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On the cover: Danish designer Christel Seyfarth's stunning Fanø Tile Shawl is knit using an unusual construction technique and trimmed with jaunty pom-poms.
Photo by Matt Graves

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Notions

Moonlighting Makers

From rug makers who wove while caring for babies, to shepherdesses who embroidered lace while tending to sheep, throughout time industrious people have been able to elevate their standard of living by the humble work of their hands.

Nimble needleworkers produced much-needed clothing and salable items while working other jobs or tending to the home, herd, family, or flock. The textiles they crafted were not only a testament to their resourcefulness (and often the need to take advantage of precious daylight hours) but also to their creative abilities.

Many of these multitasking workers were women, some of whom used training and education in handwork as a means to assist the impoverished, such as the nineteenth-century Carmelite nuns who launched an Irish-lace industry described in these pages by Gene O'Sullivan. However, a peek at Karen Brock's glimpse into the centuries-old knitting culture of Taquile Island in Peru—or at Mimi Seyferth's story about the knitters of World War I—will remind you that throughout history, men and women alike have wielded their needles for a purpose.

Twenty-first century multitaskers will enjoy the portability of Deanna Hall West's silk-ribbon forget-me-nots project, and Katrina King's remake of a late-Victorian crocheted wrist bag/yarn holder is an ideal gift for stitchers on the go.

Whether you stitch for passion or provision, I am confident that you will find something in this issue that will inspire you to pick up a ball of yarn or a spool of thread, and if you choose to craft while you are at work, I promise that I won't tell.

Pat



Landes shepherds in southwestern France ingeniously mixed form and function by surveying their flocks from the elevated vantage point of the five-foot-tall stilts upon which they perched, and they maximized their time by knitting as they tended their sheep.
Ychoux–Berger et bûcherons between 1900 and 1905
Photographer Henry Guillier (1847–1912)
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

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Necessities



❶ Happy Decorations

Who doesn't smile when they see a pom-pom? Clover makes it easy to craft batches of them with their pom-pom makers. The extra-large size (shown here) comes with instructions and measures 4½ inches across. **clover-usa.com**

❷ A Helpful Accessory

Keep those pins close with this ring pincushion from Brooklyn Haberdashery. It has an elastic ring to fit sizes 6.5–8 and soft wool to hold your pins in place. Best of all, it is available in a variety of colors to match either your project or your outfit. **brooklynhaberdashery.com**

❸ On the Go

Don't let adventure keep you from taking a project along for the ride. This ball holder from Mielke's Fiber Arts is lightweight on the wrist and can hold thread balls of various sizes, so that you can keep your yarn close at hand. **mielkesfiberarts.com**

❹ Tools of the Trade

Alterations are inevitable when working by hand, and beautiful tools can make stitch removal easier to bear. Papa Jack's Woodworks seam ripper has a hand-turned handle and is available in a variety of woods. The removable metal working end fits back into the smooth handle so that you can safely stow it for travel or in a project bag. **papajackswoodworks.etsy.com**

❺ Spring Fibers

Transition from winter wools to breezy cotton with Gist Yarn's Beam 3/2 organic cotton. Available in 8-ounce cones containing 630 yards, in a range of 18 colors, the weight is perfect for crafting a lightweight spring shawl or washer-friendly picnic blanket. **gistyarn.com**



This quintessentially Scottish tea cozy, designed to fit a personal teapot, will infuse your day with a touch of the Shetland Isles.
Photos by Matt Graves

Bide Waarm Tea Cozy

HAZEL TINDALL

Growing up in rural Shetland in the 1950s and 1960s, I was surrounded by folk whose knitting brought warmth to the family as well as essential cash income. There was no paid work available for the women in our home (my mother, unmarried aunt, and grandmother), nor for any of the neighbors. If work had been available, there would have been no transport.

Work for them was tending to life on the croft, usually with an eye on the weather and/or the clock. The clock was to see when it was time to "flit da coo"—the cow was tethered to one spot to keep her from roaming into the crops, and she had to be moved to a new patch of grass regularly and milked twice a day. They also kept watch over the clock as the mobile shops tended to arrive at roughly the same time each week, and they didn't want to keep the driver waiting.

From early spring to late autumn, dry weather meant working to get peat cut and dried for fuel, crops sown and harvested for the family and animals, as well as getting the sheep clipped and dipped. Knitting was something they did six days a week, when nothing else needed attention. The stove was always lit, the kettle on top ready to boil. The teapot was rarely cold, especially as it was always snuggled under a tea cozy.

A picot edge was one of my mother's favorite embellishments, and I remember her showing me how to knit it when I was a child. The pattern motif I chose for this tea cozy is often called "peerie herts"—"small hearts"—but it also looks like a little flower opening up to catch the sun. The tea cozy lining is single-color stockinette stitch. I used steeks to make the handle and spout openings. The cut edges of the steek are hidden inside the lining. The name *bide waarm* is Shetland for "stay warm."

Editor's Note: Please read instructions carefully through to the end before commencing, as this cozy uses some construction techniques that might be unfamiliar.

Materials

- Jamieson's of Shetland *Spindrift*, 2-ply (100% Shetland wool), 115 yd (105 m)/0.9 oz (25 g) ball: 1 ball each of #342 Cashew (A), #768 Eggshell (B), #253 Seaweed (C), #390 Daffodil (D), and #435 Apricot (E)
- Needles: US 1½ (2.5 mm) circular needle 9" (22.8 cm); US 5 (3.75 mm) circular needle 9" (22.8 cm) and set of double-pointed needles or sizes needed to match gauge.
- Stitch markers
- Fine, smooth, cotton yarn for stitch holders and finishing
- Scissors
- Tapestry needle

Finished Measurements: 15" (38.1 cm) circumference and 6½" (16.5 cm) tall, not including I-cord loop; to fit teapots measuring up to 15" (38.1 cm) around at base of spout.

Gauge: 26 sts and 34 rows/rnds = 4" (10 cm) in Fair Isle patterns from charts using larger needles, after blocking.

Special Stitches and Techniques

S2kp: Slip 2 stitches as if to knit 2 together, knit 1, then pass the 2 slipped stitches over the knit stitch—2 stitches decreased; center stitch sits on top.

Steeks: The steek stitches are the first 4 stitches and the last 4 stitches of Chart 1. Change colors by knotting the old and new colors together at the start of the round, in the center of a steek. When picking up stitches for the steek edgings, with RS facing insert the needle tip into the center of the Color C stitch next to the steek, and then out through the center of the adjacent steek stitch, wrap the yarn around the needle as if to knit, and draw a loop through—1 stitch picked up and knit. Picking up in this manner encourages the steek to fold to the WS. Pick up and knit one stitch for each round along the length of the steek.

Notes

The outside of the cozy is worked in the round using steeks for the handle and spout openings. The lining is worked back and forth in rows for the length of the openings, then joined for working in the round to the top.

The chart patterns are worked in the round. Read all chart rows from right to left.

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

Instructions

Picot Hem

With A and larger circular needle, CO 74 sts. Place marker (pm) for start of rnd, and join for working in the rnd, being careful not to twist sts.

Rnds 1–3: Knit.

Rnd 4: *Yo, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Rnds 5–7: Knit.

Using smaller circular needle, pick up every other loop along CO edge; these stitches are just placed on the needle, not picked up and knit—37 loops on needle. Fold piece in half along Rnd 4 with wrong sides touching, larger needle with 74 sts in front, and smaller needle with 37 sts in back.

Rnd 8: Using A and tip of larger needle as the working needle, *k1 from front needle, insert needle tip into next st on front needle and next st on back needle and work them together as k2tog; rep from * to end—74 sts on larger needle.



This top view shows the wonderful design of Shetland colorwork that is formed by judiciously spaced decreases, and a functional loop topper.

Establish Steeks

Remove m at start of rnd. Continue with larger circular needle.

Next rnd: *K2, [k1f&b, k2] 10 times, k5, then place last 4 sts just worked on scrap-yarn holder; rep from * once more; break yarn—2 groups of 43 sts separated by 2 sets of 4 held sts.

Next rnd: With A, CO 4 sts, pm for new start of rnd in center of steek, CO 4 sts, pm for end of steek, k43, pm for start of steek, CO 8 sts, pm for end of steek, k43, pm for start of steek, knit across the first 4 CO sts to end at start-of-rnd m—2 groups of 43 sts; 2 sets of 8-st steeks; rnd begins in center of first steek.

Chart Pattern

Breaking and joining colors in the center of the first steek (see Notes) as necessary, work Chart 1 as follows:

Rnd 1: Work 4 steek sts, slip marker (sl m), *work 1 st before patt rep, work 10-st patt rep 4 times, work 2 sts after patt rep, sl m,* work 8 steek sts, sl m; rep from * to * once more, work 4 steek sts.

Rnds 2–23: Work as established until Rnd 23 of chart has been completed.

Rnds 24–33: Work Rnds 4–13 of chart once more.

End Steeks

Remove m at start of rnd.

Next rnd: With C, k4, remove m, k43, remove m, BO 8 steek sts removing next m when necessary, k43, remove m, BO 8 sts (1 st on right needle after BO gap), sl st on right needle to left needle, pm on right needle for new start of rnd—86 sts.

Work transition rnds as follows, pulling the yarn snugly to close any gaps at the tops of the steeks in the first rnd:

Rnd 1: Sl first st on left needle purlwise with yarn in back because this st has already been worked, *k1 with B, k1 with C; rep from * to last st, k1 with B.

Rnd 2: With B, knit.

Rnd 3: *K1 with B, k1 with A; rep from * to end.

Rnd 4: With A, knit.

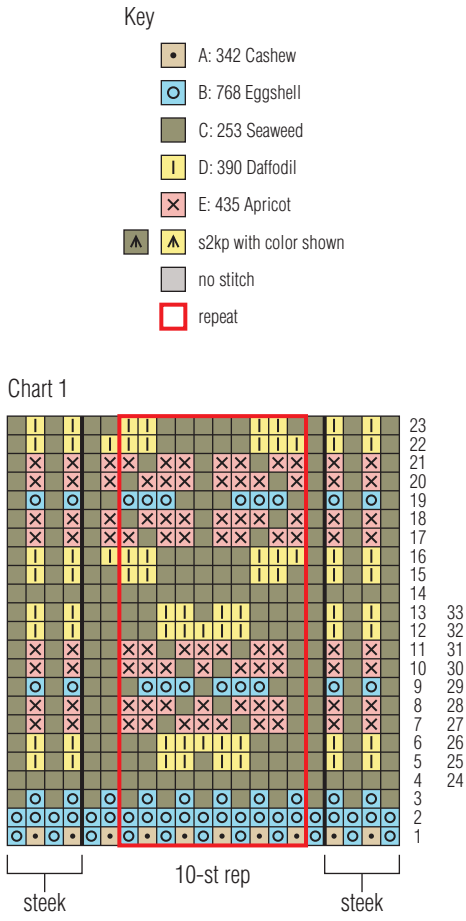
Rnd 5: With A, *[k4, k2tog] 7 times, k1; rep from * once more—72 sts.

Shape Top

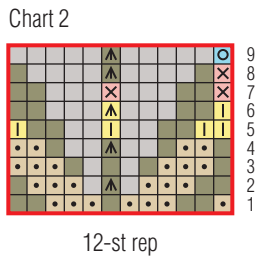
Work Rnds 1–9 of Chart 2, working 12-st patt rep 6 times around, decreasing as shown on chart, and changing to dpns when necessary—12 sts.

Next rnd: With C, k2tog 6 times—6 sts.

With RS facing, place the last 3 sts on scrap yarn,



Rnds 24–33: Work as for Rnds 4–13 once more.



then place first 3 sts on a single dpn. With C, work 12 rnds of I-cord. Graft 3 live sts at end of I-cord to 3 held sts as base of I-cord to close the hanging loop. Secure the yarn tail on the WS.

Make sure all ends in the shaped top are securely knotted; there is no need to weave in these ends because they will be covered by the lining.

Steek Edgings

Carefully cut each steek open along its center, between the columns of Color C sts. The yarn tails knotted in the center of the first steek will fall off; cut away any that do not.

Using A and smaller needle, with RS facing and beginning at the lower edge of one steek opening, pick up and knit (see Special Stitches and Techniques) 1 st for every rnd to top of steek, then 1 st for every rnd down to bottom of steek, then knit 4 sts from scrap-yarn holder at base of steek. With RS still facing, BO all sts as if to purl. Finish the other steek opening in the same manner.



A peek at the finished steek shows the knitted lining inside the cozy.

Lining

Turn tea cozy inside out. Fold piece flat, with steek openings at each side. Using smaller circular needle and beginning 2 sts in from the fold at one side, pick up 33 sts along CO edge, ending 2 sts before the fold at the other side; these sts are just placed on the needle, not picked up and knit—33 loops on needle.



The steeked openings make it easy to place the cozy over the handle and spout of your teapot, and the picot edge adds charm.

Join A to start of sts on needle. With the larger needle, continue as follows:
Row 1 (RS): Knit.
Row 2 (WS): P1, [p3, p1f&b] 7 times, p4—40 sts.
Row 3: Knit.
Row 4: Purl.
Rows 5–36: Rep Rows 3 and 4 sixteen times.

Break yarn and place sts on holder.

Flip the tea cozy over so the WS of its unlined half is facing up. Work the second lining section the same as the first section but leave sts on needle and do not break yarn—40 sts on needle.

Join lining sections and continue to the end in the rnd as follows:

Rnd 1: [K8, k2tog] 4 times, return 40 held sts of first lining section to needle with RS of lining facing, [k8, k2tog] 4 times, pm and join for working in rnds—72 sts.
Even Rnds 2, 4, 6, 8, and *10:* Knit.
Rnd 3: [K5, s2kp, k4] 6 times—60 sts.
Rnd 5: [K4, s2kp, k3] 6 times—48 sts.
Rnd 7: [K3, s2kp, k2] 6 times—36 sts.
Rnd 9: [K2, s2kp, k1] 6 times—24 sts.
Rnd 11: [K1, s2kp] 6 times—12 sts.

Break yarn, leaving a 10" (25.4 cm) tail. With tail threaded on a blunt needle, pass yarn through 12 sts, pull to close hole at top of lining, then use back-stitches to secure top of lining to WS of outer tea cozy underneath the hanging loop.

With A threaded on the tapestry needle, slip-stitch the sides of the lining sections neatly to the steek openings along the pickup rnd of the steek edgings. Weave in ends.

FINISHING

Turn tea cozy right side out. Using cotton yarn, temporarily sew the spout and handle openings closed. Thread a length of cotton yarn through the picot edge to prevent it from flaring.

Find a suitable item for blocking your tea cozy, like a round plastic food container. Try the cozy on the stretcher form before washing; it should be a tight fit so the cozy can be stretched slightly when wet. Handwash the tea cozy in lukewarm water, fold carefully, and roll in a towel to remove excess water.

Put the cozy on the stretcher, gently easing it into shape. Tighten the cotton yarn in the picot edge and tie in a temporary bow. Leave until fully dry—at least 24 hours. Remove the cotton yarn and, if necessary, press the picot edge using a damp pressing cloth with a hot iron. To prevent felting, do not machine wash the finished cozy. ❖

HAZEL TINDALL was born and brought up in Shetland, where she has lived most of her life. She has been handknitting and designing Fair Isle garments and accessories for over 60 years and was Shetland Wool Week's Patron in 2014. Sponsored by the UK Hand Knitting Association, she represented Britain at the Craft Yarn Council of America's 2008 Knit Out knitting competition in Minneapolis and won the "Fastest Knitter Award." Learn more at hazeltindall.com.

Eliza's Needle

SUSAN HOLLOWAY SCOTT



Likely made for one of Eliza's nine granddaughters, this young child's gown is enhanced with ruffled sleeves and several embroidery stitches. Circa 1810–1840. Collection of Douglas Hamilton
Photos courtesy of author unless otherwise noted

In the autumn of 1780, 23-year-old Eliza Schuyler (1757–1854) sat by the parlor window in her parents' house in Albany, New York, and stitched. Like far too many women before and since, her life had been upended by war, and for the last five years, the American Revolution had been inescapable.

Her father was General Philip Schuyler (1733–1804), and her fiancé was Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Hamilton, an aide-de-camp to Commander-in-Chief General George Washington. She was promised to marry Alexander in December, but nothing was certain because of the war. Her home was filled with soldiers, and every messenger could bring rejoicing or grief.

And so she stitched, keeping her hands and thoughts busy and full of hope as she created pieces for her wedding and marriage. While no descriptions of Eliza's wedding gown survive, it's likely that she wore a dress that was remade from an earlier garment or sewn from older fabric; even though Eliza's family was among the most wealthy and powerful in the state, trade embargos prohibited importing and buying silks from Great Britain.

Whatever she wore, Eliza added her own touch to the day by stitching elegant handkerchiefs for her and for her groom. His would have been tucked into the pocket of his coat; hers was larger and might have been





Left: The Hamilton family believes Eliza stitched these handkerchiefs for Alexander and herself to carry on their wedding day. From the large size of hers, it was likely more of a kerchief to be worn around her shoulders and pinned at the front of her dress. *Right:* Every anxious bridegroom needs a handkerchief tucked in his pocket during the ceremony. Hamilton descendants believe Eliza made this handkerchief for Alexander as a wedding gift.
Circa 1780, Alexander Hamilton Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University

worn fashionably around her shoulders and pinned in the front. Today, the linen on both handkerchiefs is so fragile that they can't be unfolded, and they are stored—forever together—in the same archival box.

In December 1780, Eliza's fiancé did return from the front lines of the war for their wedding. All fans of the musical *Hamilton* know that Alexander Hamilton also survived the Revolution and went on to become a famous hero at the Battle of Yorktown, a renowned lawyer, and the country's first Secretary of the Treasury. Eliza, in turn, is forever remembered in her husband's words as "the best of wives and best of women," as well as the mother of his eight children.

Yet Eliza's life was no fairy tale. Alexander was famously unfaithful to her. Her oldest son, Philip, was killed in a duel as a teenager. Soon afterward, her husband also died due to wounds from a duel with Vice President Aaron Burr, and he died without a will and deeply in debt. Only the support of Alexander's friends kept Eliza from losing their house to creditors, and finances remained a constant challenge for her. Her younger daughter Angelica suffered from recurring mental health issues that required considerable care, and her younger sons were forced to give up the dream of a gentleman's education.

Yet in the face of so much tragedy, Eliza's true strength blossomed. She raised her fatherless children and preserved her husband's legacy. She became a cofounder of New York's Orphan Asylum Society in the City of New York, an institution whose work aiding children continues today as the nonprofit charity Graham Windham. In a time when few women of her social class worked outside the home, she served tirelessly for decades as the institution's director and chief fundraiser.

Eliza lived to the extraordinary age of 97 (outliving her husband by half a century). Her life spanned the French and Indian Wars to the beginning of the age of Lincoln. Throughout those years, and no matter how complicated her life became, she continued to sew, embroider, needlepoint, and knit.

From an early age, needlework was a part of Eliza's life. She would have learned the basics as a child from her mother and later, before the Revolutionary War, attended a girl's school in New York City. A quarterly tuition bill for her younger sister describes what the Schuyler girls studied: "Writing & Arithmetic" were immediately followed by "Ornamental Needle-work." Listed on the bill among the school supplies were "3 Tambour Needles . . . Black Silk & Thrums [short lengths of thread] . . . 6 Skains [sic] of silk . . . 4 Skains of Cotton. . . 1 Skain of Floss Silk." Geography, music, drawing, and ciphering were also listed, but needlework was, by far, the costliest subject and one of the most important.

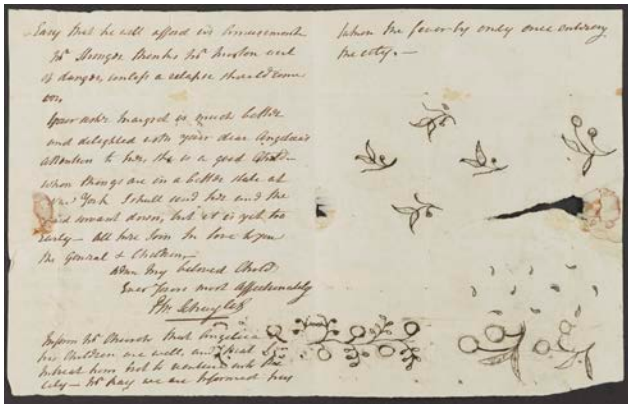
Married Life

It's likely that as soon as Eliza and Alexander were married, she began to make baby clothes, as most women did, in preparation for the children she hoped to have. Her first child, Philip, was born in 1782, and he was soon followed by 5 brothers and 2 sisters. In an era with a tragically high rate of infant mortality, Eliza was a most fortunate mother, and all 8 of her children lived to adulthood. (In comparison, her mother, Catherine Van Rensselaer Schuyler, gave birth to 15 children, only 8 of whom survived infancy.)

With so many children, Eliza's household must have been a busy one, and even the sturdiest of handmade baby clothes likely wouldn't have lasted long as a hand-me-down. While there are no remaining examples, it doesn't mean that Eliza wasn't still sewing and embroidering. A letter Eliza's father wrote to her in 1799 is filled with family news from Albany, New York. On the back of the letter are small drawings of stylized fruit and flowers that historians studying the letter have always described simply as Eliza's "doodles." However, the drawings bear a strong resemblance to embroidery designs being imported from England at the time, including those printed in *The Lady's Magazine*. It's easy to picture her with a baby on her lap and an idea in her head, pulling the old letter from her pocket to work out a design while her inspiration was fresh.

An infant's dress that Eliza made later, after she was widowed, displays the whitework embroidery that was the fashion for both women and children in the early nineteenth century. With her own children grown, it's believed that Eliza stitched the dress for one of her nine granddaughters born between 1811 and 1838. It might have served as a christening dress; it's purposefully long to drape over the baby's legs and the arms of whomever is holding the child.

It's a beautiful little garment, the product of many hours, skillful stitching, and grandmotherly love. The double ruffles of the sleeves are like angel's wings, with scalloped edges of buttonhole stitch and rows of dots and twiglike designs worked in satin stitch. The same motifs and stitches appear on the deep hem, and everything is further enhanced with cut-and-drawn work. To accommodate a wriggling small person in those pre-stretch-fabric days, the sleeves have been cut on the bias for movement, and the dress fastens with tied bows in the back. It's no surprise that the



Letter from General Philip Schuyler to Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, 1796–1799. Eliza may have used the empty space on this letter from her father to sketch ideas for embroidery designs.
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Alexander Hamilton Papers



Mrs. Alexander Hamilton (Elizabeth Schuyler) from an original picture, painted in 1781, by R. Earl, and now in possession of Mrs. James A. Hamilton, Dobbs Ferry, New York
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division



While Eliza learned to sew in the age of canvas work and crewel during her long life, she continued to try new techniques as they were introduced, like this needle case embroidered on specially punched paper, made in the 1820s–1830s.
Photo courtesy of Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

dress became an heirloom through the generations and remains in the Hamilton family today.

As those grandchildren grew, Eliza continued to make gifts for them and for family friends, too, from a tiny whitework baby cap for a godchild, embroidered all over in rice stitch, to a pair of needlepoint chair cushions as a wedding present. The fact that these gifts were preserved by the recipients and their families shows how much Eliza's handmade gifts must have meant to them.

One of Eliza's gifts was a small needle case for her granddaughter Mary Morris Hamilton (1818–1877), embroidered with "Miss Hamilton" on the front. Although faded over time—the binding and ribbons were surely much brighter originally, and the silk thread of the curving border was probably red or a vivid pink—the needle case was not only a charming memento but a way for Eliza to share her love of sewing and embroidery with her granddaughter.

Dating to the 1820s or 1830s, the needle case also shows that Eliza was trying new needlework techniques. Cross-stitch on a stiffened punched-paper "canvas" like this was a popular trend at the time. This kind of needlework is also kinder to older eyes, and Eliza, who was in her 60s or 70s when she embroidered it, likely found it easier than the more detailed whitework she'd enjoyed when she was younger.

One of the most intriguing of Eliza's pieces is one that's something of a puzzle to curators, simply

Dating to the 1820s or 1830s, the needle case also shows that Eliza was trying new needlework techniques.

because they've never seen another quite like it. Made of wool flannel and backed with glazed wool, it's the long, familiar shape of a traditional eighteenth-century *hussif*, or needle case. A hussif stored needles, small scissors, and cards of thread and was designed to be rolled up tight and tied with the long laces stitched to the end.

It's the embroidery that makes this hussif so unusual, however, and unlike the purely ornamental designs that appear on most needle cases. Using a mixture of embroidery stitches—chain, herringbone, split stitch, French knots, and so on—Eliza divided the length into eleven segments, each roughly an inch in width. The segments are marked with cross-stitched numbers. Family lore says Eliza made the hussif around 1837, when she would have been 80. So often necessity and creativity go hand in hand! It's possible she made this to be a measuring device with easier-to-read larger numbers than most rulers or tapes, either for her own use, or as a utilitarian gift for her son-in-law's sister, who later owned it.

A Gift for the Great-Granddaughter of an Old Friend

The most touching of Eliza's later needlework pieces comes with a story attached. In 1854, Eliza and her widowed older daughter, Eliza Hamilton Holley (1799–1859), were living in Washington, DC, in a house rented from Britannia W. Kennon (1815–1911), a great-granddaughter of Martha Washington. Eliza had first met Martha Washington when their husbands had served together during the American Revolution, but she had never visited the Washingtons' home at Mount Vernon.

Generously Britannia arranged a special visit to the house for Eliza and her own mother, Martha Custis Peter (1777–1854), and she escorted the two elderly women to Mount Vernon for the day. It must have been an extraordinary trip, filled with



This intriguing piece appears to be a combination ruler and needle case, or *hussif*, with embroidered numbers for measuring and a variety of embroidery stitches for ornament. Eliza enjoyed stitching gifts for friends and family members; possibly, she made this for her son-in-law's sister, Martha Coggeshall (Holly) Bissell around 1837. *Photo courtesy of Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation*

memories and reminiscences of times that very few other people remained to recall with them. The trip was all the more poignant since both older women would pass away within the year.

Before she died, Eliza made Britannia a special gift to show her thanks: a knitted pillowcase. Given her advanced age (Eliza was now in her late 90s), any form of embroidery must have been impossible. But knitting is a much more forgiving craft, and the repetitive motions of knitting with a continuous thread are less demanding than the precision of a needle through fine linen. The pillowcase is composed of five separate pieces, a knitted center square of off-white wool with four strips of multicolored striped borders, and braid and ribbon stitched over seams, likely to cover the awkward corners. The trims and the blue linen fabric backing were probably attached by someone else, possibly her daughter Eliza.

There are dropped stitches, random holes, and irregular tension in her knitting. Other rows mysteriously shorten, increase, and then disappear. The final pillow cover is woefully misshapen. Yet Britannia Kennon clearly treasured it, even pinning Eliza's handwritten signature, clipped from a letter, in the middle of the square as if to sign her work for her. On the back Britannia added a note with more details: "Made by / Mrs. Alexander Hamilton / a short time before her / death, for Mrs. Kennon."

Britannia understood all that had gone into that pillowcase, and I expect most readers of this article will as well. No matter how many challenges life placed before Eliza Hamilton, she always found time to create a baby gift for a new mother, a wedding present for a niece, or a special thank you for a friend. She, too, must have known what every needleworker knows: whatever you make, there's a little of yourself in every stitch. ❖



Made by Eliza when she was in her 90s, this pillow cover was knitted as a gift for Britannia W. Kennon, a great-granddaughter of Martha Washington. Circa 1852
Photo courtesy of Tudor Place Historic House & Garden

The author would like to thank these wonderful scholars and curators for their assistance: Neal Hurst, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; Jennifer Lee, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University; Grant Quertermous, Tudor Place; Jessie Serfilippi, Schuyler Mansion; Diane Shewchuk, Albany Institute of History & Art; Mark Turdo, Museum of the American Revolution; and Virginia J. Whelan, Filament Conservation Studio.

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Biscornu

from Frisian Whitework

BY YVETTE STANTON



Photos courtesy of the author

Frisian whitework is a counted embroidery from the Netherlands that dates back to the 1600s. The following excerpt is shared with kind permission from Frisian Whitework. *The book contains historical reference information, detailed instructions and images for both left- and right-handed stitchers, and a number of lovely projects in this unusual embroidery technique. —Editor*

This biscornu pincushion has a design based on the shapes, stitches, and motifs that are used to make up large, decorative alphabet letters.

Size 3¾ × 3¾ in (9.5 × 9.5 cm)
Design thread dimensions 127 (w) × 125 (h) threads

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

- 8 × 8 in (20 × 20 cm) 36 count linen, white
- 1 reel Londonderry linen thread, 50/3, white
- No 24 tapestry needle
- No 9 embroidery needle
- Embroidery hoop 6 in (15 cm)
- 5⅛ × 5⅛ in (13 × 13 cm) cotton fabric, white
- 5⅛ × 5⅛ in (13 × 13 cm) Dutch Heritage cotton fabric, 'Surat, Red' (or patterned fabric of your choice)
- ⅜ in (10 mm) diameter shank buttons, 2, pearl
- Polyester fiber fill
- Wash out fabric pencil
- Machine-sewing thread, white

Notes

The biscornu can be assembled by hand or by machine. The author recommends an open front presser foot if you are using a sewing machine.

The author includes charts and patterns for left-handed stitchers in her book.

Stitches and Techniques

Picot edging, satin stitch, single feather stitch border, six thread eyelets, topwinder stitch, whipped back stitch

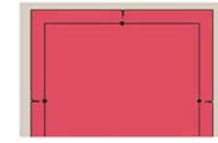
Embroidery

Follow Chart A for stitch placement. On the chart, backstitch in cyan denotes back stitch with S twist whipping. Magenta denotes Z twist whipping.

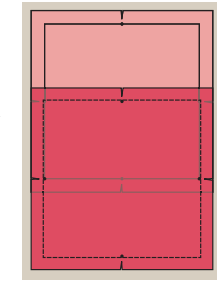
1. Fold the fabric in half both ways to find the center and mark it.
2. Mount the fabric in a hoop so that it is drum tight.
3. Work the satin stitch motifs near the center.
4. Using the Chart B biscornu thread cutting diagram, cut and withdraw the thread sections shown in magenta.
5. Work the single feather stitch border around the drawn thread area, working each row in the same direction.
6. Work the motifs outside the feather stitch, using satin stitch, whipped back stitch, six thread eyelets, and top-winder stitch.

Construction

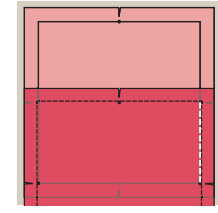
1. With a hot steam iron, press the embroidery.
2. With the embroidery centered, trim the fabric to 5⅛ in (13 cm) square.
3. Pin the white lining fabric for the front panel on the back of the embroidered fabric.
4. With the embroidered panel uppermost, use the sewing machine with pale thread to stitch along each side twenty threads away from the raw edge. Pivot in each corner so that this line of stitching is exactly positioned. **An open-fronted sewing machine foot can help here, as this will enable you to make sure your stitching stays exactly straight between two linen threads. *This is not the seam line, but a guide for the seam line. The seam will be one thread in from the stitched guide—eleven threads away from the edge. However, as you will be sewing with the lining facing you, you will need to estimate the equivalent of one linen thread in from the guide.*
5. At the midpoint of each side, carefully make a cut into the fabric, stopping 1/16 in (1–2 mm) away from the guide. *Do not cut any further!*
6. On the back of the fabric for the back of the biscornu, using a wash out fabric pencil, draw a line ⅝ in (1.5 cm) away from each edge, to mark the seam allowance. Mark the center of each side within the seam allowance.
7. At the midpoint of each side, carefully make a cut, stopping 1/16 in (1–2 mm) away from the marked seam allowance line. *Do not cut any further!*



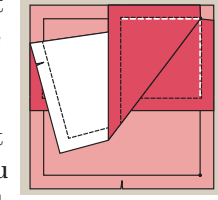
8. Place the embroidered panel face down over the front of the back panel fabric. Remembering that the seam will be one linen thread width away from the stitched guide, align one seam-line corner of the top panel with a side midpoint on the base. Align the raw edges, so that the upper fabric's midpoint on that side aligns with the seamline corner of the base piece.



9. Use the white machine-sewing thread. Start right at the seamline corner (do not sew within the seam allowance), one thread in from the stitched guide line. Machine stitch to the midpoint exactly. Insert the sewing machine needle into the fabric, and lift the presser foot. *Ensure the stitching always stays the equivalent of one linen thread away from the stitched guide.*

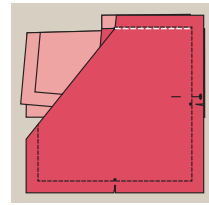


10. Realign the fabric edges so that the next seamline corner of the top fabric aligns with the midpoint of the base fabric. Pin it in place. Lower the presser foot and resume stitching where you left off, down the newly aligned sides. Stop at the seamline corner, one linen thread width inside the stitched guide.



11. Insert the sewing machine needle into the fabric, and lift the presser foot. Realign the fabric edges

so that the next mid-point of the upper fabric aligns with the seamline corner of the base fabric. Lower the presser foot and resume stitching where you left off.



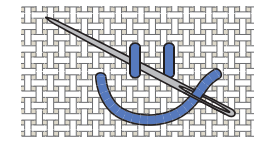
12. Continue around each side, leaving a gap of about 1⅝ in (4cm) in the final side. Tie off the thread ends.
13. Turn the biscornu right side out, pushing the corners out as far as they will go, to make them well formed.
14. Fill the biscornu with fiber fill, so that it is well stuffed. Neatly hand stitch the last side closed using the embroidery needle and machine-sewing thread.
15. Align the middle of the top of the biscornu with the middle of the base. Using a doubled machine-sewing thread, securely stitch from the top through to the base a few times, tightening the stitches to make a little 'dimple'.
16. Securely stitch the top button in the dimple on the top of the biscornu, and the other button on the base.
17. Using the linen thread and the tapestry needle work a picot edging at the edge of the linen top, over the two threads closest to the seam. Start and finish each side two threads in from the ends, to allow for the adjacent side. Work each picot six threads wide, adjusting the span of each side's last few groups, as necessary, to make the spacing fit.



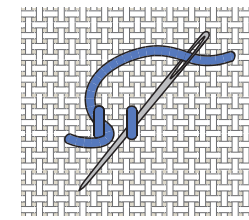
A Diamond in Topwinder Stitch

Each row of this stitch is done in two passes: the base layer and a top layer of threading or interlacing. An even number of foundation stitches is required for each row. Follow your chart for row length and the positioning of the base stitches. This stitch is often worked in diamond or triangle shapes.

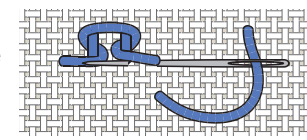
1. Embroider two parallel stitches, each three threads high and spaced three threads apart. Bring the threaded needle up to the front of the fabric three threads to the left of the bottom of the left-hand stitch. From the right, slide the needle under the closest stitch, gently, so that the stitch retains its tension. Do not enter the fabric.



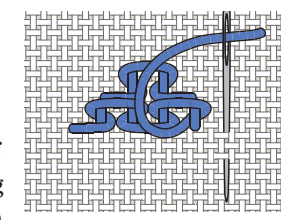
2. From the right, slide the needle under the next base stitch. Insert the needle three threads right of the bottom of the last base stitch. Bring it out three threads down.



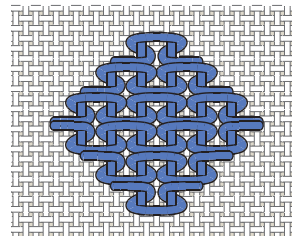
3. Pull the needle through. Insert it three threads up, bringing it out three threads to the left (first half of one pair of parallel stitches.) One stitch completed. To make the second parallel line, pull the needle through. Insert it three threads down and bring it out three to the left (first pair of parallel stitches). Continue to fill the row with as many pairs of parallel stitches (each three threads high, and three threads apart) as necessary for the shape. Wrap each pair of parallel stitches as shown.



4. To move to the next row: thread the next two base stitches, then insert the needle three threads to the right of the bottom of the last base stitch. Bring it out three threads down.



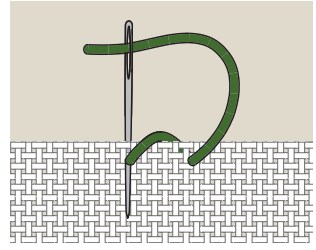
5. Completed motif six stitches high by six stitches wide.



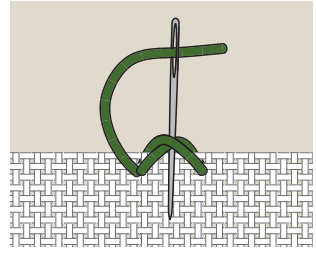
Picot Edging

Picot edgings were always worked along the edge of shirt collars. The stitching protected the folded edge of the linen from wear and tear, as it could be replaced more easily than darning a fabric edge. There are many different methods of working picots in the region and in nearby regions. This method creates picots that look like the ones on many old embroidered Frisian shirts.

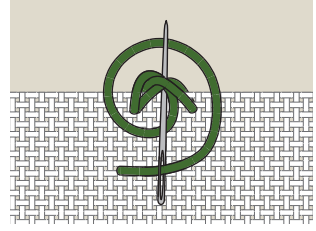
1. Create a stitch that gently curves around the fabric edge, six threads wide and two threads away from the folded edge. From the back, insert the needle at the starting point.



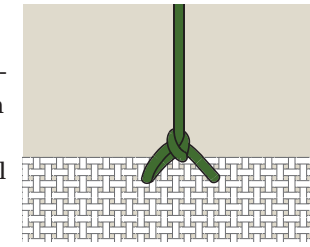
2. Pull the needle through, to create another stitch that gently curves around the fabric edge. From the back, slide the needle under the two base stitches. Do not enter the fabric.



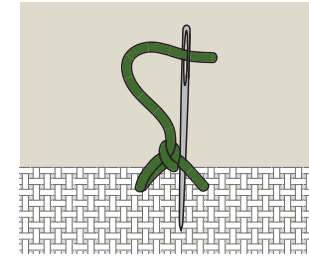
3. Pull the needle through so that the thread comes out from the right-hand side. From the front, insert the needle under all three stitches. (*Do not yet pull the needle through after inserting it.*) Take the thread under the back end of the needle from right to left, then under the front end of the needle from left to right.



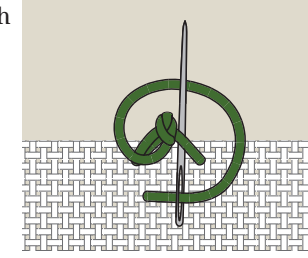
4. Pull the needle through, and up to create a tight, small chain stitch at the top of the base stitches. This will form the peak of the picot.



5. From the back, slide the needle under the base stitches. Do not enter the fabric.



6. Pull the needle through so that the thread emerges from the left. Insert it under the base stitches and take the thread around the picot and under the needle point from left to right. Pull the needle through and tighten the stitch around the picot by pulling backward. *The stitch goes right around the picot, and the working thread comes out at the back.*



Alternating stitching from the left and right sides, repeat steps 5 and 6 two more times until the first picot has been filled. To create the next picot stitch, from the back, insert the needle through the same fabric hole as the bottom right end of the base stitches. From the back, insert the needle six threads to the right. ❖

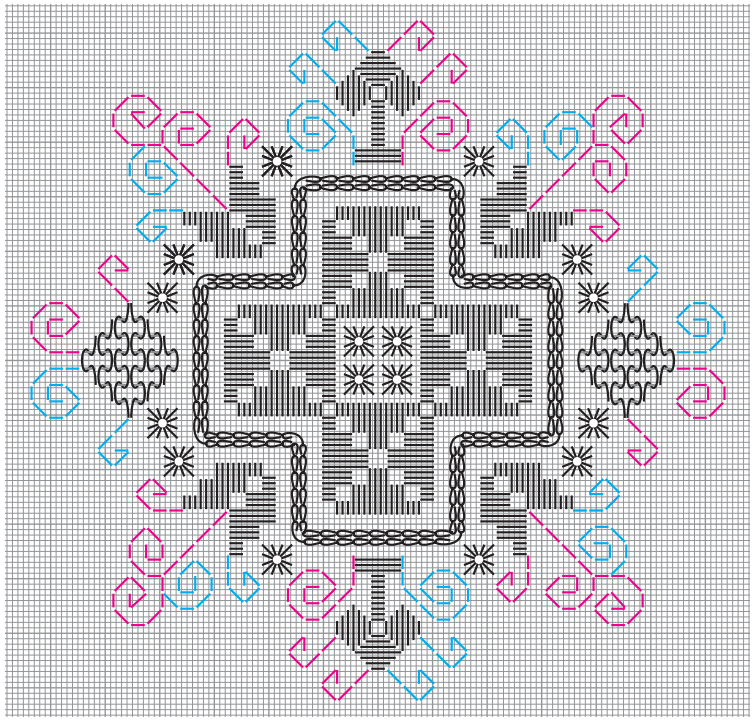


Chart A Biscornu Stitching Diagram



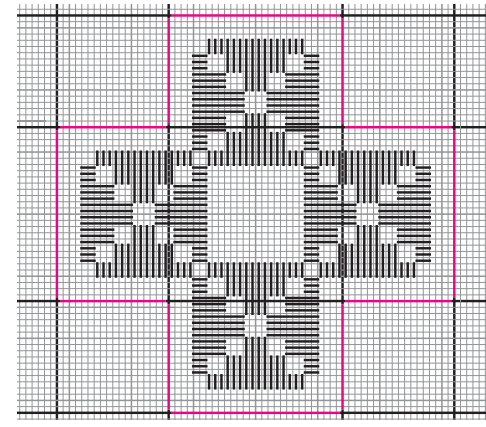
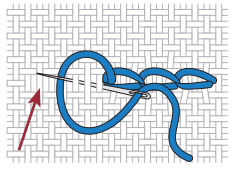


Chart B Biscornu Thread Cutting Diagram

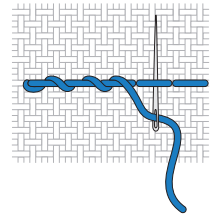
Additional Stitches from the *PieceWork* Archives

Counted Single Feather Stitch

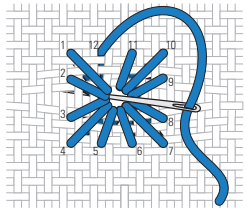


Cut and remove a thread from the fabric, prior to working this stitch.

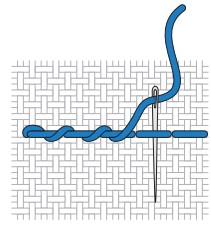
Whipped Back Stitch, Z Twist



Six-Thread Eyelet Stitch



Whipped Back Stitch, S Twist



Courtesy of Missy Shepler



Frisian Whitework
Yvette Stanton
Turnbridge Wells, UK: Search Press 2021
ISBN 978-1800920248

The Unlikely Knitters of World War I

MIMI SEYFERTH



Knitting for Daddy. Photograph by Miss Boardman, 1919.
Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photography Division

The onset of World War I (1914–1918) brought about a tremendous demand for handknitted socks and other garments for the troops, which in turn spurred on a nationwide knitting fervor in this country. As a result of widespread campaigns encouraging volunteer knitting, working men and women, young children, suffragists, and performing artists, among others, joined combatants' family members to provide much-needed supplies to fighting soldiers and sailors.

Even before the United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917, volunteer organizations in the United States encouraged knitters to knit for British fighting troops who had begun fighting in 1914. The need for socks was especially acute. It has been said that an army's strength depends on the health of its soldiers' feet.

It was essential to have clean and dry socks to ward off disease, particularly in the trench warfare of World War I, where soldiers were crowded into muddy, wet, and narrow trenches. More than 74,000 Allied soldiers were afflicted by trench foot: a serious condition that could lead to gangrene and amputation. Notably, the British War Office allocated soldiers only three pairs of socks every six months. Knitters in the United States helped close the gap between the number of socks British soldiers required and the number of socks the British Army supplied.



American Red Cross poster promoting sock knitting during World War I
Image courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Divisions

The American Red Cross

The American Red Cross was the preeminent organizer of volunteer knitting activities in the United States during World War I. The Red Cross developed knitting pattern books for military garments and accessories, acquired and distributed wool for knitters, and then collected and helped the military hand out items completed by volunteer knitters.

With the intention of getting as many people to knit as possible, it also provided knitting instruction to novice knitters (including men and children), as well as places for new and experienced knitters to gather and knit. In 1917, the Red Cross founded a new organization, the American Junior Red Cross, and a focus of that group was to encourage school children to knit and to engage in other activities in support of the fighting troops.

Because the Red Cross volunteer knitters followed the specifications set forth in the Red Cross's knitting pattern books, there was considerable uniformity in the construction and sizing of the items they produced. At a time when the sizing of knitting needles was not standardized, the Red Cross even specified the diameter of the needles, called Red Cross Needles No. 1, 2, and 3, that should be used to knit particular patterns. Red Cross knitting patterns were straightforward and could be followed by knitters of varying abilities.

The American Red Cross grew exponentially during the United States' involvement in World War I. On May 1, 1917, shortly after the United States entered the war, the American Red Cross had 562 chapters with approximately 486,000 members, and by February 28, 1919, the American Red Cross had 3,724 chapters with approximately 20 million adult members and 11 million junior members. Among its membership were men, women, and children from all walks of life, including 5,000 Native American adults and 30,000 Native American students, many of whom were enlisted by the Red Cross as volunteer knitters.

The output of the Red Cross's volunteer knitters was prodigious. In a 1919 report on its work during World War I, the Red Cross noted that it had provided the following number of knitted items to soldiers and sailors in the United States alone in the 20-month period ending February 28, 1919: 7,142 afghans; 985,841 helmets (or balaclavas); 901,830 mufflers; 3,592,126 pairs of socks; 4,208,935 sweaters; 1,199,420 wristlets; and 3,801 miscellaneous items. The same report states that comfort supplies, "particularly the knitted sweaters, socks, etc., made by chapter women in America," were issued "by the million" to troops fighting in France.[1]



Attendees at the Knitting Bee included Civil War veteran I. E. Seelye, a knitter, pictured here with two British soldiers. *Photo courtesy of the National Archives Gallery from the American Unofficial Collection of World War I Photographs*



Knitting by Universal Motion Picture Company employees, 1917, published by the *New York Herald* *Photo courtesy of the National Archives Gallery from the American Unofficial Collection of World War I Photographs*

The Comforts Committee of the Navy League

In March 1917, the Women's Section of the Navy League formed the Comforts Committee of the Navy League to supply sailors with knitted clothing. By August 1917, the Comforts Committee had enlisted one hundred thousand volunteers who completed more than seventy thousand sets of knitted garments including vests, mufflers, wristlets, and helmets. These items were made from either navy blue or oxford grey wool.

From July 30 to August 1, 1918, the Comforts Committee sponsored a three-day Knitting Bee in New York City's Central Park. According to the *New York Times*, the chairwoman of the Comforts Committee quipped that if the weather was pleasant on the third day of the Knitting Bee (inclement weather apparently plagued the first two days of the event), "the knitters would be out in such numbers that the click of the needles would be heard in Berlin."[2]

The Knitting Bee included at least 50 contests for different classes of knitting men, women, and children. Ethel Rizzo of New York City "took the first prize in the speed contest, knitting a square of twenty-one rows, twenty-eight stitches each, with five needles in eight minutes."[3] Rizzo also was awarded a prize for knitting a sweater on three needles in one afternoon. The Knitting Bee raised $4,000 and during the event, knitters completed 50 sweaters, 48 mufflers, 224 pairs of socks, and 40 helmets, which all became the Committee's property.

Ironically, the Comforts Committee itself could not forward the items completed at the Knitting Bee to Navy sailors because on August 17, 1917, the Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels (1862–1948) had issued an order prohibiting the Navy League from giving any goods to Navy personnel. According to the design and textile historian Rebecca Keyel, this order resulted from a "contentious relationship" between Daniels and the president of the Navy League and their dispute regarding the identification of the perpetrators of an explosion at a navy yard.

Although many Comforts Committee volunteers switched to knitting for the Red Cross after Daniels issued his order, the Comforts Committee did not stop its knitting campaign. Rather than have the Comforts Committee forward donated items to the Navy, the Comforts Committee's honorary chairman sent donated knitted items to Navy sailors in her personal capacity.

Suffragists

In a recent *PieceWork* article, "Another Noble Cause: Suffragist Knitters of World War I," the textile and knitting historian Susan Strawn noted that, during World War I, *The Women Citizen*, the official publication of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, praised knitting as patriotic and encouraged suffragists to knit. Suffragists from throughout the United States provided *The Women Citizen* with reports of their knitting productivity.

Suffragists from the 27th Assembly District of the Suffrage Party in New York City—the Knitting 27th— knitted 712 sets of the garments prescribed by the Comforts Committee, one set for each of the 712 sailors stationed on the USS *Missouri*, a Maine class battleship that served as a training vessel in the Chesapeake Bay area during World War I. According to Strawn, the suffragists' knitting represented "73,491,216 stitches, or 40,828 hours of knitting." Strawn further notes that these suffragists knitted with donated wool, or wool that had been purchased with cash donations, resulting in "an estimated savings to the nation of $6 million to $7.5 million."[4]

Knitting in the Workplace

The Stage Women's War Relief, which was organized in New York City at the beginning of World War I to coordinate volunteer efforts by women in the theater, sponsored its own knitting campaign headed by the actress Mary Boland (1882–1965), who also entertained troops in France during the war.

According to the National Archives, the Universal Motion Picture Company in New York City was one of the first business organizations in the United States to encourage its male employees to knit during their lunch hour, with female stenographers



Members of the fire department of Cincinnati, Ohio, making sweaters, socks, and mufflers for soldiers in France. Photo shows women members of the American Red Cross teaching firemen the art of knitting for the soldiers.
Photo courtesy of the National Archives from the American Unofficial Collection of World War I Photographs

Volunteer knitters are reported to have donated 22–23 million garments for soldiers and sailors stationed domestically and overseas.

acting as the knitting instructors. Female office workers also knitted at the office while on breaks. Indeed, knitting became such an accepted part of the professional workplace that even grand jurors were found knitting.

In *Knitting America*, author Susan Strawn recounts the story of 800 workers (who included some men) in the Butterick Building in New York City who learned to knit in two one-half hour lessons and then, in six weeks, turned out 792 garments—a sweater, gloves, and two pairs of socks each for the 198 sailors stationed on two Navy destroyers. Thereafter, Butterick appealed to its readers to join with its employees in knitting a total of 7,032 handknitted garments for the crew of 879 sailors stationed on the Navy's largest battleship, the USS *Nevada*.

Knitting by Convalescing Combatants and Interned Prisoners of War

Soldiers and sailors themselves also became knitters. Wounded veterans knitted in hospitals as a rehabilitative measure. The Lafayette House, a New York City convalescent home for wounded veterans, offered knitting instruction. Allied and enemy prisoners of war also knitted, both to make clothing for themselves and to pass the time. And, even before the United States entered the war, Russian, Austrian, and German aliens, who had been detained at Ellis Island after the war started in Europe, were provided with materials to knit articles for the American Red Cross.

According to the National WWI Museum and Memorial, between the United States' entry into the war on April 6, 1917, and the end of the war on November 11, 1918, volunteer knitters in the United States dedicated two million hours (the equivalent of 230 years of labor) and used 45 million pounds of wool in knitting for the troops. Volunteer knitters are reported to have donated 22–23 million garments for soldiers and sailors stationed domestically and overseas. Volunteer knitting allowed civilians to demonstrate their patriotism as they made meaningful contributions to their country's war effort by knitting critically needed supplies. ❖

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MIMI SEYFERTH, a lawyer and knitter, lives outside Washington, DC. In conducting research for this article, she was delighted to discover a contemporary children's book—*Knit Your Bit: A World War I Story* by Deborah Hopkinson, illustrated by Steven Guarnaccia (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2013)—about a boy who learns to knit to participate in the Knitting Bee in Central Park and gives the one sock he is able to complete to a soldier who had lost a leg in combat.

Intangible Heritage of Humanity

Knitting on Taquile Island, Peru

KAREN ELTING BROCK



Still knitting at 85 years old, this Taquilean wears a married man's *chullo* as he is knitting a bachelor's *chullo*. Both hats include the eight-segment motifs as well as butterflies and birds.
Photos courtesy of the author

To admire the tall, tapering, knitted *chullos* (Andean hats) of Taquile Island, Peru, is to appreciate a 500-year-old story of community, craft, and self-reliance. To identify the exceptionally fine knitted designs of butterflies, birds, and flowers on that chullo is to recognize the value of the natural world and the centuries-old dependence on agriculture of the indigenous people who inhabit this island. To notice the vibrant bands of red and blue against which the motifs are set or to puzzle over the chullos whose upper half is knitted in solid stark white is to understand the ways a community's social structure is echoed in its textiles.

Taquile is a small island that is just over three miles long (5.6 kilometers) situated in Puno Bay in Lake Titicaca, a lake that straddles Peru and Bolivia. Titicaca is the highest navigable lake in the world, and the Andean people believe it is the birthplace of the sun. The view from Taquile's many hilltops, the highest over 13,000 feet (3962.4 meters), reveals the mountains of Bolivia rising in the distance across the sparkling blue waters of the lake.

Agriculture

In 1450, about 75 years before the Spanish arrived on the island, the Inca claimed Taquile, which is thought to have grown into an important agricultural post for the Incan empire. Today, farmers still grow potatoes, corn, beans, and quinoa in terraced fields across the island, and meandering stone walls keep cows and sheep from gobbling up the crops.

Taquile is divided into six *suyos*, which is a Quechua term for region or district. Each suyo is a complex community represented and governed by several different families. Community members determine the planting of crops by a careful rotation among the suyos. Fewer than two thousand people live on Taquile now, continuing their farming traditions as they have for generations.

Textiles

After farming, the second significant aspect of daily life in Taquile is the making of its distinct textiles—textiles so highly revered that in 2005, UNESCO declared "Taquile and Its Textile Art" as one of 90 "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity." Many Taquileans continue to dress in these traditional textiles.

Women wear bulky, layered skirts held in place with a wide handwoven *chumpi* (belt) at the waist





Left: Terraced fields of Taquile. *Right:* Stone archways mark the beginning and end of each *suyo*, and another arch at the shore of the island is a welcoming entrance through which all visitors pass.

Boys as young as seven or eight learn to knit from the elder men in their families to continue the tradition.

and a black wool scarf draped over their head. Men dress in short white or black pants and chumpi, a billowy shirt, short black vest, and the famous knitted chullo flopped to the side.

Production of the ornate weaving falls to the women, and they are responsible for weaving, with horizontal stake looms, the intricate chumpis and *chuspas* (small bags, often used for carrying coca leaves).

While women weave, care for the children, and mind the sheep that traditionally produced the necessary wool for weaving and knitting, men alone do the knitting; they also work in the fields and weave yardage for skirts, pants, and blouses (but not the finely detailed belts and bags) on treadle looms.

Knitting

The Spanish brought the craft of knitting to Peru and to Taquile during their conquest in the fifteenth century, and the Taquilean men continue to use the early Spanish knitting techniques today. They knit in the round with five needles, working from the wrong side. The knitters tension the yarn around their neck, which also helps keep the different strands of color from twisting.

Older knitters on the island talk of using cactus thorns as needles, but now men use metal needles of some form—many looking as thin and rough as bicycle spokes, and they may well be. Boys as young as seven or eight learn to knit from the elder men in their families to continue the tradition.

Chullos

The long, conical shape of the chullo is distinctive and somewhat whimsical, the colors vivid with dozens of ornate motifs, and the knitting tight—some Taquileans say tight enough to hold water. The gauge is extremely fine, about 20 stitches to the inch, which allows the knitter to create highly detailed motifs.



A married man's *chullo*, purchased in 2017. This *chullo* was knit with synthetically dyed wool at 20 stitches per inch at the top and 15 stitches per inch along the colored bands.

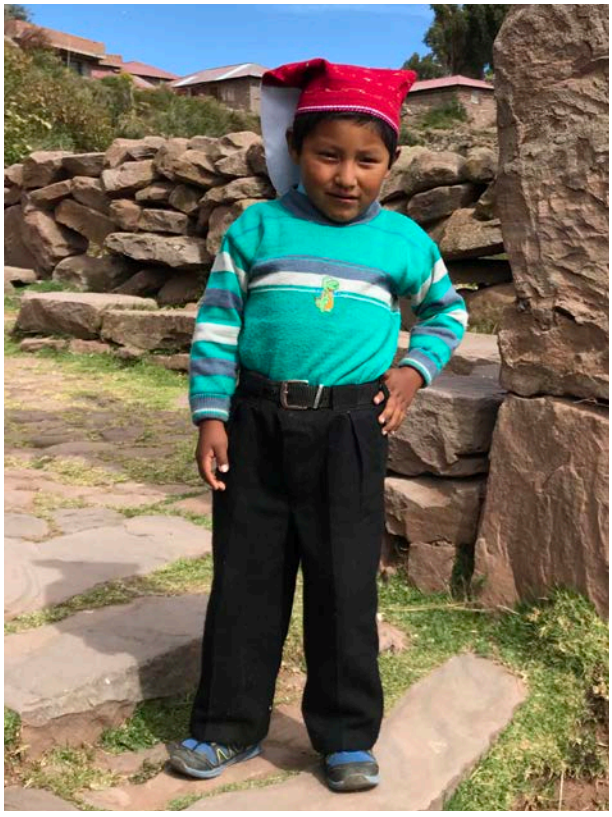
Animals, birds, flowers, and symbols from individual families make their way into the hats, which can take more than a month to knit. Two circular motifs are common. One appears as a six-segmented circle, representing the six suyos on the island, while others are circles of eight segments.

Bachelors knit their own chullos, the upper half in pure white; married men wear a chullo with alternating stripes of red and blue, each band embellished with motifs. Little girls wear a chullo with a ruffle at the bottom, but women never wear them. The chullo reflects not only a man's status as a bachelor or a husband, but a change in his status on the island. A man may knit several hats for himself during his lifetime. Each new chullo is an opportunity to demonstrate creativity, pride, and (especially for bachelors) expert knitting skills that will attract a future wife.

Tourism

While agriculture was once the primary form of work on Taquile Island, tourism has become the island's principal means of livelihood, and textiles play a major role. Tourism finally made its way to Taquile in the 1970s, and now approximately forty thousand visitors travel to the island each year. Year-round, visitors arrive by boat from the coastal city of Puno, a few hours away, and stay for an afternoon or overnight.

They lodge with local families in simple accommodations, hike the many paths across the island, learn about textile traditions, and most importantly, buy the textiles. Knitted items are no longer only for personal use but are also made to sell to tourists in the island's single cooperative store. Here, piles of knitted and woven garments are available for purchase, and the income generated from these textile sales has allowed the islanders to invest more in tourism infrastructure.



A small boy wears a bachelor's *chullo* with the all-white top half.

Changing Chullos

Tourism has brought additional work and income to Taquile, but not without a cost. UNESCO notes: "While tourism is regarded as an effective way of ensuring the continuity of the textile tradition, rising demand has led to significant changes in material, production and meaning." One example of these changes is that the yarn is seldom naturally dyed, handspun wool from the island's sheep but is often synthetically dyed acrylic yarn bought in Puno.

The traditional chullos did not have earflaps as they do in the Peruvian Highlands, but many hats for sale in the community store on Taquile have earflaps: design updates have catered to tourist's preferences. To increase options for customers, which increases sales, knitters make chullos in a variety of colors, not just the traditional red and blue or red and white. Knitting faster to knit more means using a stitch count that is much less fine than the traditional 20-plus stitches to the inch, which simplifies the intricate colorwork. Instead of detailed motifs on all the colored bands, now motifs may be knit on only a few.

Agriculture, textiles, and tourism are disparate but interconnected pursuits on Taquile Island. Despite the changes that time and tourism have brought, the proud Taquileans continue their traditions, adapting to meet the future. ❖

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Art, Tradition, Passion

Polish Crocheted Lace

CAROL J. SULCOSKI



Dreamcatcher in *Koniaków* lace with pom-poms
All photos courtesy of Centrum Koronki Koniakówskiej, permission granted by Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut unless otherwise noted

For over a hundred years, women in the Polish village of Koniaków have crocheted stunning lace designs in fine cotton thread. Despite its beauty and uniqueness, Koniaków lace flew under the global radar until 2003, when a group of lacemakers began crocheting risqué lingerie instead of doilies. But crocheted undergarments are only a small part of the story of Koniaków lace. Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut, who heads the Koniaków Lace Center and Museum, sums up her community's lacemaking tradition in three words: "Art. Tradition. Passion."

The Art of Koniaków Lace

When you first see Koniaków lace, you may think of snowflakes, intricate flowers, or stars. Worked in white or ecru cotton thread with delicate lines and swirling motifs, Koniaków lace has an ethereal feel. The most important thing you need to know about Koniaków lace is one of the most astonishing: Koniaków lacemakers do not use templates or patterns.

Each lacemaker creates her own motifs, which are often based on nature, and incorporates them as she works the larger piece. For example, lacemaker Zuzanna Ptak was inspired by how the sun's rays shone from around a nearby mountain peak; now she frequently designs flower motifs surrounded by "rays." This connection to the surrounding natural world underlies the lacemakers' work and gives it special meaning.

Once a crocheter finishes the individual motifs, she joins them together using "spiders," which are usually circular or star-shape geometric structures. This unusual method of design and construction means that no two pieces of lace are exactly alike. Like nature, the lace has small imperfections that only add to its beauty. Though created extemporaneously, designs are marked by their attention to composition. As Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut describes it, "Each pattern is symmetrical and even countable. There is no randomness here."

Traditionally, Koniaków lace is worked in white or off-white fine cotton thread using fine-gauge hooks. Today's renewed interest in using Koniaków lace for less traditional garments has led some younger designers to use colored threads, especially black. It's unlikely, however, that darker threads will supplant white or cream. It's significantly harder to crochet such intricate designs using dark thread. That means that lacemakers can't work on dark-colored projects all day as they can with light colors, particularly older makers with less accurate vision.

Koniaków lace has a deep, almost visceral connection to place. Of course, this is partly a function of its design focus on the natural world surrounding its makers. It may also relate to the way its techniques are taught—knowledge is passed on person to person, usually by mothers, neighbors, or friends. Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut observes that even though some techniques are available online, many crocheters outside Koniaków cannot duplicate the designs—they use heavy connecting lines, or they lay out motifs incorrectly. "Lacemaking knowledge," she explains, "will not come naturally without being here and living our culture. That's the magic of our lace."



European Heritage Days in Koniaków, 2009. The woman seated to the left is wearing a traditional mobcap called a *czepiec*.
Photo by Daniel Franek





Top: The Koniaków Lace Museum in Koniaków, Poland. *Bottom:* View on Koniaków from the Ochodzita Mount
Photo by Kamil Czaiński, courtesy of WikiCommons

Koniaków Lace Traditions

While we can't point to an exact time when Koniaków's lacemaking tradition started, we do know that Koniaków lace is about a century and a half old. We also know that the technique has its roots in the region's folk costume.

Polish highlander women traditionally wore collared shirts with puffy sleeves, skirts, aprons, and a bonnet or mobcap called a *czepiec*. A portion of the cap, often made of netting, covered the wearer's forehead, framing her face. Historical documents show that crocheted lace adorned the front of these caps by the early 1880s.

Mobcaps were worn by married women and played a cultural role in village life. As part of wedding festivities, other married women would remove the bride's flower crown, replacing it with a cap—a symbol of being welcomed into the community and the responsibilities of married life. Like her wedding ring, Ligocka-Kohut explains, the cap "accompanied her from the wedding ceremony until the end of her life. Lacemakers who could not afford a mobcap crocheted it by themselves. Women tried to stand out, so they experimented with motives [sic]."

It didn't take long for the distinctive type of lace to catch on. Soon, women added lace inserts to blouses and shirts and used crocheted lace to adorn ecclesiastical garments and altar cloths. Historical documents show that lacemakers produced crocheted doilies by 1906 or 1907. In time, hotel owners and shopkeepers sought out lace napkins, tablecloths, and doilies. By the period between world wars, Koniaków lace was highly sought-after by businesses and a growing urban bourgeois class. In addition to doilies and table linens, items such as lace curtains, bags, collars, and stockings became popular.

The vitality of the lacemaking trade in Koniaków was deeply affected by the Second World War and the subsequent formation of the communist Polish People's Republic in 1947. Enter a master lacemaker named Maria Gwarek.

A Passion for Koniaków Lace

The story of Koniaków lace wouldn't be complete without the individual women whose passion for the craft translated into a fierce determination to keep it alive, like Maria Gwarek. Sometimes called "the mother of Koniaków lace," Gwarek was born in 1896 and had a crochet hook in her hand from the time she was a little girl. As an adult, she was recognized as a local lace authority.

Gwarek was not just a master lacemaker, however; she was also a social activist. In 1947, Gwarek founded a cooperative for Koniaków lacemakers. While the Koniaków Lace Collective was a way to preserve this beautiful craft, it was also intended to create socio-economic opportunities for Koniaków artisans. A pastime that once was used as a break from physical labor or as a sideline for some extra income became a respected, paid profession.

The Collective employed women as lacemakers and instructors and provided them with a way to support themselves. At the same time, it fostered the growth of the art by sponsoring exhibitions and competitions, developing new patterns, and finding markets for finished items.

In an odd twist, the dreary day-to-day life in postwar Poland inspired a fresh interest in genuinely Polish items, from fabrics to sculpture to pottery.

After World War II, the communist People's Republic of Poland (PRP) controlled all Polish industries, from autos to food to health care. In the late 1940s, PRP agencies decided to extend state protection to folk art and formed the Folk and Art Industries Headquarters in 1949. A state-owned chain of shops called *Cepelia* began selling folk art, including Koniaków lace. Working with Cepelia shops, as Maria Gwarek did, provided a way for a local craft to be seen and admired all over Poland. Cepelia shops were successful for decades but saw a decline in popularity once the Polish economy switched to a capitalist structure in 1989.

After the untimely death of Maria Gwarek in 1962, her daughter-in-law Zuzanna took the helm of the Koniaków Collective. Zuzanna was a lifelong lacemaker known for the exquisite composition of her work. Zuzanna and her husband Erwin continued to run the Collective; they also collected examples of lace created by master crocheters. In 1980, they founded the Memorial Room of Maria Gwarek, displaying the oldest examples of Koniaków lace as well as unusual lace items. Zuzanna carried on the work of the Koniaków Collective until her death in 2015.

Spurred by an Unlikely Source: The Renaissance of Koniaków Lace

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, interest in doilies and other traditional lace products waned. Fewer women were learning Koniaków techniques, and the lacework was in danger of becoming a bygone art. And that's where the lingerie came in. In 2003, some Koniaków lacemakers took a bold step: they began using traditional Koniaków methods to produce undergarments, including thongs and G-strings. From a marketing perspective, the initiative made sense. Lingerie always sold briskly and the media attention—with headlines like "Lace and Licentiousness" and "Veruschka's Secret"—drew new attention to the village's lacemaking heritage.

The decision to branch out into less traditional products divided lacemakers. Some felt that using traditional motifs for items like lingerie was a betrayal and an insult to an almost-sacred art. More pragmatic crochet artists took the change in stride. After all, smaller items like G-strings took less time to make and sold better than, say, large tablecloths or doilies.



Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut with children at the Koniaków Lace Museum

The controversial shift to lingerie-making was just the beginning of a larger renaissance for Koniaków lace, driven in large part by Lucyna Ligocka-Kohut. Growing up in a nearby village, Lucyna saw her grandmother in Koniaków make lace. It wasn't until Lucyna began her ethnology studies that she came to appreciate how uniquely valuable her heritage was.

A whirlwind of energy, Lucyna has made the promotion and continued production of Koniaków lace her life's work. In 2019, she opened the *Centrum Koronki Koniakówskiej* (the Koniaków Lace Center). The Center includes a museum, a shop selling genuine Koniaków lace products, and an educational space for workshops and classes. Although she does not make lace herself, she has taken a three-pronged approach to preserving Koniaków lace: increasing awareness of its beauty, using modern applications to challenge old notions about lace, and providing a space where makers can collaborate and learn from each other.

One of Lucyna's projects was a 2018 collaboration with Japanese designer Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons. Kawakubo was interested in working with global folk artists and approached the Koniaków lacemakers. Although the designer didn't quite appreciate that Koniaków lace was genuinely slow fashion—it can take a lacemaker hours to perfect just one small motif—she was intrigued enough to order three hundred rectangular lace tablecloths.

Lacemakers came together to produce them in record time. Kawakubo incorporated the lace into a 2018 wedding dress presented at Paris Fashion Week.



Largest Koniaków lace doily 2013. The piece measures 16½ feet in diameter and took five months to complete.

The publicity and appreciation of the lacemaker's art led Lucyna to realize the importance of taking Koniaków lace in new directions.

Some other recent projects include the creation of the world's largest Koniaków lace—a doily measuring 16½ feet across, made from eight thousand individual pieces over a five-month period. The lace was certified by the Guinness Book of World Records, introducing a new audience to the traditional craft. Another success: a display of crocheted dresses, titled "Flowers of Koniaków," which was on display at the Polish Pavilion of the 2020 Dubai Expo.

The Center has also begun a new initiative to create Koniaków lace from wool, specifically the wool from local sheep. Central to all of these projects is Lucyna's vision: "We want to encourage [people] to play with Koniaków lace, get to know it and even fall in love with it, to carry this tradition into the future." ❖

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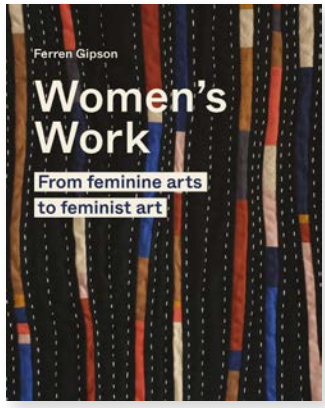
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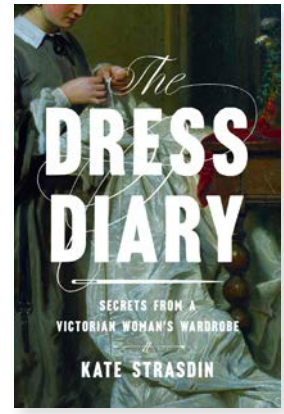
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Bookmarks

A World of Empowerment through Fiber



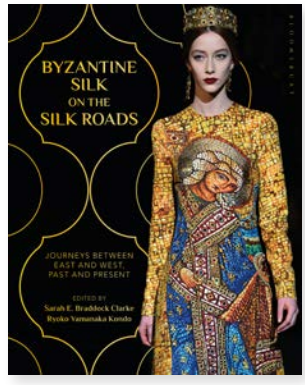
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The Story and Patterns of an Irish Crochet
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This Victorian-era inspired silk-ribbon embroidery piece is festooned with forget-me-nots, which were used to symbolize true and everlasting love.
Photos by Matt Graves

Forget-Me-Nots

A Silk-Ribbon Embroidery Based on a Victorian Pelerine, Project II

ADAPTED AND STITCHED BY DEANNA HALL WEST

The popular belief that the language of flowers (floriography) originated around the start of the Victorian Age could not be farther from the truth. Flowers have long been used symbolically in religious celebrations, art, folklore, and literature of the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, and Chinese.

Arguably, the earliest recorded floral communication with the gods may have happened some 35,000–65,000 years ago at the grave site of a group of Neanderthals at the Shanidar Cave in Iraq. Flowers featured prominently in many ancient cultural events in Europe, India, Asia (China, Japan, and Korea), and precolonial Africa to symbolize love, honor, and respect.

The avid British and European interest in the language of flowers began when it was first introduced to British society from the court of Constantinople (Ottoman Turkey) by an English woman, Mary Wortley Montagu, in 1717, and it then made its way to the United States soon after. Floriography books became popular as people sought to learn the meaning assigned to each flower.

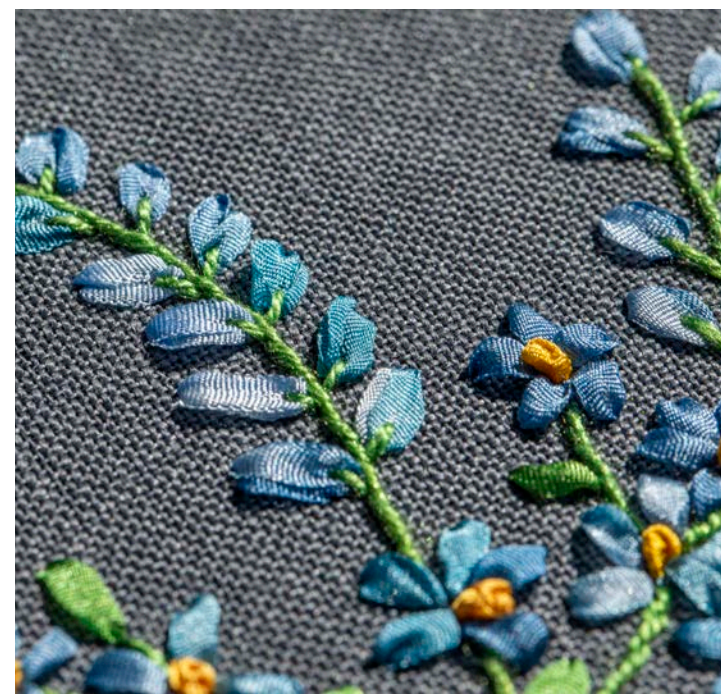
The common, five-petaled, yellow-centered, blue-hued forget-me-not is featured in this second installment of our four-part floral silk-ribbon embroidery series inspired by flowers stitched on a magnificent mid-nineteenth-century Victorian pelerine in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A pelerine is a short woman's cape or tippet, made of fur or fabric, with long panels hanging down the center front and that ends at the waist in the back. (For the first installment, see Marguerite Daisies: A Silk-Ribbon Bouquet Based on a Victorian Pelerine, *PieceWork* Winter 2023, page 40.)

Forget-me-nots have a long and rich history of myth and symbolism. There are actually two different plants that fit the general forget-me-not description and appearance—*Myosotis* and *Cynoglossum* (Chinese forget-me-nots). Myosotis is the more common genus with a low-growing habit 6"–8" (15–20 cm) tall that blooms in the spring with small flowers ranging from light to medium-dark blue, but with species exhibiting pink, white, or lavender flowers. Both *Myosotis* with its 80-plus species and *Cynoglossum* are all called forget-me-nots. *Cynoglossum* grows 12"–24" (30–61 cm) tall and blooms during the summer months with similar looking flowers in blues and pinks. Interestingly, both varieties are poisonous, so it would be best not to include them with edible gifts!

The flowers of both plants symbolize true and everlasting love, ongoing remembrance during partings and after death, and fidelity and loyalty in relationships. What a lovely gift this embroidery would make for someone dear!

MATERIALS

- Wichelt Imports *Edinburgh Linen*, 36-count: Slate, 1 piece 12" × 12" (30.5 × 30.5 cm)
- Treenway Silks *Silk Ribbon*, 3.5 mm wide (100% reeled silk), 5 yd/skein: 1 skein of #317 Green Tourmaline
- Treenway Silks *Montano Hand-painted Silk Ribbon*, 3.5 mm wide (100% reeled silk), 5 yd/skein: 2 skeins Glacier Lake, 1 skein each of Spring Green and Daffodil
- Treenway Silks *Zen Shin Thread*, 20/2 (100% spun silk), 10 yd/skein: 1 skein of #317 Green Tourmaline



The blue buds of the forget-me-nots are embroidered using the double straight stitch.

- Beechwood embroidery hoop (to work embroidery and to use as a frame): 7" (17.8 cm) diameter, hoop shown by Frank A. Edmunds Company.
- Needles: chenille #18 or 20, embroidery #5, sharps #9, and quilting or between #10 to sew down tails
- Flat metal hook needle threader to fit needles
- Scissors: fabric shears and embroidery
- General silk-ribbon-embroidery accessories: pincushion, blunt awl or laying tool, tweezers
- Fabric glue
- Felt: black, 1 piece 9" × 9" (22.9 × 22.9 cm) to back the hoop

Design Size: 5⅝" × 6½" (14.3 × 16.5 cm).
Project Size: 7⅜" (18.7 cm) diameter.

For more information from the author about how to work silk-ribbon embroidery, please visit LT.Media/Ribbon-Embroidery

Embroidery

Lightly trace the design onto the fabric.

Stitch the forget-me-not design, starting with the stem-stitched stems, then proceed to the silk-ribbon portions, stitching from the top down, and finally stitch any remaining components. Refer to the design photo, pattern, and legend for the placement of the ribbon and thread colors and stitch type.

When the stitching is complete, if needed, carefully iron out the wrinkles from the linen ground fabric (using the linen setting on the iron) outside of the embroidered area. Lightly mist the wrinkled areas with water if necessary. Do not touch the silk ribbon with the iron.

Project Construction

With the design fabric taut, center and secure the design into the wooden hoop with the hoop's hardware at the center top. Trim the ground fabric 1½" (3.8 cm) beyond the hoop's edge. With a double thread, handsew a running stitch ½" (1.3 cm) from the raw edge of the linen. Tightly gather the fabric and secure the thread. Place glue on the back side of the hoop only. With the felt square on a flat surface, center and firmly press the hoop onto the felt. If necessary and without distorting the felt, lightly pull the felt to be as taut as possible. Let the glue dry, then carefully trim the felt adjacent to the hoop with the fabric shears. ❖

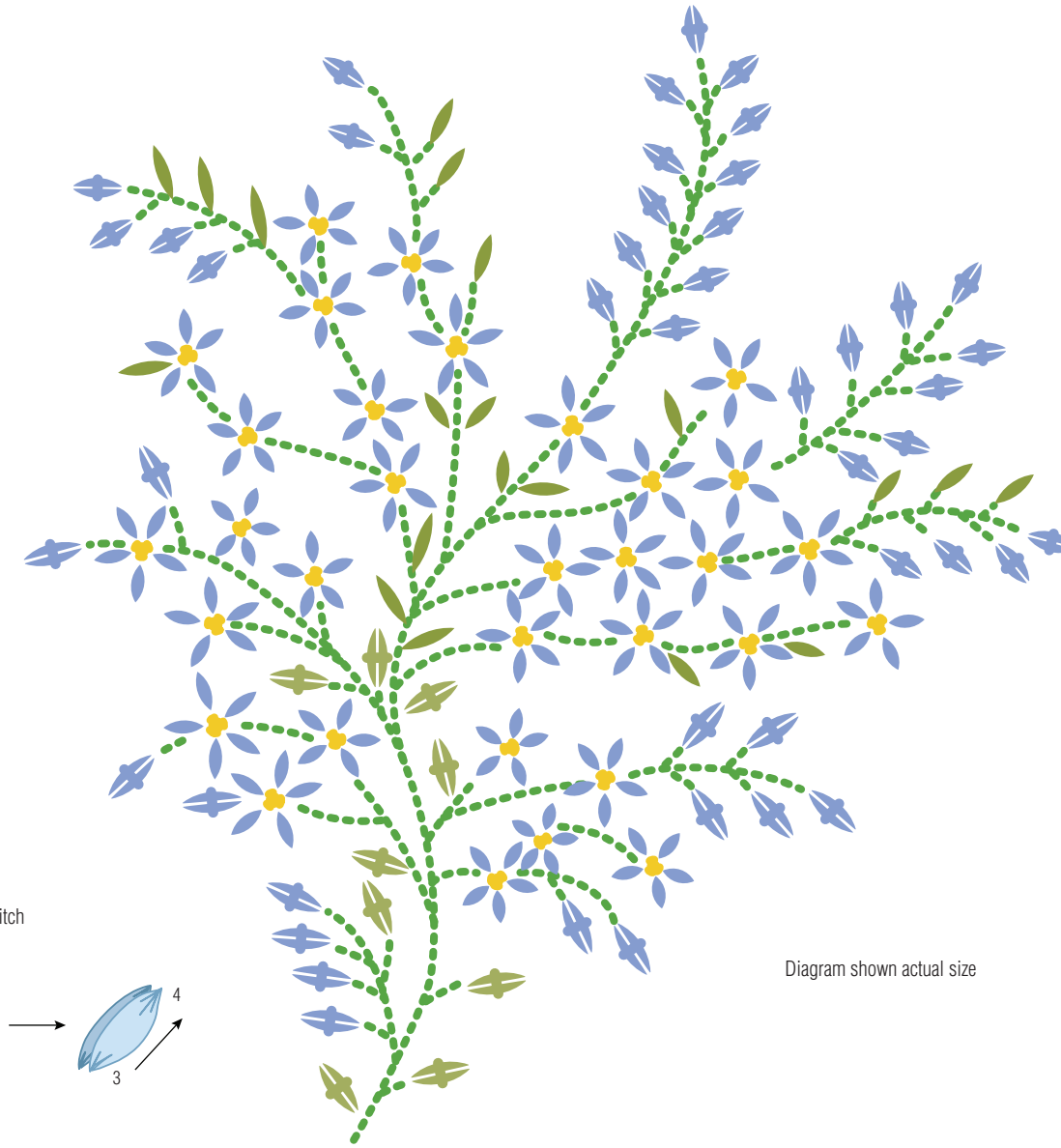


Embroidered silk thread stems provide a nice contrast in texture to the silk ribbon leaves and flowers.

DEANNA HALL WEST has been active in the needlework publishing business for more than 40 years as an editor, designer, author, researcher, teacher, and stitcher. She is recognized for her knowledge and writings about antique needlework accessories, samplers, and individual embroidery stitches.

Key

- Stem Stitch, #317 Green Tourmaline 20/2
- Double Straight Stitch, Glacier Lake ribbon
- Straight Stitch, Glacier Lake ribbon
- Double Straight Stitch, Spring Green ribbon
- Straight Stitch, #317 Green Tourmaline ribbon
- Colonial Knot, Daffodil ribbon



Double straight stitch

Diagram shown actual size

The Long Thread

Voices from Our Community

Linda Ligon

Founder, Interweave Press and Thrums Books, and cofounder, Long Thread Media

Your interest in the written word started at a young age and led to a career in journalism. When and how did your love of craft begin?

I was pretty solitary in early childhood in my little backwater Oklahoma town. World War II rations were in place, and toys were few and far between—or handmade. My mother gave me needles and thread to play with when I was as young as three, and I remember feeling empowered by these tools. I remember sewing scraps of cloth to a stick and calling it a doll. At the same time, I began making little books out of scrap paper with crude drawings. I've never stopped loving making things from scratch.

***PieceWork* was first launched 30 years ago. What similarities and differences do you see in handcraft from then to now?**

People still want to make stuff, and those who do still have an interest in the history of making stuff. Maybe the aesthetic has changed (fewer crocheted toilet-paper covers, for instance), but the fundamentals of creativity endure.

Having been in publishing for over 40 years, what do you see for its future?

Less print on paper, more online communication. I love the tactile and visual and archival aspects of printed books and magazines, but at the same time, I have always felt twinges of guilt at the number of trees that have been sacrificed for that purpose. I also love the dynamic possibilities of digital media—the in-person interviews, the helpful instructional videos, the community building. I hope print and digital continue to complement each other.

Many people consider craft as "cute" or say, "My grandma does that." What are your thoughts on changing or expanding that perspective?

Oh, I just want to punch them. Well, not really. I want to say, "Take me to your cute grandmother!"

Interweave started on your dining room table. What advice would you give to someone now wanting to start a venture from scratch as you did?

People are starting new ventures all over the place! Podcasts. Videos. Self-published books. There are so many opportunities, and I see amazingly high-quality work popping up all the time, even on TikTok and Instagram. It would be much harder, maybe impossible, to start a print magazine today as I did in 1975 because the technology and marketing channels have changed so much. I was working with typesetting and X-Acto knives and rubber cement and crude photos developed in my laundry room at night. It was primitive, and that shows in the early magazines. I wouldn't want to go back to that.

Interweave and Long Thread Media are not the only publishing that you have done—Thrums Books was another endeavor. What inspired you to visit diverse places and document these cultural crafts and lifestyles?

After leaving Interweave Press in about 2011, I wasn't finished with my urge to make books. I'd had the



Louise Tsosie of Chinle, Arizona, learned all the important traditional skills a Diné woman must know from her father, after her mother passed at an early age. Now in her 80s, she still weaves with speed and skill to put groceries on the table. Here, she visits Canyon de Chelly with her daughter, Rosalita Teller, and her granddaughter, Ailla (and me).

Photos by Joe Coca and courtesy of the author







Above: Resist dyeing with indigo is the specialty of these women of Sandu County, Guizhou Province, China. Just look at the intricacy and precision of the patterns on their aprons, all worked freehand.
Right: Welcoming a visitor with homemade rice wine is obligatory in Qingman Village, Qiandongnan Prefecture, Guizhou Province, China. Pan Yan Lian is a cheerful hostess as well as a world-class weaver and embroiderer of silk felt.
Below: Phout (no last name) raises silkworms, reels their silk, dyes splendid natural colors, and weaves elegant textiles in the remote village of Xam Tai, Houaphan Province, Laos. She also tootles around the village on her motor scooter and was kind enough to offer me a ride.

chance to travel a bit and see some of the exquisite textile traditions in Central and South America. Books just began happening, thanks in large part to Joe Coca, my sidekick photographer, and the authors I worked with in the indigenous cultures. One thing led to another, and pretty soon I was going to Morocco, China, and even Afghanistan. So many stories, so many skilled crafters, so much amazing cloth. It was a joy to document all that.

How can we continue to protect and preserve these crafts and cultures today?

We can continue to use our hands, with their remarkable opposable thumbs, to create work that speaks to us. We can pass our skills on to the next generation. We can collect textiles produced by indigenous crafters and by traditional crafters in our own culture. Record their stories, treat them with care, pass them on. ❖

Elsa's Stitching Legacy

SUSAN MERROW



A photo of Elsa Kallstrom Trulson from 1909 is nestled among some of her needlework pieces.
Photos by Jim Dugan. Images courtesy of the author

In 1904, 42 years before she was to become my grandmother, Elsa Kallstrom stepped off a ship that brought her from Göteborg (Gothenburg), Sweden, to Boston, Massachusetts. At the tender age of 17, she had come to start a new life in a strange new country, and with those brave first steps, she started down the path that would end in a new American branch of her Swedish family tree. Now, 120 years later, there are so many questions I wish I had asked about her journey, what prompted it, and how she made her way in this new land.

I know that she grew up in Figeholm, a small rural town south of Stockholm, and I know she was the oldest of eight children of a seafaring father. I've seen the small red house in Figeholm where she grew up, and I can easily imagine that it was impossible to sustain a large family there. It makes sense that she needed to leave to take the burden off her family and to make her own way. But first she had to journey from one side of Sweden to the other, arriving in Göteborg where it is likely she had to pick out the way to the steerage deck of her ship, carrying only a few possessions.

I know that after a two-week Atlantic crossing, Elsa was welcomed into a community of Swedish immigrants in Norwood, Massachusetts. While the Midwest was the destination for so many of the immigrants from the Swedish farmlands (35,000 of whom found their way across the sea in 1903 alone), I like to think that Elsa's roots on the beautiful Baltic coast of Sweden, like those of her welcoming community in Norwood, drew her nearer to the coast.

I'm told that she found work as a domestic in a wealthy household, which was a very typical career path for a young Swedish émigré. Swedish domestic help was apparently highly sought after in her new country, and letters home to Figeholm from friends who had gone before her to Norwood no doubt painted an inviting picture of the good life that awaited her if she was willing to work hard.

By 1911, she was engaged to be married to my grandfather Johan Werner Trulson, always called Werner. No doubt driven by the same need to find opportunity that motivated Elsa, he had immigrated through Ellis Island from Västervik, Sweden, just 40 or so miles from Figeholm, and he had a good job with a tannery. In the photographs of her 1911 wedding, she is wearing a dress that she made herself, but even more remarkably, Werner is wearing a suit that Elsa also made.

They set about to build a house in Norwood and raise two daughters, the older of whom is my mother. Family lore has it that Elsa was determined that her daughters would go to college, and they didn't disappoint her. She is also reputed to be one of the first women in her neighborhood to have a driver's license and the first of her peers to cut her hair. I have vivid memories of her as a strong, no-nonsense woman, always busy about the business of keeping a proper home.



Elsa and Werner Trulson wedding pictures—Elsa made both her gown and his suit.

Handstitched Keepsakes

Many mementos of Elsa's have found their way across the years to me (not the least of which is her name—my middle name is Elsa). Probably the most remarkable objects, however, are pieces of her handwork. Judging by the number of crocheted doilies and bedspreads, tatted handkerchiefs, and embroidered bureau scarves that survive to this day, her hands were never idle.

A number of the most beautiful pieces are decorated with Hardanger embroidery, which was popular in the western district of Hardanger in what is now Norway. Hardanger embroidery is a cutwork embroidery worked on evenweave fabric, typically done with white thread on white linen fabric. With skillful handwork, the edges of each stitched square (called a *kloster* block) are reinforced with stitching so that when the center has been clipped away, the fabric will not fray. Sometimes these openings are filled in with needle lace stitches, and sometimes only the warp or weft of the fabric has been removed, and what remains is incorporated into delicate patterns.



Cutwork and embroidery detail, trousseau pillowcase



Richelieu and *broderie anglaise* embroidery detail, trousseau pillowcase



Cutwork bow and monogram, pillow sham

By far the most beautiful memento of Elsa that I have inherited is a set of trousseau bed linens, which have somehow survived 112 years of being passed from hand to hand to find their way to me. I imagine that Elsa took pride in making a good life in her new country, and proper bed linens were part of that. I can't think that they would have survived so well if they had been used very often.

I suppose that Elsa stored them carefully in a linen closet until her death in 1957. By the time they got to me, however, they had been stashed in a large drawstring bag and had yellowed with age. The trousseau bed linen combines several floral patterns of all white embroidery on white linen sheets, pillowcases, a bureau scarf, and what appears to be meant as a pillow sham. Some of the pieces involve cutwork, while others have finely crocheted edgings.

These delicate, white-on-white embroidery styles would certainly have been popular in Scandinavia during Elsa's growing up years. Certainly, it would have been a matter of pride for Elsa to bring some lovely household items into her marriage. I picture her giving special attention to the embroidered initials that represent her new status as a married woman.

Of all the qualities that Elsa might have passed down to me, the patience and skills for painstaking handwork were not among them. (Perhaps a bit of Elsa lives on in my own daughter. She is a spinner, weaver, knitter, and also the Editorial Director of Long Thread Media, publisher of this magazine.)

Bringing Swedish Crafts to Her New Home

If I could spend an afternoon with Elsa after all these years, I would want to know where and how she learned her craft. Was she carefully taught in her hometown before she left Sweden as a teenager? Sweden was notably ahead of other countries for encouraging education for girls in order that women might be capable of supporting themselves if it became necessary, and handwork skills would have been a part of her training. Satin stitches, chain stitches, and other surface embroidery stitches became popular as printed embroidery designs on fabrics became more readily available. According to Edith Nielsen's *Scandinavian Embroidery: Past and Present*:

> Little girls throughout Scandinavia learned these stitches and the counted stitches early;

These delicate, white-on-white embroidery styles would certainly have been popular in Scandinavia during Elsa's growing up years.

> they were expected by age ten to start work on the so-called bridegroom shirt. Every well brought up country girl presented such an elaborately embroidered shirt to the man to whom she became engaged.[1]

During the Industrial Revolution, European needlework books and magazines, and mass-produced bed linens stamped with designs to embroider were sold all over Sweden, which brought about a departure from the traditional folk needlework techniques of earlier times.

Embroidering bed linens became a very *au courant* pastime, as materials became affordable as well as available to people of all classes. Her relatives in Sweden could have sent her stamped fabric; it is equally possible, as Elsa lived in Massachusetts (which was full of textile mills), that she could have purchased fabric here in this country as well.

Writing about the bed linens with printed pattern markings in Scandinavia in the late 1800s, Edith Nielsen remarks:

> However, in the bedroom the old styles were not forgotten, but merely changed. No longer were there embroidered bed hangings, just as there were no more enclosed beds. But, there were very fancy bed linens and embroidered runners on dressers. *Broderie Anglaise* was followed by its cousin, *Richelieu* work, which was more difficult to embroider.[2]

Elsa's lovely sheets and pillowcases are elaborately decorated with finely executed satin-stitch monograms, broderie anglaise eyelets, and on some of them, Richelieu motifs. The embellishments speak to her skill at whitework embroidery, and many are neatly hemstitched, which is a fine counted-thread technique.

She embroidered some of her table linens exclusively in counted thread work. Hardanger was very popular, not only in Scandinavia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also in the United States, and counted work on linen would have been something that Elsa, as a young Swede, would have been very familiar with. Schoolgirls in Sweden learned cross-stitch on linen at an early age, as it was used to mark linens and clothing with both monograms and decorative elements.

At the very least, her education apparently equipped her with an adventurous spirit. However, I imagine that she carried only a few precious things on her journey to the United States. I know these included a bible inscribed with her name and the date of her confirmation in the Figeholm church when she was 16, just a year before her departure.

Did the community of friendly Swedes that took her in in Massachusetts teach her and encourage her to be proud of the work of her hands? Following days of domestic work in the home of the wealthy family, did Elsa spend her evenings in a rooming house plying her needle while she looked forward to her wedding day?

I hope that Elsa would be proud to know not only that the work of her hands is admired and treasured all these years after her wedding, but also that her family, whose roots she planted here so far from Sweden, is proud of her courage and of the Swedish heritage that runs through our veins. One hundred years after the confirmation date in her bible, I was privileged, along with another of Elsa's granddaughters, to stand in that small white church in Figeholm. Her legacy lives on. ❖



Hardanger edging decoration on bureau scarf and doily

NOTES

1. Edith Nielsen, *Scandinavian Embroidery: Past and Present* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 21–22.
2. Nielsen, *Scandinavian Embroidery*, 37.

SUSAN MERROW is a retired town government official and lobbyist for environmental causes. She lives in mid-coast Maine and is proud of her Swedish heritage!

Fanø Tile Shawl

CHRISTEL SEYFARTH



Wrap yourself in Seyfarth's handknitted masterpiece of color and pattern.
Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

Fanø, the westernmost island of Denmark, is a small sandbar sandwiched between the great roaring North Sea and the Wadden Sea National Park. It was once the home port for Denmark's largest sailing ship fleet, surpassed only by the capital, Copenhagen. The ships transported goods on the seven seas, and the seamen were often gone for years at a time.

The tile culture on Fanø is closely related to the maritime heydays of the island. The handpainted tiles were used as ballast in the ships sailing from the Netherlands to Fanø. Once the ships returned home, the tiles were set into the walls, creating the most beautiful patterns. Around the year 1900, the golden age of sailing ships was nearing the end, and with it, the beautiful ballast cargo. Luckily, the tiles can still be found in many Fanø homes, and today they are a collector's item, whether sold singly or as multi-tile murals.

Materials

- J.C. Rennie & Co. *Supersoft Lambswool 4ply*, (100% lambswool), about 270 yd (246 m)/1.76 oz (50 g): 2 balls each of background colors #412 Cream, #221 Putty, #591 Wheatear, #621 Mushroom, #131 Oyster, and #117 Laurel; 1 ball each of pattern colors of #273 Blueprint, #358 Atlantic Spray, #1048 Ocean Force, #258 Denim, #1008 Petrel, and #158 Ivanhoe; 4 balls border color #183 New Navy
- Needles: size 4 (3.5 mm), 16" (40 cm), 24" (60 cm), and 48" (120 cm) circulars, or size needed to obtain gauge
- Stitch markers
- Contrasting sewing thread and handsewing needle or sewing machine for securing steek
- Square of cardboard 4" × 4" (10.2 × 10.2 cm) or 4" (10.2 cm) form for winding pom-poms

Finished Measurements: 88" (223.5 cm) width across upper edge, 44" (111.8 cm) length from lower point to upper edge, not including pom-poms.

Gauge: 30 sts and 33 rows/rnds = 4" (10.2 cm) in stranded stockinette chart patterns, after washing and blocking.

Special Technique

Magic Ball

This method uses a ball of yarn made up of short lengths of different colors wound one after the other into the same ball. The shawl uses one magic ball with six background colors and another magic ball with six pattern colors. The technique is slightly random, and you will be in a constant state of suspense about how the next color combination from the balls will work out.

Arrange all the colors from one group (either background or pattern) from darkest to lightest. Starting with the darkest shade, wind 4½ to 13 yards (about 4 to 12 meters) into a ball, then continue with the next-darkest color, and so on, until you finish with the lightest shade. While creating the ball, simply overlap the old and new colors and keep rolling, without joining them. Then reverse the colors, working in order backward from lightest to darkest.

Consider how the colors blend so the result is subtle, with no harsh transitions between the colors. While you can skip colors in the sequence, avoid placing a very light color next to a very dark one. Prepare a ball about the size of a tennis ball from the background color group and a second ball from the pattern group. You now have two balls, ready to begin knitting!

Make more balls when necessary, keeping the color gradations in mind. Do not worry about how the colors will fit into the patterns. The stripes at the start of the shawl will be taller than the later stripes worked on more stitches, but that doesn't matter. Just knit!



Antique Dutch tiles, such as these, provided the inspiration for Seyfarth's striking shawl.
Tilel: Sun, Moon, and Stars (Rozenster) 1750–1850, Artist/Maker Unknown, Dutch philamuseum.org/collection/object/205158

How to Treat Loose Ends

Many color changes mean many ends! You can avoid having to weave them in later by joining as you work. Tie the old and new colors together in a weaver's knot, leaving 2" (5 cm) tails. Smooth one tail against the working yarn on each side of the knot, moisten overlapped section, then rub it between your hands to felt the tails to the yarn. You can also splice the ends together. Do what you feel is easiest.

For step-by-step instructions on the weaver's knot, please visit LT.Media/Weavers-Knot.

Notes

This shawl is worked in stranded stockinette colorwork. Only two colors are used for each row, a background color indicated by the white squares on the charts, and a pattern color shown by the dark squares. The colors are combined to form the background and pattern color groups using the Magic Ball method (see Special Technique).

The shawl is worked from the bottom point upward. The body of the shawl begins by working back and forth in rows, increasing until there are enough stitches to join the piece for working in the round. Steek stitches are added, and the piece continues in the round to the upper edge. The faced top border is worked as a continuation of the shawl body.

After the shawl body steek has been cut open, stitches for the side borders are picked up along the two diagonal edges of the shawl, then joined with their own steek so that they can be worked entirely in the round. After cutting the ends of the side borders apart, their steeked edges are turned to the WS and stitched invisibly to the edges of the top border.

Because the steeks in this project are inserted between diagonal edges, I prefer to sew the steek stitches by hand to maintain the elasticity of the edges instead of using a sewing machine.

When working in rows, odd-numbered chart rows are RS rows, and even-numbered chart rows are WS rows. When working in the round, read all chart rows from right to left as RS rows.

Refer to the diagram for the placement of the charts. You can also photocopy the individual charts and tape them together for a complete working copy.

Exact gauge is not critical for the success of this project, but it may affect yarn amounts.

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

Instructions

Body

Using the 16" (40 cm) circular needle and background color, CO 2 sts. Work in rows as follows:

Row 1 (RS): K2.

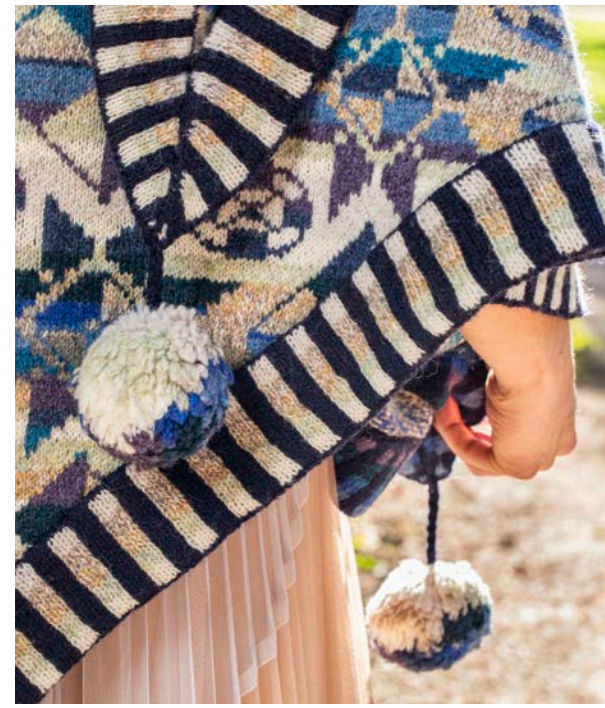
Row 2 (WS): K1f&b 2 times—4 sts.

Join the pattern color but work the following rows entirely in the background color, trapping the pattern color floats on the WS every 3 to 5 sts so the solid-color tip of the shawl will have the same thickness as the stranded colorwork sections.

Row 3: K1f&b with both colors held together, knit with background color to last st, k1f&b with both colors held together—2 sts inc'd.

Row 4: K1f&b with both colors held together, purl with background color to last st, k1f&b with both colors held together—2 sts inc'd.

Rows 5–14: Rep the last 2 rows 5 more times—28 sts.



The pom-poms add a lively touch to the striped border.

Note: When working the chart patterns in rows, work each k1f&b with both colors held together, ignoring the dark or light colors of the squares in the pattern chart; this ensures that the colors are carried all the way to each selvedge.

Next row (RS): Work Row 1 of Chart 1 over 14 sts inc them to 15 sts as shown, work Row 1 of Chart 2 over 14 sts inc them to 15 sts—30 sts total.

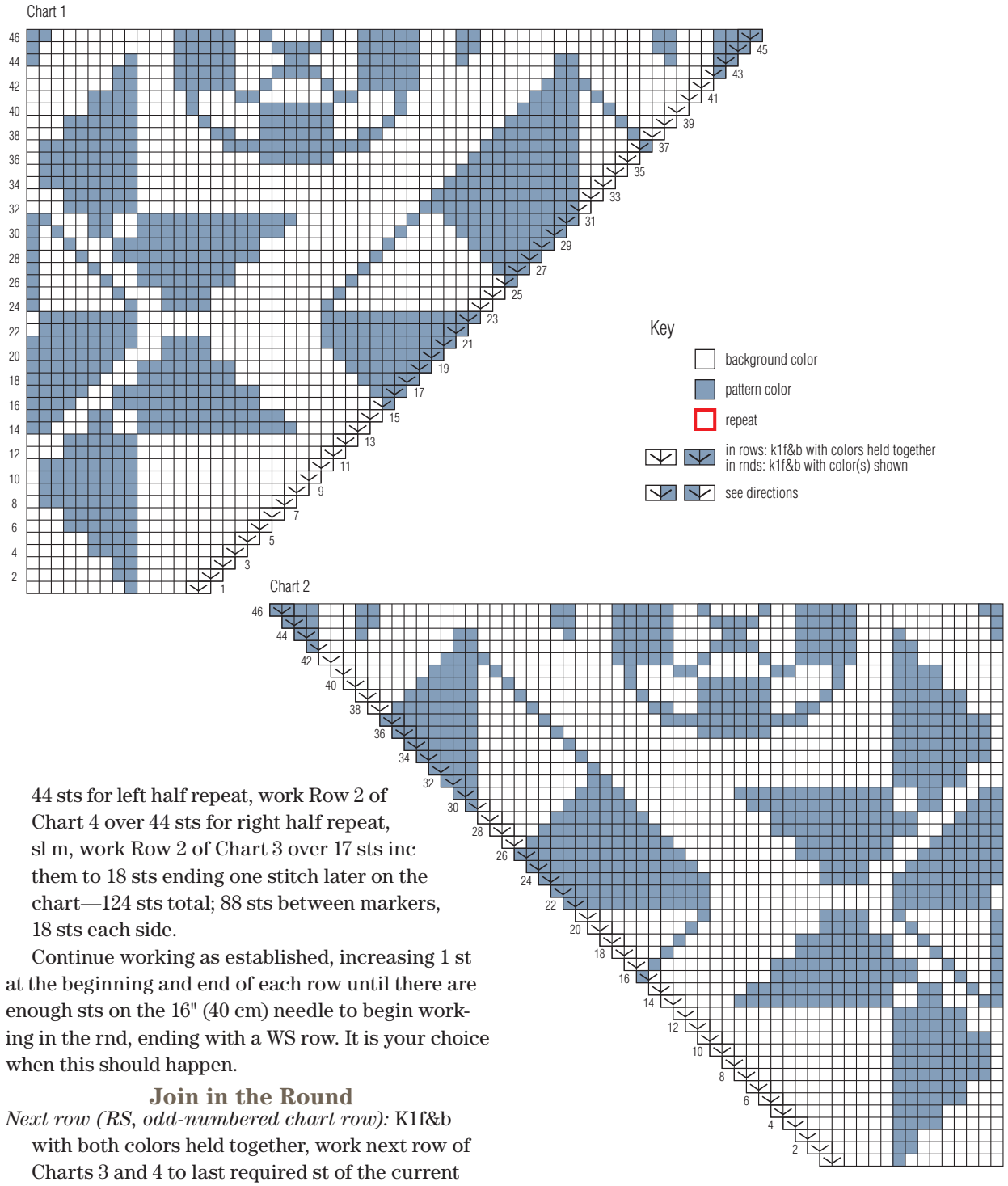
Next row (WS): Work Row 2 of Chart 2 over 15 sts inc them to 16 sts, work Row 2 of Chart 1 over 15 sts inc them to 16 sts—32 sts total.

Continue as established until Charts 1 and 2 have been completed—120 sts total, 60 sts each chart.

Continue as established working from the main pattern Charts 3 and 4, increasing 1 st at the beginning and end of each row by working k1f&b with both colors held together.

Next row (RS): Work Row 1 of Chart 3 over 16 sts beginning the row where indicated with k1f&b with both colors held together to inc to 17 sts, pm, work Row 1 of Chart 4 over 44 sts for the right half of main pattern rep, work Row 1 of Chart 3 over 44 sts for left half of the main pattern repeat, pm, work Row 1 of Chart 4 over 16 sts inc them to 17 sts by ending with k1f&b with both colors held together—122 sts total; 88 sts between markers, 17 sts each side.

Next row (WS): Work Row 2 of Chart 4 over 17 sts inc them to 18 sts and starting one st earlier on the chart, sl m, work Row 2 of Chart 3 over



44 sts for left half repeat, work Row 2 of Chart 4 over 44 sts for right half repeat, sl m, work Row 2 of Chart 3 over 17 sts inc them to 18 sts ending one stitch later on the chart—124 sts total; 88 sts between markers, 18 sts each side.

Continue working as established, increasing 1 st at the beginning and end of each row until there are enough sts on the 16" (40 cm) needle to begin working in the rnd, ending with a WS row. It is your choice when this should happen.

Join in the Round

Next row (RS, odd-numbered chart row): K1f&b with both colors held together, work next row of Charts 3 and 4 to last required st of the current row, k1f&b with color(s) shown on chart, pm for beginning of steek, use the backward loop method to CO 5 steek sts as [1 st pattern color, 1 st background color] 2 times, 1 st pattern color, pm for end of steek and end of rnd, then join for working in the rnd—2 body sts inc'd; 5 new steek sts, not shown on charts.

Note: When working the chart patterns in the round, change to working each k1f&b with the color(s) shown for each stitch in the increase.

Next rnd: K1f&b with color(s) shown, work next row of charts to 1 st before steek m, k1f&b with color(s) shown, sl m, work 5 steek sts using the opposite color for each st for a checkerboard steek pattern—2 body sts inc'd.

When the stitches on each end of the row have increased to the full width of the chart, pm between repeats and begin another repeat of Chart 3, left half, and Chart 4, right half.

Continue in pattern as established until Rnd 86 of all charts has been completed—297 sts total;

88 marked center sts, 44 sts in half-repeats each side of center, 58 sts each side, 5 steek sts.

Next rnd: Continue in pattern as established, starting over with Row 1 of Chart 3 and Chart 4 until Rnd 86 of all charts has been completed—469 sts total; 264 marked center sts, 44 sts in half-repeats each side of center, 56 sts each side, 5 steek sts.

Next rnd: Continue in pattern as established, starting over with Row 1 of Chart 3 and Chart 4 until Rnd 61 of all charts has been completed—591 sts total; 440 marked center sts, 73 sts each side, 5 steek sts.

Top Border

Cut pattern color, but do not cut background color. Join New Navy border color. Remove pattern m as you come to them in the next rnd, leaving m on each side of steek in place.

Next rnd: With border color, k1f&b, knit to 1 st before steek m, k1f&b, sl m, k5 steek sts—588 body sts, 5 steek sts.

Next rnd: With border color, k1f&b, knit to steek m, sl m, k5 steek sts—589 body sts, 5 steek sts.

Next rnd: K1f&b with border color, k1 with border color, *k3 with background color, k3 with border color; rep from * to 5 sts before m, k3 with background color, k1 with border color, k1f&b with border color, sl m, work 5 steek sts as established—591 body sts, 5 steek sts.

Working new sts at each side into established 3×3 colorwork pattern, continue to inc 1 st at each end of shawl body every rnd. Work in pattern until top border measures 2" (5.1 cm) from last chart rnd.

With border color, knit 1 rnd, purl 1 rnd for facing fold line, then knit 1 more rnd.

Exchange the colors in the border facing, using the border color for the columns that were previously in the background color, and vice versa. Continue as follows:

Next rnd: K1 in border color, ssk in color of first st on left needle, work 3×3 colorwork pattern with colors reversed to 3 sts before m, k2tog in color of second st on left needle, k1 in border color, sl m, work

Chart 3, main chart left half

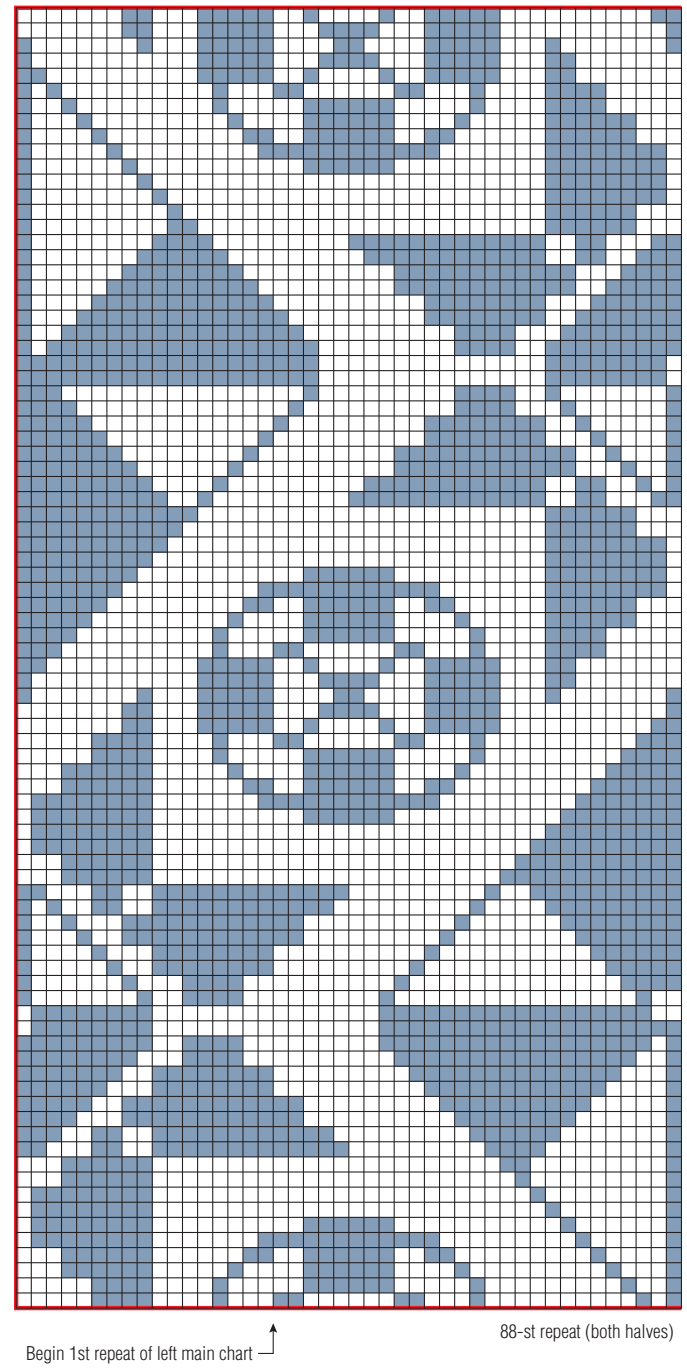
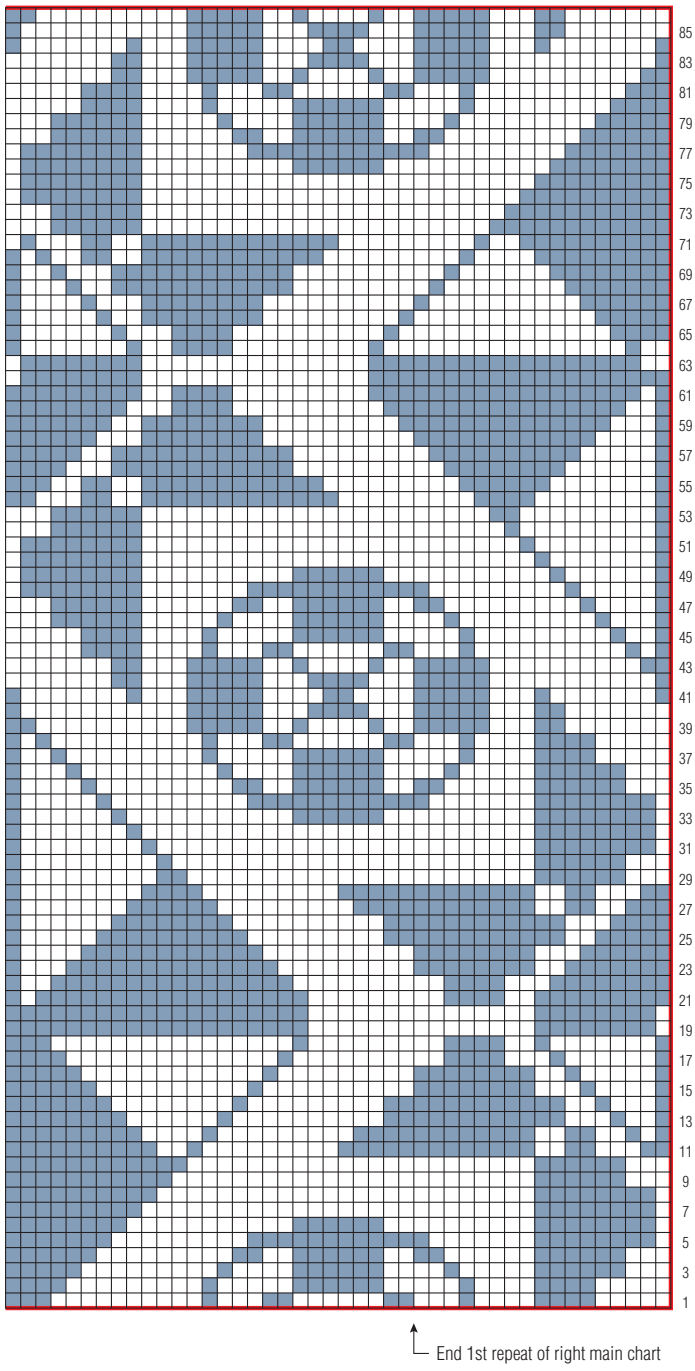


Chart 4, main chart right half



5 steek sts as established—2 body sts dec'd.

Rep the last rnd until facing contains the same number of 3×3 colorwork rnds as the RS of top border. Cut background color.

With border color, knit 1 rnd. BO all sts with border color.

Secure Steek

Using handsewn backstitches or a sewing machine (see Notes), sew a line of stitches between the 1st and 2nd steek stitches, then sew another line between the 4th and 5th steek stitches. Turn the work inside out so you can see the lines of stitching clearly. Before cutting, you may want to lightly felt the steek by steaming with a steam iron. Carefully cut the steek open along its center stitch.

Secure any loose ends, and steam-press the shawl lightly.

Side Borders

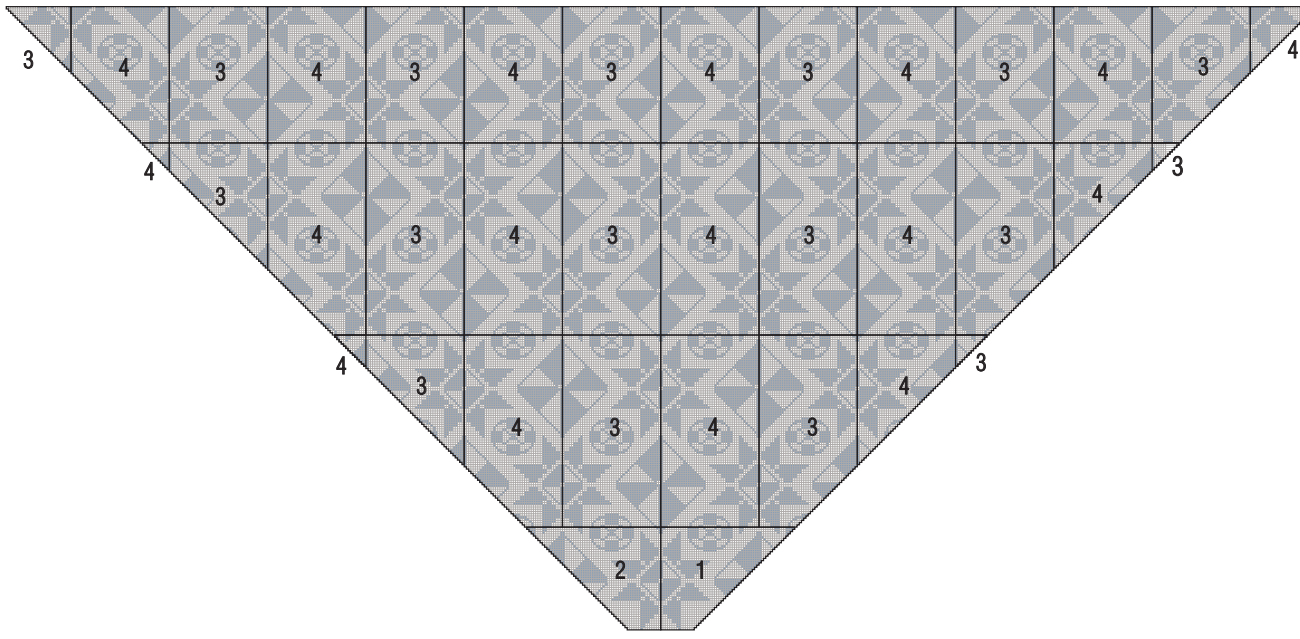
Using the New Navy border color and 40" (100 cm) circular needle, with RS facing and starting in last chart rnd at top left corner of shawl body, pick up and knit 295 sts (about 1 for every row or rnd) between the chart pattern and the steek along one side, pm, pick up and knit 2 sts from lower point CO, pm, then pick up and knit the same number of sts along other side, ending in the last chart rnd at the top right corner of shawl body, pm for beginning of steek, use the backward loop method to CO 5 steek sts, pm for end of steek and end of rnd, then join for working in the rnd—295 sts each side section, 2 marked point sts, 5 steek sts.

With border color, knit 1 rnd.

Next rnd: *K1f&b with border color, k1 with border color, [k3 with background color, k3 with border color] 48 times, k3 with background color, k1 with border color, k1f&b with border color;* sl m, k2 point sts with border color, sl m; rep from * to * once more, sl m, work 5 steek sts as [1 st border color, 1 st background color] 2 times, 1 st border color—297 sts each side section in 3×3 colorwork pattern, 2 marked point sts, 5 steek sts.

Working new sts into 3×3 colorwork

Chart Layout



pattern, working 2 marked point sts in border color, and working steek in checkerboard pattern, continue to inc 1 st at each end of both side sections every rnd, taking care to mirror the pattern on each side of the 2 marked point sts. Work in pattern until side borders measure 2½" (6.5 cm) from pickup rnd.

With border color, knit 1 rnd, purl 1 rnd for facing fold line, then knit 1 more rnd.

As for the top border, exchange the colors in the side border facings, using the border color for the columns that were previously in the background color and vice versa. Continue as follows:

Next rnd: *K1 in border color, ssk in color of first st on left needle, work 3×3 colorwork pattern with reversed colors to 3 sts before m, k2tog in color of second st on left needle, k1 in border color,* sl m, k2 point sts with border color, sl m; rep from * to * once more, sl m, work 5 steek sts as established—2 sts dec'd each side section.

Rep the last rnd until facings contain the same number of 3×3 colorwork rnds as the RS of side borders. Cut background color.

With border color, knit 1 rnd. BO all sts with border color.

Sew and cut steek as for shawl body.

FINISHING

Secure any loose ends. Steam-press again, turning facings to WS along purled fold lines and lightly pressing the folds.

Sew BO edges of facings as invisibly as possible to WS of shawl, making sure the side borders cover the cut edges of the shawl body. Fold cut edges of side border steek to WS and sew side and top borders together along their mitered corners, easing to fit.

Pom-poms

Make three pom-poms. For each, cut a 12" (30.5 cm) length of yarn and set it aside. Wind the first color around the cardboard until the pom-pom is halfway full, then wind the rest of the way with the second color. Slide the length of yarn between the wrappings and the cardboard at the top, remove the cardboard, and tie the strand firmly to cinch the wound yarn. Using sharp scissors, cut the across the bottom of the wrappings to open the pom-pom. Fluff the strands, and trim into a round shape. Attach one pom-pom to each corner using a 2" (5.1 cm) length of twisted cord in border color.

Using liquid wool soap gently wash the shawl in lukewarm water, either by hand or in the washing machine on the wool cycle. Rinse well and run an extra spin cycle if necessary to remove excess water. Lay flat until thoroughly dry. Press again using a steam iron and lots of steam. ❖

CHRISTEL SEYFARTH is one of Denmark's best known knitwear designers, with fans all over the world. She is particularly known for her fantastic pattern mix and an exceptional eye for colors. Christel Seyfarth has developed knitting techniques that make her complicated models much, much easier to knit than you might think at first glance. She works from her studio store on the island of Fanø in Denmark. Read more about Christel Seyfarth at christel-seyfarth.dk.

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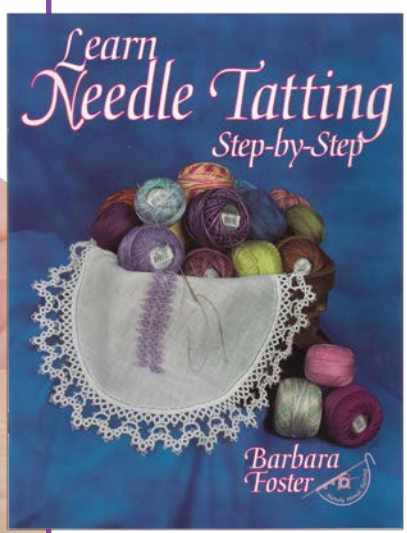


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Knitting in The Ballet World

ALPHONSE POULIN



Prima ballerinas Irina Baronova, Alicia Markova, and Nora Kaye in the open loft door of one of the Jacob Pillow barns in 1941, which now houses the Pillow Store. Alicia Markova is wearing handknitted leg warmers.
Photo by Hans Knopf, courtesy of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

Ballet is a stylized form of dance that originated during the Italian and French Renaissance. Catherine de Medici (1519–1589) brought ballet from Italy to France, where it developed further due to her noble influence. An influx of money from aristocrats helped fuel the rise of the literature, ideas, music, scenery, and costumes that brought dance to the courts of Europe. *L'Académie Royale de Danse* (now the Paris Opera) was founded by Louis XIV in the latter part of the seventeenth century, which is why the vocabulary of ballet is made up of French terms. Eventually, ballet flourished throughout the courts of Europe.

The Evolution of Ballet Attire

As time progressed, dance masters and choreographers placed more importance on costumes and ballet wardrobes. They sought costumes and dance attire that did not hinder the freedom of movement the dancers needed. The *tutu* (from the word *cucu*, which was slang for bottom) was in vogue as of the beginning of the eighteenth century. The first tutus worn for morning training and for rehearsals consisted of a bodice, a knee-length skirt worn with petticoats, and pantaloons (for modesty) down to the knees.

The Romantic tutu is made of 10–12 stiff tulle skirts sewn onto a panty and sits at the dancer's hips. The inverted Bell tutu is composed of several long layers of tulle which have a downward droop usually to mid-thigh. The Powderpuff tutu has short ruffles of tulle sewn loosely onto a panty for soft effect. The Platter tutu sits at the waist. The Pancake tutu is supported by a hoop and is very flat. The long Romantic tutu was worn throughout the Romantic period of ballet (circa 1827–1848) and is still worn today.

Just prior to the Romantic period, in France, Carlo Blasis (author of *Traité élémentaire, théorique et pratique de l'art de la danse [Elementary, theoretical, and practical treatise on the art of the dance* chez J. Beati et A. Tenenti, Milan, 1820]) established the elements, requirements, and sequences necessary for ballet instruction. This brought the level of technique and artistry to a higher and more demanding level. Increased rigor demanded more uniform attire.

Men were becoming more prominent in the ballet repertoire where virtuosity and skillful partnering were more advanced. During this Romantic era of ballet, theaters and dance studios were not overly heated. Cold work environments inspired dancers to knit their own ankle warmers, leg warmers, tights, capelets, shawls, and shrugs. When not involved in rehearsals, they did not sit with idle hands. They knitted dance clothing and accessories that were simple, practical, and easy to knit, which served the main purpose of keeping them warm. Shawls were an all-time favorite made of a large triangle with easy lace patterns or plain garter stitch. Ballerinas wore them very fashionably in a variety of ways. They were light, airy, and accentuated the flow of the dancer's movements.



The Dance Class, Edgar Degas, 1874. Bequest of Mrs. Harry Payne Bingham, 1986, 1987.47.1
Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

By the end of the nineteenth century, circus artists were introducing commercial clothing such as leotards, tights, body stockings, shirts, and sweaters that did not take long for ballet dancers to adopt and produce for their daily work clothes. The famous surplice "ballerina" sweater, which ties around the waist, may have first appeared during this period. During performance periods, ballerinas backstage also wore beautiful handknitted shrugs (often made in a dancer's favorite stitch for easy identification). Shrugs were easy to shed for a quick return to the stage.

The first half of the twentieth century brought a lot of innovation to the ballet world. The French ballet master Marius Petipa choreographed over one hundred ballet masterpieces enriching the repertoire of St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Ballet. They became classical ballets, all of which are still performed in today's classic repertoire: *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *La Bayadère*, *Raymonda*, and many more. Functional and beautiful costumes were imperative.

During this time, the Russian empresario Serge Diaghilev brought the *Ballets Russes* to Paris and introduced new ballets by contemporary composers, choreographers, and lighting, costume, and set designers. Coco Chanel designed the knitted costumes for the ballet *Le Train Bleu* (the first of its genre—Modernist ballet). The Russian revolution of the early twentieth century scattered many talented

Over much of the twentieth century, it was common to see both ballerinos and ballerinas knitting.

artists throughout the globe, and American troupes benefited from the expertise of their talent as well as their costuming and knitting traditions.

Over much of the twentieth century, it was common to see both ballerinos and ballerinas knitting. Because of the intercontinental travel that many troupes endured, knitting traditions from all over the world soon became adopted and shared during rehearsal and backstage sessions.

As dancers shed clothing as they warmed up, whether it was a shrug or legwarmers, they often tossed the garment over a barre, leaving it until it was picked up by the next dancer who needed to grab something quickly to get warm. So, it was not only knitting tips and techniques that the dancers shared.

By the middle of the twentieth century, with the help of generous benefactors and later the National Endowment of the Arts, many civic ballet companies flourished throughout the United States. Over time, these companies became self-sufficient and independent and opened their own schools to eventually train their own dancers.

These schools all had dress codes: for the ladies, this consisted of a leotard, pink tights, and ballet shoes; the norm for men was black tights, white T-shirt, white socks, and white ballet shoes. The American dancers quickly adopted the knitting traditions of the past to keep themselves busy during rehearsals, during time spent in the wings, and to keep themselves warm while dancing.



Le Train Bleu performed by Ballets Russes at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, June 20, 1924. Coco Chanel designed the costumes, many knitted, for this ballet. Photograph of *Le Train Blue* (photo 2), 1924. *Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress, Music Division*

Textiles for dancewear had improved tremendously, and with better quality yarns available for the handknitter, so improved their ability to create more comfortable dance clothing. Cotton yarn in many colors became more accessible, which was ideal as cotton is easy to wash and dry and is not itchy; synthetic yarns were also in great use as they were inexpensive as well as easy to wash and dry. Modern choreographers began utilizing knit fabric for costumes from the 1940s on.

New York City Ballet's George Balanchine dressed the dancers in many of his abstract ballets in leotards and tights (with or without long/short chiffon skirts), to accentuate the body moving in a clear, visible manner. It was also very economical. By the 1950s there were many dance supply boutiques, and most sold machine knit dancewear, such as ankle warmers, leg warmers, tights, unitards, leotards, ballerina sweaters, and mesh tights. Still, dancers continued to knit backstage.

In the 1980s, athletic programs such as Pilates became very popular especially in the dance world, and these supplementary workouts enabled the dancers to work through injuries, help prevent injuries, and build core strength to supplement ballet training. All of these extracurricular activities brought about a great change of attire to the dance world. Many dancers started their own line of clothing appropriate for both dance and the gym. The strict guidelines for practice wear were fading away.

Unfortunately, recently the handknitting tradition in ballet has dwindled considerably as inexpensive high-tech fast fashion has become so readily available, and it has become more accepted as uniform in the dance world. On a positive note, there will always be dancers and knitters who enjoy knitting while in rehearsals; they need to keep something moving even if it is only their hands.

Knitting and Dancing from Maine and Back

I was born and raised in Augusta, Maine, the seventh son, and the 11th of 14 children, into a very musical and talented family. I studied in a parochial school with French nuns who taught me to

knit. At the age of six, I went with my sister to a local social dance school where I studied tap, jazz, and ballroom dance.

In June of 1966, right after high school graduation, I took a Greyhound bus to Boston, Massachusetts, where I auditioned for the Boston School of Ballet in the hopes of getting a scholarship as well as an apprenticeship program with the recently formed Boston Ballet Company. I started in late summer and saw many of the dancers, both girls and boys, knitting in spare moments to prepare for the winter. Theaters and dance studios are not overly heated, so knitted dance attire was important for warmth and comfort.

I spent eight wonderful years in Boston where I learned my craft as a dancer and also became a better and more skilled knitter. We dancers shared simple knitting patterns for ankle warmers, knee-length and full-length leg warmers, tights, surplice ballerina sweaters, shawls, and shrugs. The wardrobe department (like most of the ones that I would work with in the future) consisted of very talented tailors, seamstresses, and designers, and all were highly skilled in needlecrafts and generous with their knowledge.

My next engagement was with the *Theatro Municipal* (Municipal Theater) in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The company had a lot of knitters, and other than me, they all knit in the Portuguese manner. The Hungarian-born mother of a dear colleague had a very distinct style of knitting on long needles: she didn't turn her needles to start a new row but switched the thread to the left hand and knitted back from left to right! I had never seen that before, but I picked it up and started to use the technique myself.

My next job brought me to Lisbon, Portugal, to join the newly founded *Companhia Nacional de Bailado* (National Ballet of Portugal). I lived in Estoril and enjoyed the morning and evening train commute to Lisbon where knitting and crocheting kept the ladies on the train busy. In the 1970s, needlecrafts were very much a part of the daily routine, and the Portuguese women really excelled in all different types of handcrafts. The company toured throughout Portugal, and the dancers always had their handwork accessible whether backstage, waiting for transportation, or while traveling.

From Portugal, my next engagement was with the *Gärtnerplatz Opera-Ballet* in Munich, Germany. The ladies in the opera's chorus knitted a lot. There were not many knitters in this ballet company, but there





Top: Principal Dancers Anamarie Sarazin (shown left, wearing a shawl knitted for her by the author) and Woytek Lowksi at a rehearsal for the Boston Ballet's 1972 production of Fall River Legends
Bottom: Dancers Stephanie Moy and Leo Guerard (l to r) are both wearing leg warmers knitted by the author (far right), as they wait between rehearsals for Fall River Legend (Boston Ballet, 1972).
Photos courtesy of King Douglas



The author knit this unitard. He used ribbing to shape the waist and made an I-cord lace closure for the front.
Photo courtesy of the author

were two other boys who were good knitters. While in Germany, I went to Berlin and got the role of Larry (the assistant) in the German production of Michael Bennett's *A Chorus Line* and was dance captain for the duration of the six-month engagement.

During that time, I was permitted to take the subway through Checkpoint Charlie to go to East Berlin to enjoy terrific performances at the Komische Oper Berlin. After performances, I would meet the dancers in the canteen for a drink. Our group included dancers from all over the Eastern Bloc, and we often discussed knitting, and I learned from my new Hungarian, Latvian, and Estonian friends how to graft with both a blunt tapestry needle and with knitting needles.

Through connections I had made in Brazil, I received an invitation to join *Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève* (Geneva Ballet) as *maître de ballet et répétiteur* (ballet master and rehearsal assistant). I felt it was time for me to retire from the stage, and this was a great opportunity to segue into a new career. I was also asked to be the Dean of Dance Division of the *Conservatoire de Musique* (Music Conservatory of the Geneva Ballet).

Many of the dancers there were great knitters, and it was at this point in the early 1980s that I began to see the decline of knitted dance attire. The dancers knit for their husbands, children, and themselves, but they bought their dance attire and accessories at the dance boutique. The Geneva Ballet traveled throughout Europe, South America, Africa, Asia, and Cuba; this gave me abundant opportunities to observe different knitting skills, tips, and styles. I also enhanced my knitting library (which now numbers over seven hundred publications), including many knitting books in various languages.

After 14 terrific years in Geneva, I spent the following 6 years as a guest ballet master working with some of the best contemporary dance companies throughout Europe and learning more about knitting around the world. My engagements in the Netherlands allowed me to master brioche knitting. While working in Stockholm, I met Inger Fredholm who taught me the ins and outs of two-color stranded and Fair Isle knitting. I collaborated with her to write her book, *Knitting with a Smile*.

In 2000, I accepted an invitation to join the faculty of the Juilliard School in New York City. After 26 years of living abroad, it was a culture shock to be in the midst of American culture, to see the radical changes in the dance world, and to be working at a university level. From the beginning of my time at Juilliard, I was disappointed with the lack of proper attire worn in the United States for ballet classes and even more disappointed that not one dancer in my group knit.

After 15 great years at Juilliard, I thought it was the right time to pass the torch to a younger generation. Change is the only thing in life that is constant, and in 2015, I retired and moved back to Maine where I enjoy my quietude, solitude, family, the beauty of the seasons, and having time to read and knit. ❖

ALPHONSE POULIN is a career ballerino, prolific knitter, and knitting book author. Fluent in six languages, he has brought his knitting backstage with him across a number of countries as a member of various ballet troupes. Prior to his retirement, he was a senior ballet master at Juilliard University in New York City, New York.

Improbable Businesswomen

The Carmelite Nuns and New Ross Lace

GENE O'SULLIVAN



This Carmelite crest and motto created in flat-point and tape lace is from a deep edging that was attached to a priest's alb from the monastery. The tape used is machine-made, while the filling stitches are done by hand. There is a matching altar fall. Unlike the majority of the work done in the monastery, these were made specifically for use there. As with all of the lace pieces in the collection, there is no date attached.
Photos courtesy of Bairbre Guilfoyle unless otherwise noted

It would be hard to imagine a more unlikely group to establish a thriving international business than the Carmelite Nuns. Yet, their involvement in the lace trade in nineteenth-century New Ross (located in southeast Ireland) assisted many struggling families and helped bring this beautiful art form to prominence on the world stage.

Within the Christian tradition, the most visible nuns engage in apostolic endeavors in health care, education, and social work. Hidden within monastic enclosure, the contemplative Carmelites live austere but joyful lives of prayer: they are the hidden beating heart of the Catholic Church.



The Mount Carmel Monastery and Lace School, New Ross, County Wexford, Ireland, circa 1900. The building was replaced in the 1970s, due to dry rot.

This image is reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland, call number L_ROY_03577

The Monastery and New Ross in the 1800s

The Reformation of the 1540s resulted in the dissolution of all Catholic monasteries and the banishment of nuns from the diocese. The eighteenth-century Penal Laws then sought to annihilate any remaining Irish Catholic culture. Hence, a storm of bigotry and threats of legal challenges greeted the arrival of the Carmelites to New Ross in 1817.

The *Records of Mount Carmel* book (the monastery annals), a rich depository of daily monastery life, provides vivid accounts of their struggles. The tenacious vision of Pastor Dean Chapman and the indefatigable faith of Prioress Mother Kavanagh proved equal to the challenges.

The plight of the Catholic poor in New Ross in the 1800s was abysmal. Crushed and dispirited after the failed Irish rebellion of 1798 and still under the yoke of the draconian Penal Laws, they barely existed in mud cabins in the shadow of the Protestant Ascendancy and the merchant classes who governed the town.

Prospects were meager for all, and worse for women. Moneyed Catholics navigated better lives, provided that they did not draw attention to themselves. The poor were dispossessed and disempowered. The Great Famine in the 1840s decimated the population of Ireland by an estimated 25 percent, disproportionally affecting the most vulnerable.

Against this backdrop, the courageous Catholic parish priest Reverend Dean Chapman persuaded Carmelite nun Mother Mary Theresa Kavanagh to establish a monastery and school for the poor of the town. His vision was to improve their prospects through basic education.

His success was highly improbable. The Carmelites were an enclosed and contemplative order, and their reception in New Ross was quite hostile. However, he had no option but to turn to an unlikely source as these nuns, as active teaching religious orders in the area were nonexistent or in their infancy.

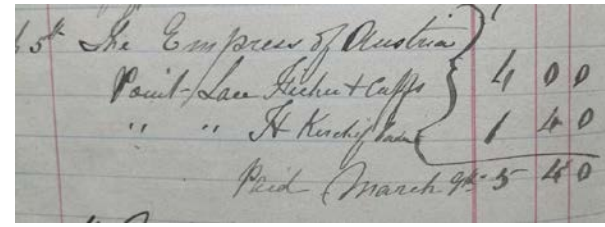
Mount Carmel Monastery, The Free School, and National School

In July 1817, the Mount Carmel Monastery was established, and by October of that year, the Mount Carmel Free School welcomed those who, previously, could never aspire to be educated. The nuns, many of whom were well-educated and came from well-to-do families, set about imparting a basic education, even though they were not trained as teachers. Part of the curriculum included needlecraft, which was seen as a necessary life skill as well as a potential source of income for girls.

The Free School literally was free to all. For more than a decade, the nuns were unpaid, and they were completely dependent upon charitable donations. Monastery annals recount very lean and hungry years.



The Mount Carmel Monastery annals
Photo courtesy of the author



An entry in the monastery ledger that shows a £540.00 lace order from the Empress of Austria for a fichu, cuff, and handkerchief
Photo courtesy of the author

In 1831 The Free School joined the recently established National School System. The nuns now received a regular salary, which they quickly invested to enhance the prospects for the girls who were too old to stay in school. They established the first convent lace school in Ireland in 1833. The nuns provided the premises and materials for the girls to make the crochet and needle lace, and they discovered the channels to sell the finished goods. All profits were redistributed among the workers. This industry continued until 1932, at which time the Carmelites returned to full monastic enclosure.

Converting Craft to Cash

One of the greatest difficulties facing Mount Carmel Lace School was securing a regular market for the lace wares, as private orders were irregular and uncertain. Fortunately, the nuns had the foresight to enter samples from their students into national and international competitions. The prize-winning pieces by the students of The Free School gained the attention of discerning individuals and retailers alike. These competitions were means to an end, in which dealers and representatives from textile companies could pick and choose products from all over the United Kingdom and continental Europe.

In Ireland, the market for high-end needlepoint lace was dominated by three dioceses: Kenmare (Poor Clare Nuns), New Ross (Carmelite Nuns), and Youghal (Presentation Nuns). Discriminating purchasers wanted the best in terms of design and needlework, and the most exclusive items purchased were status symbols of the time. Therefore, competition between the three convents was lively, to say the least, because the recognition that came with national and international awards translated into higher sales and resultant benefits for the needleworkers for whom these enterprises were established.

One could measure the success of the Mount Carmel Lace School in terms of the awards and acclaim it garnered internationally. Certainly, New Ross lace won awards at many prestigious exhibitions around the world, including New York, Paris, London, Brussels, and Milan, and it won a gold medal at the Edinburgh Fair and two gold medals at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

The lace became an international success. A Monsieur Maree began purchasing significant amounts of Mount Carmel lace for the French market in January 1875 and continued to buy until his death in 1899. Frequently in the accounts he is simply recorded as "Frenchman." His importance to the success of the Mount Carmel lace industry is unrivaled—illustrated by purchases in 1878 that amounted to 80 percent of total lace sales and sales of 61 percent of total lace sales during 1880.

Mount Carmel Lace Design

Initially, the lace designs were copied from pieces of old lace. Eventually, these were adapted and varied by increasingly skilled needleworkers, as attested in the wages book in payments for design.

The nuns also kept a keen eye on lace being produced by other centers of excellence, and they acquired many high-quality photographs and purchased actual pieces as templates for adaptation. This was required to meet the requests from purchasers for styles associated with other lace schools.

Increasingly, Mount Carmel lace garnered national and international repute for the quality of its design and its excellent execution needlepoint lace, in particular for the Rose point pieces. Artists such as Mr. Michael Holland (Cork School of Art) and Mr. S. J. Murphy (Waterford School of Art) also bolstered the reputation of Mount Carmel crochet and lace with their innovative award-winning designs.

The Value of Mount Carmel Lace

The real value of Mount Carmel lace lay in the dramatic rise in living standards it afforded to local families from the income they earned as lace producers. On the macroeconomic level, it is astounding that in 1887 the annual income recorded at the monastery from total lace sales was just over £534 while a local prosperous farmer would expect to earn about £45 per annum at this time. As a point of reference for that time frame, one British pound (equivalent to 20 shillings) had an exchange rate of between $4.14–$4.40 in U.S. dollars.

At the individual level, the 1907 book of wages shows that the average weekly wage was between 10 and 15 shillings per week, averaging £32 per annum. It is difficult for modern-day readers to put a practical value on such earnings.

It might help to compare with the earnings of local men around this time. A contemporary local source recorded the daily wages paid to men building the Parish Church of New Ross, which was completed in 1902. The daily pay rates were 5 shillings and 6 pence for masons (33 shillings per week), 5 shillings for carpenters (30 shillings per week), and 2 shillings and 4 pence for laborers (14 shillings per week).

These examples illustrate the enormous economic benefits to local families afforded by the employment of many local women and girls. Furthermore, independent external inspections consistently lauded the working environment and apprenticeship training for the lacemakers. To this day descendants of

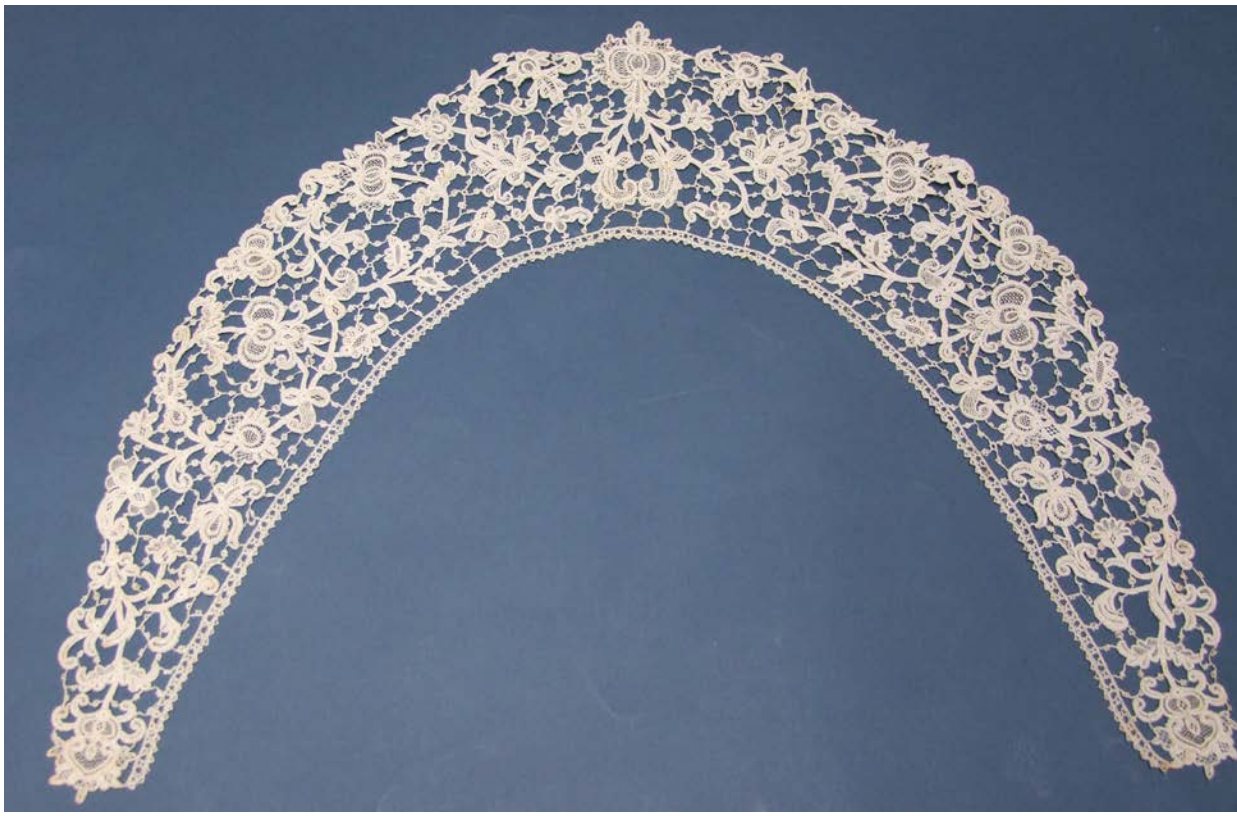


Left to right: Sr. Anne (former prioress), Sr. Brenda (current prioress) of Mount Carmel New Ross, and the author
Photo courtesy of the author



Highly decorative cuff in Rose point needle lace

But, perhaps the best remembered accolade came in the highly acclaimed novel Ulysses, *when author James Joyce referred to "* . . . *ivory raised point from the Carmelite convent in New Ross, nothing like it in the whole wide world."*



Flat-point collar, in generally excellent condition, thought to date from the early twentieth century

lace workers express genuine appreciation to the Carmelites for providing life-enhancing opportunities for their relatives during bleak times.

In Mount Carmel New Ross, one of the best illustrations of the priorities of the nuns is that there is no roll of honor recording the various prizes. Instead, we have a piece of an envelope where an unidentified nun jotted down her recollections of prizes to that date. It is a valued heirloom. The nuns treasured the changes made in the lives of their students more than they cared about the prizes.

The early Carmelite nuns succeeded admirably in fulfilling the founding intention for the Lace School. The current sisters at the monastery hope that the artistry of their predecessors and of the early lacemakers will be admired in a suitable exhibition space and that it will engender pride and inspiration to current and future generations. They believe that it is all God's work. ❖

Resources

Mount Carmel Lace, mountcarmellace.com.

The Discalced Nuns of Mount Carmel Monastery, www.carmelitesnewross.ie.

GENE O'SULLIVAN is a retired secondary school principal who lives in close proximity to the Mount Carmel Monastery in New Ross, Ireland. He has been a friend of the Carmelite sisters for over 40 years and feels privileged to know these remarkable nuns, hear their stories, share their memories, and have access to their archives. In 2022, he launched a website, with an exhibition of their lace collection, to commemorate the two hundredth year of the craft in Mount Carmel.

Armenian Needlework

from Denison House

SHERYL DE JONG



Armenian embroidery "Folk handicraft" purse; Denison House, Boston. A drawstring bag with Armenian Marash embroidery, four Armenian needlelace flowers (*oya*), two on bottom and one on each side, drawstring crocheted, worked by Armenian women at Denison House in Boston, Massachusetts, circa 1917

Photo courtesy of National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Division of Home and Community Life, Accession number 2013.0121

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History has a textile collection that contains over 50,000 items; the sheer size of it makes it difficult to be aware of every treasure. I have been volunteering at the Smithsonian for over 22 years and was delighted one day to come across a bag that I recognized as being embellished with Armenian embroidery.

I am familiar with Armenian needlework, as I have an Armenian friend whose home was full of needlework from her country. Her mother taught me traditional needle lace-making techniques, and I taught myself how to do Marash embroidery, which is the signature stitching tradition from Armenia.

When I saw the small bag in the Smithsonian collection, I happily recognized the embroidery as Armenian Marash embroidery. In addition, the purse had a label with the inscription "The Folk Handicrafts, Denison House, 93 Tyler St., Boston, Mass," and that further helped to identify its origin.

Plying Traditional Crafts for Income

Denison House was a women-run settlement house in Boston's old South Cove neighborhood founded in 1892 by the College Settlements Association, a group that provided support and control of college settlements for women. These houses were established by college women, were controlled by college women, and the majority of the residents were college women. Denison house was modeled on the Jane Addams Hull house in Chicago, Illinois, and its primary residents were from Boston College.

The settlement houses provided a variety of social and educational services to neighborhood residents, most of whom were immigrants who lived in straitened circumstances. The Panic of 1893, which was a time of great economic stress, brought many people to the doors of Denison House and to other similar organizations for assistance.

Denison House was in a neighborhood made up of people of many nationalities—principally from Italy, Syria, and Greece. Often the immigrants settled in communities with people from their own countries, which helped to keep their native cultures alive. Although many people perceived the United States to be a land of golden opportunity, some, like the Armenians (who fled the 1918 genocide by the Turkish), came to Boston out of grave necessity.

Denison House became an important neighborhood center, and it offered classes in nursing, English literature, crafts, cooking, and carpentry, as well as sports and a summer camp for children, and clubs for adults. It housed a library, a gymnasium, and a clinic.

Local men and women who frequented the Denison House were encouraged to celebrate their different

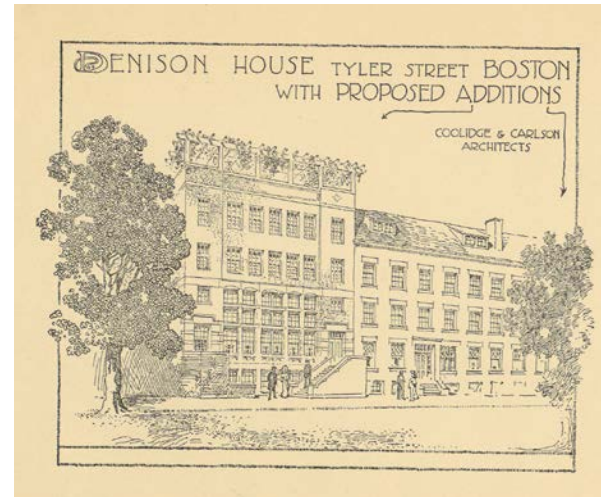


Illustration from *Annual Report for the Year Ending October 1st, 1913*, by Denison House, a Boston settlement house
Courtesy of the Open Collections Program at Harvard University, Monroe C. Gutman Library, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University

heritages through events like cultural festivals and craft exhibitions. In 1917, one such exhibition was held at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art. Items made by participants from the settlement home were recorded to have sold quite well.

Handmade craft items, which provided income for the poor neighborhood women, were also sold in a shop at Denison House. The price on the tag for the Armenian bag from the Smithsonian was "4.75." I'm not sure what that refers to: $4.75 would have been very expensive for that time frame—it is equivalent to $162.02 in 2023.

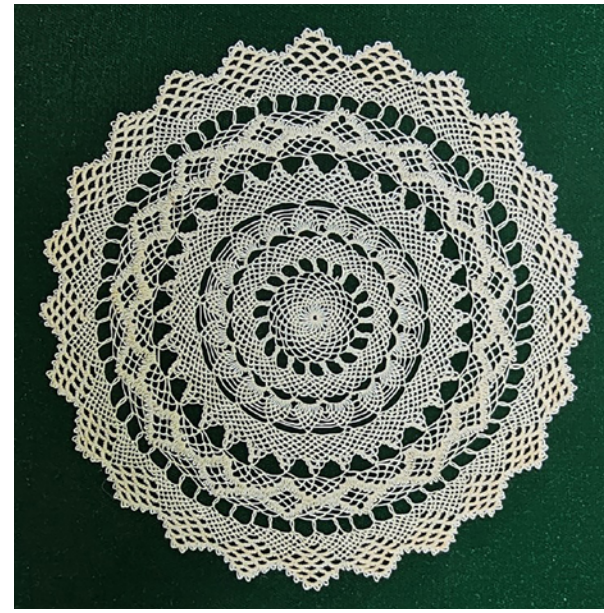
The Denison House legacy has continued, and it even boasted a very famous employee—Amelia Earhart—who worked there as a social worker in 1925. Throughout all the years, and despite several moves, the settlement still exists today as part of Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses in its current location of Codman Square, Uphams Corner.

The Drawstring Bag

The bag in the Smithsonian collection measures 10 1/8" × 13 5/8" (25.71 × 34.60 cm) and is stitched in Marash embroidery. This signature interlaced embroidery is worked over two rows of stitches in the form of fishbone or herringbone stitches. Marash embroidery is named after Marash, a key city in the ancient Armenia Kingdom of Cilicia (1198–1275), in what is today



Marash Embroidery, late 19th to early 20th century, cotton embroidery on cotton fabric, Photograph by George Bouret
Photo courtesy of the Armenian Museum of America, Watertown, Massachusetts, Acquisition No. 1986.037



An Armenian *oya* needle-lace doily, made by the author six inches in diameter, and made using DMC Cordonnet #50 thread
Photo courtesy of the author

southeastern Turkey. Cilicia was a significant outpost on the Silk Road.

The bag was constructed from two pieces of cloth, and each side was hemmed with a black running stitch that was then covered by a herringbone stitch in ecru. A French knot is placed on the top of each stitch, which makes up the decorative edge. The central medallion features a traditional Marash pattern, a circle of lazy daisy stitches in black and ecru. For piecework embroiderers, a simple design is more advantageous in terms of both time and the materials needed, so it is unsurprising that the bag is embellished rather simply. The side motifs bear evidence of lines that were drawn on the fabric in blue ink to keep the stitching in a straight line.

Marash embroidery is a very precise needle art. There can be no errors in crafting it, or the weaving step (see Step 3 in Marash Embroidery, page 65) will not come out perfectly. The work is composed of two layers of interlaced stitches and is created almost entirely on the right side of the material.

According to author Alice Odian Kasparian, Marash designs are geometric: their fundamental designs are based on linear crosses, clusters of crosses, circles, and squares. It is worked on linen, wool, heavy cotton, velvet, or silk satin. The motifs are similar in design to those found on *khachkars*, which are Armenian commemoratives carved of stone, ivory, or wood.

The purse has two crocheted drawstrings as a closure. There are also four *oya* (lace) flowers, two on the bottom and two on the sides for added decoration. The Armenians are known for their lacemaking, and oya is one of their most well-known needle laces. Doilies are worked from the center of each motif out, and the difficulty in stitching lies in keeping a piece flat as the worker adds loops to the outside of the piece.

According to Kasparian, stylized lace flowers for the edgings of head scarves, *yazmas*, are the pinnacle of Armenian lacemaking. Crafting them requires skill, experience, and inexhaustible patience. The flowers (pictured below) are about a half an inch (1.25 cm) high and made from fine thread similar to tatting cotton. As the worker starts or ends a thread, they make a very tight and barely perceptible knot, and then the thread ends are clipped very close to



Oya needle lace *yazma* flowers, from the author's collection
Photo courtesy of the author

the knots. These fine-thread flowers can still be purchased in Turkey today.

The flowers on this purse (which are made up of petals and stamens but no leaves) are much larger than the flowers used on yazmas, so they were probably easier to make and are in better proportion for the size of the bag.

This same type of embroidery can also be found in India where it is known Kutch work, as it is done in the tribal community of the Kutch District in present-day Gujarat and Sindh. It is possible to trace its origins to the mid-sixteenth century when Armenians were invited by Akbar (1556–1605), the Mughal emperor, to settle in Agra, India, or theoretically to even later when Christian missionaries came to work in India to help relieve poverty. Cottage industries were started, and the Indian women did traditional Armenian needlework as taught by the Armenian missionaries.

I have found that it is unusual to come across an Armenian object in the textile collection of an American history museum. The Denison label helped to identify this bag as having been made in the United States; therefore, it is a part of American immigrant history. It is unfortunate that the maker is not known, but happily, her purse has been carefully stored at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. ❖

Resources

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Krager, Margo. "A Meter Square: Headscarves Trimmed in Needle-Lace." *PieceWork* January/February 2006: 28–33.

"Records of Denison House." Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute Repository, https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/schlesinger-library.

Wetzel, Carolyn. "Oya: A Traditional Needle-Lace Embellishment." *PieceWork* July/August 2011: 24–25.

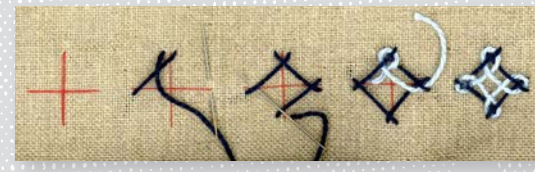
Wilson, Kax. "Bebilla and Oya: Needle-Knotted Miniature Laces." *PieceWork* July/August 1996: 22–27.

SHERYL DE JONG has been a volunteer in the Textile Collection of the National Museum of American History for over 22 years. She has been involved in research and data entry and has given lectures as well as behind-the-scenes tours pertaining to objects in the collection. She is a needlework historian and helps researchers and other museums with needlework-related questions.

Marash Embroidery

1. Baste a temporary cross on the fabric to serve as a guideline (this will be removed later).

2. Embroider a herringbone stitch on the top of the cross. The fabric is pierced with this first stitch. Marash embroidery is customarily stitched in rows, but the purse embroidery is composed of a single motif, so the work is turned 180 degrees each time before you make the next herringbone stitch. Before completing the last stitch, bring the threaded needle under the first thread of the motif as shown in the third step, and end by inserting the needle back into the fabric.



A close-up of the steps used to create the embroidered motif on the bag from the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of American History
Photo courtesy of author

3. To stitch the interlacing into the herringbone stitch foundation, thread a tapestry needle with another thread of a different color, come up from the back where you began your first herringbone stitch, and with the thread on top of the fabric, weave as shown around each corner.

To work the last corner, your weaving thread must go under the original thread that was begun in that corner. Secure the thread on the back of the work.

4. Remove the basting stitches.

The Miners of the Dales

PENELOPE HEMINGWAY



Reproduction of the "G.Walton, 1846" glove, originally illustrated by Marie Hartley in *The Old Hand-Knitters of the Dales*, in 1949. This sample was knitted by Tom of Holland. The original gloves are at the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, Cumbria.
Photos courtesy of the author

Lead mining and handknitting were two of the main industries in the Dales of Yorkshire and Westmorland, England. They often went hand in hand (or hand in glove), as both lead miners and their families knitted for extra income. Lead mining in the Dales began some time during the Roman era in Yorkshire (from 71 to 410 CE) and continued for the best part of two thousand years.

Conditions for lead miners were brutal and dangerous. Early twentieth century writer Ella Pontefract (1896–1974) described conditions in the Dales in the 1840s, a time when handknitting and lead mining were at their zenith: ". . . there was great poverty amongst the working people. The knitters worked incessantly, and earned only fourpence a pair for knitting big, long stockings; other workers knitted in their spare time to eke out a living. . . . "[1]

Pontefract mentioned the many miners who used their small wages to rent smallholdings in the village of Castle Bolton. Any luxuries would have been provided by the extra income that came from knitting. Their diet consisted largely of gulls (oatmeal porridge), brown bread, and havercake (oat cake made simply from oats and water).

Lead mining and handknitting both began to decline from the mid-nineteenth century onwards as the lead ran out and as machine knitting took hold. Many families were forced to leave the Dales as these industries waned.

My own Dales families (the Bellas, Aldersons, and Stephensons) were also part of this diaspora, ending up in the industrial city of Leeds in the West Riding of Yorkshire, never to return to their farms in the shadow of the Westmorland hills where they'd farmed since records began. Other Dalesfolk emigrated en masse to America or Canada, traveling from Leyburn in the Dales, and then on to Lancashire, embarking from Liverpool for their new lives.

From Knitting Needles to Needed Income

The handknitting industry in the Dales was similar to other cottage industry networks of the time. Long established hosier or mill-owning families from various Dales towns and villages would distribute "knots" of yarn to be knitted, and then they would pick up the finished items, take them to market, and sell them. In *The Old Hand-Knitters of the Dales*, Marie Hartley and Joan Ingilby recounted a conversation that they had had with the sons of a Dales hosier. He said his family went monthly over the hilltops, delivering yarn to the scattered villages. Sometimes they exchanged provisions for finished items of knitting.

The lead mining families seem to have knitted the whole repertoire common to all Dales: stockings, baby socks, caps, guernseys, gloves, and mitts. But they were famous for their "bump" knitting in particular. Bump knitting was a description of oversized (then shrunken) garments that were made with "groove" wool (groove was an old word for mine). It was thick yarn, often undyed. Knitting paid for small extras like tea or tobacco. Women knitted as they walked.

The bump yarn (a thick, handspun, coarse worsted yarn, similar to chunky yarn) was routinely knitted into oversized garments, which were then shrunk down/dressed by washing and agitating the items in hot water. Knitters used bump yarn to make mittens, jackets, and stockings (called "elephant stockings" because when first made, they were over a yard long). Knitters got 7 pence for a pair of stockings and 3 halfpence for mittens (in 1840, £1 [240 pence] was equivalent in purchasing power to about £125.63 [US $156.61] in 2023).

The elephant stockings are described as having been knitted in one of just three colors—a blue-gray (likely rough gray wool lightly overdyed with indigo or woad), drab brown, or what they called "dirty white." No known elephant stockings remain, but a reproduction bump cap can be seen at the Dent Village Museum and Heritage Centre, in the Yorkshires Dale National Park. The cap has no discernible shaping and is basically a long tube with a square, unshaped end.

The original bump caps were made from a coarse, lower quality worsted that had been knitted as a tube about a yard long, one half of which was turned inside out. These were knitted largely for export. In *The Old Hand-Knitters of the Dales*, a mention was made of a farmer's daughter who made four bump caps daily, which earned her a shilling (fivepence) a day.





Top: The remains of the Keld Heads lead-smelting mill (Yorkshire, England), which was built circa 1851. *Bottom:* Bump cap reproduction in Dent Village Museum and Heritage Centre, Dent, Cumbria. *Photo kind copyright of Dent Village Heritage Centre*

Beyond Bump Yarn

Cheap bump or "groove" knitting wasn't the only type of knitting carried out by Dales' lead-mining families. Knitters also worked on an industrial scale making delicate items in pretty colors. Hartley interviewed



This metal "knitting stick" from Reeth, England, is a lovely and useful memento.

a Mrs. T. Kirkbride (circa 1868–1949) in Askrigg. She remembered that when she was a child of 10, she used to knit babies' socks in pretty colored wools for which she was paid 3 pence (£1 [240 pence] in 1878 was equivalent in purchasing power to about £146.79 [US $156.75] in 2023) a pair. Her knitting stick was made for her by an elderly man from Swaledale who worked at the Worton lead mine.

A knitting stick (or sheath) was a small length of wood with a hole in it that was placed on the knitter's right side in a belt. The working needle was placed into the small hole, so the needle could be moved like a lever, which in turn would speed up the knitting. Some fancier ones were made from metal with a tube for the needle. The cliché is that knitting sticks were made by loving fathers or as lovers' tokens from a sweetheart. Mrs. Kirkbride's remembrance, however, is an example of a knitting stick made for a child by an unknown lead miner.

Reeth, another community in Swaledale, was also a center for lead mining and a place where local miners and their families knitted stockings for themselves and for the trade. Wool for the pieceworkers was generally brought into the Dales from Kendal, Cumbria, and later from as far afield as Halifax in West Riding. Some of them also gathered fallen wool, which they then carded, spun, and knitted. I've continued the tradition for the past couple of years, gathering some fallen wool from just outside Reeth.

The cliché is that knitting sticks were made by loving fathers or as lovers' tokens from a sweetheart.

What else did the mining families knit? Legwarmers is the answer that warms the cockles of my 1980s heart. The miners and farmers wore long footless knitted stockings they called *loughrams*. These were put on over outer clothes in poor weather, and because of the oiled wool used, they repelled moisture. Loughrams (which came well up the thighs) provided knee padding for when miners had to kneel at work. The word loughram seems to have a connection with the Scottish word *loags*, which is a name for a similar kind of leg covering.

Fine-Gauge Dent Gloves

Not all of the mining families knit coarse items; it is possible that the most sophisticated and beautiful pair of extant Dales gloves has a lead-mining connection. There are a little more than a dozen pairs of finely knitted gloves from the Dales in existence. Arguably, the most sophisticated is a pair known as the "G. Walton 1846" gloves, which is in the collection of the Wordsworth Grasmere Museum, Cumbria, England. They are the oldest extant dated pair of Dales gloves and also the only fringed pair.

I've been lucky enough to handle, examine, and document these gloves. Interestingly, in this pair of gloves, the stitches from one finger are unraveled and were left live on some waste yarn presumably to be knitted later. Hartley documented them in 1948, writing: "We went back to our knitting [book]. One day we had a magnificent run to Grasmere to see some *Dent gloves* in the Wordsworth Museum. . . . "[2]

The gloves were acceded to the Wordsworth Trust at an unknown date and have no known provenance apart from a card with them (which may not even be original), stating they were from "Deepdale." I believe that the most likely location is the Deepdale that lies to the

northwest of Whernside and is extremely close to Dent —also home of the famous "terrible knitters e' Dent." This would, as Hartley said, make them "Dent" gloves.

In the diaries, Hartley detailed the work of the only "swaving" old style knitter that she saw in action, a Mrs. Crabtree: "(August Bank Holiday Mon Aug 2nd 1948) We went to Dent. . . . Mrs. A [Agar] took us to see a Mrs. Crabtree — a nice old person — who showed us the old method of knitting. Then a Mrs. Raw showed us 2 pairs of Dent gloves knitted in a fancy pattern."[3] Swaving was also called "weaving" or "waving" in other dales, and it referred to knitting when sitting down and rocking the upper body to aid in pulling the working stitches quickly from the end of the needle, which is most helpful when using fine wool.

The Dent gloves Hartley saw in 1948 are now lost, but the fact that Hartley saw them and felt the G. Walton gloves were stylistically similar lends credence to the idea that the G. Walton gloves were indeed from Deepdale, near Dent.

The mystery remains.

The Demise of the Industry

By the 1930s, the lead mines of the Dales were characterized as eerie and abandoned places, semi-derelict, and already reverting to nature. "Weird and lonely . . . The great scars of Old Gang Mines appear like enormous heaps that look as if some giant mole had burrowed there, giving an almost terrifying desolation to the moor."[4]



Sheep just outside of Reeth, England

Memories of the handknitting industry by that point in time were equally tumbledown. They were almost out of reach by the late 1940s when Marie Hartley and Joan Ingilby embarked on their research for the book that recounted the tales of these subsistence knitters—a book that was to become a classic history of knitting and related the stories of those moonlighting makers: *The Old Hand-Knitters of the Dales*. ❖

Notes

1. Ella Pontefract and Marie Hartley, *Wensleydale* (London: J. M. Dent, 1936), 9.
2. Diaries of Marie Hartley, undated but between September and November, 1948, from the archive of the Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes, Yorkshire.
3. Diaries of Marie Hartley, 1948, from the archive of the Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes, Yorkshire.
4. Ella Pontefract and Marie Hartley *Swaledale*, (London: J. M. Dent, 1934), 118.

Resources

Dales Countryside Museum, dalescountrysidemuseum.org.uk.

Dent Village Museum and Heritage Centre, museumsinthe yorkshiredales.co.uk.

Diaries of Marie Hartley, 1948–1961 (unpublished), from the archive of the Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes, Yorkshire. This article is the first time that words from Marie Hartley's personal diaries have ever been published.

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Pontefract, Ella and Marie Hartley. *Wensleydale*. London: J. M. Dent, 1936.

Wordsworth Grasmere Museum, wordsworth.org.uk.

With thanks to Fiona Rosher, Museum Manager at the Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes, Yorkshire.

PENELOPE HEMINGWAY lives in Yorkshire, where her family has lived since records began. She's the writer of *Their Darkest Materials* (2020), is a frequent contributor to various magazines in the United Kingdom and United States, contributes to *Yorkshire Bylines,* and worked on the 2013 edition of Marie Hartley and Joan Ingilby's classic book *The Old Hand-Knitters of the Dales*.

PIECEWORK Retail Shop Directory

ARIZONA

Fiber Creek
Suite 123
1046 Willow Creek Rd
Prescott, AZ 86301
(928) 717-1774
fibercreekprescott.com

CALIFORNIA

Lacis Museum of Lace & Textiles
2982 Adeline St
Berkeley, CA 94703
(510) 843-7290
lacis.com

COLORADO

Lambspun of Colorado
1101 E Lincoln Ave
Fort Collins, CO 80524
(800) 558-5262
lambspun.com

ILLINOIS

Fine Line Creative Arts Center
37W570 Bolcum Rd.
St Charles, IL, 60175
(630) 584-9443
fineline.org

IOWA

Blue Heron Knittery
300 W Water St
Decorah, IA 52101
(563) 517-1059
blueheronknittery.com

KENTUCKY

LSH Creations
1584 Wellesley Dr.
Lexington, KY 40513
(859) 321-7831
lshcreations.com

MASSACHUSETTS

WEBS - America's Yarn Store
75 Service Center Rd
Northhampton , MA 01060
(800) 367-9327
yarn.com

MICHIGAN

Chicks With Sticks, LLC
5401-3 Portage Rd
Kalamazoo, MI 49002
(269)552-9276
chickswithsticksyarns.com

Stash Crafters Lounge
115 Cleveland Avenue
Ishpeming, MI 49849
(906) 458-0626

The Hen House Quilt Shop
211 S Cochran Ave
Charlotte, MI 48813
(517) 543-6454
thehenhousemi.com

Tawas Bay Yarn Co
1820 East US 23
East Tawas, MI 48730
(989) 362-4463
tawasbayyarn.com

Timeless Stitches
112 N Evans St #3
Tecumseh, MI 49286
(517) 423-0808

MINNESOTA

Ingebretsen's
1601 E Lake St
Minneapolis, MN 55407
(612) 729-9333
ingebretsens.com

Rocking Horse Farm Knitshop
25636 County Rd 74
St Cloud, MN 56301
(320) 252-2996

Stitchville USA
12945 Ridgedale Dr
Minnetonka, MN 55305
(952) 474-1700
stitchville.com

MISSOURI

Cecilia's Samplers
2652 Shepherd of the Hills Expressway
Branson, MO 65616
417-336-5016
www.ceciliassamplers.com

Hillcreek Yarn Shoppe
4093 E. Ketterer Rd
Columbia, MO 65202
(573) 825-6130
hillcreekyarn.com

MONTANA

Camas Creek Cottage
139 Main St
Kalispell, MT 59901
(406) 755-YARN
camascreekcottage.com

Beads Yarns & Threads
2100 Stephens Ave #109
Missoula, MT 59801
(406) 543-9368

NEBRASKA

Plum Nelly
743 W 2nd Street
Hastings, NE 68901
(402) 462-2490
theplumnelly.com

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Lilac + Finch Yarn and Weavery
66 Hanover Street,
Suite 303
Manchester, NH 03101
(603) 856-5457

NEW YORK

Spinning Room of Altamont
190 Main Street
Altamont, NY 12009
(518) 861-0038
spinningroom.net

Fiber Kingdom
137 E Broadway
Salem, NY 12865
(518) 854-7225
fiberkingdom.com

NORTH CAROLINA

Studio 256
106 S Greene Street
Wadesboro, NC 28170
(704) 507-1160
Studio256.online

The Tail Spinner
109 North Wilmington Street
Richlands, NC 28574
(910) 324-6166
www.thetailspinner.com

Yadkin Valley Fiber Center
321 East Main St.
Elkin, NC 28621
(919) 260-9725
yadkinvalleyfibercenter.org

OREGON

Acorns & Threads
4475 SW Scholls Ferry Rd
#158
Portland, OR 97225
(503) 292-4457
acornsandthreads.com

Little Hawk Yarns
544 SE Main Street
Roseburg, OR 97470
(458) 262-0046
www.littlehawkyarns.com

PENNSYLVANIA

ChickenKnitz
562 Main St
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Revisited

An On-the-Go Project Bag to Crochet

KATRINA KING



Carry your handiwork in this wrist bag made from a nineteenth-century pattern: The Shopping Bag made of String from *Weldon's Practical Needlework volume 12, series 32.*
Photo by Matt Graves

MATERIALS

- Gist Yarn *Beam 3/2* (100% cotton), 630 yd/8 oz (576 m/227 g) cone: Lemon, about 158 yd (145 m)
- Crochet hook size F/5-3.75 mm
- Tapestry needle
- Ribbon, ⅞" wide: light yellow, 4' length

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

SPECIAL STITCHES

Beginning cluster: Ch 3, 1 dc in same sp, ch 2, 2 dc in same sp.
Small cluster: 2 dc in same sp, ch 2, 2 dc in same sp.
Beginning large cluster: Ch 3, 1 dc in same sp, [ch 2, 2 dc in same sp] twice.
Large cluster: 2 dc in same sp, [ch 2, 2 dc in same sp] twice.

Bag

Ch 6, sl st in first ch to join into a ring.
Rnd 1: Ch 5, 1 dc in circle, *ch 1, 2 dc in circle, rep from * 4 more times, ch 1, sl st to top of ch.
Rnd 2: Sl st in first dc, sl st in ch-1 sp, work beginning cluster in ch-1 sp, *work small cluster in next ch sp, rep from * 4 more times, join to beg large cluster with sl st.
Rnd 3: Sl st in first dc, sl st in ch sp, work beginning large cluster in ch sp, *work large cluster in next ch sp, rep from * 4 more times, join to beg large cluster with sl st.
Rnd 4: Sl st in first dc, sl st in ch sp, work beginning cluster in ch sp, *work small cluster in next ch sp, rep from * 10 more times, join to beg cluster with sl st.
Rnd 5: Rep rnd 4.
Rnd 6: Sl st in first dc, sl st in ch sp, work beginning large cluster in ch sp, * work small cluster in next ch sp, work large cluster in next ch sp, rep from * 4 more times, work small cluster in next ch sp, join to beg large cluster with sl st.
Rnd 7: Sl st in first dc, sl st in ch sp, work beginning cluster in ch sp, *work small cluster in next ch sp, rep from * 16 more times, join to beg cluster with sl st.
Rnds 8–15: Rep rnd 7.
Rnd 16: Sl st in first dc, sl st in ch-2 sp, ch 9, starting in 3rd ch from hook work 1 sc, 1 dc, 1 trc, 1 dtrc, 1 ttrc, 1 qtrc, 1 qtrc in next ch sp, *1 qtrc in next ch sp, using the loops on the side of the qtrc worked in the ch sp, work 1 sc, 1 dc, 1 trc, 1 dtrc, 1 ttrc, 1 qtrc in the base of the previous qtrc, 1 qtrc in next ch sp, rep from * 7 more times, join to beg of rnd with sl st.
Rnd 17: *Ch 1, work small cluster in next st from previous rnd, ch 1, skip st, 1 sc, skip st, rep from * 17 more times, ch 1, join to beg of rnd with sl st. Cut yarn, finish off.

Handles (make 2)

Ch 6, join into ring, work sc in each st in spiral fashion to a length of 12". Finish off, sew to bag on scallop edge leaving three scallops between ends. Add the second handle to other side of bag, mirroring the position of the first.

Thread the ribbon through the spaces in Rnd 16 and tie in a bow. ❖