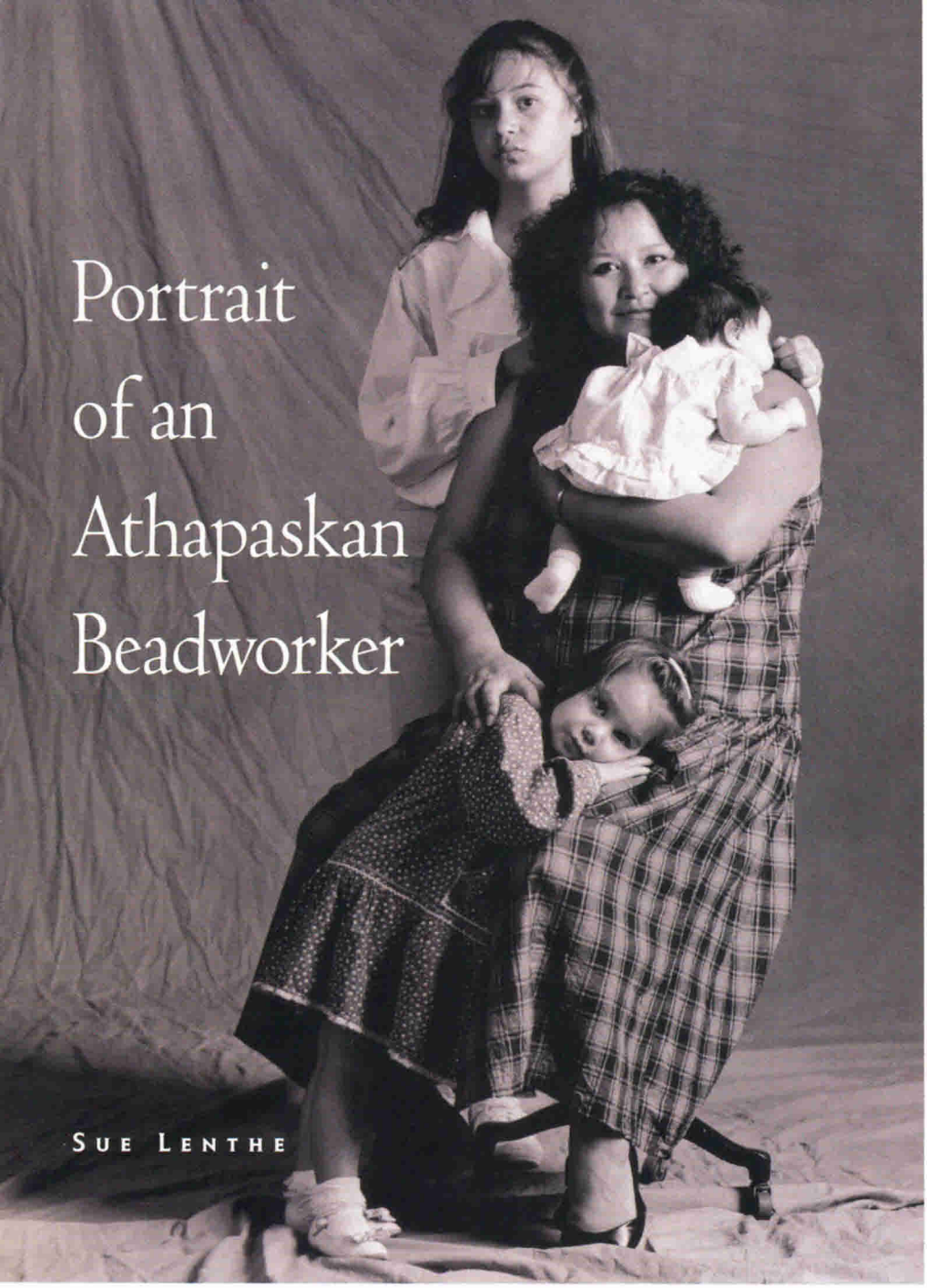
———. *Some Warmer Tone: Alaska Athabaskan Bead Embroidery.* Alaska Historical Commission Studies in History no. 131. Fairbanks, Alaska: University of Alaska Museum, 1984. Kate C. Duncan's exploration of Kutchin beadwork is the precursor to her larger study.

Fitzhugh, William W., and Aron Crowell. *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska.* Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988. Written for an exhibit produced in conjunction with the former Soviet Union, this catalog offers excellent information on gut and sinew embroidery.

Penny, David W. *Art of the American Indian Frontier.* Seattle: Detroit Institute of the Arts and University of Washington Press, 1992. The author's expertise on historic Native American artifacts informs this catalog for an exhibit currently traveling in the United States.

Wade, Edwin L., ed. *The Arts of the North American Indian.* New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1986. Artists and scholars discuss the diversity of native decoration and fine arts.

Portrait of an Athapaskan Beadworker



SUE LENTHE

Bonnie Greife, Athapaskan beadworker, with her three daughters, Rhiannon, Racia, and Alexa.

BONNIE GREIFE OPENS THE PLASTIC BAG that protects her beadwork, releasing a pungent, smoky scent. The strings of colored beads she keeps coiled like skeins of yarn in a tin box also carry the scent.

The source of the smell is the smoked moose hide on which some of the beadwork is created. For Bonnie Greife, it is the smell of home, the remote eastern Alaskan village of Beaver. The thirty-four-year-old woman is a member of the Kutchin clan of the Athapaskans. The craft she learned as a child growing up in Beaver permeates her life as persistently as the smoky smell clings to her beadwork—and beadwork connects her to her roots. The evocative smell, Bonnie says, "takes me home in two seconds."

If she were at home in Alaska, beadwork would be much more a part of her everyday life, Bonnie says. "We would go to my sister's house to have some tea or crackers or dried moose jerky or dried salmon strips. We would talk about what was going on around town, and my grandmother would tell stories." And everyone would have a beadwork project in her lap.

Bonnie Greife learned the craft at her paternal grandmother's knee as soon as she was deemed old enough to wield a needle safely. Her earliest memories are of sewing with her grandmother.

"As far back as I can remember, she would be sitting at the window doing beadwork, and I'd be sitting with her with a needle stringing beads. And I thought I was making incredible pieces," she says. "I don't know when my grandmother first gave me some beads, but I do remember when she started making me pay attention to what I was doing."

By the time she was in first grade, her grandmother had started her and the other girls in her beading group, which was much like a 4-H group, on projects. A medallion was among her first projects. The bead-covered circles are often used to decorate clothing, parkas, slippers, and moccasins.

The richly beaded picture frames, knife sheaths, and scissor holders, and the delicate suncatchers stored carefully in a leather briefcase are a link to home. The beadwork—made by Bonnie Greife, her mother, sister, and grandmother—transport her over the many miles separating her Greeley, Colorado, home from Beaver.

A hint of sadness cools Bonnie's warmth and energy as she fingers the beadwork and looks at photographs of Beaver. Accessible only by airplane, the remote Alaskan village of fifty people clings to the shores of the Yukon River with miles and miles of Alaskan bush at its back.

The children of Beaver must leave home after the eighth grade to attend high school. Bonnie attended high school in Taos, New Mexico. In Taos, she lived with a couple who had served as Episcopalian missionaries in Beaver. She returned to and left Alaska several times after that. Bonnie met her husband, Ed, in Arizona; they were married in Beaver and are settled, for now, in Colorado.

Until recently, working on a college degree in education, running a full-time daycare home, and tending her own three children diminished her time for beadwork, but she hopes to dedicate more time to the craft soon.

Today's Athapaskan beadworker typically uses two needles threaded with a cotton-blend thread and often works on felt. Kutchin workers most often bead with white thread, Bonnie says, who much prefers it to black. The beadworker strings beads with one needle and with the second couches the beads to felt. A piece of brown paper sack, sometimes marked with a pattern, is sandwiched between beads and felt to lend stiffness, aiding the intricate stitching. When the beadwork is complete, the back is lined with a second, protective felt piece.

Beadworkers still use moose and caribou hide for their craft, but the hide is much more difficult to work with than felt. Leather is still the basis of beadwork, however, when the craftwoman is creating a knife sheath, or similar utilitarian item.

Common patterns feature bright, round-petaled flowers with leafy stems and curling vines. Bonnie Greife sketches her patterns before starting a project, beading over the sketch. Her grandmother works freehand, depicting with beads the flowers and plants growing around her. Athapaskan craftswomen use tiny seed beads in primary and pastel hues. Iridescent and faceted beads also are commonly used.

For Bonnie, beadwork has been both social and soothing. Yet without family surrounding her, it can seem a lonely and exotic task. The work goes much faster when visiting with friends. The more experienced beadworkers offer input and help with patterns; the younger beadworkers experiment with patterns and materials. For example, some young beadworkers are incorporating caribou hair into their work.

For the Athapaskan girls of Beaver, learning beadwork is part of growing up. Yet Bonnie has yet to teach the craft to her own daughters. Her eldest, fourteen-year-old Rhiannon, will probably begin soon. It is late to start by Alaskan standards, but Bonnie thinks it is important for her daughter to learn the native craft. "It's something I think is valuable that I have to offer her."

Some of the objects Bonnie beads are traditional, some are distinctly contemporary, and some, like the beaded suncatchers Bonnie makes, are traditions in the making. They have always been part of her Beaver environment and they connect her thoughts with home.

The suncatchers serve an almost metaphysical role in many Athapaskan homes. Trimmed with leather, beads, feathers, and shells, the centers of the suncatchers are webs of iridescent beads. Athapaskan women hang the suncatchers in their homes as a reminder that the long winters of Alaska won't last forever. Midwinter days are brief, the daylight like dusk. The suncatchers capture and reflect the few pale rays of the winter sun.

While beadwork has been part of the traditional life-style of Athapaskan women for countless years, its focus is changing. Once, beadwork was commonly done for family and friends. During Bonnie Greife's lifetime, the craft has come to mean precious income for many beadworkers. In remote Beaver, there are few paying jobs. Beadwork is filling that gap as Athapaskan craftswomen find markets for their work among collectors and the Pacific Northwest's tourist trade. This evolution, experienced by native American artists since the turn of the century, seems natural to Bonnie. "It's a luxury to be paid for something that you're doing anyway."

The Kutchin (also Gwitch'n) compose one of several Athapaskan groups for which beadwork has been particularly important. In the country north of Fairbanks where they live, the beadwork becomes a way to capture the colors and light of summer for delight in the long winter months that give the beadworker time to work. A strong sense of contrast—light and color against a dark background—informs Kutchin beadwork.

Her eyes are shadowed with longing as the talk turns again to her family. Her need to return is palpable. She wants her children to grow up knowing their extended family and understanding Alaska's natural majesty. Trips home have been too few: two in ten years. The distance leaves a void colored by memories of the beauty of the Alaskan landscape, the strength of tradition and family, and the close friendships that harbor few pretensions.

Bonnie Greife describes life in the Lower Forty-eight, even in the West, as "too formal." She says she feels claustrophobic in cities any larger than Greeley, with its population of about 60,000, and sometimes isolated in the midst of the culture that surrounds her.

"Sometimes it seems like my whole life is wanting to go home," she says. She will go home to live someday, she insists. "My husband is from Missouri and I am slowly moving him towards Alaska. Now that we are in Colorado, I am trying to sell him on Montana."

For now, her beadwork is her link.

About the Author. *Sue Lenthe is a freelance writer who lives in Loveland, Colorado.*

Button Covers to Bead

DESIGNED BY DEBORAH ROBSON

Materials

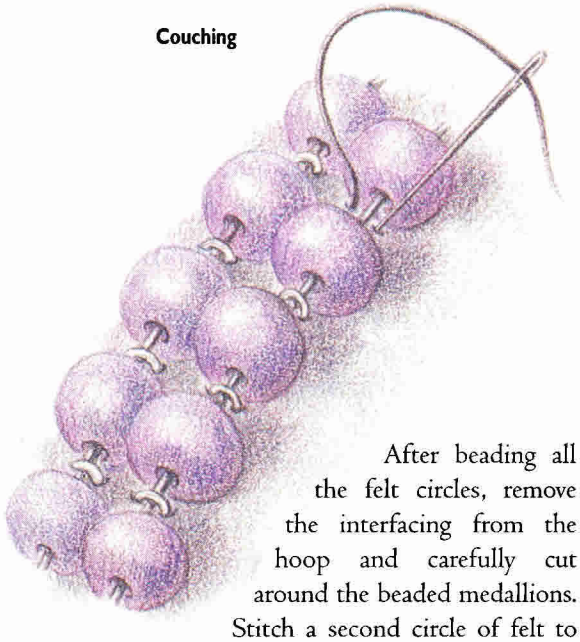
- Set of removable, clip-on button covers (mine were metal)
- 6-inch square of felt, preferably in a dark color
- #12 or #13 beading needles (you may need extras due to breakage)
- Size B nylon thread the same color as the felt (I used Nymo by Belding Corticelli)
- Seed beads in four or five colors, with some sharp contrasts included. Because it was often used by Athapaskan beadworkers who worked on cloth, I chose black as the background bead color.
- Piece of interfacing large enough to be stretched in a set of embroidery hoops
- Set of round embroidery hoops (I used 5-inch hoops)
- Craft glue
- Scissors

Making Your Button Covers

Cut two felt circles for each button cover and a couple for experimenting with technique. The circles should have a radius about 1/16 inch longer than the radius of the button covers. Stretch the interfacing in the embroidery hoops and baste half of the felt circles (plus a couple for experimentation) to the interfacing to make the small pieces easier to work with and help them keep their shape.

After choosing a pattern (I used small portions of historical floral motifs), either sketch the pattern to scale on a piece of paper and work freehand, as I did, or sketch the pattern onto the felt. Any marking tool can be used because marks on the felt will be covered by the beadwork.

Begin beading by knotting a single thread and bringing it up through the felt circle. String 4 to 5 beads on the needle. Thread a second needle, knot the thread and bring it up through the felt circle and couch each bead. I couched after every bead because the felt circles are so small. I started with the outside edge of a shape from the design, such as a leaf or petal, and worked toward the center of that shape. After all the shapes were filled in, I covered the remaining felt with background beads.



Couching

After beading all the felt circles, remove the interfacing from the hoop and carefully cut around the beaded medallions. Stitch a second circle of felt to the back of each beaded circle, using an overcast stitch around the edge.

To finish the felt circles, couch a single row of black background beads around the edge of the medallion, catching the edges of both pieces of felt and the interfacing. Glue the finished felt circles to the button covers. The final row of couched beads should come slightly over the edges of the button covers. After letting the glue dry throughly, wear your beaded button covers with pleasure. ❖

Bead Resources

The Bead Directory, by Linda Benmour. PO Box 10103, Dept. PW, Oakland, CA 94610. $14.95.

Beyond Beadery, 54 Tinker St., Woodstock, NY 12498. (914) 679-5548. Catalog $1.00.

Center for the Study of Beadwork, PO Box 13719-KAO, Portland, OR 97213. (503) 249-1848.

Golden Hands Press, 4202 Water Oaks Ln., Tampa, FL 33624. (813) 265-1681.

Shipwreck Beads, 2727 Westmoor Ct. SW, Olympia, WA 98503. (206) 754-2323. Catalog $3.00.

Southwest America, 1506-C Wyoming NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112. (505) 299-1856. Brochure $1.50.

Floral motifs selected from details of historical Athapaskan beadwork are captured on these button covers.

Leather courtesy of Mountain Leather Traders, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Athapaskan Beadwork Techniques

Athapaskan women accomplished their beadwork by three methods: two methods are forms of weaving and the third is sewn embroidery. Loom-controlled beadwork requires that at least the warp threads be under tension. Loose-warp woven beadwork has finger-controlled warps not under tension, with beads placed between warps on wefts by either plain or twined methods. Exploring woven methods further is beyond the scope of this article.

In sewn beadwork, the most commonly used technique, beads strung on a thread are attached (couched) to a ground of cloth or leather with small stitches at regular intervals. The same needle used to string the beads may be used to secure them to to the background, or one threaded needle holds the strung beads while a second couches the beaded thread, to the fabric ground after every one, two, three beads, etc.

VERONICA PATTERSON

THE URGE TO Extravagance:

The maker of this Broken Dishes pattern quilt, containing more than 10,000 pieces, is unknown. Made between 1940 and 1950, the quilt measures 84 by 70 inches.

Robert Cargo Folk Art Gallery, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Albert Small made this Hexagon Mosaic quilt of 36,000 pieces in 1933 and 1934.
Photograph courtesy of Jon Blumb

PRODIGAL QUILTS

THE NEBRASKA QUILTER Grace McCance Snyder (1882–1982) enjoyed eavesdropping as people studied her prizewinning quilts at fairs and shows. "Of course, that quilt was made by a feeble-minded person, was it not?" "I feel as if I ought to curtsey, or something." One couple at a Nebraska State Fair saw several of Grace Snyder's quilts and then scrutinized the "Pilgrim" block in her United States history quilt. When the woman wondered aloud how one person could have found time to make all the quilts, the man replied, "Because she started in 1620, I guess." What occasioned this disbelief and awe was not the quality of work in the quilts (which was superb). It was the sheer number of pieces. Whereas a more typical show-stopping queen-sized Log Cabin or Jacob's Ladder quilt might have 2,500 pieces, Grace Snyder's extravagant quilts had from 50,000 to nearly 88,000 pieces, all joined with hand stitching.

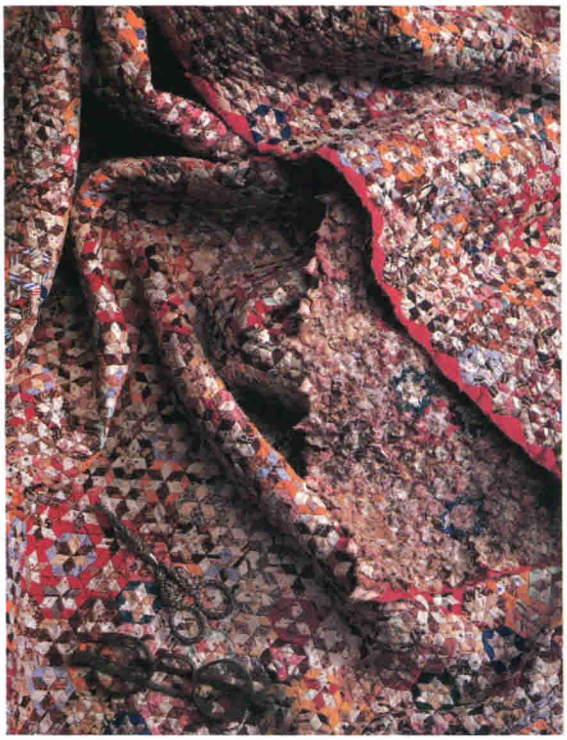
How long did it take you?

✣

Where did you get the patience?

✣

Didn't you have anything else to do?



This Broken Dishes quilt top is tersely described as a quilt with 1/4-inch pieces made by Mrs. Carpenter in Vermont about 1860. After completing the many-thousand-piece top, the maker may have run out of time or energy to quilt it.
Memorial Hall Museum, Deerfield, Massachusetts. Donated by Cecilla Van Dan.

A number of quilts containing thousands of pieces were made in the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. Information about many of them is sparse. It can be difficult to discover why or how the quilters got involved in their extensive projects. An impressive quilt top in the Broken Dishes pattern at the Memorial Hall Museum in Deerfield, Massachusetts, for example, has few accompanying details: "Quilt with 1/4-inch pieces. 1860, Vermont, by Mrs. Carpenter." Those words plus the donor's name constitute what is known. The information is hardly satisfying as you gaze at myriad tiny hexagons that spur thoughts on time, mortality, and even sanity. Quilt historian Barbara Brackman has written that in the late nineteenth century, when subtle details of fine quilting fell out of fashion, quilters who wanted to show off their skills "turned to counting pieces rather than stitches," and so produced what it's tempting to call the "real" crazy quilts.

A second wave of quilters early in the twentieth century began producing show-off quilts to set records. Competition was "news" and was reflected in the newspapers of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Yet even the news files give us only glimpses of the impulse and the process. An English-born American, Albert Small, handled explosives for a sand quarry in Ottawa, Illinois, and quilted, he said, to "keep his hands flexible." An article in a 1935 issue of *McCall's Needlework* reported that he began by betting his wife he could make a quilt with more pieces than she could. Surely, he could have achieved either purpose—keeping his fingers limber or

Albert Small's record-setting quilt of 123,200 pieces.

Photograph courtesy of Jon Blumb.

topping the number of pieces in his wife's quilts—in quilts of fewer than 30,000 (then 60,000, then 100,000) pieces. Whatever the quilter's specific reasons, these immoderate quilts seem to reflect an impulse toward extravagance that is simply human. In the medium of quilt pieces and stitches—as in most human endeavors—someone wonders, *how big* (or *how tiny*), *how many, why not?*

Quilting Extravaganzas

Another quilt in the Broken Dishes pattern (a pattern easy to handle in small pieces), measuring 84 by 70 inches and made in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, contains 10,752 pieces. A striking quality is the different impression the quilt makes when viewed at close range, at which time you notice the wild variety of fabric patterns and colors (including maverick pieces not repeated within the square or the quilt), and from a distance, at which time you notice the balanced overall pattern of the squares.

Nancy Armina Snyder Osborne (1817–1909), of Besemer, in Tompkins County, New York, created a Broken Dishes quilt of 21,559 pieces over a twenty-five year period with help from her mother, Eva Van Loon. According to *New York Beauties* (1992), a report on the New York State Quilt Project, Nancy Osborne was a granddaughter of one of the first settlers to come to that then-wilderness in 1802. Her husband was a barge captain on the 363-mile-long Erie Canal (built between 1817 and 1825), which runs through the state between Albany and Buffalo. As he traveled on the canal at 1½ miles per hour, Nancy Osborne must have had ample time for quilting this 101½-by-84-inch quilt.

A miniaturized Postage Stamp variation quilt made by Mrs. B. W. Riley, of Farson, Iowa, in 1939 won first prize at the Eldon, Iowa, fair in 1940 and is notable for its explicit documentation. Measuring 81 by 104 inches, the quilt contains 69,649 pieces, used 3,694 yards of thread, and took 1,087 hours to make. Mrs. Riley estimated the number of stitches at 1,810,874.

A Carpenter's Wheel (variation) quilt, of 110 identical blocks, also called the "Wonder Quilt," was made between 1895 and 1897, in White Cloud, Kansas, by Martha A. Haggard (1815–1899). "She commenced it in 1895 at 80 years of age, completed in 2 years," Martha wrote as part of the documentation she stamped on the quilt's back. "It contains 62,948 separate pieces." Despite her statement, calculations based on the number of pieces per block indicate a total of 79,950 pieces.

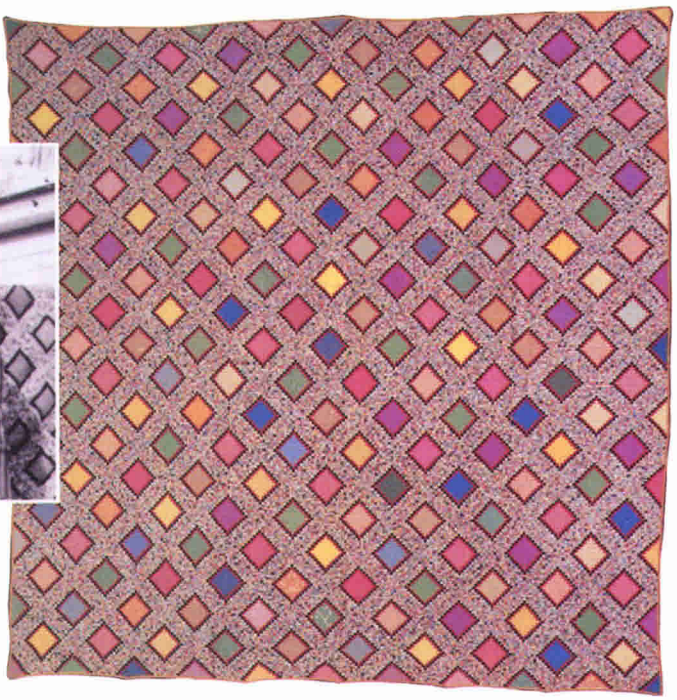
Albert Small, the dynamiter, after practicing on a Hexagon Mosaic quilt of 36,000 pieces and then one of 63,450 pieces, in 1939 completed a quilt of 123,200 pieces, the world record. Given all three quilts' vibrant colors and designs, one could call them "explosive."

The Stradivarius of Quilts

Grace Snyder, using a small black-and-white photograph of Albert Small's 63,450-piece mosaic quilt,

Made by Mrs. B. W. Riley, of Farson, Iowa, this miniaturized Postage Stamp variation pieced quilt contains 69,649 pieces; nine square blocks measure one square inch. Eighty-one by 104 inches, the quilt weighs 7½ pounds.

Collection of Donna and Bryce Hamilton. Photograph courtesy of Thos. K. Woodward American Antiques and Quilts.



This Broken Dishes quilt was made by Nancy Armina Snyder Osborne (1817–1909) and her mother, Eva Van Loon, in Besemer, Tompkins County, New York. The pieced cotton quilt measures 101½ by 84 inches.

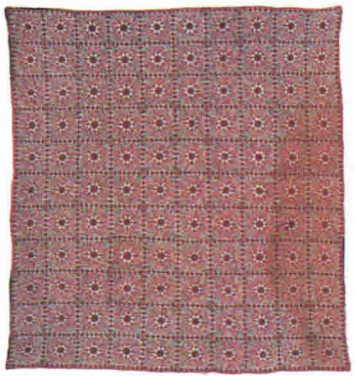
Collection of Carl English. Photograph courtesy of the New York State Quilt Project, Museum of American Folk Art, New York City.

executed the same design in a stunning 99-by-100-inch quilt, which, however, did not top his quilt in number of pieces. Her quilts, several of which have an astonishing number of pieces, are finely executed. When the dazzle of the extravagant number of pieces has passed, they continue to be pleasing. Fortunately for us, Grace Snyder published an autobiography, *No Time on My Hands,* in which she tells some of the story behind her quilting and her quilts.

Grace Snyder's Flower Basket Petit Point quilt, made in 1942 and 1943, measures 94 by 93 inches and contains 87,789 pieces. At the time, she lived on a ranch fifty miles north of North Platte, Nebraska. It took her a month to create the pattern alone. Nine pieces sewn together make a block less than one inch square; each flower basket contains more than 3,000 pieces. In 1977, Grace Snyder was named "Quilt Lady of Nebraska," and in 1980 she was inducted into the Quilter's Hall of Fame in Arlington, Virginia.

Photograph courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society. Donated by Nellie Snyder Yost.

She began to quilt as a young girl. Quilting was one way that, like her mother, she could bring beauty into the Nebraska homesteader's life. But more particularly, quilting mitigated the boredom of herding the family cows. "One evening, after the longest, lonesomest day yet, I watched Mama setting tiny, quick stitches into the diamond-shaped calico scraps she was sewing into a Lone Star quilt top. And right then I knew what *I* wanted to do. I asked her for some pieces to sew while I sat in the strawstack all day. . . . I sat in my straw nests and sewed on the little quilts, making my stitches small and neat so Mama would let me have more pieces. . . . I began to dream of the time when I could make quilts even finer than Mama's, finer than any others in the world."



Made by Martha Haggard (1815–1899) between 1895 and 1897, this Carpenter's Wheel variation contains about 79,950 pieces and measures 77½ by 69 inches.

Spencer Museum of Art, the University of Kansas. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Clark Langworthy.

In the 1930s, after decades of quilt making, Grace Snyder began to focus on the challenge of what she called "unusual" quilts, including those with thousands of tiny pieces. Her Flower Basket Petit Point quilt, made in 1942 and 1943 and now at the Nebraska State Historical Society, contains 87,789 tiny triangles. According to Grace's daughter, Nellie Snyder Yost, one man called it "the Stradivarius of all quilts." It took sixteen months to make and 5,400 yards of thread.

Grace Snyder adapted her Flower Basket quilt pattern from the design on a china plate. She wrote to the manufacturer and discovered that the plate had been designed by a German artist, Wendelin Grossman. An exchange of letters after World War II between Grace Snyder and the designer offers a haunting reminder of the backdrop of history. "I guess you are living in a peaceful, quiet landscape, far off from the town and the sorrow about politics," he wrote. "Only under such conditions you could do such wonderful work, as you did it with love and repose."

To Miniaturize and Multiply

This brief tour of extravagant quilts is inspiring, but in the end we seldom know what inner urge leads quilters to these excesses. There also are quilters and quilts we haven't the space to present. More such remarkable quilts may come to light. If it's true, as the eighteenth-century poet, artist, and visionary William Blake wrote, that "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," then these are wise quilters indeed. ❖

Note: Veronica Patterson thanks Barbara Brackman for the information she contributed to this article.

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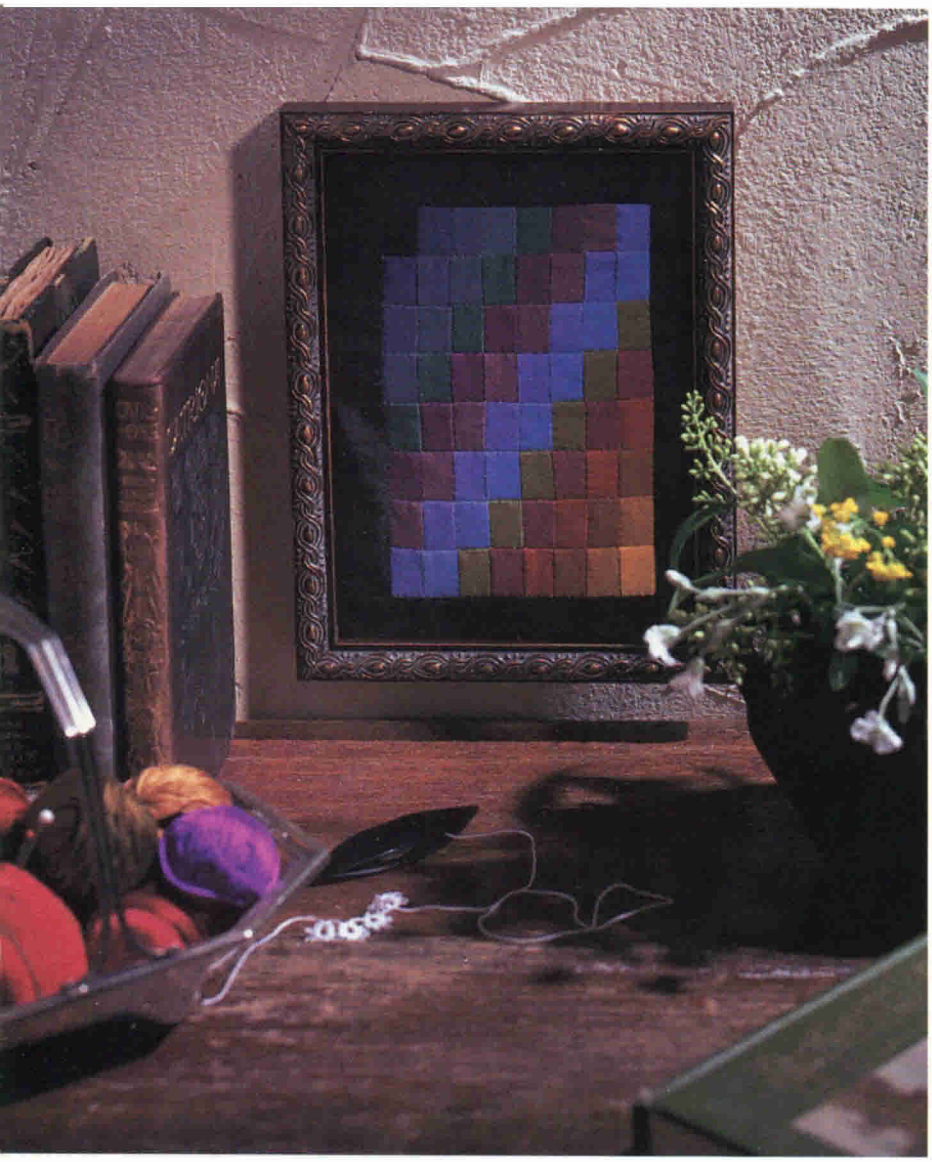
A Tiny-Pieced Quilt to Make

BY SUSAN HAYNES OPDAHL



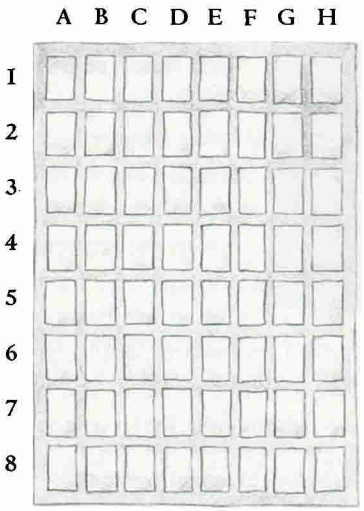
A small quilt of minute pieces lets you experiment with handling pieces of the size that composed some of the stunning multipiece quilts produced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

THERE IS MORE to making quilts than keeping the body warm. For firing the imagination and warming the soul, tiny quilts function very well. When you work with these tiny bits of fabric, you needn't worry about practicality. Washfastness, fading, or seams that fray are inconsequential. On the other hand, color placement, value, and intensity matter. And because the quilt measures about 8½ by 5½ inches, it won't take the rest of your life to explore the possibilities.

Making Your Quilt

Often, the most difficult part of making a quilt is choosing the design and colors. When I'm exploring a new process, I like to let either color or design challenge me, but not both. In the project quilt, I let color make my decisions and made a color-sequence quilt.

My scraps were left from a regular-size quilt I had made that had an abundance of solid colors plus black. I chose to use rectangular pieces, 3/4 inch by 1 inch. Laying each piece of fabric face down on my sandpaper board, I marked a strip 1 inch wide, then marked 3/4-inch segments down its length. I marked and cut a dozen rectangles of about twenty colors. (This was more than enough for the quilt, but I wanted to lay out several designs.) I arranged them in a sequence I liked, experimenting and rearranging on the surface of the sandpaper board. Friction held the pieces, and laying a sheet of clear acetate over the arrangement added extra security.



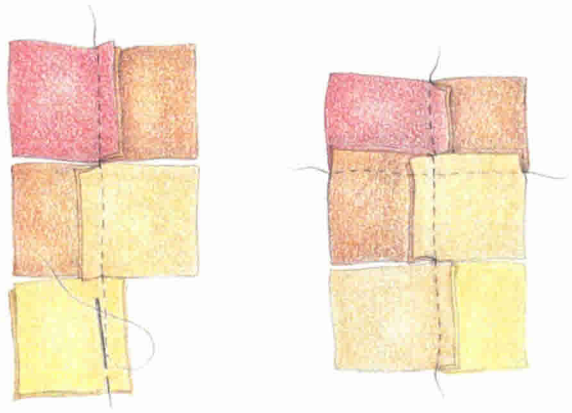
The design I liked best used fifteen fabrics in quantities ranging from one to eight tiny rectangles laid out in a diagonal color sequence that shades from yellow to gold to red-orange, maroon, olive, blue, purple, green, teal, and black. The sequence does not follow a color-wheel progression but blends the values of the fabrics in a progression from light to dark.

With the pieces right side up on the sandpaper, I laid a piece of freezer paper on top and pressed it with a medium-temperature iron. When I lifted the freezer paper from the board, the pieces stuck to the paper nicely, ready to be peeled off as needed. I wrote a letter of the alphabet above each column of pieces and a numeral by each row down the left-hand side, as you see on the grid above. This gave each piece a specific designation: 1A, 2A, 1B, 2B, and so on.

Next, I marked the left-hand side of each rectangle with a 1/8-inch seamline.

Sewing tiny seams isn't difficult but seeing them can

be. I use a magnifier called an Optivisor. To simplify the sewing, I chained the pieces together. I placed 1A and 2A right sides together, and I stitched along the marked seamline from top to bottom, using a fine run-



ning stitch. Without breaking the stitching, I paired and stitched 1B and 2B, then 1C and 2C, and so on, until all eight pairs were stitched. In the next row, I joined 3A to 2A, 3B to 2B, and so on. This method joins all of the completed rows with little thread bridges, making the crosswise seams easier. I finger-pressed the seam allowances to the side, alternating directions—with even-numbered rows pressed to the right and odd-numbered rows to the left.

After marking a 1/8-inch seam allowance at the top of the even-numbered rows, I sewed them to the adjoining odd-numbered rows, then marked and sewed the remaining rows. The interlocking seam allowances make matching the seamlines reasonably easy. I started each line of stitching with a tiny knot and one backstitch. At the end, I turned the work and stitched back two or three stitches before cutting the thread. Keeping knots to a minimum avoids bulk.

With the crosswise seams complete, I pressed the piece, squaring it up as needed. Now for the borders. Squared rather than mitered corners work well. I marked and cut a strip about 1/4 inch wider than the border width I felt would look good. The total strip length needed to be at least twice the width of the quilt top plus twice the length, with extra length to form the corners of the border and seam allowances. I cut the border into four strips, two the width of the quilt plus allowances and two the length of the quilt plus allowances, marked a 1/8-inch seamline along one side of the border strips, then just sewed them on, sides first, then top and bottom. At the end of the sides, I trimmed the strips, making sure that sides were equal to each other and that top equaled bottom.

To finish the quilt top, I pressed it, squaring it again as needed, then laid it face down on the sandpaper board and marked a 1/8-inch seamline around the outside edge. I cut a piece of cotton flannel the size of the finished quilt top, laid the quilt top on it right sides together, pinned the two layers, and stitched really tiny stitches around the marked seamline. This seam will be trimmed to 1/16 inch, so I used special care and the smallest stitching at the corners, leaving an opening of 2 to 3 inches in the center of one side. I trimmed the flannel slightly wider than the quilt top and narrowed the corners a bit more. Next, I carefully turned the quilt through the opening. The corners reversed over my thumbnail with a minimum of poking out with a blunt point turner. I never use scissors, which can cut the fabric. I slipstitched the opening and pressed the quilt lightly with a steam iron, just patting it down a bit.

To earn the title of quilt, a top must be quilted, but a little stitching will do. I used small running stitches around the outside, about 1/8 inch from the edge.

A small piece of foam board cut slightly smaller than the quilt and covered with fabric served as a mounting board. I attached my quilt with small pins so it could be easily removed. After you've made one of these miniature quilts, stop a moment and multiply to compare your work to a full-size quilt with pieces smaller than these—from 10,000 to 100,000 of them!

Supplies

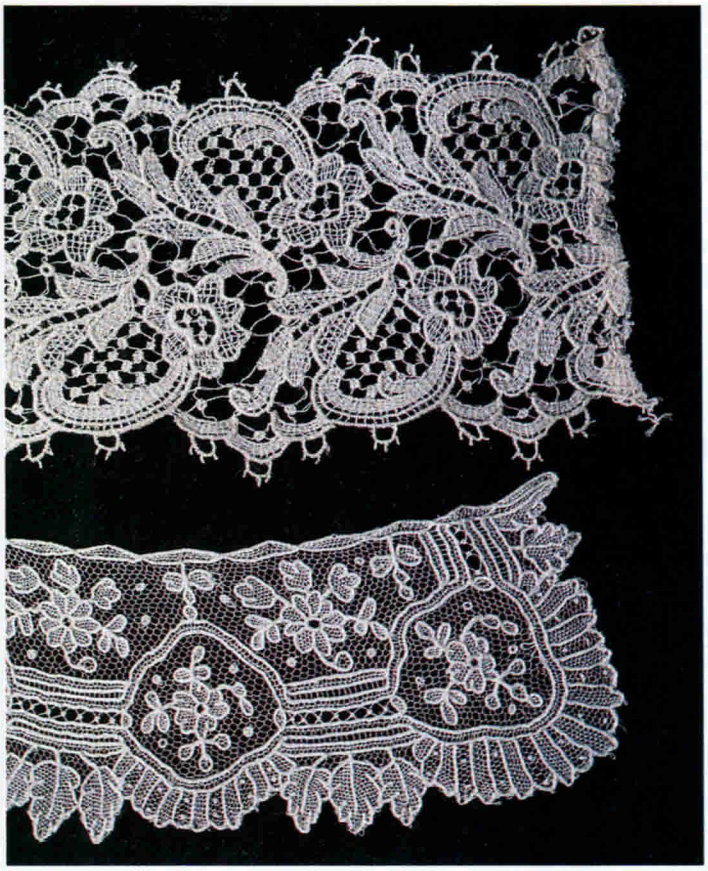
- #12 needles
- 1-by-6-inch transparent flexible ruler
- 0.5-mm or 0.7-mm mechanical pencil
- Fine-line quilt-marking pencil in silver or white. These pencils will mark dark fabrics clearly.
- Sandpaper board made by gluing a standard-size piece of fine or extra-fine sandpaper to foam board cut to the same size. Coat the back of the sandpaper completely with a thin film of craft glue. Weight the sandpaper until it dries by covering it with a plastic bag and piling books on the bag.
- Freezer paper or waxed paper. Pressed with an iron, fabric pieces will stick to the paper instead of dispersing to the four winds.
- Sharp craft or embroidery scissors
- Pins—sharp, long, and thin
- Sheet of clear acetate, such as half of a clear file folder cover, or a piece of glass, 8½ by 11 inches
- Fabric scraps. Gathering scraps is fun because you may use bits of fabric too rare and precious for a big quilt.
- 1/4 yard cotton flannel for backing and batting. This fabric shows the quilting well, but avoids having the quilt look like a potholder.
- Mercerized cotton quilting thread, such as Mettler. This thread is strong, easily passes through the eye of a needle, and tangles little. As an alternative, use fine polyester thread, lightly beeswaxed to ease threading and minimize tangling.

Legacy

Identifying keepsakes

For Lace Enthusiasts: Identifying Hand- and Machine-made Lace

Have you found some old lace in your grandmother's attic? Inherited the lace bodice of Aunt Ellen's wedding dress? Bid on a box at a farmhouse auction and then found it full of lace?



Comparing Chemical to Handmade Brussels Lace

The upper piece in the photograph is machine-made Brussels chemical lace. The lower piece is a handmade Brussels lace combining bobbin and needle-lace techniques. In the chemical Brussels lace, the bars look wrinkled, and individual threads cannot be distinguished. The picots (small loops on the bars) look like mere bumps, and the threads appear to be of different sizes and are rough and crinkled. In the handmade Brussels lace, the connecting bars can be distinguished as braided threads. Note that in both the bobbin and needle-lace sections of the handmade piece, the threads are clearly defined. The picots are open, well-defined loops.

Photographs from the collection of Gretchen Allgeier.

The lace is pretty, it's old, but is it handmade or machine made? As someone involved with lace—collecting, learning, leading tours, and teaching about it—that's the question I am most often asked.

The answer is not always easy. Some lace, for example, contains both machine and hand-worked elements. Helpful distinguishing elements of specific kinds of lace—for example, the outlining of floral areas in Chantilly lace—are beyond the scope of this article. In certain cases, therefore, you will need to consult a lace expert, but I can offer you some simple guidelines to begin determining whether your lace is handmade, machine made, or both.

Machines are capable of replicating three basic types of handmade lace: bobbin, needle, and tambour. To create bobbin lace, a machine imitates the cross-and-twist movements of the bobbins; to imitate needle lace, a machine embroiders a lace design on a background that is then dissolved; and to imitate tambour lace, a machine produces a net that is then tamboured (embroidered) by machine, as it was once embroidered by hand. The first successful use of machines in lace making was in producing net for subsequent embroidery by hand.

Machine Lace Is Not New

Most people think that machine-made lace is a modern invention—that if a piece of lace is old, it must be handmade. In fact, the first machine to produce a solid knitted material appeared in the mid-sixteenth century, but it was not refined to produce a lacy knitted fabric until the early seventeenth century. The first mesh produced on the early machines unraveled easily, which limited its use. Then in 1809, John Heathcoat succeeded in producing a "fast" machine-made mesh. Within a few years, thousands of people were employed in decorating the yardage produced, either by running a thread in and out of the mesh or by embroidering a design on it.

In the mid-1800s, machines that could produce a patterned lace were introduced; during the 1870s, a Frenchman introduced a machine which could imitate the movements of a bobbin-lace maker. Within a few more years,

machine-made Torchon (one of the simplest of the bobbin laces) was produced in such fine quality that it was barely discernible from the handmade goods the lace makers produced with their pillows and bobbins. Torchon, Chantilly, and Valenciennes are the bobbin laces that have been most commonly imitated by machines.

"Chemical" lace, an imitation needle lace, was developed at the turn of the twentieth century. A machine first embroiders a design in cotton on a silk fabric. Chemicals then dissolve the silk, leaving the embroidered design intact. Although the process creates a three-dimensional lace whose varied surface makes fine specimens difficult to detect from a distance, the technique is easy to identify up close.

Distinguishing Characteristics

Fiber. The first clue to distinguishing handmade from machine-made lace lies in the fiber content. Handmade lace is usually made of natural fibers—cotton, flax, and silk. Machine laces are usually limited to cotton or synthetic fibers or a combination of the two.

Orderliness. The second distinction lies in the orderliness of the lace's appearance. In handmade lace, each thread can be identified and followed throughout the piece, over and under the threads that cross it. The background stitches (reseau) of handmade bobbin lace, for example, can be seen twisting into a neat, orderly mesh. In machine-made laces, individual threads are often indistinguishable and impossible to follow throughout the piece. Even when threads can be followed, a lack of orderliness may be apparent. In some machine-made laces, certain threads run the length of the piece and are then pulled together at intervals by a tie thread. The bunched longer threads look tangled rather than neatly twisted and crossed.

Edges. A third factor that distinguishes handmade lace from a chemical lace of the same type is the neatness of the edges. The handmade laces have firm, clear edges, which are worked over closely with a buttonhole stitch. Chemical laces have the same basic patterns, but their edges are rough or ragged.

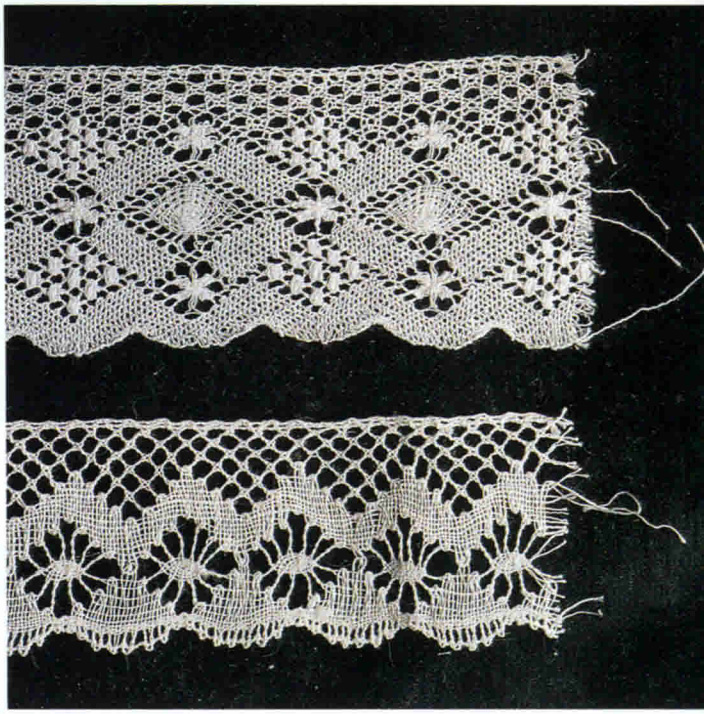
Pattern Regularity. A fourth factor that distinguishes handworked from machine-worked tambour laces is the regularity of the pattern. Handworked tambour lace is made with a single continuous thread and a hook similar to a fine crochet hook. The design is created by chain-stitching on machine-made net or tulle. Although it can be hard to detect machine-tamboured lace, which can be well duplicated by machine, the design usually has all-too-perfect repetitions of a simple design. Even mistakes or irregularities are precisely repeated.

Any Lace Cherished

Being machine rather than handmade doesn't make a piece of lace unworthy. There are fine specimens of beautifully designed and executed machine-made laces, old and new. The finer the lace and the more artistic its design, the more desirable it is. And any lace cherished for its beauty, prior ownership, or memories has a value no price tag can address.

—*Gretchen Allgeier*

Gretchen is the owner of Beggars' Lace, a mail-order business in Denver, Colorado, selling lace-making books and supplies. In addition to teaching lace making, she organizes and escorts lace tours and workshops in Europe. Gretchen recommends the following books to those interested in pursuing lace identification further.



Comparing Machine-made to Handmade Torchon Lace

The upper piece in the photograph is machine-made Torchon lace, in which a machine imitates the bobbin-lace maker's movements. The lower piece is handmade Torchon lace. In the machine-made bobbin lace, the threads are not clearly distinguishable. They often look messy and heavy, especially in the solid areas. The edge of the lace is not well defined. Each thread of the handmade bobbon lace can be followed throughout the length of the piece. The edges are firm and well defined.

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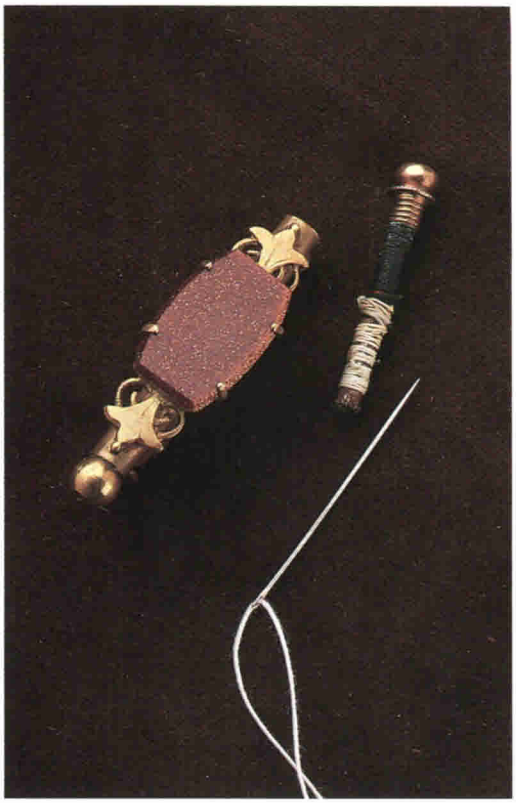

A Victorian nanny brooch with its handy cache of needle and thread.
From the collection of Loene McIntyre.

Nanny Brooches

While strolling through the park with small children, a well-dressed Victorian nanny needed to be prepared to handle minor sewing emergencies. A decorative nanny brooch met her need.

A typical nanny pin was a cylindrical brass case decorated with goldstone, a glass or quartz spangled with particles of gold-colored material. It looked like any other decorative pin, but unscrewing the end of the case gave the nanny quick access to needle and thread. With a torn shirt or dress quickly mended, the nanny could return needle and thread to the hidden case, and she and her charges could continue on their way. The pin shown at left was made in England, circa 1885.

—*Nancy Arndt*

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."

Barbara Abbey's Knitting Lace
by Barbara Abbey
Pittsville, Wisconsin: Schoolhouse Press, 1993. Hardbound, 143 pages, $24.95. ISBN 0-942018-00-6.

Knitting Lace: A Workshop with Patterns and Projects
by Susanna E. Lewis
Newtown, Connecticut: The Taunton Press, 1992. Softbound, 210 pages, $24.95. ISBN 0-942391-52-7.

These two easily read and practical lace-knitting books not only provide an abundance of beautiful lace patterns but also help the knitter understand the intricacies of lace knitting. Both authors draw from historical material and focus on traditional styles of lace knitting. Barbara Abbey has gleaned her designs from nineteenth-century printed patterns, while Susanna Lewis has reconstructed patterns from a European lace sampler dating from the early to mid-nineteenth century.

Both authors assume basic knitting knowledge, but they point out that the building blocks of knitted lace are few and easy to master. Clear directions and ample illustrations ensure that anyone familiar with elementary knitting techniques will be able to use these books. While the mechanics of knitted lace are addressed in both works, Lewis takes the subject to greater depth, equipping the reader with the necessary understanding to design original lace patterns and projects.

After being out of print for several years, Barbara Abbey's classic work is available once again. The first two chapters of her book concentrate on technique, with well-illustrated descriptions of lace-knitting basics. A section entitled "Special Problems" is helpful in overcoming some of the idiosyncrasies of lace knitting and includes suggestions for modifying the patterns presented later in the book. Barbara Abbey's pleasant, encouraging direction is supplemented with occasional insights into the notations and practices of nineteenth-century knitters.

In chapters three, four, and five, Abbey presents an extensive and delightful collection of eighty-two edgings, seventeen insertions, eleven background stitches, and instructions for several complete projects including doilies, collars, bedspreads, and a shawl, all designed for hand-knitting on two needles. The author's unique notation is a cross between abbreviated written directions and charting symbols. Clear black-and-white photographs of each pattern accompany the written directions, making the patterns easy to grasp.

The first part of Susanna E. Lewis's book consists of directions for each of the ninety-two exquisite patterns knitted into the nineteenth-century sampler. Each pattern is shown in a photograph and presented in both standard abbreviated written form and an easy-to-visualize chart.

The second part, described as a lace-knitting workshop, explains in detail the components and characteristics of knitted lace and tells how each is achieved. Using the sampler patterns as examples, along with an abundance of black-and-white photographs and diagrams, Lewis explains the elements of different types of lace and how those elements combine to form patterns. She includes a substantial section on charting, which she points out often makes more visual sense than writing directions. You can learn to chart your own patterns both from written instructions and from a knitted piece. Four complete projects—a woman's pullover, a girl's dress, socks, and a shawl—demonstrate how lace patterns may be incorporated into almost any article.

While primarily written for handknitters, the book includes an illustrated glossary to help machine knitters translate the lace-knitting techniques to their machines. If you're serious about understanding how traditional lace patterns are constructed, with the aim of designing your own patterns and projects, this book will become a valued tool.

—Jane Fournier

Clear directions and ample illustrations ensure that anyone familiar with elementary knitting techniques will be able to use these books.
Jane Fournier, on two lace-knitting books.

Kwakiutl String Figures

by Julia Averkieva and Mark Sherman

Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992. Hardbound, 199 pages, $35.00. ISBN 0-295-97172-X.

"Their names are intriguing: The Wrinkled Forehead series—that one sounded just right for me."
Sue Lenthe, on Kwakiutl String Figures

In his foreword to *Kwakiutl String Figures,* Bill Holm asserts that this book offers proof that string figures can be learned from the printed page.

I disagree. I sat up late into the night one evening with string in hand and book in lap twisting and looping my string to no avail. I eventually made the basic starting figures described, but I could get no further.

I tried several string figures, paging through the construction methods chapter in search of a figure that looked simple. Their names are intriguing: The Wrinkled Forehead series—that one sounded just right for me; Fighting Men (Pulling Each Other's Hair); A Kick in the Back; Two Kelps (and Two Men Standing at the Ends of Them). Had there been one titled "Woman Grimacing over Knotted Tangle of String," I'm sure I would have succeeded.

Please don't let my failure deter you from trying this graceful diversion. String figures are known to cultures around the world. More than 2,000 patterns have been recorded, including the 112 described in this book. Created with a circle of string looped and folded, wound, and unwound from finger to finger and hand to hand, Kwakiutl string figures often illustrate a story or song.

Readers can find other riches in *Kwakiutl String Figures.* Averkieva, a Russian ethnologist, traveled in 1930 with the anthropologist Franz Boas, of Columbia University, to study the Kwakiutl people of northeastern Vancouver Island. She was twenty-three at the time of the expedition. This book represents the posthumous publication of Averkieva's study of Kwakiutl string figures.

The book also offers extensive interpretation of Averkieva's study of string figures. Mark Sherman's introduction includes a history of Averkieva's manuscript and provides distribution data useful in anthropological consideration of string figures, but it is in the details that readers can sense the culture behind the them. Included with some of the figures presented in the book are the chants or songs sung as the figure is made. For example, the "Going to Get Some Bait" series would be accompanied by the song:

> Where are you going old man?
> He went to get bait, this old man.
> Now, my clothes are wet, and I must tote them on my head.

Each set of instructions concludes with an analysis comparing that pattern to similar patterns from other tribes and cultures.

Kwakiutl String Figures is a multifaceted work. It tells the compelling story of one woman's life and work, offers a close-up of one culture's diversion, and reminds us that regardless of culture or locale, many threads of human experience connect us.

—*Sue Lenthe*

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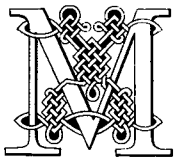

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PATTERNS

John Norris

The Rare Art of Birch Bark Biting

FROM A DISTANCE, it looks as if Angelique Levac is biting down on a crust of bread. Actually, her eye teeth are piercing intricate designs of moose, ducks, beavers, flowers, and butterflies into the folds of white birch bark. The bark is a thin inner layer, which Angelique has stripped from a living birch tree and folded in half, in half again, and then diagonally to form a triangle.

Not just any bark will do. It should be white and relatively free of tears and knots. Bark from young trees is often thinner and more pliable, but suitable bark can be carefully selected from older trees as well. Angelique harvests only the first (outermost), second, and third layers of bark, which does not harm the tree. The second and third layers are the ones she bites. The inner bark can be peeled from the outer bark and patterned right away or the whole piece kept for a few months flat and unpeeled in a plastic bag. If the bark gets too dry, it is difficult to bite into. Although Angelique, a Manitoba Cree Indian, lives in Prince George, British Columbia, Canada, she searches out only the best birch trees—near the northern border between the prairie provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, an area she visits once or twice a year.

Birch bark biting is not new. Women of the Woodland Cree and Montagnais tribes used these delicate bitings as patterns for their bead and quill work, and later for their embroidery. Angelique believes that patterns were created and used when needed, rather than kept for reference. The bitings were also a form of entertainment, with the women vying to see who could create the most beautiful designs in the shortest time.

Angelique Levac's grandmother introduced her to the craft when Angelique, as the oldest child in her family, lived alone for a time with her grandparents. Her grandmother, who was a basket maker, collected raspberries, blueberries, and cranberries in pieces of birch bark lined with moss. While they were picking berries together, her grandmother demonstrated birch bark biting, making a game of it. During this time with her grandparents, Angelique also learned how to bead, tan moose hides, live off the land, and gather herbs for medicinal use.

But it wasn't until much later that Angelique Levac began to practice birch bark biting. She had read in a magazine that Angelique Merasty, a Cree woman from Beaver Lake, Saskatchewan, was looking for a pupil to whom she could teach the dying art. The older woman wanted someone who was both dedicated and determined. Angelique Levac appointed herself.

Initially, Angelique Levac stayed with Angelique Merasty for a week, learning which trees to select and how to peel the bark into layers thin enough for biting. Even with her natural skill and the older woman's training to guide her, she at first found it frustrating. "What kept me going was that I knew this was special. This was what I wanted to do."

Adapted with permission from "Canadian Woman Keeps Tradition of Birch Bark Biting Alive," by John Norris, Woodshop News, *April 1993.*

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