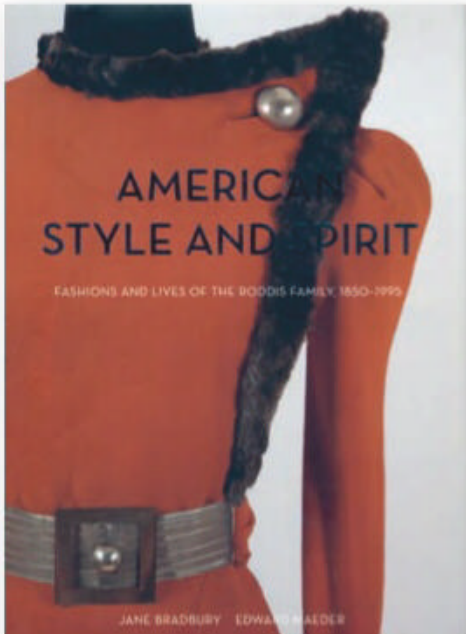


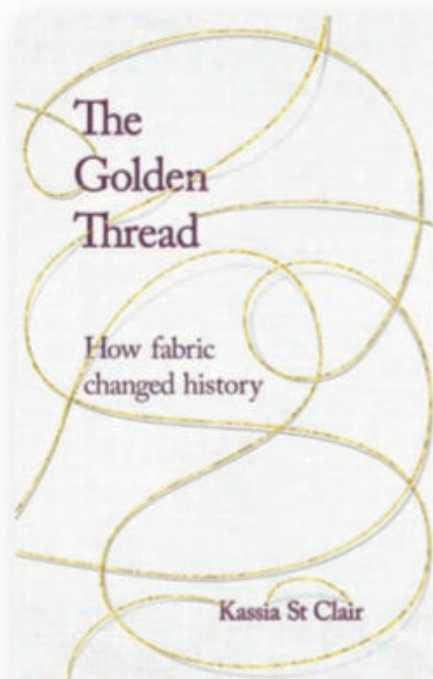
The Last Word

To learn more about the rich and ongoing tradition of various forms of needlework, we recommend these books.

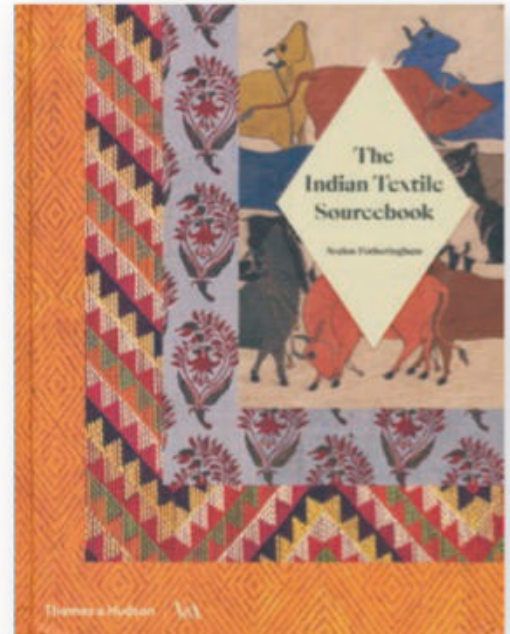
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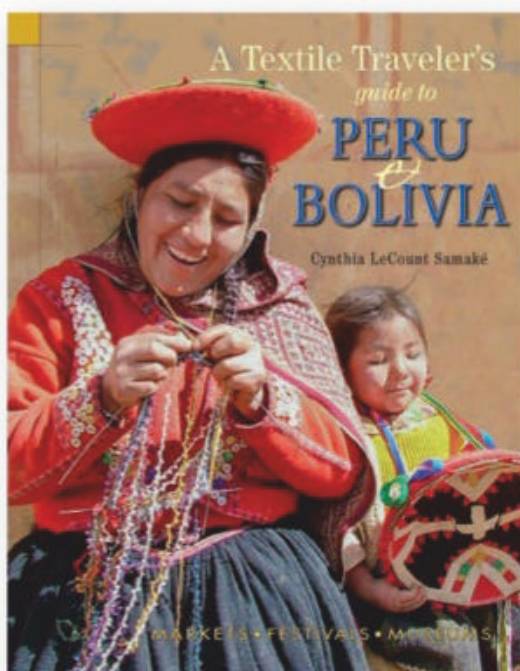
***American Style and Spirit:
The Fashions and Lives of the
Roddis Family, 1850-1995***
Jane Bradbury and Edward Maeder
London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016.
Hardbound, 304 pages, \$45.
ISBN 978-1-851-77889-8.



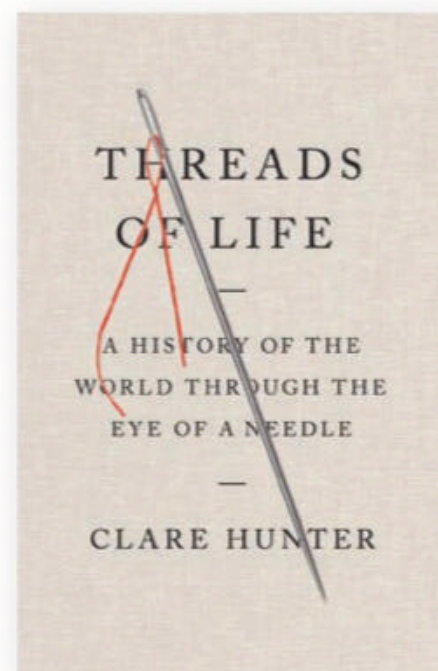
***The Golden Thread:
How Fabric Changed History***
Kassia St. Clair
London: John Murray, 2018.
Hardbound, 368 pages, £20.
ISBN 978-1-473-65903-2.



***The Indian Textile
Sourcebook***
Avalon Fortheringham
New York: Thames & Hudson, 2019.
Hardbound, 400 pages, \$55.
ISBN 978-0-500-48042-7.



***A Textile Traveler's Guide
to Peru & Bolivia***
Cynthia LeCount Samaké
Loveland, Colorado: Thrums Books, 2019.
Softbound, 152 pages, \$24.95. ISBN 978-1-732-35285-8.



***Threads of Life: A History of the World
Through the Eye of a Needle***
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New York: Abrams, 2019.
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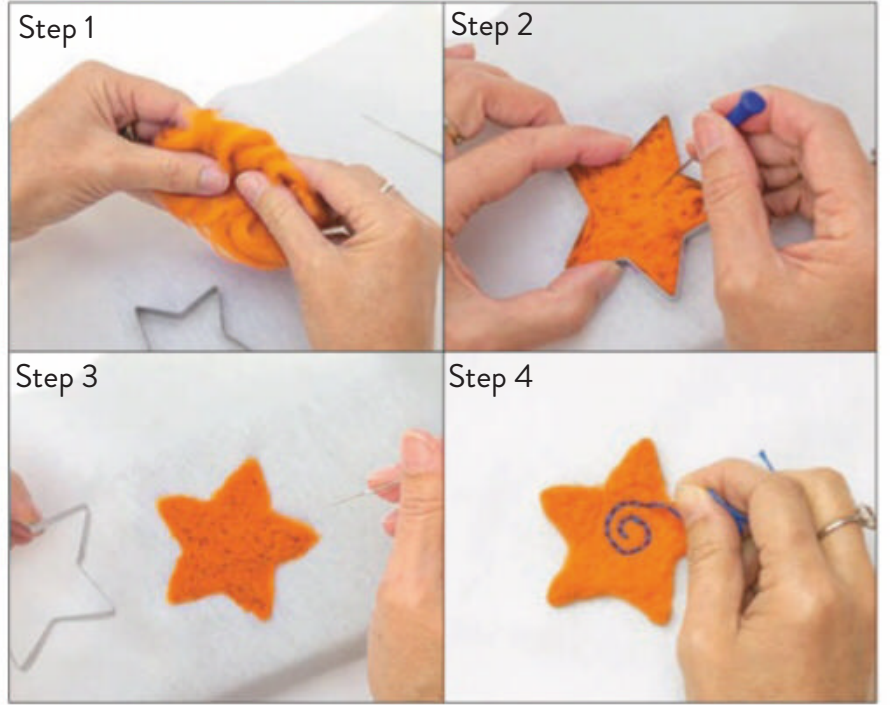
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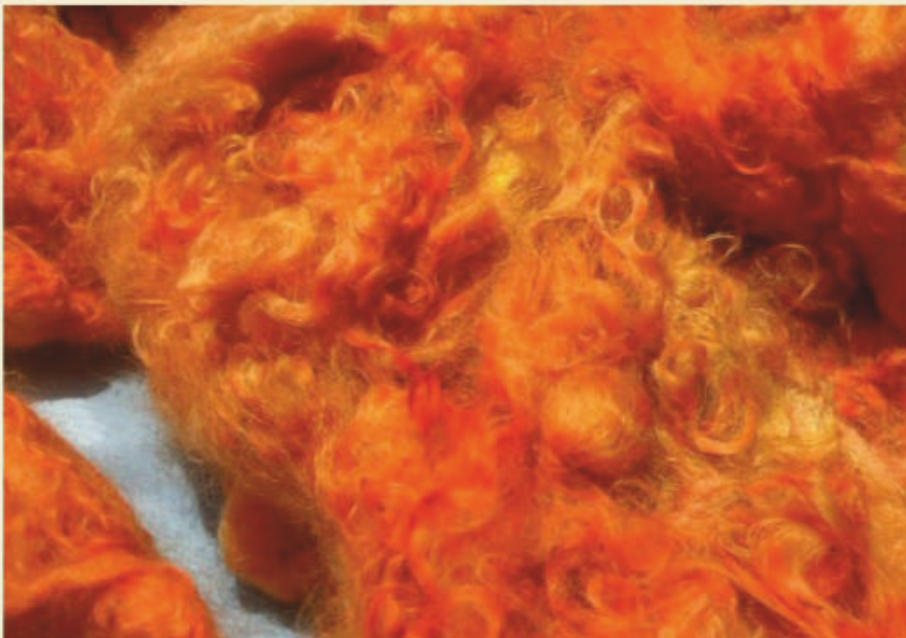
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Notions

Each and every issue of *PieceWork* is brought forth by many hands. However, this special issue has been carried forward by more hands than most. As *PieceWork* and sister magazines *Spin Off* and *Handwoven* settle into their new home at Long Thread Media, they are growing and changing. The future is bright, and we have so much in store for you!

In this issue, we hope you will enjoy learning to decode Estonian lace and learn the difference between true Haapsalu and “rebellious” lace and be inspired to make your very own housewife (of the sewing roll variety). Read about the unsolved mystery of Hepsibeth A. Edwards’s nineteenth-century silver knitting needles, and try your hand at Rhodes stitch with the “A Stitch in Time” recurring needlework column.

Each of us at *PieceWork* has a deep passion for textiles past, present, and future. We are indebted to the makers who came before us as well as the people who have lifted the stories behind textile traditions and makers of the past. For nearly three decades, this unique publication has sought to spread the joy of historical



Justin Allan-Spencer explores Icelandic embroidery with modern materials on page 46.

Photograph by Matt Graves.

needlework and assure its journey into the future. We hope you will join us as we continue this work!

KATE LARSON, *Editor*

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MEDIA

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By Post



Tasty Translation

Thank you for the lovely and sad article about Luisa Sanfelice [“Luisa Sanfelice: Martyr of the Parthenopean Republic”] by Mimi Seyferth in the Summer 2019 issue. A painting by painter Gioacchino Toma in the introduction to the companion project is incorrectly titled as *Scuola per cioccolatini ciechi*. Since Italian is my first language, I know that *cioccolatini* means “little chocolates” and the word for lace is *merletto*. I searched the web for Toma’s painting, and

the following Facebook link brings you to the painting and its title, *La scuola delle merlettaie cieche*, www.facebook.com/FondazioneAndrianaMarcello/photos/a.1397998563766561/1893121704254242/?type=1&theater. The painting is very moving. Thank you for a very informative and fun to read magazine. I never do any of the projects, but I love to read about the history and people of our fiber past.

Marcy Petrini
via email

Send your comments, questions, ideas, and high-resolution images of items you’ve made from instructions or inspired by projects and stories in *PieceWork* to piecework@longthreadmedia.com with By Post in the subject line or mail to By Post/ *PieceWork*, PO Box 2579 Loveland, CO 80539. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

From Our Readers’ Hands

I just finished my stole from the Fall 2018 issue Wandering Path Stole to Knit by Katrina King. This was a long project, but I am so pleased with the results. It is beautiful!

Donna Langman, via email



Above right: Photograph by George Boe.

Calendar

Exhibitions

Berkeley, California: November 16, 2019–October 2020. Worn to Dance: 1920s Beads and Fashion, at Lacis Museum of Lace and Textiles. (510) 843-7290; www.lacismuseum.org.

Los Angeles, California: Through January 5, 2020. The Allure of Matter: Material Art from China, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. (323) 857-6000; www.lacma.org.

San Francisco, California: Through July 5, 2020. The Turkmen Storage Bag, at the de Young Museum. (415) 750-3600; <https://deyoung.famsf.org>.

Chicago, Illinois: Through January 21, 2020. Silver Screen to Mainstream: American Fashion in the 1930s and 40s, at the Chicago History Museum. (312) 642-4600; www.chicagohistory.org.

Boston, Massachusetts: Through March 29, 2020. Boston Made: Arts and Crafts Jewelry and Metalwork, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. (617) 267-9300; www.mfa.org.

New York, New York: Through January 5, 2020. Pierre Cardin: Future Fashion, at the Brooklyn Museum. (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org.

New York, New York: Through April 18, 2020. Ballerina: Fashion's Modern Muse, at The Museum at FIT, Special Exhibitions Gallery. (212) 217-4558; www.fitnyc.edu/museum.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: November 10, 2019–May 17, 2020. Off the Wall: American Art to Wear, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. (215) 763-8100; www.philamuseum.org.

Dallas, Texas: Through January 12, 2020. Shelia Hicks: Secret Structures, Looming Presence, at the Dallas Museum of Art. (214) 922-1200; www.dma.org.

Cambridge, Canada: Through December 22. Made in France: Haute Couture and the French Fashion Industry 1870–1970, at the Fashion History Museum. (519) 654-0009; www.fashionhistorymuseum.com.

Toronto, Canada: Through September 2020. The Gold Standard: Glittering Footwear from Around the Globe, at the Bata Shoe Museum. (416) 979-7799; www.batashoemuseum.ca.

Bath, England: Through March 1, 2020. Glove Stories, at the Fashion Museum Bath. 44 1225 477789; www.fashionmuseum.co.uk.

Symposiums, Workshops, Consumer Shows, Travel

Springfield, Massachusetts: November 2–3. The Fiber Festival of New England, at the Mallary Complex at Eastern States Exposition. www.easternstatesexposition.com.

Steelville, Missouri: November 1–2. Ozark Fiber Fling, at the Meramec Baptist Retreat Center. www.ozarkfiberfling.com.

Antarctica and South America: January 31–February 22, 2020. Antarctica and South America Knitting Adventure with Beth



Brown velvet dress. Silk velvet. Circa 1936. Collection of the Chicago History Museum; gift of Mrs. John E. Spann. (1975.95.1a-b). From the exhibition Silver Screen to Mainstream: American Fashion in the 1930s and 40s, at the Chicago History Museum.

Photograph courtesy of the Chicago History Museum.

Brown-Reinsel, hosted by Craft Cruises. (877) 972-7238; www.craftcruises.com.

Bhutan: February 28–March 15, 2020. Textiles, Temples, and Tshechus: Bhutan, hosted by Behind the Scenes Adventures. (707) 939-8874; www.btsadventures.com.

Nottingham, England: April 3–5, 2020. Missing Persons: Who Were the Typical Tudors? Conference, hosted by Jane Malcolm-Davies and Ninya Mikhaila. www.tudortailor.com.



Our calendar is going digital! Find upcoming event information at www.pieceworkmagazine.com. To have your event listed, send event information and an image via email to piecework@longthreadmedia.com.

Necessities



Knitting Essentials

The Namaste Maker's Buddy Case from Jimmy Beans now comes loaded with all of the essentials a knitter needs. Each case comes with a tapestry needle for seaming, a tin for keeping stitch markers, and a mini notebook for jotting down project comments. Magnets keep everything in place. Shown in Dark Grey. www.jimmybeanswool.com.



Stylish Stitches

The Stockinette Stitch Motif Earrings from Porterness Studios evoke the repetitive V-shape of the knit stitch. Artist Jen L. Porter designs and casts the earrings in her Los Angeles, California, studio. Lever-back wires keep the earrings in place and from getting caught in your handknits. Mini-size earrings are shown in sterling silver. www.porternessstudio.com.

Visible Mending

The time-honored tradition of mending is experiencing a resurgence in popularity. The Utility Mending Fabric Pack from Brooklyn Haberdashery includes a variety of vintage and new fabrics for visibly repairing worn garments. Each set comes with ten to twelve patches and no two packs are alike. www.brooklynhaberdashery.com.



Lacy Tankard

It's important to stay hydrated during long stretches of stitching. Creative with Clay's Jumbo Lace mug draws its inspiration from the timeless allure of lace-knitting stitches and will hold 20 ounces of your favorite beverage in style. The handcrafted stoneware mugs are microwave and dishwasher safe. Shown in Purple. www.creativewithclay.com.



Warming Wood

Ken Mocker of Silly Salmon Designs handturns his ergonomic crochet hooks using exotic woods and aluminum Boye tips. For crochet lovers with hand-health issues, the wide thumb rest provides a comfortable grip and the warmth of the wood is easy on the hand. Crochet hook is shown in U.S. size H (5 mm) with a cocobolo handle. www.sillysalmondesigns.etsy.com.

Trimmings

Mary Elizabeth Greenwall Edie's Knitted-Lace Samples

FRANCES H. RAUTENBACH



Photograph by George Boe.

Top Row: Lace No. 6 (left), Lace No. 7 (right). Middle Row: Lace No. 8. Bottom: Knitted Bedsread.

We included the story of Mary Elizabeth Greenwall Edie's handmade knitted-lace sampler book in the May/June 2016 issue of *PieceWork*. We asked Frances H. Rautenbach to re-create some of Mary Elizabeth's samples, using modern terminology and abbreviations to knit the patterns as flat pieces worked back and forth on two needles. Mary Elizabeth made her sampler book in 1935, and her patterns reflect that time. The sidebar on page 9 includes a chart showing Mary Elizabeth's notations followed by modern translations. A total of ten samples are included in the May/June 2017 and May/June 2018 issues. The final four are given here. Each sample retains the number or name that Mary Elizabeth assigned to it.

—Editor

MATERIALS

- ◆ Garden Cotton Thread by Nazli Gelin, 100% cotton crochet thread, size 10, 306 yard (279.8 m)/50 gram (1.8 oz) ball, 1 ball of #700-02 Cream
- ◆ Needles, size 1 (2.25 mm)

INSTRUCTIONS

Notes: See each pattern for gauge and sample size. Samples worked back and forth in rows. If a design is to be knitted in the round, adjustments to the stitch pattern may need to be made. On Lace No. 8 Row 8, the repeat ends with a yarnover. To accomplish this at the end of a row, I started the next row with a backward-loop cast-on.

THE PATTERNS

Lace No. 6

The stockinette chevron pattern of eyelets in No. 6 forms an even body of lace rather than a lacy edging. The first row of the eight-row repeat staggers the diagonal of eyelets formed; the pattern is worked in multiples of five stitches and an eight-row repeat.

The stitch count remains the same—five stitches per repeat—for each repeat of the pattern throughout. **Gauge:** one 5-st repeat and 8 rows = $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (1.9 cm) wide and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3 cm) tall.

Sample measures: $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches \times $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (9.5 cm \times 3.8 cm).

CO a multiple of 5 sts.

Row 1 (RS): *Yo, k3, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 2 (WS): P.

Row 3: *K1, yo, k2, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 4: P.

Row 5: *K2, yo, k1, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 6: P.

Row 7: *K3, yo, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 8: P.

Rep Rows 1–8.

Lace No. 7

The cast-on edge of this stockinette chevron pattern of eyelets forms a zigzag, which can be a lacy hem for items knitted from the bottom hem or cuff edge. Knitted in the round, this pattern will form a lacy cuff for socks, mittens, a bag, and more. The pattern is worked in multiples of thirteen stitches and a ten-row repeat.

The stitch count remains the same—thirteen stitches per repeat—for each repeat of the pattern throughout.

Gauge: one 13-st repeat and 10 rows = $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (3.8 cm) wide and 1 inch (2.5 cm) tall.

Sample measures: 3 inches \times 3 inches (7.6 cm \times 7.6 cm).

CO a multiple of 13 sts.

Row 1 (RS): *Sl 1, k1, pss0, k4, yo, k1, yo, k4, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 2 (WS): P.

Row 3: *Sl 1, k1, pss0, [k3, yo] twice, k3, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 4: P.

Row 5: *Sl 1, k1, pss0, k2, yo, k5, yo, k2, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 6: P.

Row 7: *Sl 1, k1, pss0, k1, yo, k7, yo, k1, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 8: P.

Row 9: *Sl 1, k1, pss0, yo, k9, yo, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 10: P.

Rep Rows 1–10.

Lace No. 8

No. 8 forms a body of lace on the bias, with a slightly wavy edging at the cast-on edge. The pattern is worked in multiples of eight stitches and a seven-row repeat.

The stitch count remains the same—eight stitches per repeat—for each repeat of the pattern throughout. **Gauge:** one 8-st repeat and 7 rows = 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3 cm) tall.

Sample measures: 4 inches \times 2 inches (10.2 cm \times 5.1 cm).



Notations

Mary Elizabeth's Abbreviation	Modern Abbreviation/Notation
n (abbreviation for narrow)	k2tog/knit two together
o	yo/yarnover
o2	yo twice/yarnover twice
pn	p2tog/purl two together
S&B (slip and bind)	sl 1, k1, pssso/slip one, knit one, pass the slipped stitch over the stitch just knitted
S, n, pass S o	sl 1, k2tog, pssso/slip one, knit two together, pass the slipped stitch over the one stitch made by knitting two together

CO a multiple of 8 sts.

Row 1 (RS): *Yo, k6, k2tog; rep from * to end. (Each decrease [k2tog on RS rows, p2tog on WS rows] should continue in line with the decrease of the row below.)

Row 2 (WS): *P2tog, p5, yo, p1; rep from * to end.

Row 3: *K2, yo, k5, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 4: *P2tog, p3, yo, p3; rep from * to end.

Row 5: *K4, yo, k2, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 6: *P2tog, p1, yo, p5; rep from * to end.

Row 7: *K6, yo, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 8: *P2tog, p6, yo; rep from * to end (see Notes above).

Row 9: *K1, yo, k5, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 10: *P2tog, p5, yo, p2; rep from * to end.

Row 11: *K3, yo, k3, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 12: *P2tog, p2, yo, p4; rep from * to end.

Row 13: *K5, yo, k1, k2tog; rep from * to end.

Row 14: *P2tog, yo, p6; rep from * to end.

Rep Rows 1–14.

Knitted Bedspread

This is a remarkable version of the Feather and Fan pattern, creating symmetrical eyelet increases on either side of a central eyelet worked in stockinette stitch, keeping the stitch count even every row between stockinette stitch decreases, with every fourth row featuring a crisp, well-defined wave of purled decreases.

Mary Elizabeth notes: “For fine patterns which makes a desired width for a strip.” A strip being anything from a narrow fine lace edging to a bedspread (knit in a series of strips to be sewn together). The pattern is worked in multiples of twenty-three stitches and a four-row repeat.

The stitch count remains the same—twenty-three stitches per repeat for each repeat of the pattern throughout.

Gauge: one 23-stitch repeat and 8 rows = 2 inches (5.1 cm) wide and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (1.9 cm) tall.

Sample measures: 6 inches \times 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (15.2 cm \times 6.4 cm).

CO a multiple of 23 sts.

K 1 row.

Row 1 (RS): [P2tog] 4 times, *[yo, k1] 7 times, yo, [p2tog] 8 times; rep from * to last 15 sts, [yo, k1] 7 times, [p2tog] 4 times.

Row 2 (WS): P.

Row 3: K.

Row 4: P.

Rep Rows 1–4.

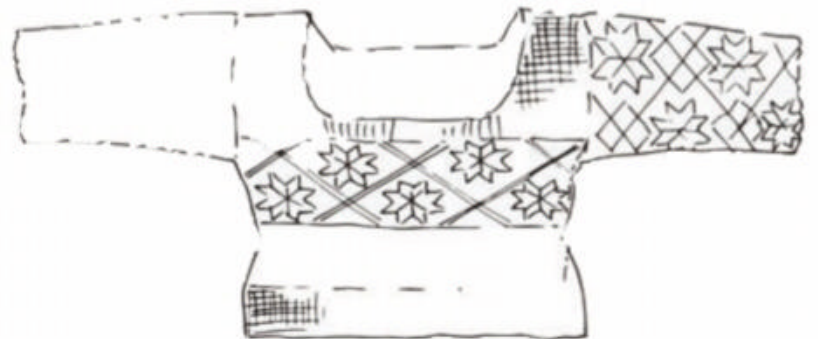
FRANCES H. RAUTENBACH lives on Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada. She learned to knit at age four from her granny, who taught her that her job, as the first-born, was to knit socks for the family and darn them when they wore out, so she had better knit them well in the first place. Deciphering old knitting instructions has become a recent interest, and passing on what she learns remains a lifelong passion.

Danish Night Sweaters

VIVIAN HØXBRO

The following is excerpted with permission from Traditional Danish Sweaters: 200 Stars and Other Classic Motifs from Historic Sweaters by Vivian Høxbro. The book is filled with historical information, photographs and sketches of many night sweaters from museum and private collections, and much more. For more information, see the sidebar on page 12.

—Editor



Nakskov Sweater. Maker unknown. Knitted. Nakskov, Lolland, Denmark. Collection of the Museum Lolland-Falster, Nykøbing Falster, Denmark. (LFS 8868). Measurements: circumference, 30 inches (76.2 cm); total length, 13¾ inches (34.9 cm); sleeve length, 8¼ inches (21.0 cm). Color: green. Knitting gauge: 28 stitches and 48 rows = 4 by 4 inches (10.2 x 10.2 cm). Patterns: traveling stitch and star motifs; edge patterns on the body; traveling stitch and star motifs on the sleeves.

Photographs and sketch © Vivian Høxbro and from Traditional Danish Sweaters: 200 Stars and Other Classic Motifs from Historic Sweaters by Vivian Høxbro, published by Trafalgar Square Books in 2019.

The sweaters in this book are from the 19th century: “night sweaters,” as they were once called, which have roots deep in Danish history. Yes, they are single-color—minimalist, you might say, with quite artfully designed relief patterns. You could also find them in south Sweden (where these garments are referred to as *spedetröjor*) and in Norway—both areas that were considered Danish territory at one time or another, where women knitted sweaters as part of traditional folk dress. Similar sweaters were worn by men, at least up to the beginning of the 19th century, but I have concentrated only on women’s sweaters.

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Single-color women's sweaters like these, whether Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish, went out of fashion at the end of the 19th century. They were discarded, deconstructed so the materials could be reused, or, in the best case, forgotten but conserved in our museums.

When night sweaters disappeared from the Danish sartorial landscape, their patterns did also. I had no luck finding written or sketched patterns for them from the time period when they were knitted and worn. However, more than 150 sweaters and some knitted sleeves have been preserved in Danish museums.

Perhaps the name “night sweaters” was used to distinguish between these sweaters and expensive imported sweaters, which were not likely to have been worn at night—on the contrary, they were bought to be shown off and were probably the most expensive items of clothing a woman owned. Ordinary night sweaters were very much inspired by the silk sweaters of the upper class.

The Danish word *nattrøje* literally translates as “night jacket” or “night shirt.” In the early history of

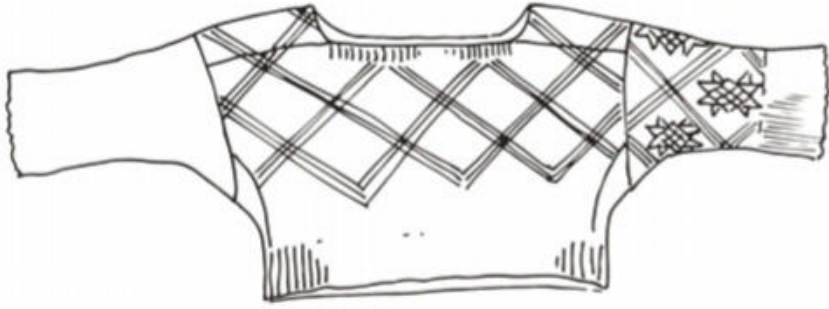
these knitted garments, the style was more akin to a shirt or tunic. The fabric, often knitted with silk, was very fine in both quality and density. Later, the same name was used for the more close-fitting short jackets knitted with wool which we have termed “night sweaters” in this book.

During the day, people in most parts of Denmark wore night sweaters as part of the rest of their outfit. Women's traditional dress consisted of an inner shift or a bodice. The night sweater was worn over that, and then, over it, came a long skirt with an



Aastrup Sweater. Maker unknown. Knitted. Aastrup, Falster, Denmark. Collection of the Museum Lolland-Falster, Nykøbing Falster, Denmark. (MLF 0521 x 001). Measurements: circumference, 33 inches (83.8 cm); total length, 11½ inches (29.2 cm); sleeve length, 8¾ inches (22.2 cm). Color: dark green. Knitting gauge: 37 stitches = 4 inches (10.2 cm). Patterns: traveling stitch and edge patterns on the body; traveling stitch and star motifs and edge patterns on the sleeves; note the long stars on the sleeves.

Photographs and sketch © Vivian Høxbro and from *Traditional Danish Sweaters: 200 Stars and Other Classic Motifs from Historic Sweaters* by Vivian Høxbro, published by Trafalgar Square Books in 2019.



Herning Sweater. Maker unknown. Knitted. Origin unknown. Collection of the Museum Midtjylland (Central Jutland), Herning, Denmark. (20960). Measurements: circumference: 33½ inches (85.1 cm); total length, 21¼ inches (54.0 cm); sleeve length, 17¼ inches (43.8 cm). Color: red. Knitting gauge: 43 stitches = 4 inches (10.2 cm). Patterns: traveling stitch and star motifs, horizontal panels and edge patterns on the body; traveling stitches and star motifs and edge patterns on the sleeves.

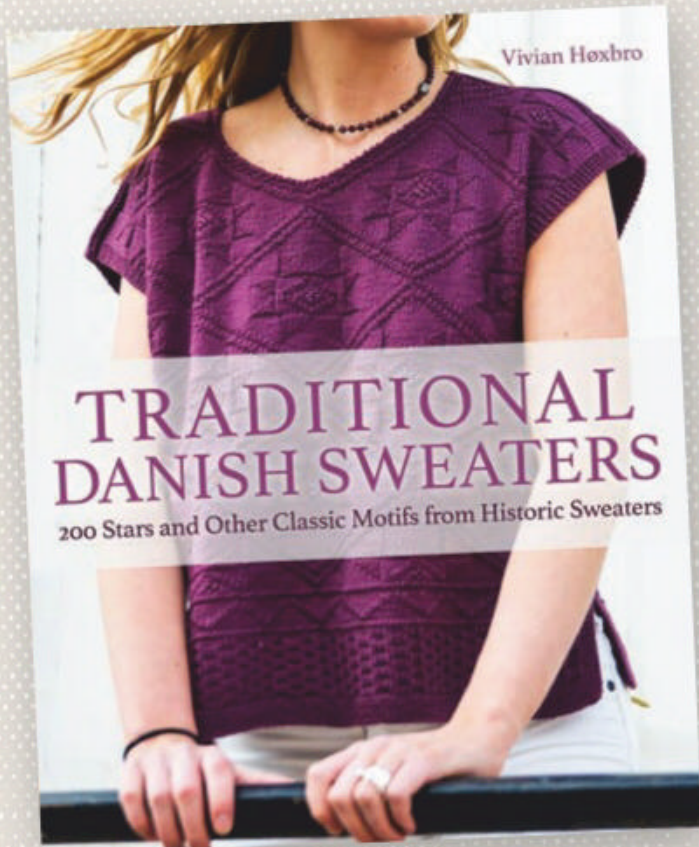
Photographs and sketch © Vivian Høxbro and from *Traditional Danish Sweaters: 200 Stars and Other Classic Motifs from Historic Sweaters* by Vivian Høxbro, published by Trafalgar Square Books in 2019.



apron. A tight-fitting vest could be worn over the night sweater; a scarf surrounded the neck, and the head was usually covered by a cap and cap linen. Naturally, there were big differences between the various provinces around the country, depending on the economy and the style of each place. But all over Denmark, you could find the most unbelievably fine patterned sweaters and distinctive stylings.

You might wonder why women devoted so much imagination and energy to knitting these elegant patterns, when the rest of the outfit only allowed the sleeves or part of them to be seen. My guess is that, then as now, people simply had the need to create something beautiful—a desire for aesthetic appeal.

Knitted night sweaters worn by most people were single-color and usually decorated with ingenious



Traditional Danish Sweaters

In her fascinating new book—*Traditional Danish Sweaters: 200 Stars and Other Classic Motifs from Historic Sweaters*—Vivian Høxbro examines the uniquely Danish *nattrøje* (night sweater). The book is filled with historical information, photographs of traditional sweaters, detailed technical information on how the sweaters were created, and complete instructions for knitting eleven garments. The inclusion of knitted samples with charts for the 200 motifs and the “Knit Your Own Night Sweater” chapter truly are the icing on this cake.

Traditional Danish Sweaters: 200 Stars and Other Classic Motifs from Historic Sweaters by Vivian Høxbro. English ed. North Pomfret, Vermont: Trafalgar Square Books, 2019. Softbound, 254 pages, \$31.95. ISBN 978-1-57076-924-5. www.trafalgarbooks.com.

Photograph © Ingrid Riis and from *Traditional Danish Sweaters: 200 Stars and Other Classic Motifs from Historic Sweaters* by Vivian Høxbro, published by Trafalgar Square Books in 2019.

patterns. They were knitted with white wool yarn and then dyed. A characteristic common to all of them was that they were knitted with patterns using knit and purl stitches, or damask knitting, which as the name implies, was inspired by damask weaving.

A night sweater most likely began with the sleeves, which were typically knitted from the cuff up. An edging was knitted first and then, most often, followed by traveling stitch and star motifs. The pattern repeats on many of the sweaters became wider and higher as they were increased, so there were no visible increases along a “sleeve seam.”

The body was knitted from the bottom up and begun with edge pieces for the front and back, often in a block pattern or ribbing, knitted back and forth on two needles. After that, the two edges were joined and the body was then knitted in the round on anywhere between six and nine double-pointed needles. At the underarm, the piece was divided and the front and back worked separately, back and forth. The front and back necklines were sometimes straight across, sometimes rounded. The shoulders were worked straight up, one at a time and finished by joining with three-needle bind-off. Lastly, the sleeves were sewn in.

I imagine that most night sweaters were knitted by the women who wore them—or by local women who could earn a little by knitting for others. These sweaters shared certain local characteristics, but each was different and very much personal in its details.

VIVIAN HØXBRO has worked as a knitting designer for more than 30 years, both for yarn companies and freelance. She has written 10 knitting books, published by Norwegian, American, Japanese, and Danish companies. In 2000, she presented her own kit collection, which continues to be sold. During the same time period, she has also taught and made presentations in Scandinavia as well as in the United States and Japan.



Odense Sweater. Maker unknown. Knitted. Sankt Hans, Odense, Fyn, Denmark Collection of the Odense City Museum, Odense, Denmark. (KMO/1963/613). Measurements: circumference: 31½ inches (80.0 cm); total length, 13½ inches (34.3 cm); sleeve length, 9½ inches (24.1 cm). Color: red. Knitting gauge: 42 stitches = 4 inches (10.2 cm). Patterns: vertical traveling stitch and star motifs, initials (AMD), and edge stitches on the body; traveling stitch and star motifs and edge patterns on the sleeves.

Photographs and sketch © Vivian Høxbro and from Traditional Danish Sweaters: 200 Stars and Other Classic Motifs from Historic Sweaters by Vivian Høxbro, published by Trafalgar Square Books in 2019.

A Stitch in Time

Rhodes Stitch

DEANNA HALL WEST

The Rhodes stitch is a highly textured member of the cross-stitch family. Its appearance is a distinctive geometric shape, including the original square (Figure 1) and rectangle (Figure 2) and later the circle (Figure 3), diamond (Figure 4), heart (Figure 5), oval (Figure 6), and partial patterns of these shapes (Figures 7 and 11).



This Rhodes-stitch sampler was designed and stitched by Deanna Hall West. Design size: $4\frac{7}{8}$ by $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches (12.4 x 7.0 cm). Materials: Wichelt Linen, 32-count, Ivory; DMC Cotton Floss, #155, #310, #333, #597, #598, #601, #603, #605, #3746, #3808, #3810, #3811, and #3822; John James Needles, tapestry size 26 or 28.

Photograph by George Boe; illustrations by Ann Swanson.

This modern-day stitch was created by and named for Mary Rhodes, an English needlewoman, teacher, and author who developed the square and rectangular versions of this stitch. She described them in her 1980 book, *Dictionary of Canvas Work Stitches*, as proceeding in a clockwise manner, but some later authors/designers have diagrammed these stitches as being done in a counterclockwise manner. This procedure creates a large build-up of thread at the center point, thus making the Rhodes stitch a very textured stitch. As long as the stitches progress in a specific placement and sequence, the direction

doesn't matter. Also, where the stitch begins varies from illustration to illustration. The placement of the first leg of the stitch depends upon where the stitcher wants the last leg to be placed (vertically, diagonally, or horizontally), and ultimately affects the final appearance of the stitch.

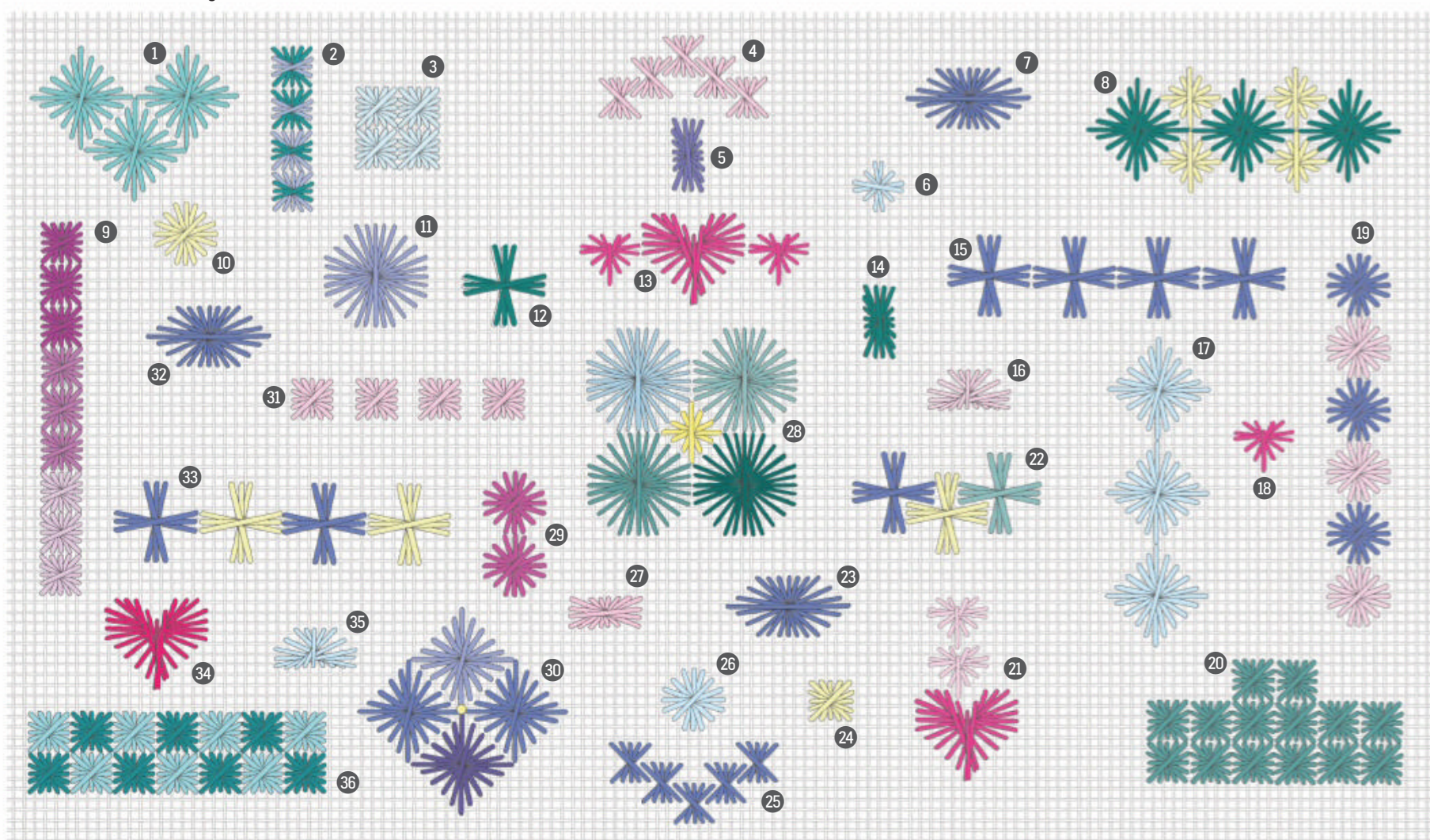
The Rhodes stitch is usually worked on an evenweave fabric, such as mono needlepoint canvas, congress cloth, or linen with enough sizing and tension (hoop, stretchers bars, or frame) to support the many legs of each stitch. However, it can be worked with more difficulty on plain fabric, but the

shape's outer stitch placement should be marked to keep the symmetry of the particular geometric shape. Subsequent authors/designers created the circle, diamond, heart, oval, and other versions of the Rhodes stitch and the many partial patterns of these shapes (Figure 7). The Rhodes stitch can be stitched as single units (Figures 1 through 8), distinct groupings (Figures 9 through 12), in rows (Figures 10 and 11),

floral elements (flower heads and shamrocks, Figure 12), or as fillings for a background (Figure 10). See the Rhodes-Stitch Spot Sampler for examples of these arrangements.

Each individual stitch is usually worked in one fiber type and in one color (solid, variegated, or overdyed versions of that color). However, some designers/stitchers have chosen to divide an individual shape

Rhodes Stitch Diagram



Key

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| ① #597, Figure 4. | ⑫ #3808, Figure 7 (middle). | ⑳ #3811, Figure 3 (large). |
| ② Top two elements—base #3808 and top #155; lower two elements—base #155 and top #3808. | ⑬ #601, Figure 5. | ㉑ #603, Figure 2. |
| ③ #3811, Figure 9. | ⑭ #3808, Figure 2. | ㉒ #598, # 597, #3810, #3808 and # 3822, Figure 12. |
| ④ #603, Figure 11 (turn fabric 180 degrees). | ⑮ #155, Figure 7 (middle). | ㉓ #601, Figure 3 (large). |
| ⑤ #155, Figure 2 (turn fabric 90 degrees). | ⑯ #605, Figure 7 (right). | ㉔ #155 (top), #3746 (middle two), #333 (bottom) and #3822 (French knot). |
| ⑥ #3811, Figure 3 (small). | ⑰ #598, Figure 4. | ㉕ #605, Figure 1. |
| ⑦ #333, Figure 6. | ⑱ #601, Figure 5. | ㉖ #333, Figure 6. |
| ⑧ #3808 and #3822, Figure 4 (large and small). | ⑲ #3746 and #605, Figure 3 (large). | ㉗ #155 and #3822, Figure 7 (middle). |
| ⑨ #601 (top), #603 (middle), #605 (bottom), Figure 10. | ㉚ #3810, Figure 10. | ㉘ #603, Figure 5 (large). |
| ⑩ #3822, Figure 3 (large). | ㉛ #601 and # 603, Figure 5 (both sizes). | ㉙ #3811, Figure 7 (right). |
| ⑪ #3746, Figure 12 (circle only). | ㉜ #155, #3822, and #3810, Figure 7 (middle). | ㉚ #3810 and #3808, Figure 10. |
| | ㉝ #333, Figure 6. | |
| | ㉞ #3822, Figure 1. | |
| | ㉟ #155, Figure 11. | |

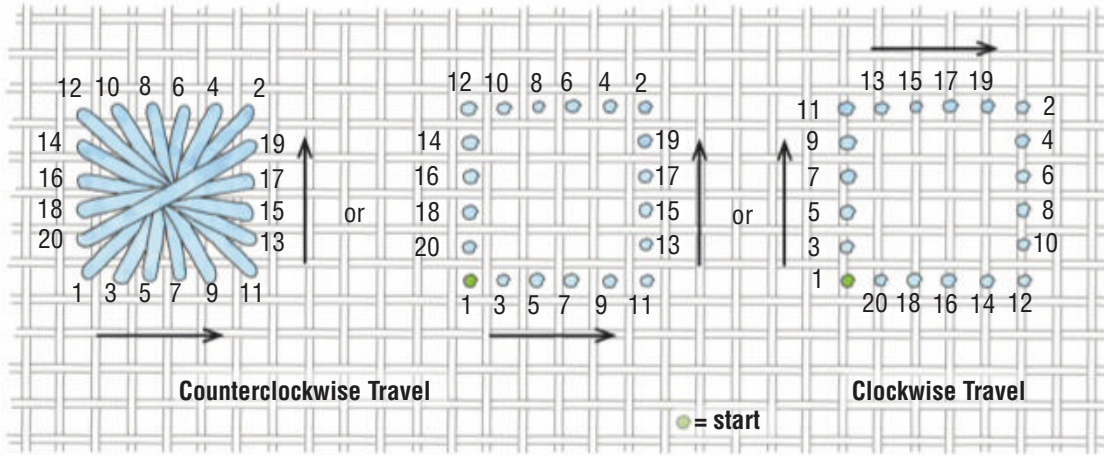


Figure 1

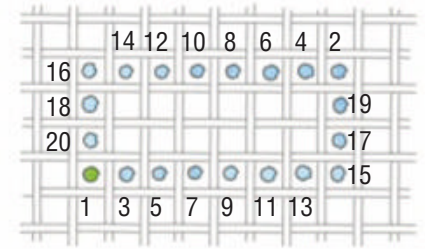


Figure 2

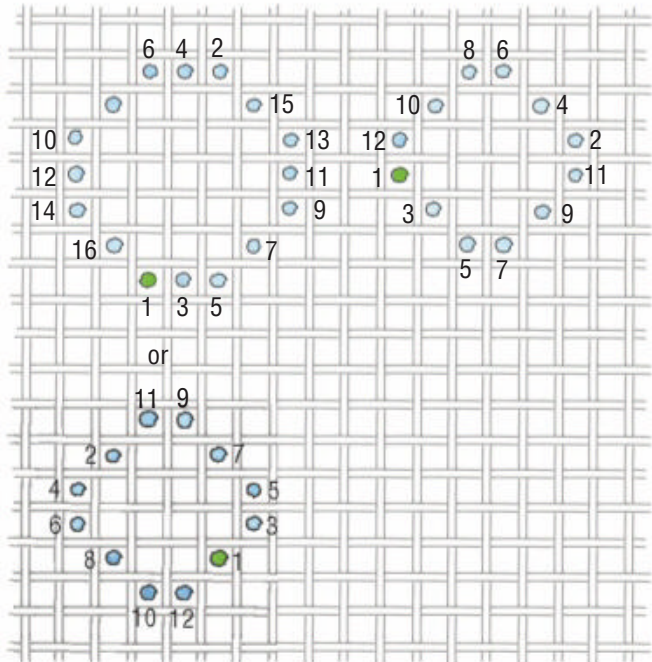


Figure 3

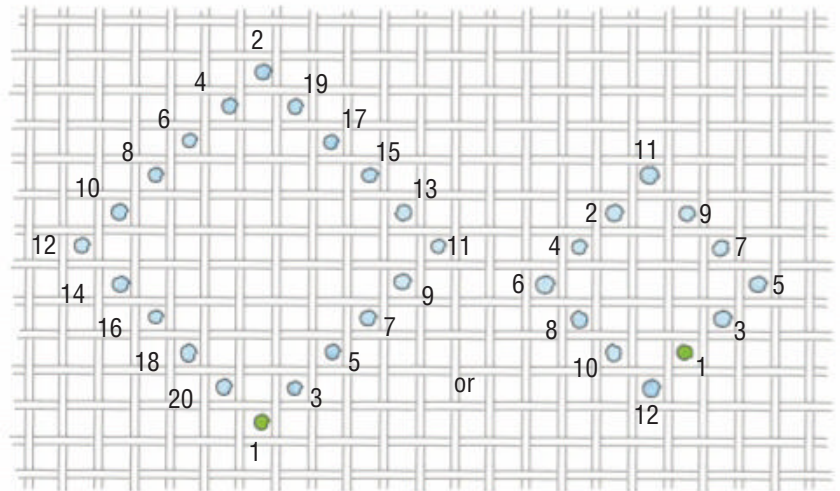


Figure 4

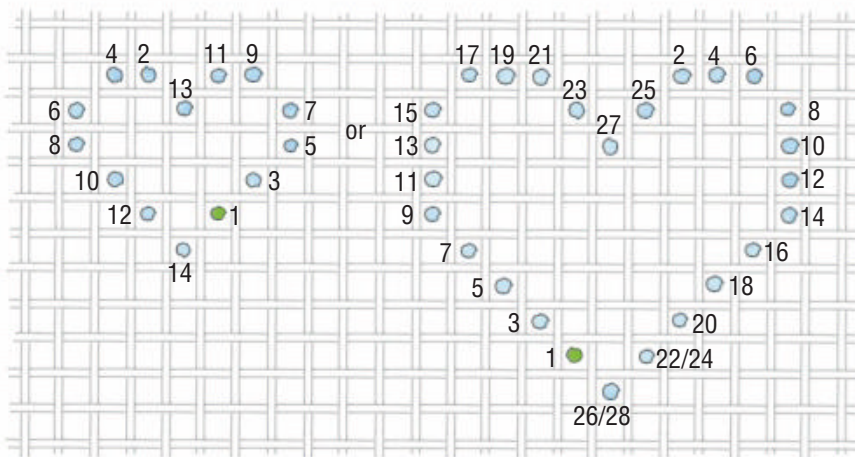


Figure 5

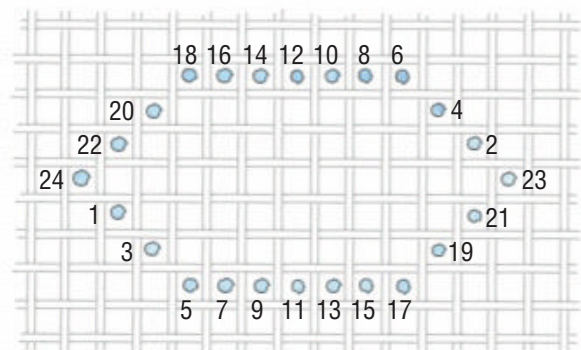


Figure 6

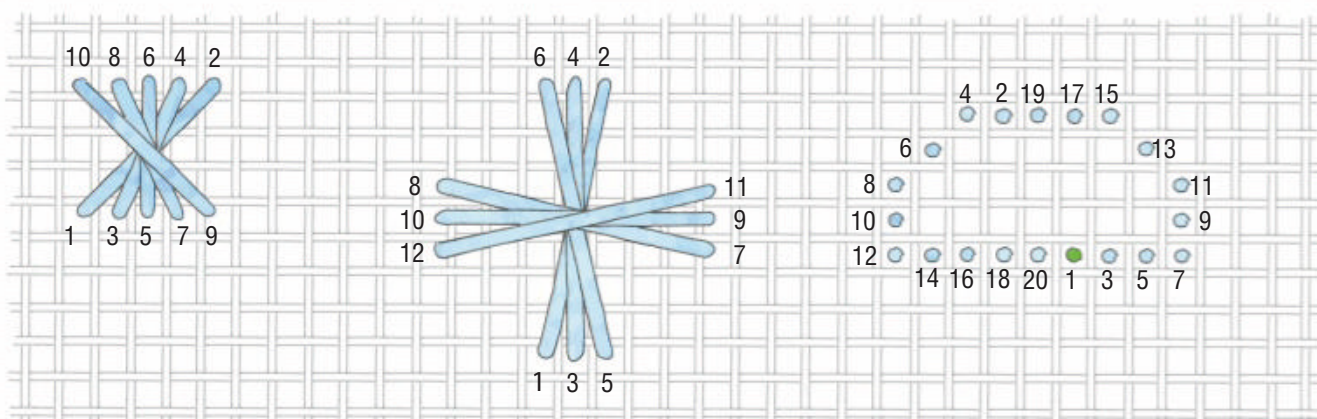


Figure 7

into quarters or halves and stitch the shape in more than one color (Figure 8). Each Rhodes stitch can be worked over a various number of background threads, making the stitch larger or smaller as desired.

Threads to consider are stranded floss (cotton, rayon, or silk), metallics (blending filament or narrow braid), pearl cotton, flower thread, silk ribbon, and even tapestry or crewel yarns. If using multiple thread strands, it is advisable to use a laying tool or to railroad the strands to keep them as parallel as possible for the best final appearance. The Rhodes stitch tends to sag or one leg can become looser than the others, so always work with the ground fabric under tension. Make sure that the thread or yarn weight used is appropriate for the thread count of the ground fabric selected. To start a motif use an away-waste knot or stitch several tiny tacking stitches that eventually will be covered by the motif itself. Also, use a long length of thread or yarn of 20 plus inches (50 plus cm),

because of the many legs for any Rhodes stitch. Lay the thread on the fabric surface somewhat snugly but not so tightly as to create holes in the fabric or be loose or floppy. To end the stitching thread, bury the thread under the existing stitches on the back, being careful not to disturb the stitch alignment.

I N S T R U C T I O N S

Note: Use 2 strands of floss for all stitching.

With #310 floss, backstitch around a $4\frac{7}{8}$ by $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches (12.4 x 7 cm) area. Randomly place and stitch the design elements, using the key (on page 15) and the Stitch Diagram (the numbers on the Stitch Diagram correspond to the numbers in the Key).

DEANNA HALL WEST is *PieceWork's* needlework technical editor; she previously was the editor of *The Needleworker* magazine.

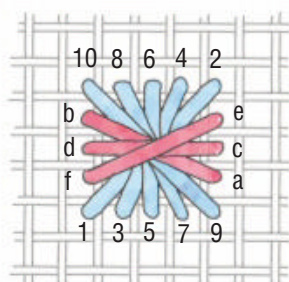


Figure 8



Figure 9

[Repeat Fig 1 left-hand diagram
4 times sharing holes.]

For larger images of the illustrations in this article, visit www.pieceworkmagazine.com/stitch-in-time-rhodes-stitch.

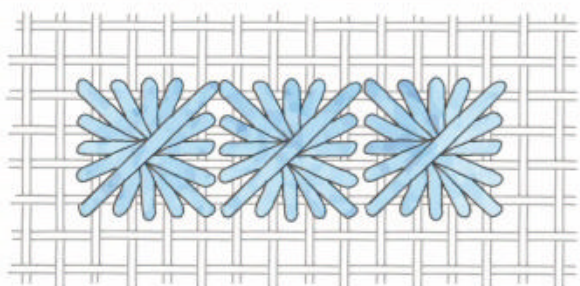


Figure 10

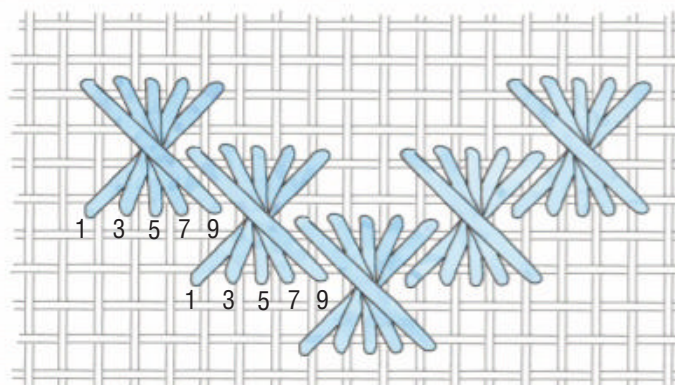


Figure 11

“Rebellious” and True Haapsalu Shawls

NANCY BUSH



White shawl: Saima Tee knitted this rectangular shawl, which is an example of a “true” traditional Haapsalu shawl. Collection of Nancy Bush. Green shawl: Nancy Bush’s Videvik Shawl; the use of an alternate fiber—100 percent cashmere—makes this shawl “rebellious.” It is included in *Knitting Green: Conversations and Planet-Friendly Projects* by Ann Budd (Fort Collins, Colorado: Interweave, 2010.) Yellow Scarf: Susanna IC’s Annis Scarf inspired this “rebellious” example that was knitted by Saima Tee. Collection of Nancy Bush. Photographs by Matt Graves.

During a trip to Haapsalu, Estonia, in the summer of 2018, I visited a delightful exhibition at the Pitsikeskus (Lace Center). The inspiration for the exhibition, *The Definition of a True Haapsalu Shawl*, was the way so many visitors to the center would walk in and, noticing a lovely scarf or other item in the shop, comment, “Oh, look, a Haapsalu shawl.” Often, the item was actually *neither* a true shawl nor a true scarf but a variation in some form of one of the exquisite lace items that have their origins in Haapsalu. (*Note: In the “lace language” of Estonia, a scarf is a square or triangle; a shawl is a rectangle.*)

The exhibition fascinated me: I studied the items displayed and took many notes. After talking with the knitters there, we decided that these items would be considered “rebellious,” which is important in defining those that are “true.” In the process, I realized that many of the items I have made over the years using techniques from Haapsalu fit, as the exhibition indicated, the description of rebellious lace. Below are some of the characteristics associated with both true Haapsalu shawls or scarves and rebellious ones. Both are important to keeping the 200-year-old heritage of making Haapsalu shawls and scarves alive.

knitted and sewn-on scalloped lace edge. The scarves are often about 40 inches by 40 inches (102 by 102 cm or 1 meter by 1 meter) square.

- A rectangular shawl usually has one pattern that repeats and always has a separately knitted and sewn-on scalloped lace edge. A few shawls contain several motifs in the center, but this design is not as common. Shawls typically measure about 20 inches (51 cm) wide by 70 inches (178 cm) long.

- Triangular scarves are made three ways. The earliest construction method, developed in the 1930s, involves knitting from the top down, beginning with

True Haapsalu Lace

- A true Haapsalu shawl or scarf is always made of 100 percent wool. Although other fibers can make a lovely and traditional-looking shawl or scarf, 100 percent wool is firmly part of the tradition. Typical yarn weights are 28/2 (1,400 meters [1,531 yd] in 100 grams [3.5 oz]), 30/2 (1,500 meters [1,640 yd] in 100 grams [3.5 oz]), and 32/2 (1,600 meters [1,750 yd] in 100 grams [3.5 oz]). All are two-ply yarns.

- The yarn used to make a true Haapsalu shawl or scarf is always a solid color. The color can be dyed bright or pastel or a natural sheep’s color, but there is never more than one color in a true Haapsalu shawl or scarf.

- A square scarf always has a large decorative border, a center that usually has a repeated overall pattern, and a separately



This rectangular shawl knitted by Virvi Palmiste incorporates the Greta Garbo pattern and is an example of a “true” traditional Haapsalu shawl. Collection of Nancy Bush.

a scalloped-lace edge. The center is then decreased on each side, to the tip. The outer-lace edge is knitted separately and sewn on. The result is a lace edge on all three sides. The second construction method involves knitting from the tip up with a garter-stitch border at the top and a separately knitted and sewn-on lace edge on the two sides. The third starts at the outer sides by casting on for the lace edge. The body of the scarf is then decreased in three places: across every right-side row, at each side edge with a single decrease, and in the middle with a double decrease, removing four stitches on one row. The shawl is completed at the center of the upper edge with a grafted seam.

- The center of all true Haapsalu shawls and scarves is always surrounded by a garter-stitch frame. The outer-scalloped edge, knitted separately and sewn on, is attached to this frame.

- The patterns used in Haapsalu shawls and scarves can be traditional or be newly designed, but they all have at least a basis in tradition. Many include the unique technique found in Haapsalu lace—the *nupp* (Estonian for “button,” “bud,” or “knob”), a bobblelike feature that creates texture and added interest to the openwork patterns. Many patterns, whether traditional or newly designed, are inspired by nature.

Rebellious Haapsalu Lace

- A rebellious shawl or scarf may be made of a blend of wool and other fiber(s) or another fiber

altogether, such as linen, mohair, silk, or alpaca. The exhibition included a triangle in a lovely yellow mohair of varied tones; it was perfectly made, but the mohair fiber and varied tones make it rebellious.

- The weight of the yarn can be thicker than the classic fine yarn used in Haapsalu. The exhibition included a triangular scarf knitted (using the third construction mentioned above) in a worsted-weight yarn. The scarf was enormous, closer to a blanket, making it much more than a scarf.

- A rebellious scarf or shawl may be an unusual shape, not the traditional square, rectangle, or triangle. Examples of such variances include the accompanying project, a pelerine, with its short lacy bolero style and the interesting half-moon shape of Susanna IC’s Annis Scarf. Knitters in Haapsalu discovered the Annis Scarf on the internet, adapted the shape, and added motifs and different lace edges to create something special within their own tradition. Other rebellious shapes include cowls, irregular-sided squares, rectangles, or triangles.

- More than one color in a shawl or scarf makes it rebellious. A perfectly constructed Haapsalu shawl with a scalloped-lace edge in a different color from the center (for example, a white center with a dark blue outer edge) is rebellious. In a perfectly constructed Haapsalu-style shawl, the yarn may be dip-dyed or tie-dyed or spun using mixed-colored top or roving, making it rebellious, as would extra colors



The Prairie Scarf, designed and knitted by Nancy Bush with bison yarn handspun by Judith MacKenzie, is another “rebellious” example. Instructions for making it are in *All New Homespun Handknit: 25 Small Projects to Knit with Handspun Yarn* (Fort Collins, Colorado: Interweave, 2009).



There are three ways to make a triangular scarf. For this scarf, Siiri Reimann used the third method to knit this scarf with the Läänemaa’s Bird pattern, illustrating that a recently designed pattern that uses traditional elements and techniques is also a “true” traditional Haapsalu shawl. Collection of Nancy Bush.

added in the patterning or nupps made with a second color.

- A shawl or scarf is rebellious if the scalloped-lace edge is made in any way other than the traditional “knitted separately and sewn-on” method. If the outer edge is picked up and the lace edge knitted on, the piece is certainly rebellious. Although you can achieve a scalloped-lace edge this way, the points are not as rounded, so this approach is not considered the “correct” way to make the lace edge. As Aime Edasi and Siiri Reimann explain in *The Haapsalu Shawl* (Türi, Estonia: Saara Publishers, 2009), “The lace edge is not picked up and knitted onto the shawl, as there would then be yarn-over holes in the center of each scallop on the outer edge, which would spoil the shape of the points.” The exhibition also contained a lovely shawl with a Greta Garbo pattern in which the outer edge was completely replaced by slightly felted wool fleece, similar to a Santa’s beard!

- Beads, as well as other embellishments, denote a rebellious shawl or scarf. One scarf in the exhibition was embellished with needle-felted bits of colored wool fiber and another was embellished with added flowers, some knitted and some made of organdy. Replacing nupps with beads is also considered quite rebellious.

- Mixing two traditional patterns that would normally be used individually in one shawl or scarf is considered rebellious, even if all the other criteria for a true Haapsalu shawl are met. The exhibition contained a shawl with the Lily of the Valley pattern and a leaf pattern used together in stripes. Another shawl, made of Jamieson and Smith’s cobweb-weight wool yarn, contained cross-stitch motifs adapted from an embroidery pattern that were made with nupps. The effect was quite heavy, not airy and lacy.

The knitters in Haapsalu are very skilled. They love making their traditional shawls and scarves, but they also love trying new things, exploring interesting



Hilja Aavik’s “rebellious” shawl features a picked-up and knitted-on edge. The center pattern is the Pasqueflower Pattern 2 in *The Haapsalu Shawl* by Aime Edasi and Siiri Reimann (Türi, Estonia: Saara Publishers, 2009). Collection of Nancy Bush.

ideas, and creating new designs. On display in the Pitsikeskus shop, one might see an exquisite, but definitely “rebellious,” dress decorated with traditional Haapsalu lace patterns made with linen yarn. The knitters are pleased to make and sell lovely lace pelerines like the accompanying project or scarves inspired by the Annis Shawl from Susana IC in the shop. Although these items are rebellious, they also fit into the innovation and growth of this 200-year-old cottage industry.

NANCY BUSH continues her fascination with Estonia and their lace knitting. She travels to Estonia regularly, always finding something new to catch her attention. The author would like to thank Michelle Poulin-Alfeld for invaluable help with the “architecture” of the pelerine and her great cast-off solution, and Lisa Sewell and Sheryl Gillilan for the loan of their lovely pelerines from Haapsalu.

↔ *A companion project follows* ↔

A Haapsalu Lace Pelerine to Knit

NANCY BUSH

◀ *Inspired by the preceding article* ▶

Similarly constructed shawls made by several master knitters in Haapsalu, Estonia, inspired this small circular shawl or pelerine. I loved their airiness and the challenge of figuring out how they were made. This garment falls into the category of “Rebellious Lace” as it is a different shape from a traditional knitted-lace shawl or scarf from Haapsalu, and it is made in the round, offering a few technical challenges as well.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Bush, Nancy. *Knitted Lace of Estonia: Techniques, Patterns, and Traditions*. Fort Collins, Colorado: Interweave, 2010.

MATERIALS

- ◆ Skacel HiKoo Merino Lace Light, 100% merino wool yarn, laceweight, 1,531 yard (1,400.0 m)/100 gram (3.5 oz) hank, 1 hank of #1003 Shade
- ◆ Needles, sizes 2 (2.75 mm) and 6 (4 mm) circ 24 inches (61 cm) or sizes needed to obtain gauge
- ◆ Stitch markers
- ◆ Coil-less pins or moveable markers
- ◆ Tapestry needle

Finished size: 28 inches (71.1 cm) circumference at top and 18 inches (45.7 cm) deep

Gauge: 26 stitches and 26 rnds = 4 inches (10.2 cm) in St st with size 2 (2.75 mm) needles, after blocking

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

Knitted Cast-On

The cast-on for the lace edge is worked using two ends of the yarn held together. This cast-on edge is the outer edge of the lace. When the cast-on with two ends is complete, break one end and continue for the rest of the pelerine using a single end.

Work the cast-on as follows: Make a slipknot and place it onto the left-hand needle. With the right-hand needle, go into this slipknot as to knit and make a new stitch. Place this new stitch on the left-hand needle by putting the left-hand needle beyond the new stitch (to the right of it) and go into it from right to left. This keeps the stitch mounted correctly on the needle. Knit into the stitch, making a new stitch. Repeat this process until you have the desired number of stitches.

Nupps

The nupps in this project, made of seven stitches, are not worked in the traditional way, as the project is worked in the round as opposed to back and forth.

Make nupps as follows: When you reach the nupp symbol, increase seven stitches in one stitch. Do this by knitting into the marked stitch, don't remove it from the left needle, *make a yarnover and knit the stitch again; repeat from * two more times—seven nupp stitches. You must do this *loosely*. These increased stitches are always completed with a knit stitch, to secure the group of stitches. On the next round, when you reach the cluster of nupp stitches, knit them together through the back loop to create one stitch again, which keeps the stitch count correct. When you knit these stitches together, you will understand why they needed to be made loosely on the previous row.

Gathered Stitch

Knit three together but do not drop the stitches from the left needle, knit these three stitches together again through the back loop and drop the three stitches from the left needle—three stitches decreased to two stitches.

INSTRUCTIONS

Notes: The pelerine is worked circularly from the lower edge up, beginning with the scalloped-lace edge. Shaping is done with double decreases in four equal places around the piece. When the project is complete, it is bound off.

Pelerine

Scalloped Lace Edge

With size 6 (4 mm) needle, yarn doubled, and using the knitted method, CO 420 sts. Break off one end of yarn and cont with single yarn and size 2 (2.75 mm) needle. Beg chart for scalloped lace edge. Note that the edge is worked in garter st.

Rnd 1: (Stitches are not joined yet.) K across all sts.

Pm and join work into a rnd when you beg the 2nd rnd, being *very* careful not to twist your work.

Note: Since there are so many stitches, it is really easy to twist them around the needle. I recommend taking the time to check and double-check how the stitches are mounted on the needle. You may want to actually pin down the needle with the cast-on stitches on a board or soft surface so you can be sure



Nancy Bush's tour-de-force small circular shawl or pelerine is a different shape from a traditional knitted-lace shawl or scarf from Haapsalu. It will be perfect to keep the chill off.

the stitches are not twisted. You can repair a twist between the first and second round, but after that, you will have a Möbius.

Rnd 2: After you have joined, p 1 rnd. These are Rnds 1 and 2 on the Edge Chart.

Cont foll chart for the lace edge.

Note: I recommend placing a marker every two repeats of the pattern to keep track as you work. When Rnd 20 is complete, cont in St st (odd rnds are patterned and even rounds are knit).

On Rnd 24, place a coil-less pin or movable marker on the 1st st, the 106th st, the 211th st, and the 316th st. So you can keep track of the double decs as you work up the piece, move the m every time you make a double dec.

Center

Beg working the Center Chart.

On Rnd 1 of the Center Chart, beg shaping. In order to make the 1st double dec (sl 1, k2tog, pss0), which is indicated on the 1st st of the rnd, you will need to use the last st of the previous rnd. This is indicated by the double dec symbol in a pink square. Every time you make a double dec at the beg of a rnd, you must use the last st from the previous rnd to make the slipped st of the double dec.

Cont following the chart, dec every 4th rnd until you reach Rnd 85, then dec every other rnd until you have completed Rnd 104. You will have 42 sts between each marked st and a total of 172 sts. On Rnd 105, work a single dec at each dec place as indicated on the chart—168 sts rem.

On Rnd 107, you will need to use the last st of the previous rnd to make the 1st of the gathered sts as indicated on the chart by the pink background. When you complete the rnd, you will have reduced the number of stitches by one-third, from 168 to 112 sts.

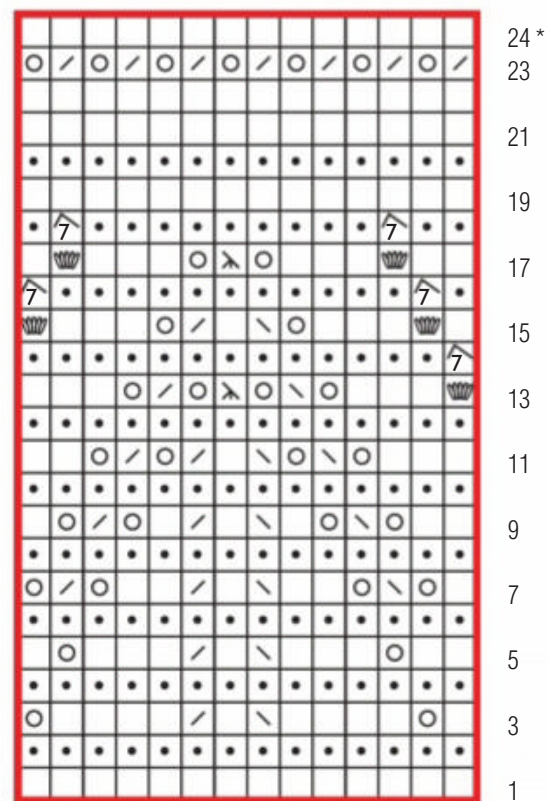
Work through Rnd 117 of the chart.

BO as foll: K 2 sts, *bind the 1st st over the 2nd st, yo, bind the 2nd st over the yo, k1, bind the yo over the knitted st, k1; rep from * to end. Fasten off.

Finishing

Weave in ends. Block to desired measurements.









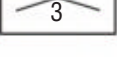



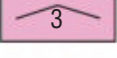
Edge Chart



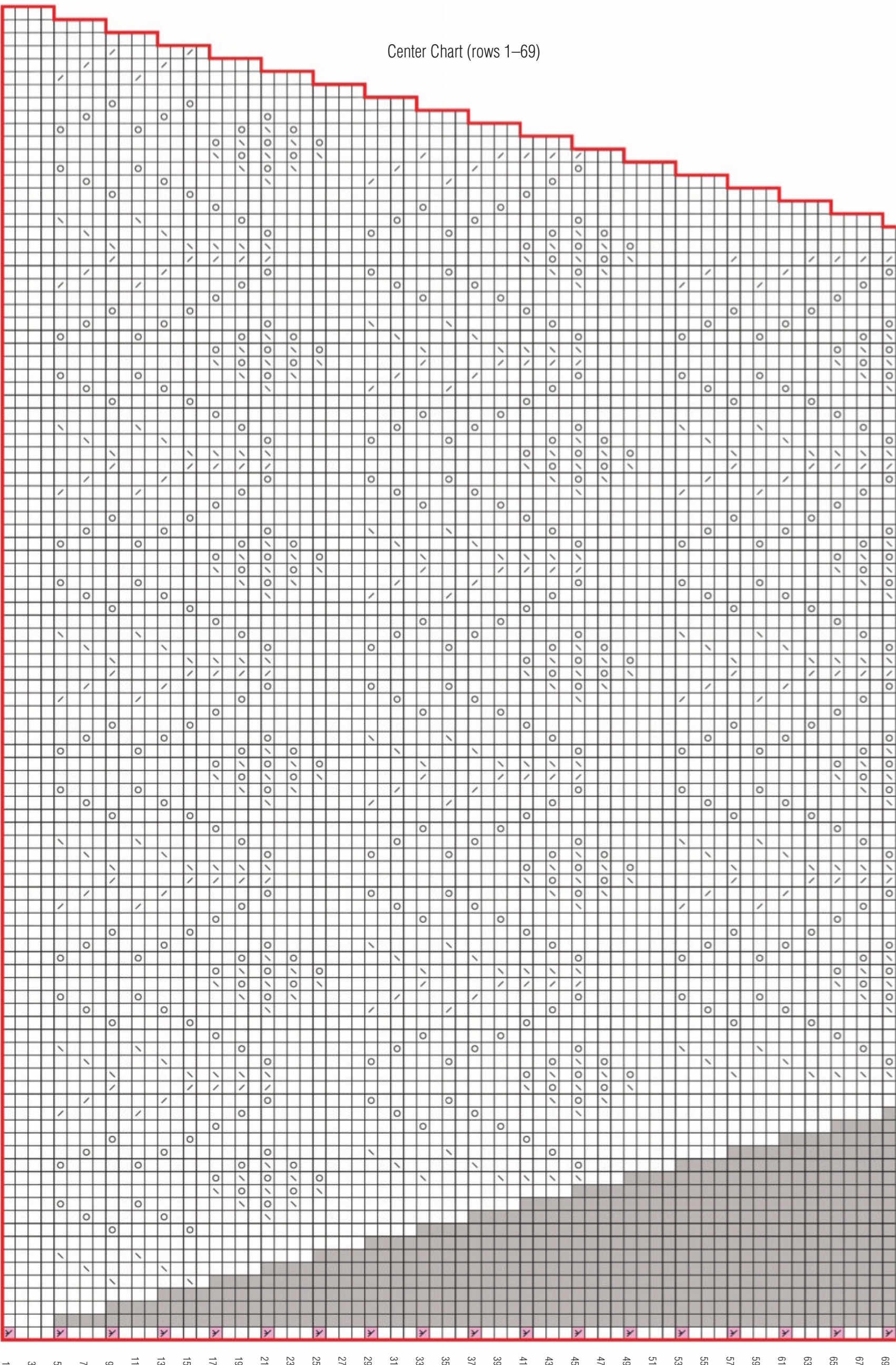
14-st rep

* Work as given in instructions

Key

-  k
-  p
-  yo
-  k2tog
-  ssk
-  sl 1, k2tog, pss0
-  nupp (see Special Techniques)
-  k the 7 nupp sts tog tbl
-  gathered st (see Special Techniques)
-  no st
-  patt rep
-  on 1st rep only, work sl 1, k2tog, pss0 using the last st of the previous rnd as the slipped st; all other rep work sl 1, k2tog, pss0 (see Instructions)
-  on 1st rep only, work gathered st using the last st of the previous rnd as the first st; all other rep work gathered st (see Instructions)

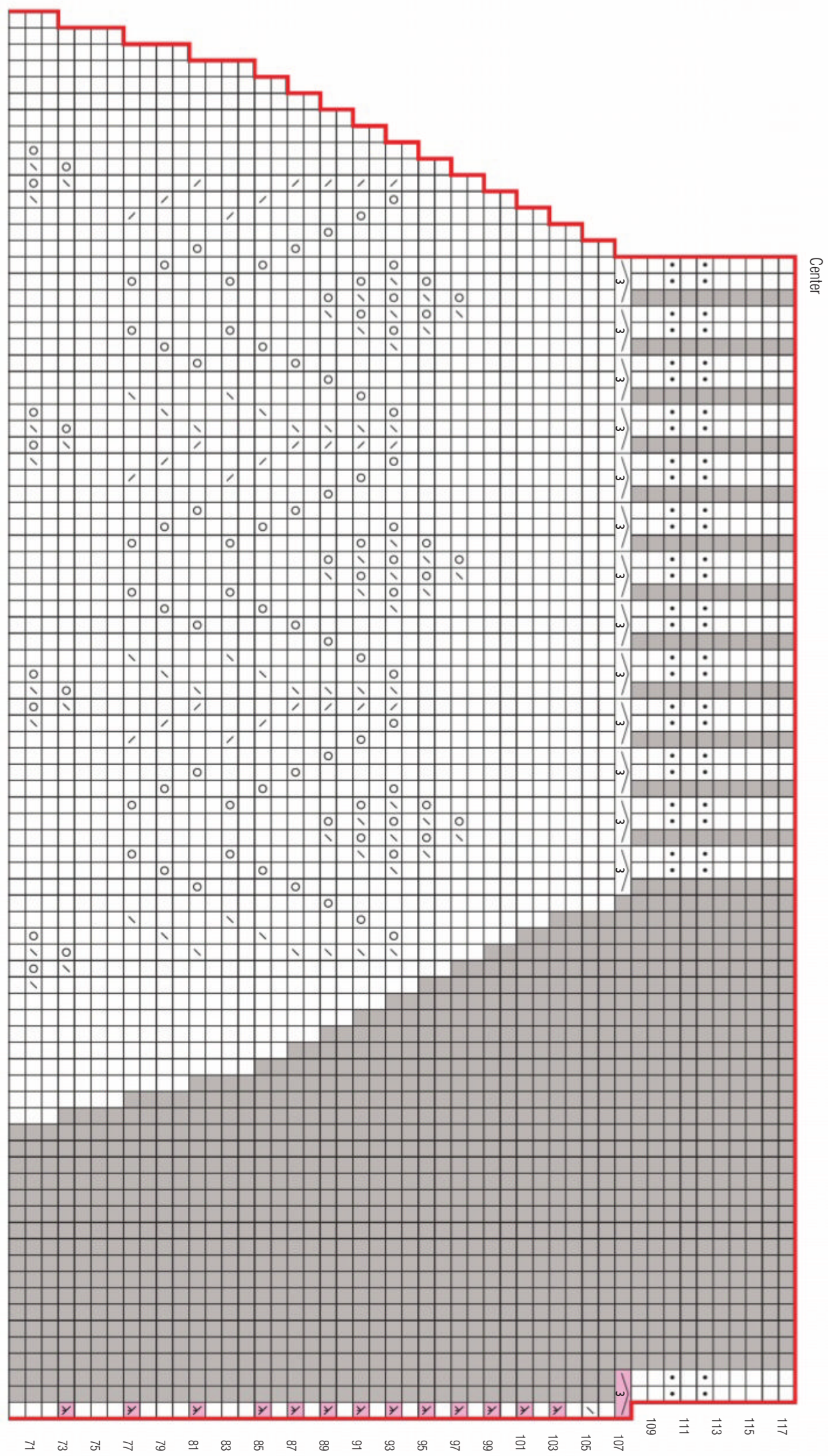
Center Chart (rows 1-69)



105-st to 28-st rep

1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 23 25 27 29 31 33 35 37 39 41 43 45 47 49 51 53 55 57 59 61 63 65 67 69

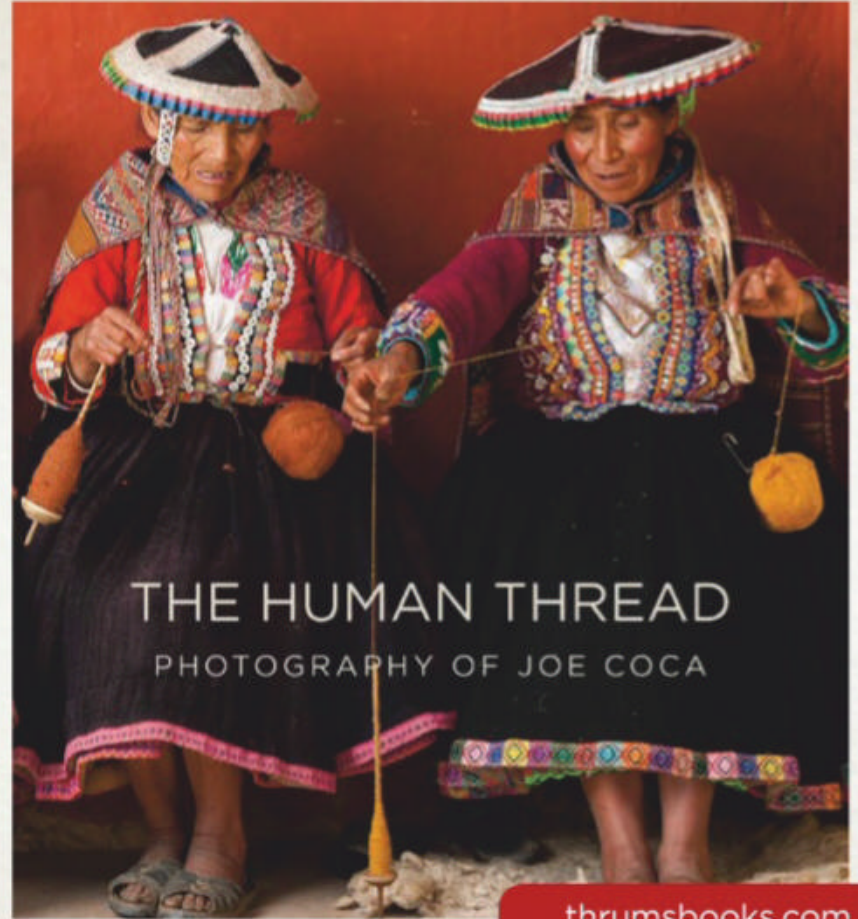
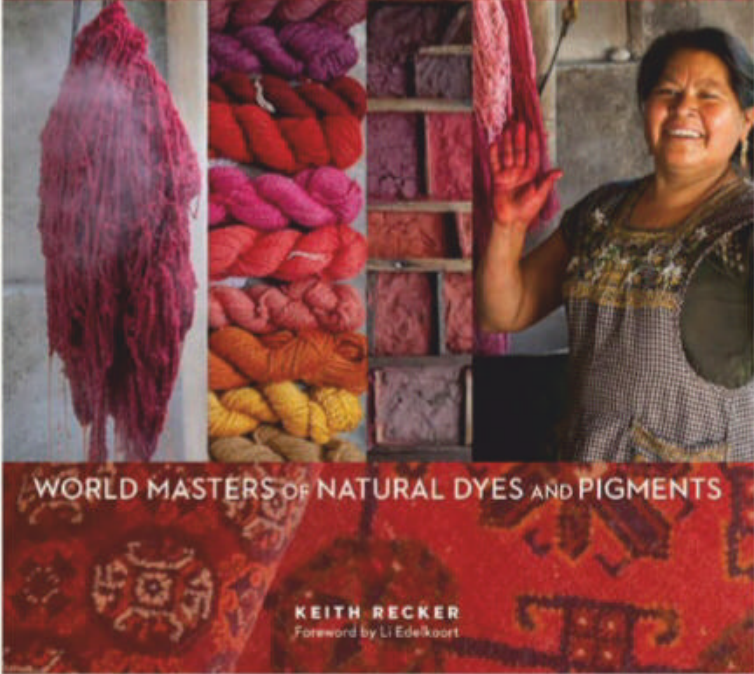
Center Chart (rows 70–117)



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long thread

MEDIA

A Velvet Sewing Roll to Make

DAWN COOK RONNINGEN



All needleworkers will delight in this lovely sewing roll. It will make a perfect gift—and don't forget to give one to yourself.

A person in the nineteenth century had few more essential possessions than a sewing roll. This small roll-up sewing kit may also be referred to as a housewife or huswif. They have been in use for centuries and contained the supplies needed to maintain textiles. The earliest ones were made of animal skins and carried primitive implements, such as bone needles and sinew threads. Used by men, women, and children, sewing rolls are still popular with needleworkers today and are often reproduced from antique examples.

Over time, the styles and materials changed as new materials entered the marketplace. Sewing rolls can be made of new and/or repurposed materials, including

leather, suede, silk, cotton, wool, linen, velvet, and even oilcloth. Recycled materials include ribbons, trims, embroidered fabrics, garments, and curtains. A price shift occurred during the Industrial Revolution and previously expensive materials, including velvet, became more affordable for many home sewers.

Velvet was popular in the Victorian era (1837–1901), influenced by England's Queen Victoria. Velvet was used in ladies' gowns and in the home for drapery and upholstery. Small pieces of velvet were used in the needlework of the day—sewing rolls, pincushions, crazy quilts, and needle books.

Although patterns for sewing rolls were published in ladies' magazines, the instructions often lacked

detail. Makers used their own creative ideas and specific needs to create unique rolls. The construction details of many antique and vintage sewing rolls are what make them distinctive. Variations include the use of binding, thimble holders, edge treatments, and stitching techniques.

The antique wool and velvet sewing roll shown below is from my collection and inspired this project. This sewing roll is likely from about 1900 and entirely handsewn. Decorative embroidery embellishments and the use of ribbons combine function and beauty. Although by 1900, sewing machines were widely available to most American households, women still enjoyed handsewing, and this sewing roll is a wonderful example.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Bassett, Lynne Zacek. "Just a Housewife."
PieceWork, May/June 2003.

MATERIALS

- ◆ Velvet fabric, cotton or cotton blend, 5 × 16 inches (12.7 × 40.6 cm), 1 piece of avocado green (for the outer body)
- ◆ Cotton fabric, 5 × 16 inches (12.7 × 40.6 cm), 1 piece of orange print (for the lining)
- ◆ Wool fabric, 5 × 16 inches (12.7 × 40.6 cm) and 5 × 5 inches (12.7 × 12.7 cm), 1 piece each of avocado green (for the inner body and the pincushion)
- ◆ Wool fabrics, 3 × 4 inches (7.6 × 10.2 cm), (3.8 × 7.6 cm) of six different coordinating colors (for the needle leaves); medium green, medium blue, brown, dark blue, cream, and wine were used in this project
- ◆ Ribbons, satin or silk, ½ inch (1.3 cm) wide, 4 inches (10.2 cm) of blue (to secure the needle leaves); satin, 1 inch (2.5 cm) wide, 24 inches (61.0 cm) of orange (for thimble area and pincushion); grosgrain, ⅝ inch (1.6 cm) wide, 1 yard (0.9 m) of multicolored (for ties and accessory holders); grosgrain, ¾ inch (1.9 cm) wide, 5 inches (12.7 cm) of color of choice (for trim on inside pocket)
- ◆ Mat board, 4 × 4 inches (10.2 × 10.2 cm), white
- ◆ Quilt batting, 100% cotton, ½ yard (0.5 m)

- ◆ DMC Embroidery floss, 100% cotton, 8 meter (8.7 yd)/skein, 1 skein each of #310 Black, #444 Dark Lemon, and #741 Medium Tangerine
- ◆ Sewing thread, 100% cotton, green to match wool and velvet fabrics and orange to match ribbon and print fabric
- ◆ Fabric and pinking scissors
- ◆ Pins, regular sewing and ½ inch (1.3 cm) long appliqué
- ◆ Various sewing/needlework tools to include in finished sewing roll

Finished size: Opened, 15½ × 4½ inches (39.4 × 11.4 cm); closed, 4½ × 5½ × 2½ inches (11.4 × 14.0 × 6.4 cm; size dependent upon items in the sewing roll)



This antique wool and velvet sewing roll in Dawn Cook Ronningen's collection inspired her project. Maker unknown. Handsewn and embroidered. Circa 1900. Shown above folded and below opened.

Photographs this page by Dawn Cook Ronningen.



INSTRUCTIONS

Sewing Roll

Pincushion

Trace and cut out Template A, including the center opening (the recessed area to hold a thimble). Cut the batting into 4½-inch (11.4-cm) squares and stack enough of them to equal a height of 1¼ inches (3.2 cm); baste together. Center Template A over the batting stack and mark the center opening with a pencil. Cut out, including the central rectangle, through all layers. If necessary, further trim the interior walls to be smooth.

Using Template A, cut the green square wool pincushion top, including the center opening. Align the pincushion on top of the batting stack and pin in place. Line the sides of the thimble recessed area with a 6-inch (15.2-cm) length of orange ribbon and pin the top edge around the interior wool edges. Sew together, using a tiny overcast stitch and green thread. Remove the pins and the batting stack. Stitch the ribbon ends closed.

To create the base of the thimble area, cut a piece of orange ribbon 2 inches (5.1 cm) long. Center and sew this piece to the four ribbon walls of the thimble area, using an overcast stitch and orange thread. Overcast the raw ribbon ends to prevent raveling.

Use one strand each of Dark Lemon and Medium Tangerine floss and buttonhole stitch closely to embroider around the top edge of the thimble area, covering the previous green stitches and catching both the wool and ribbon edges. Add short straight stitches of two strands of Black floss, evenly spaced among the Dark Lemon and Medium Tangerine stitches. To create the outer walls of the pincushion, pin and sew

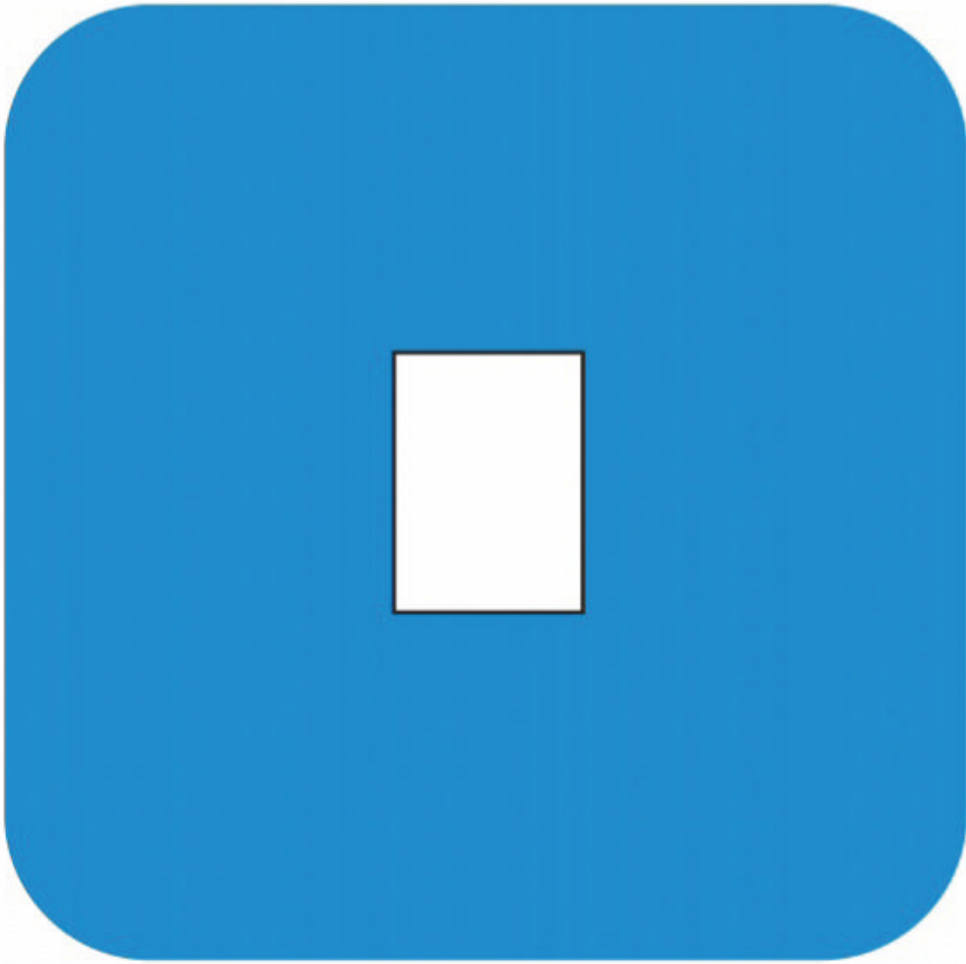
a 17-inch (43.2-cm) length of orange ribbon around the outer edges of the pincushion with orange sewing thread and running stitch, overlapping the fabrics about ¼ inch (6 mm). Sew the ribbon ends together to create an open box. To further embellish the pincushion top, use one strand each of the three floss colors and feather-stitch around the outer top edge. With two strands of Dark Lemon floss, add French knots at the outer points of the feather stitch.



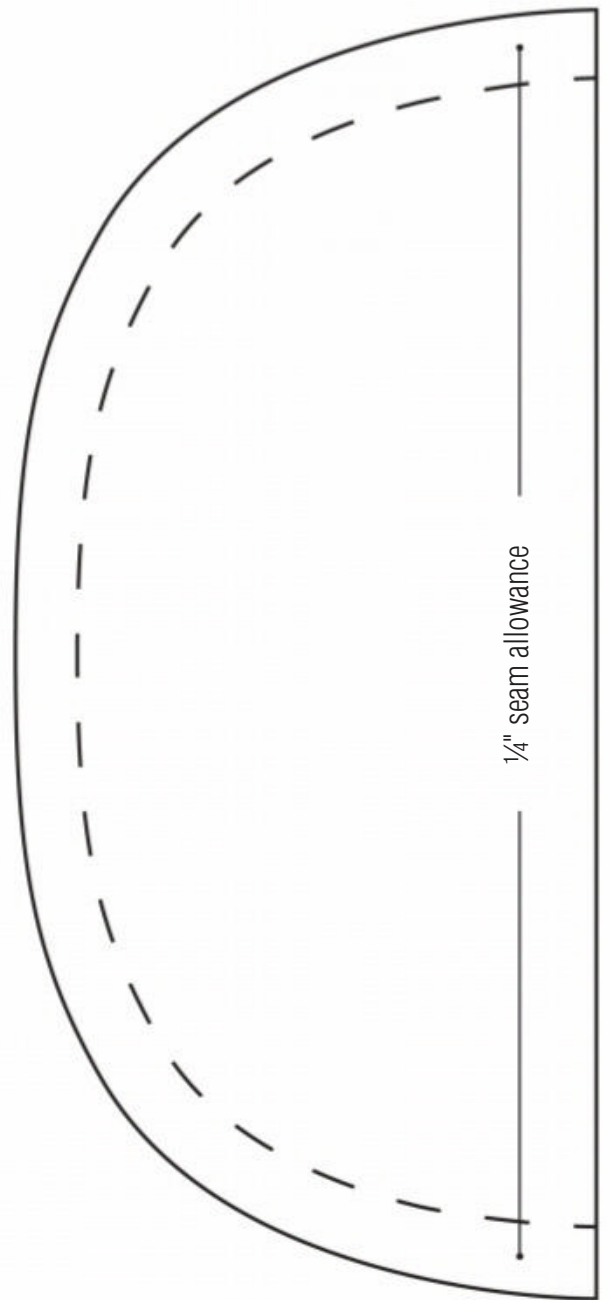
The ribbons that will hold accessories on the inside of the cover of Dawn Cook Ronningen's sewing roll.



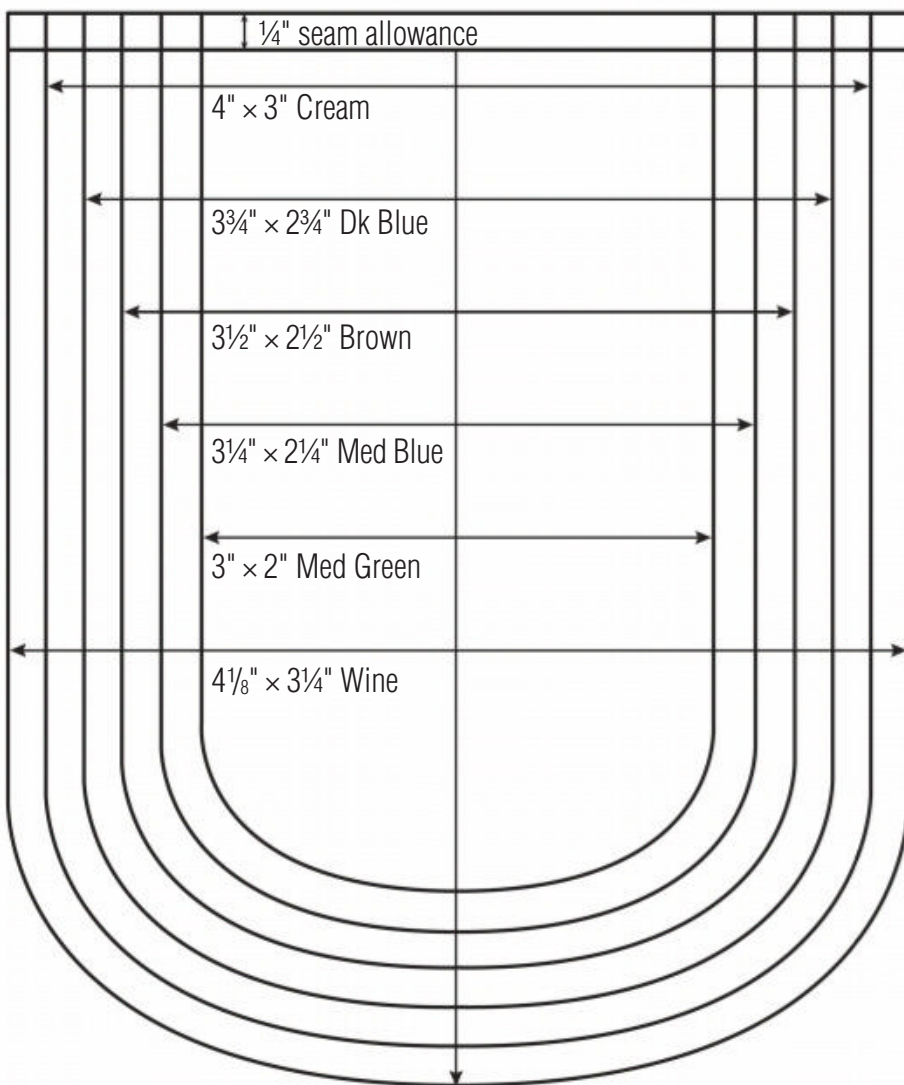
Detail of the ribbon-lined walls of the thimble insert in the pincushion top section of Dawn Cook Ronningen's sewing roll.



Template A
Pincushion



Template C
Cover Corner



Template B
Needle Pages



Above: The needle pages and the blue ribbon that secures them on one side of Dawn Cook Ronningen's sewing roll. Below: The pocket above the accessory ribbons on the inside of cover of Dawn Cook Ronningen's sewing roll.



To finish the pincushion, position the pincushion cover over the batting stack. Align the center thimble holder area with the center opening in the batting.

Place Template A over the mat board and cut out; do not cut out the center rectangle. Place the mat board on top of the batting. Turn the edges of the ribbon over the mat board, overlapping $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (6 mm) and lace the edges together, enclosing the mat board. Set unit aside.

Needle Pages

See Template B. Cut the six pieces in the sizes indicated on Template B in the following order (ranging

from largest to smallest piece): wine, cream, dark blue, brown, medium blue, and medium green. Pink only the side and bottom edges—not the top—of each needle page. Embroider the edges of each progressively smaller needle page in feather stitches, ranging from the most complex feather stitches to the least, combining one, two, or three of the floss colors. Align the nonpinked edges of all six pages and baste together with a green running stitch along this straight edge. Center the blue ribbon's length over the straight edge, overlap the pages about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (6 mm). Turn the raw ends of the ribbon to the back and sew together, using an overcast stitch and green thread. Set aside.

Cover

Using the fabric scissors and Template C, round the corners at each end of the long pieces of velvet, wool, and print fabrics. Cut the multicolored ribbon into two 12-inch (30.5-cm) pieces. On the front side of the velvet piece, measure down $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches (8.3 cm) from one end, centered side to side, and mark with a pin. Fold one raw end of one of the ribbons under $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (6 mm) and sew to the velvet piece at the pin mark; remove the pin. Roll up the ribbon and pin it in the center of the velvet so it won't get caught later in

the seams. On the wrong side of the opposite end of the velvet piece, pin one end of the remaining 12-inch (30.5-cm) ribbon with the raw edges aligned.

With right sides facing, pin and sew the print fabric to the velvet unit, using a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (0.6 cm) seam allowance and leaving a 5-inch (12.7-cm) opening along one straight side for turning; remove the pins. Turn right sides out, smooth out the curved ends, and handsew the opening closed. Decoratively trim the ends of the ribbon.

Pink the edges of the long wool piece and center it over the print side of the velvet unit. Carefully trim the wool with pinking scissors so that the wool piece fits

evenly within the print lining with a little of the lining showing. Cut the remaining multicolored ribbon into two 6-inch (15.2-cm) lengths. Measure in 1½ inches (3.8 cm) from one bottom of the wool piece and 1½ inches (3.8 cm) from one side and pin one end of one ribbon; repeat for the second ribbon. Pin the top of each ribbon 4¼ inches (10.8 cm) above the first seam. Sew the raw ends of each ribbon to the wool, using a running stitch and green thread; remove the pins. Allowing for equal amounts of slack in each ribbon, pin and sew at two 1½-inch (3.8-cm) intervals along each ribbon's length. The slack allows the accessories to slide in and out without damaging the wool layer. *Note:* The pocket will cover the lower raw ends of the ribbons and the pincushion will cover the top ends.

Pocket

Position the wide multicolored ribbon pocket 1¼ inches (3.2 cm) from the bottom wool end, covering the raw ribbon ends of the accessory holders. Turn under and pin the raw ribbon ends, leaving about ¼ inch (6 mm) space from the pinked wool edge. Sew the sides and base of this ribbon to the wool, using overcast stitches and green thread. Remove pins. Sew a vertical line of running stitches with orange thread through the ribbon and wool piece, dividing the pocket into two sections.

At the other end of the wool unit, center the needle pages unit about ½ inch (1.3 cm) from the bottom. Sew only the ribbon band to the wool unit, using overcast stitches and the green thread.



Dawn Cook Ronningen's sewing roll folded.

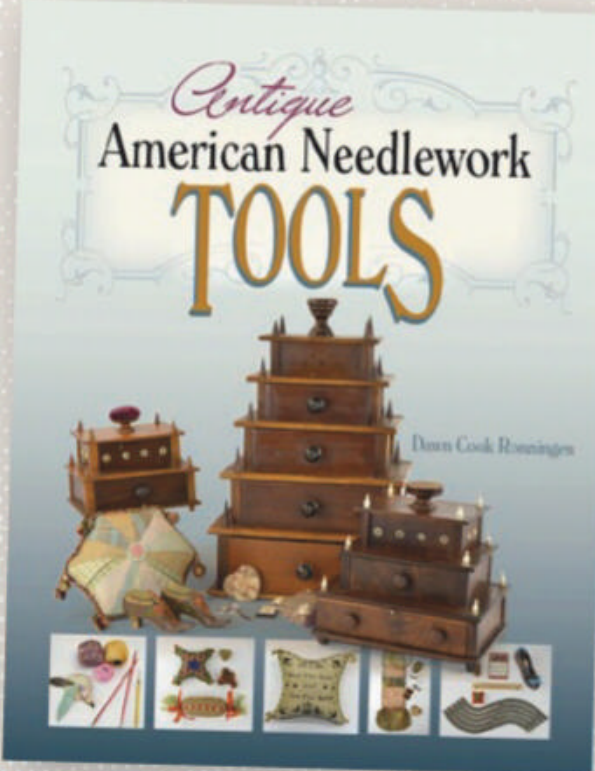
Assembly

Place the completed wool unit on the print side of the velvet unit and pin to secure all layers together. Baste around the entire outer edge of the wool unit with green thread, attaching it to the print fabric only. With the wool unit right side up and using one strand of each of the three floss colors together, feather stitch only through the wool and print fabrics. Be careful not to stitch into the velvet front. Turn the unit to the velvet side and feather stitch around its outer edge with two strands each of the Dark Lemon and Medium Tangerine floss, being careful not to stitch through to the wool fabric. Center and pin the pincushion to the wool unit; stitch together, using the orange thread and small overcast stitches.

Finishing

Decoratively add the appliqué pins to the pincushion around the thimble opening. To complete the sewing roll, add a thimble to the recessed area, needle packages in the pocket, needlework tools (scissors, seam ripper, pencil, awl, laying tool) or spools of thread under the ribbon accessory holders, solitary needles to the needle pages, and pins to the ribbon walls of the pincushion.

DAWN COOK RONNINGEN is the author of *Antique American Needlework Tools* (see the box at right). She is a collector of antique needlework tools and textiles. In addition to collecting, she enjoys researching, re-creating, and stitching heirlooms. She lives in Minnesota and travels the world lecturing, teaching, and sharing her collections.



Discover Glorious
Needlework Tools

Treat yourself or a favorite needleworker to this stellar book by Dawn Cook Ronningen. It's packed with historical information and full-color images of glorious tools. *Antique American Needlework Tools* by Dawn Cook Ronningen. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing, 2018; 240 pages; \$34.99. ISBN 978-0-7643-5549-3. Available at www.schifferbooks.com.

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Notre-Dame Tam to Knit

LAURA RICKETTS



Laura Ricketts's stunning tam is a fitting tribute to Notre-Dame—past, present, and future.

On April 15, 2019, just before 6:20 p.m. local time, the world was startled to hear that the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris was burning. I have a BBC news alert on my phone, so I found out right away. What an awful feeling—to know, as the firefighters struggled, that *la forêt* (the frame) was burning, and not to know if they would be able to put the fire out.

Notre-Dame is a centuries-old structure and an amazing feat of architectural engineering. Begun in 1163, it was built on the ruins of two other churches (and a temple to Jupiter) and took almost two hundred years to complete. Notre-Dame shines as an example of early Gothic structure with its massive flying buttresses that offset the weight of the tall walls. The rose



Notre-Dame. Paris, France. Laura Ricketts based the design of her tam on the upper rose window of the south façade in Notre-Dame. This photograph, taken before the April 15, 2019, fire, shows the upper rose window above the larger rose window. Photograph © Tuan Tran; Moment/Getty Images Plus.

windows were also a newer architectural feature, and only possible in the thinner walls of the Gothic style, as opposed to the thicker defensive walls of the earlier Romanesque churches. Notre-Dame's three great rose windows are world famous for their size, beauty, and age.

I have had the privilege to be in Notre-Dame twice. Twice, I have felt the beauty of her twelfth-century indigo-colored glass, glowing in overcast Parisian sunlight. But one does not need to set foot in this UNESCO World Heritage building to be affected by the threat of its demise.

Notre-Dame is more than a building for today's French people. It has entered into the collective *lieu de mémoire* (realm of memory); through the passage of time, it has become a symbolic part of the memorial heritage of the French people—and, not only for the French, but for so many of the world's citizens. Just think of the crowds that surrounded Notre-Dame as it burned. Tourists who were interviewed had come from every corner of the globe. These tourists had come to the City of Lights to sit at the foot of Notre-Dame on the île de la Cité.

As for *lieu de mémoire*, one of the first things I thought of when I heard Notre-Dame was burning was my friend Kelly, a spinning buddy in my regional group. Just a year ago, she and her husband, Murle, had been in Paris and had climbed to the top of Notre-Dame in the roof tour. Murle had surprised her at Christmas with the trip. They laughed and ate their way through Paris and had the time of their lives, although Murle had what seemed a small physical complaint. When they returned, he was diagnosed with a rare cancer. At the one-year anniversary of their trip to Paris, both Murle and *la forêt* of Notre-Dame were gone.

This tam project is based on the upper rose window of the south façade in Notre-Dame, and is the third in a series of stained-glass inspired tams I have designed and knitted. The window was part of the attic set in the timber frame. This explains its demise in the fire, while the three ancient stained-glass rose windows in the sanctuary survived. I have interpreted this upper rose window in the beautiful colors familiar to the ancient glass, but I hope those who want to respond to the burning will replace the blues and pinks with oranges and reds for the fire.

MATERIALS

- ◆ Elemental Affects Shetland, 100% North American Shetland wool yarn, fingering weight, 118 yard (107.9 m)/28 gram (1 oz) skein, 2 skeins of #Fawn (MC), and 1 skein each of #47 Dark Purple (CC1), #49 Damsum Plum (CC2), #12 Berry (CC3), and #35 Agave (CC4)
- ◆ Needles, sizes 1 (2.25 mm) and 2 (2.75 mm) circ 16 inches (40 cm) and set of double pointed or sizes needed to obtain gauge
- ◆ Markers, one of contrasting color
- ◆ Cable needle
- ◆ Tapestry needle

Finished size: Brim circumference, 21 inches (53.3 cm); height, 8 inches (20.3 cm), after blocking

Gauge: 27 sts and 32 rnds = 4 in (10.2 cm) in 2-color rib patt on smaller needles

SPECIAL STITCH AND ABBREVIATION

Make Bobble (mb)

K, p, k, p, k into st, turn, p5, turn, k5tog tbl.

INSTRUCTIONS

The tam is worked in the round from the brim up with bobbles, spontaneously cabled trefoils, cables used as fretwork, and colorwork for the stained glass. Any type of cabling requires extra stitches. This includes spontaneous cables or cables that begin at the middle of the work and not at the brim with the initial stitch increase. Stitch increases are necessary and make up for the natural contraction of fabric that occurs when stitches cross. Therefore, each cabling has stitch increases in the rounds before the cable begins.

Tam

Brim

Using CC1 and smaller circ needle, CO 144 sts. Pm and join in the rnd being careful not to twist sts.

Rnd 1: With MC, k.

Rnds 2 and 3: *With MC, k1, with CC1, p1; rep from * to end of rnd.

Rnds 4 and 5: *With MC, k1, with CC2, p1; rep from * to end of rnd.

Rnd 6: *With MC, k1, with CC3, p1; rep from * to end of rnd.

Rnds 7 and 8: Rep Rnd 4.

Rnds 9 and 10: Rep Rnd 2.

Rnd 11: With MC, *k1, p1; rep from * to end of rnd.

Body

Next Rnd (Inc Rnd): *K3, inc 1; rep from * to end of rnd—192 sts.

Change to larger circ needle and k 2 rnds even. (P 1 rnd, k 1 rnd) twice.

Next Rnd (Bobble Rnd): *Mb, k3; rep from * to end of rnd.

Next Rnd (Dec Rnd): *K14, k2tog; rep from * to end of rnd—180 sts rem.

K 1 rnd even. (K 1 rnd, p1 1 rnd) twice. K 2 rnds.

Work Rnds 1–20 of Trefoil Chart—240 sts.

Work Rnds 1–12 of Rose Petals Chart—108 sts rem.

Note: Change to dpns when necessary.

Next Rnd (Dec Rnd): With MC, k2tog, k7; rep from * to end—96 sts rem.

P 1 rnd.

Next Rnd (Dec Rnd): *K3, k2tog, k3; rep from * to end of rnd—84 sts rem.

Work Rnds 1–10 of Center Rose Chart—18 sts rem.

Next Rnd: With CC1, k2tog around—9 sts rem.

Break yarn and pull tail through rem sts. Pull tight to gather sts and fasten off on WS.

Finishing

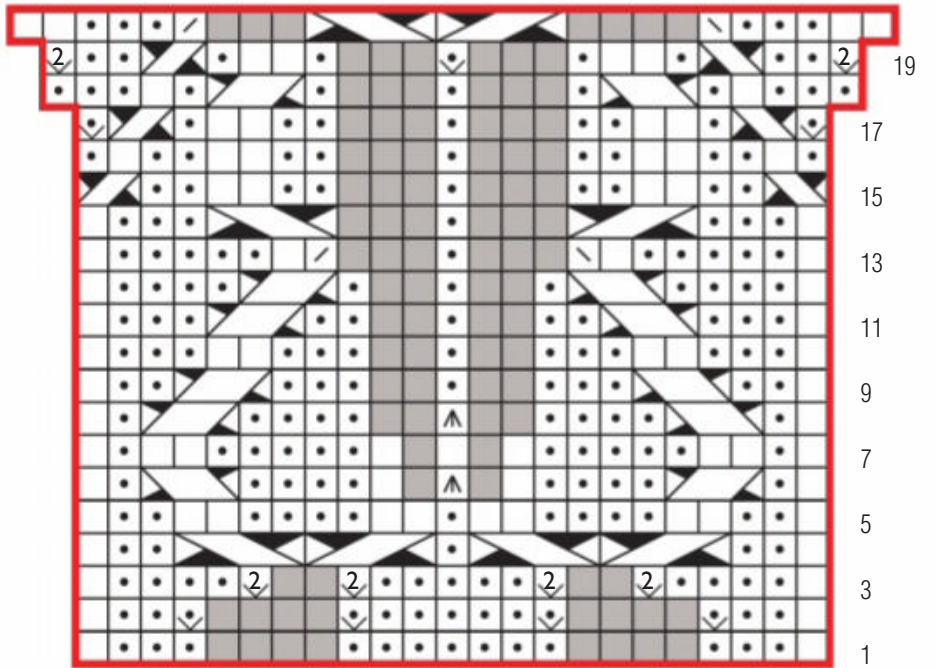
Weave in ends. Block.

LAURA RICKETTS lives and works in northern Indiana. She loves textiles of all kinds, but especially knitting and colorwork. You can contact her through www.laurarickettsdesigns.com.



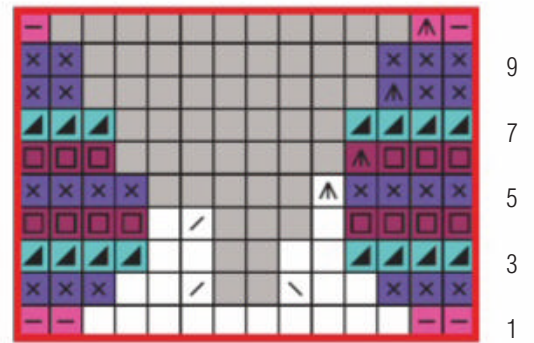
The brim of Laura Ricketts's tam.

Trefoil



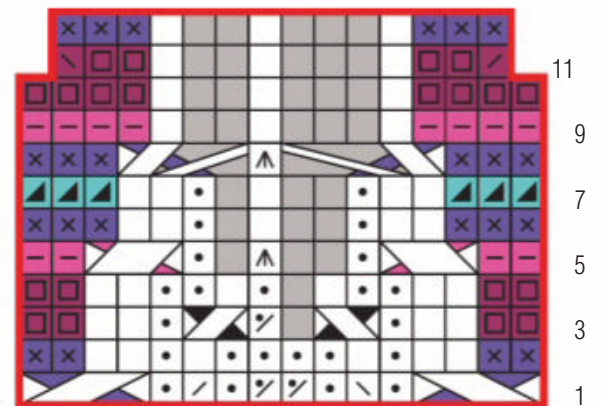
15-st to 23-st rep

Center Rose



14-st to 3-st rep









Rose Petals













20-st to 9-st rep

Charts may be photocopied for personal use.

Key

-  with MC, k
-  with MC, p
-  with MC, k1f&b
-  with MC, p1f&b
-  with MC, k2tog
-  with MC, ssk
-  with MC, p2tog
-  with MC, sl 2 as if to k2tog, k1, p2sso

-  with CC1, k
-  with CC2, k
-  with CC3, k
-  with CC4, k
-  with CC1, sl 2 as if to k2tog, k1, p2sso
-  with CC2, k2tog
-  with CC2, ssk
-  with CC2, sl 2 as if to k2tog, k1, p2sso
-  with CC3, sl 2 as if to k2tog, k1, p2sso
-  no st

 patt rep

 sl 1 st onto cn, hold in back, with MC, k1, p1 from cn

 sl 1 st onto cn, hold in front, with MC, p1, k1 from cn

 sl 1 st onto cn, hold in back, with MC, k2, p1 from cn

 sl 2 sts onto cn, hold in front, with MC, p1, k2 from cn

 sl 2 sts onto cn, hold in back, with MC, k2, p2 from cn


 sl 2 sts onto cn, hold in front, with MC, p2, k2 from cn

 sl 1 st onto cn, hold in back, with MC, k2, with CC3, k1 from cn

 sl 2 sts onto cn, hold in front, with CC3, k1, with MC, k2 from cn

 sl 2 sts onto cn, hold in back, with MC, k2, with CC1, k2 from cn

 sl 2 sts onto cn, hold in front, with CC1, k2, with MC, k2 from cn

 sl 2 sts onto cn, hold in front, with CC1, k1, with MC, k1 from cn, return st rem on cn to left needle, then sl 2 as if to k2tog, sl next st on left needle onto cn and hold in back, with MC, k1, p2sso, k1, with CC1, k1 from cn

Traditional Icelandic Embroidery

Stories in Wool

JUSTIN ALLAN-SPENCER



Riddarateppið (knight's blanket). Maker unknown. Long-arm cross-stitch. Wool on woolen extended tabby. Unknown provenance. Seventeenth century. 59 × 51.2 inches (150.0 × 130.0 cm). Collection of the National Museum of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland. (800). Photograph © the National Museum of Iceland.

It's a chilly January afternoon, and my husband, Adam, and I are trudging through the roadside slush in a suburb of Reykjavík, Iceland. The streets are quiet; after a winter with a surprising dearth of snow, the skies have blanketed the Icelandic capital in a soft, downy layer. The city breathes a sigh of relief: nature has returned to normal.

We are on our way to a nondescript warehouse that holds part of the collection of the National Museum of Iceland (Þjóðminjasafn Íslands). We are meeting with Lilja Árnardóttir, head of Artifact Collections, who has invited us to examine the embroidery pieces kept in the labyrinthine warehouse.

Just two days before, Lilja had walked us through the impressive collection of sixteenth- to nineteenth-century embroidery pieces on permanent display at the museum, including counted-grid and free-hand tapestries, religious ornaments, and decorative household pieces. Additional artifacts—including a seventeenth-century manuscript detailing a variety of patterns for use in needlework—on display at the Culture House (Safnahúsið, the museum's secondary collection) had also drawn our rapturous attention.

My interest in Icelandic embroidery started with a very large book. Weighing in at nearly 5 pounds (2.3 kg), the 784-page *Íslensk sjónabók: Ornaments and Patterns Found in Iceland* contains digital re-creations of nearly 800 patterns recorded in ancient manuscripts. When I acquired the book in 2013, I had no idea what to do with it other than anchor my desk. In 2015, a wicked idea hatched in my brain unbidden: cross-stitch the patterns. All of them.

I had learned cross-stitch in childhood; my mother and grandmother both were prodigious



Coverlet made by Ólöf Jónsdóttir. Long-arm cross-stitch with small details in Florentine stitch. Wool on woolen tabby. Hellisfjörður, Iceland. Dated 1811. 62½ × 47½ inches (159.0 × 121.0 cm). Collection of the National Museum of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland. (11055).
Photograph © the National Museum of Iceland.

needleworkers. I carefully selected the best Zweigart linens, the appropriate palette of DMC floss, and got to work. Five years and 1 full yard (0.9 m) of linen later, I am coming close to completing the patterns from the first manuscript within the *Íslensk sjónabók*. At this rate, only forty years of work remain.

During those five years, I happened across a well-used, heavily dog-eared copy of *Traditional Icelandic Embroidery* by former curator of textiles and costume at the National Museum of Iceland, Elsa E. Guðjónsson. Documenting embroidery techniques, extant examples, and pattern manuscripts, Guðjónsson revealed that my hitherto off-the-cuff evening-time craft project not only had ties to a tradition going back centuries, but also made clear that I had been doing everything wrong.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ICELAND

Iceland recently celebrated its 1,145th birthday, a toddler when it comes to the nations of Europe. In 874,

Ingólfr Arnarson (849–910) and his allies fled from the ruthless Norwegian king Harald Fairhair (850–933) to Iceland, where they found fertile land, bountiful seas, and settled permanently. For more than 100 years, Iceland flourished, a strong commonwealth of Viking explorers and farmers.

Shortly after the end of the first millennium, misfortune brought Iceland to its knees. In 1000 CE, Iceland converted to Christianity, curbing some barbarous tendencies. However, the peace that followed didn't last long; a brutal struggle for power soon ensued. In 1262, in an effort to quell this violence, rule of the island was handed over to the Norwegian king, and the commonwealth was dissolved.

In 1397, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and their outlying tributary colonies were joined together in the Kalmar Union, under a single monarch. When the Union disbanded in 1523, Iceland came under the rule of the Danish crown. Trade, an essential lifeline for a country with few natural resources, was strictly



Cushion cover. Maker unknown. Eye stitch (square and diamond). Wool on woolen tabby. Unknown provenance. Eighteenth or early nineteenth century. About 15¾ × 18½ inches (40 × 47 cm). Collection of the National Museum of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland. (927).
Photograph © the National Museum of Iceland.

controlled by Danish merchants, and the colony was kept on the brink of poverty. In the late fifteenth century, the Black Plague wiped out more than 60 percent of Icelanders. Centuries later, the island's largest volcanoes erupted, choking much of the arable land with poisonous ash; citizens resorted to eating their shoes and books to stay alive during the famine that followed.

Despite the many challenges, Icelanders eked out a living, thanks to an unexpected savior—the Icelandic sheep. Outnumbering people nearly two to one (even today), the sturdy Icelandic sheep is a long-fleeced beast that resembles a wild, dirty, ill-tempered mop. From its dual-layered coat, Icelanders created warm fabrics for wear and trade.

During these periods of strife and hardship, the traditional embroideries were created. With the necessities of subsistence living pressing nearly all citizens, were it not for the patronage of the church, it is unlikely Icelandic embroidery would have had the opportunity to develop.

THE CHURCH

As throughout all of medieval Europe, a handful of prominent families and the Catholic Church held all the wealth and power. The church supported textile production—a grueling, time-intensive process in pre-industrial times—in the convents at Kirkjubæjarklaustur and Staður, the primary needleworking centers in pre-Reformation Iceland. All the surviving embroideries from the pre-Reformation period are religious in nature. Before the establishment of the National Museum in 1863, these pieces were carefully stored and cataloged in ecclesiastical collections. While there is evidence that secular embroidery was created during this time, none has survived. Considering the challenges of preserving cloth in a cold and damp environment, this is no surprise.

The Reformation, which arrived on Icelandic shores in 1550 and marked the end of the medieval period, had a seismic effect on the island's society. The power and wealth of the Catholic Church diminished. Eschewing the grandiose ornaments of Catholicism, the Lutheran Church had less need for magnificent needleworks. The role of patron fell to the secular wealthy (dynastic Icelandic families and Danish merchants) and church clerics fond of decorating their personal chambers with embroidered items. Following the dissolution of the convents in 1550, needlework was done primarily by women of means, with a few notable exceptions. For example, in the nineteenth century, Ólöf Jónsdóttir (dates unknown), a farmer's



A pattern recorded in the *Skaftafell Book*, drawn by an eighteenth-century farmer, Jón Einarsson. Skaftafell, Iceland. Collection of the National Museum of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland. (Pjms P og P Th 116). Photograph © the National Museum of Iceland.

wife from eastern Iceland, embroidered a remarkable coverlet in long-armed cross-stitch.

Ecclesiastical themes still dominated post-Reformation (1550 into the nineteenth century) Icelandic needlework. However, secular pieces—including bed coverings, valances, cushions, saddle blankets, and costume ornaments—decorated in abstract, floral, and zoological designs became more prevalent.

SKAFTAFELL AND THE SJONABOKS

On the south coast of Iceland, just west of the small hamlet of Vík, lies a 100-mile (160.9-km) stretch of desolation called Öræfi (Wasteland)—with black sands and glacial off-flow rivers as far as the eye can see. Before Route 1 (the only road that circumnavigates the island) bridged this expanse in 1971, the area was one of the most isolated places on the island. But this has not always been the case. In the earliest days of the nation, a large farming community called Skaftafell

flourished here. In 1362, a disastrous eruption of the nearby Öraefajökull volcano decimated Skaftafell. Although farming was re-established shortly afterwards, it had marginal success.

Skaftafell was home to the farmer Jón Einarsson (circa 1731–1799). Little is known about his life, but he left behind a remarkable document: a forty-nine-leaf, hand-drawn manuscript known informally as the *Skaftafell Book*. This manuscript records patterns for use in a variety of fabric arts, including embroidery, knitting, and weaving. The manuscript is one of ten known *sjónabóks*, or pattern books, dating from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries; a modern interpretation of Einarsson's book is included in *Íslensk sjónabók*.

The 800-plus patterns contained within *Íslensk sjónabók* are reflective of motifs found throughout the Nordic nations; some are copies of patterns from as far away as Italy and the Slavic countries. Runic and Latin alphabets, exotic creatures and flowers, and a dizzying array of abstract patterns abound. Many of the patterns Einarsson recorded, including the uniquely Icelandic *þríbrotin áttablaðrós* (thrice-broken eight-petaled rose) and the *valhnútur* (endless knot), can also be found in the corpus of extant traditional embroideries.

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL ICELANDIC EMBROIDERY

Icelandic embroidery is not dissimilar to the embroidery practiced by the nation's Nordic neighbors; darning stitches and patterns are nearly identical to those of Norwegian *smøyg* (pattern darning). Cross-stitch, ubiquitous across needleworking traditions, is used sparingly; more common is *fléttusaumur* (braid stitch; also known as long-armed cross-stitch), a variant popular in medieval Germany that yields a plaited texture. *Refilsaumur*, a multistep, multistitch technique of freestyle embroidery that dominates pre-Reformation Icelandic needlework, is the same stitch used in the eleventh-century English masterwork, the Bayeux Tapestry. *Augunsaumur* (eye stitch) and *sprang* are recognizable to practitioners of Hardanger embroidery.

What makes these embroidery pieces unique is the prevalence of that essential Icelandic material—wool. Homespun woolen yarns, dyed with plant-based dyes, and domestically produced fabrics were cost-effective alternatives to expensive imports. In *Traditional Icelandic Embroidery*, Gudjonsson explains that counted-grid techniques were worked on woolen *twistur*, a loosely woven plain-weave or

extended-basket-weave fabric, while freehand embroidery was worked on *einskefta* (closely woven tabby) or *vaðmal* (twill-woven fabric made of wool).

By today's standards, these homespun yarns and woven fabrics are coarse. The pieces that have survived the long march of time—fewer than a hundred—are rough, bold, substantial. They mirror their makers: the callous-handed poor farmer's daughter carding and spinning long into the dim nights of winter; the tempest-tossed fisherwoman weaving stories with words of wool; the unbent, stern matriarch passing down the secrets of the needle to the women of her household. The materials and the embroidery pieces themselves reflect a hardworking resolute island nation that has stood against the gales of the world.

And this is where I went wrong with my *Sjónabók* Project: Instead of using traditional techniques and modern analogs to traditional materials, I employed standard cross-stitch (a technique Icelandic needleworkers used sparingly) and fine cotton floss (a fiber virtually unknown to pre-eighteenth century Icelanders). My project lacks the grit and character that make traditional Icelandic pieces so entrancing.

THE FUTURE

In the early twentieth century, Icelandic fortunes improved. In 1918, Icelandic sovereignty was recognized; in 1944, the country became an independent

The National Museum of Iceland

Þjóminjasafn Íslands (National Museum of Iceland) was established as the Forngripasafn Íslands (Antiquarian Collection) in 1863. It preserves and manages thousands of historical and cultural artifacts dating back to the founding of the Icelandic commonwealth in the late ninth century. The National Museum of Iceland, National Gallery, and Icelandic Museum of Natural History are the three principal Icelandic museums, providing collaborative leadership and professional promotional support to museums throughout the country. In addition to the primary museum building on Suðurgata in Reykjavík, the museum maintains the collection at Safnahúsið (Culture House, located in Reykjavík's former library), and multiple historical buildings throughout Iceland. The National Museum of Iceland, Suðurgata 41, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland; 354 530-2201; www.thjodminjasafn.is/english.

—Justin Allan-Spencer

nation, free from Danish rule. After eight centuries as one of the poorest European nations, Icelanders regained their economic footing and leaped into the modern era. Today, it is one of Europe's most prosperous countries, buoyed by clean-energy production, tech businesses, and tourism.

The restoration of sovereignty in the early twentieth century led to a rise in national pride and a celebration of the creative traditions that define the national character. *Kvennaskólar* (women's schools) passed along needleworking traditions to new generations. Auður Laxness (1918–2012, second wife of Icelandic literary giant Halldór Laxness (1902–1998) popularized the now-ubiquitous *lopapeysur* (a sweater with a decorative yoke made from traditional lopi yarns spun from the fleece of Icelandic sheep), cementing knitting as the national folk craft. In 1960, Heimilisiðnarfélag Íslands (The Home Handiwork Association of Iceland) was established to preserve and educate people about traditional crafts.

Contemporary needleworkers are adding innovative spins to time-tested techniques. Textile designer Ragna Fróða and jewelry designer Ása Gunnlaugsdóttir cast traditional embroidery stitches and fabrics in silver, creating highly textured jewelry. Knitter Ýr Jóhannsdóttir builds humorous and thought-provoking upcycled and machine-knitted pieces. Fashion designer Steinunn Sigurðardóttir has fused ritual and needleworking, leading rhythmic knitting workshops accompanied by drummers. Fiber artist James T. Merry combines natural and artificial materials to create organic headpieces resembling dreamlike floral landscapes. Although these new forms of needleworking may be vastly different from their antecedents, they are anchored in a centuries-old tradition that Icelanders continue to honor and celebrate.

When I started my casual evening-time cross-stitching project, I had no idea Adam and I would find ourselves rifling through a warehouse in Reykjavík, in the dead of the Nordic winter. Lost inside the maze of steel shelves piled high with unimaginable treasures, it is impossible for anyone not to feel the weight of the long and arduous national journey of Iceland and its people. Studying the embroideries in the museum's collection, with Lilja patiently answering my never-ending barrage of questions, I realize I am not simply looking at frayed fabric and age-worn yarn; I am seeing the history of a resolute and wholly

remarkable nation, written in millions of painstaking stitches. Although I am not Icelandic, by practicing the traditional techniques and adding my own spin, I am participating in this history and joining untold numbers of needleworkers on this adventure. Won't you pick up your needle and join us?

JUSTIN ALLAN-SPENCER is a graphic and book designer. He has been practicing needlework for more than thirty years. He regularly teaches traditional Icelandic embroidery and cross-stitch at the National Nordic Museum in Seattle, Washington. He is a board member of the Seattle-Reykjavík Sister City Association, an organization dedicated to building personal connections between the residents of both cities. He lives with his husband in Seattle, Washington. Learn more at www.justinallan.com. He sincerely thanks Lilja Árnardóttir, the staff at the National Museum of Iceland, and all the Icelandic women who have patiently welcomed him into their world. Portions of this article originally appeared in "In Praise of the Icelandic Sheep" in *Nordic Kultur*, 2019.

◀ *A companion project follows* ▶

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Gudjónsson, Elsa E. *Traditional Icelandic Embroidery*. 1982. Reprint. Reykjavík Iceland: Elsa E. Gudjónsson, 2003. (This book offers the most complete history of Icelandic embroidery.)
- Hallgrímsdóttir, Margrét. *Treasures of the National Museum of Iceland*. Reykjavík, Iceland: National Museum of Iceland, 2017.
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- Hjálmarsson, Jón R. *History of Iceland: From the Settlement to the Present Day*. Reykjavík, Iceland: Forlagið, 2009.
- Íslensk Sjónabók: Ornaments and Patterns Found in Iceland*. Reykjavík, Iceland: Heimilisiðnaðarfélag Íslands (The Icelandic Handcraft Association), Þjóðminjasafn Íslands (The National Museum of Iceland), and Listaháskóli Íslands (The Iceland Academy of the Arts), 2011. (This book contains digital re-creations of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century pattern books.)
- Kristófersdóttir, Ágústa, and Lilja Árnadóttir. *Með sífurþjarta nál: spor miðalda í íslenskum myndsaumi* [With a Shining Needle: The Medieval Legacy in Icelandic Embroidery]. Reykjavík, Iceland: National Museum of Iceland, 2006.

An Icelandic Endless Knot Design to Stitch

JUSTIN ALLAN-SPENCER

◀ *Inspired by the preceding article* ▶



A pattern recorded in the *Skaftafell Book*, which was drawn by an eighteenth-century Icelandic farmer, and colors found in a seventeenth-century bridal bench cushion in the collection of the National Museum of Iceland inspired Justin Allan-Spencer's beautiful Icelandic endless-knot design. *Photographs by Matt Graves. Illustrations by Justin Allan-Spencer.*

The *valhnútur*, Icelandic for endless knot, is a design motif that appears in several handwritten Icelandic manuscripts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This needlework version is inspired by a pattern recorded in the *Skaftafell Book*, drawn by an eighteenth-century farmer, Jón Einarsson. The colors for this design were inspired by a seventeenth-century bridal bench cushion in the collection of the National Museum of Iceland. This design is particularly fitting for a wedding—the two entwined knots symbolize the married couple.

Traditional Icelandic embroidery was typically worked with plant-dyed wool yarns. The Icelandic yarn manufacturer Ístex, maker of Lopi yarns, produces a laceweight yarn offered in a twenty-six-color palette that is a close facsimile, but it is hard to use with any readily available modern evenweave fabric. Appletons Wool crewel-weight (two-ply) yarn, available in more than four hundred colors, works well.

Traditional counted-thread embroideries were worked on wool *tvistur*, a loosely woven plain-weave or basketweave fabric. I am unaware of any modern Icelandic manufacturer of a comparable fabric. However, Zweigart makes an excellent fabric substitute in its 20-count Cork linen. When you stitch on this loosely woven fabric, it is best to place the linen in a roller frame or on stretcher bars (instead of using a hoop) to keep the fabric taut because this fabric stretches easily on the bias. Also, you can use any 28-count evenweave fabric or 14-count Aida if you work with two strands of embroidery floss; however, the design will be smaller.

This design is entirely worked in long-arm cross-stitch, the most common stitch found in the extant traditional embroideries of Iceland. In Icelandic, the stitch is called *gamli krosssaumurinn* (old cross-stitch) or *fléttusaumur* (braid stitch) because of the plaited texture the stitch creates; it is not to be confused with the braid stitch found in Hungarian needlework.

MATERIALS

- ◆ Zweigart Cork, 20-count, 100% linen fabric, 1 piece 12 × 12 inches (30.5 × 30.5 cm) of Raw Linen, Cream, or White
- ◆ Appletons Wool, 100% wool yarn, crewel weight, 2 ply, 25 meter (27.3 yd)/skein, 1 skein each of #324, #326, and #328 Dull Marine Blue; #694 and #696 Honeysuckle Yellow; #227 Bright Terra Cotta; and #982 Putty Groundings

- ◆ John James Needle, tapestry or petite tapestry, size 20 or 22
- ◆ Roller frame or stretcher bars to fit the width of the fabric

Finished design size: 5½ × 5½ inches (14.0 × 14.0 cm)

INSTRUCTIONS

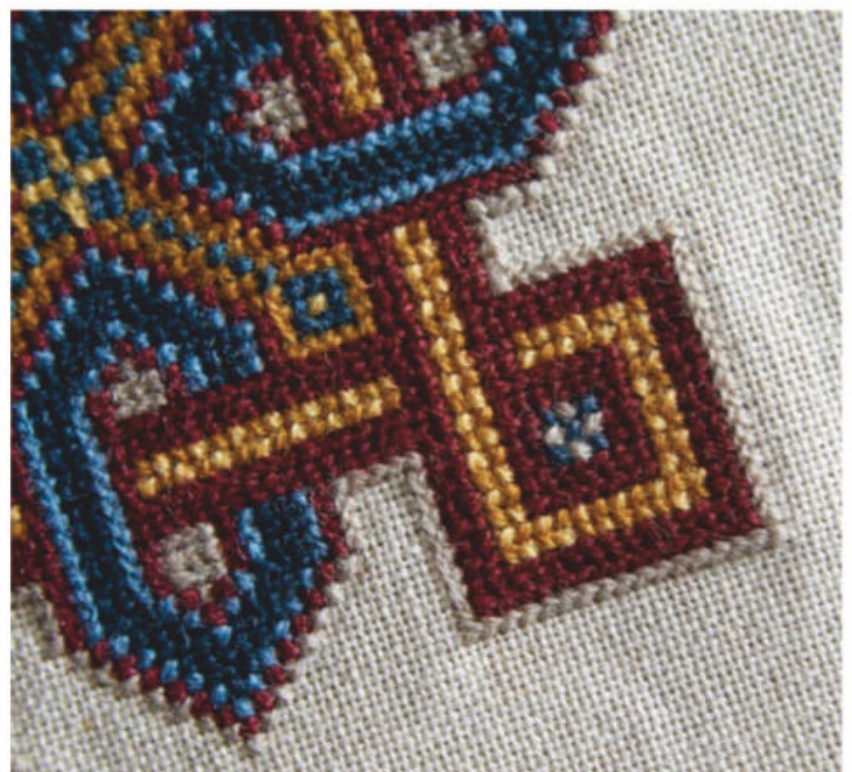
Endless Knot

To prepare the fabric edges, use a serger, machine zigzag, or hand overcast to prevent fraying. Stitch the design, using the long-arm cross-stitch and a single strand of yarn. Cut the yarn length no longer than 12 inches (30.5 cm) to reduce wear, as wool yarns tend to become fuzzy with stitching. See the illustrations for the Figure 1 Horizontal, Figure 2 Vertical, and Figure 3 Single long-arm cross-stitches.

Notes: Be careful of the stitch tension because the warp and weft threads of this large-count fabric can shift easily. Worked in yarn, the long-arm cross stitch can be very difficult to remove if a mistake is made. It is best to use a seam ripper to cut and remove all of the stitches worked with that particular length of yarn.

Finishing

Remove the work from the frame or stretcher bars and handwash in cool water with a mild detergent; rinse until no detergent remains. Do not wring or twist the fabric to remove the water; instead, place the fabric between two terry towels and blot. Allow the fabric to air-dry flat. Place the fabric face down on a dry towel and gently iron to remove any persistent wrinkles, if necessary.



Notes on Long-Armed Cross-Stitch

Horizontal Rows

Step 1: The first arm in a row is a shortened long arm; all long arms in this row will repeat the direction of this stitch. This first row is worked from left to right.

Step 2: The second arm is another short arm; all short arms in this row repeat the direction of this stitch.

Step 3: This is the first long arm covering two horizontal and four vertical threads of the ground fabric.

Step 4: Steps 3 and 4 complete one full long-arm cross-stitch; repeat these steps to the last stitch in the row.

Step 5: The last arm in a row is a shortened long arm.

Step 6: The long arms in the adjacent rows run in the opposite direction, regardless of the color of the stitches. As with the previous row, the first arm is a shortened long arm; all long arms in this row will repeat the direction of this stitch. This second row is worked from right to left.

Steps 7–9: These steps mirror Steps 2–4 in the previous row. Repeat Steps 8 and 9 to the end of the row.

Step 10: As with the previous row, the last arm in the row is a shortened long arm.

Vertical Columns

Long-arm cross-stitch can also be worked in vertical columns, although only one column is recommended; stitches should be worked primarily in horizontal rows. Columns can be worked downward or upward. As with horizontal stitches, each column starts with a shortened long arm (Step 1). Repeat Steps 3 and 4 until the end of the column (Step 5). The last leg of the column is a shortened long arm (Step 6).

Single Stitches

Single stitches can be worked as a regular two-arm cross-stitch. For consistent loft, single stitches should be worked with three short arms with the first and last arm worked in the same direction.

— Justin Allan-Spencer

Figure 1 Horizontal Rows

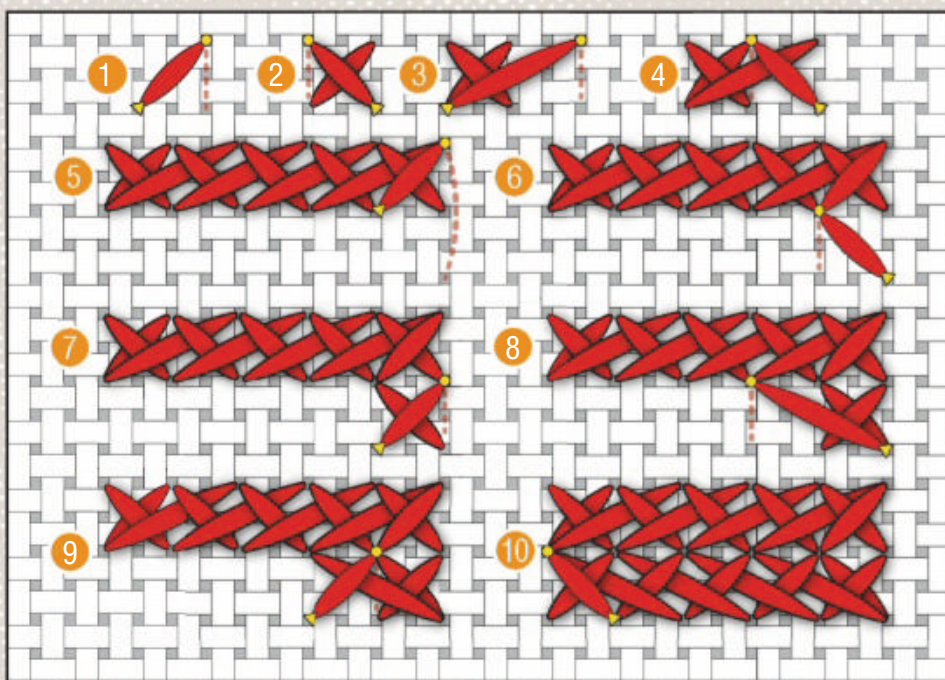
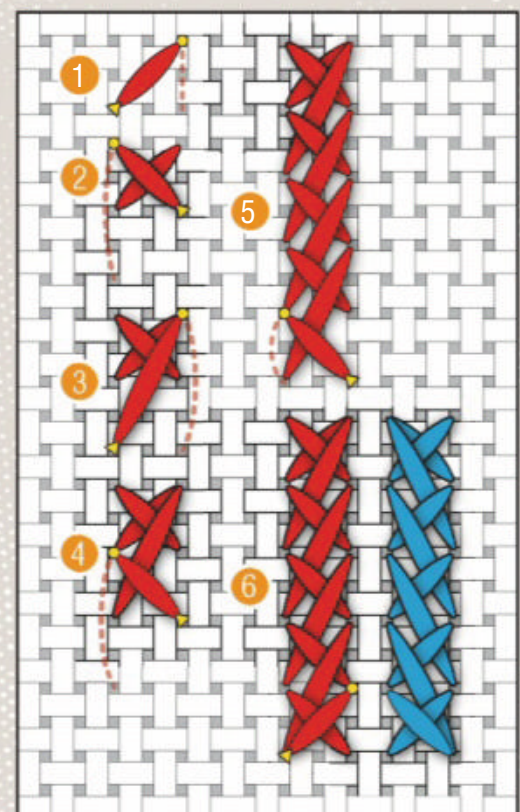


Figure 2 Vertical Columns



Key

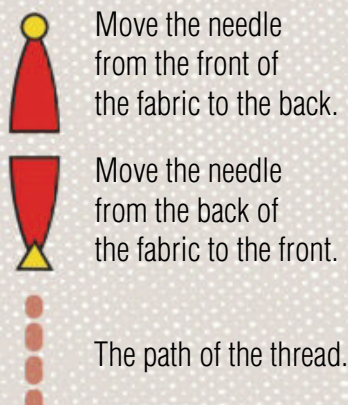
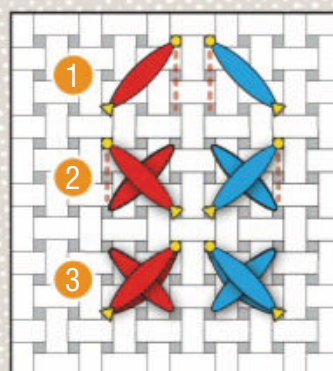


Figure 3 Single Stitches



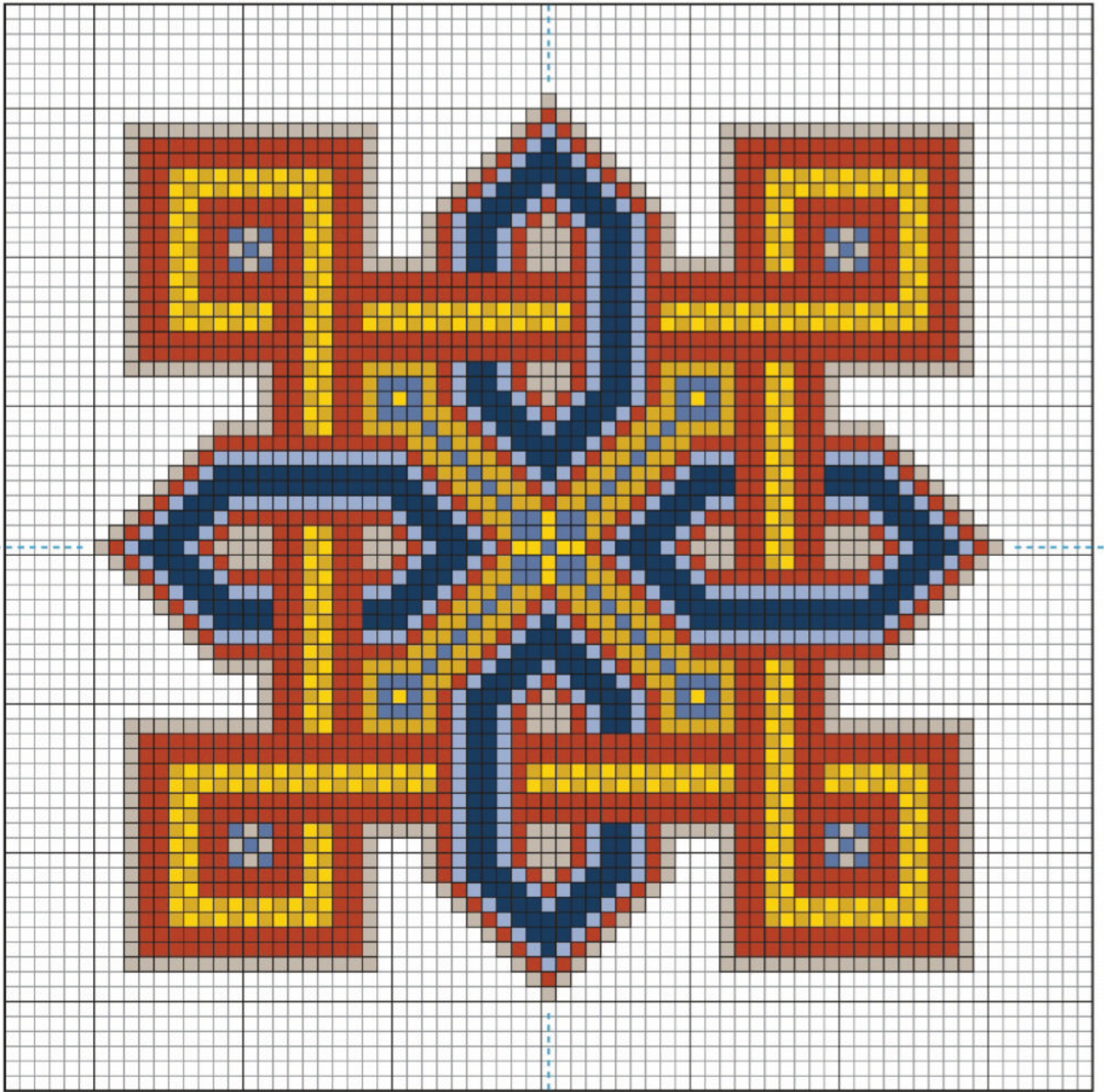








Chart may be photocopied for personal use.

Color Key

		
328	326	324
		
696	694	227
		982

Further Discoveries of Virginia Woods Bellamy's Geometric Number Knitting

ANN W. BRAATEN AND SUSAN STRAWN



Above: A stole designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy. Handknitted. Collection of Susan Strawn.
Right: A scarf designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy. Handknitted. Collection of Susan Strawn.
Photographs this page by Matt Graves.

Number Knitting, the innovative knitting method developed by Virginia Woods Bellamy (1890–1976), emerged from the fog of history with the discovery of original knitted garments and her book *Number Knitting: The New All-Ways Stretch Method* at her son's 2004 estate sale in Moorhead, Minnesota. Virginia's work was beautifully arrayed during the sale's evening preview, so dress historian and curator Ann W. Braaten lined up on opening day intent on purchasing the book and examples of the knitting to learn about Virginia's oeuvre. She shared her book and three knitted pieces with Susan Strawn, knitting researcher and author, when they met for a symposium in 2011.

Susan's first thought was, "Why have I never heard of this woman and Number Knitting?" She recognized a research opportunity and a potential collaboration to create a written record of Bellamy's work and interpret Number Knitting for contemporary knitters. Ann agreed to research Virginia's life story, and Susan began to decipher Number Knitting. Their research led to several published articles and patterns (see Further Resources).

A few years after the estate sale, Ann learned from the sale's manager that additional Number Knitted pieces were sold within the Fargo-Moorhead fiber arts community. Ann began asking each fiber artist she encountered if they had bought any of Virginia's knitting. Vicky Jo Bogart—artist, educator, collector, and curator—responded. She attended the sale when only a jumbled heap of knitting remained. Intrigued, she sifted through them, considering color and design, size and structure, intending to use them as wearable art and visuals for displays and classes. Garments from Bogart's collection, never before published, are featured here. All the garments were knitted of wool either by Virginia or her students, who were given name credit for work published in Number Knitting.

Virginia Woods Bellamy described Number Knitting as "merely a method of knitting design, based on squares and triangles and their tributary units." She discarded traditional measurements for geometrical

principles. She began each design by selecting among seven knitted geometric units, then drew the design on graph paper unit by unit, and numbered each unit in the order in which it would be knitted. She devised notations and abbreviations to clarify instructions.

Following the graph as pattern, she knitted loosely in garter stitch on large needles, picking up stitches along edges unit by unit. Loosely knitted pieces required less yarn and knitting time. Her method created light, warm garments with few or no seams, bias stretch, minimal yarn wastage, and exceptional resilience. She preferred wool but experimented with other natural fibers and metallic yarns for special-occasion pieces.

Virginia recommended knitting swatches with a range of sizes of knitting needles and different yarns to assess drape and softness; a knitter could select a preferred drape and fabric instead of knitting to the fixed gauge directed in a pattern. Interest in Number Knitting led to workshops, exhibitions, an international correspondence course, a patent for the technique (1948), designs featured in women's magazines, and her book published in 1952.

Virginia kept close to geometrical principles for the fitted design of the Hampton blouses and cardigan. Divided squares and angles of ribbing were planned and worked to create contrary tension and shape the garments to lines of the figures. Slightly heavier yarn



Left: The Hampton Pullover in ecru designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy, using her patented Number Knitting method. The neckline variation shows the versatility of a classic design knit of divided squares forming a "ski-track" design. Handknitted. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart. Center: The Hampton Cardigan in green was designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy, using her patented Number Knitting method. Worsted-weight yarn and varying the size of needles shape the fitted cardigan. Divided squares were arranged in the "tree design." Pattern instructions for knitting this cardigan were sold separately through *McCall Needlework* and do not appear in *Number Knitting*. Handknitted. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart. Right: The Hampton Pullover in yellow sportweight wool designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy, arranging divided squares in the "mountain design." The neckline is a variation of the Woman's Hampton Shirt with scoop neck shown in *Number Knitting*, the knitting credited to Elizabeth Cuddy of Blue Hill Falls, Maine. Handknitted. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart.

Photographs by Mark Anthony.

Left: A large wrap in two shades of purple designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy, using the divided triangles described in her patented Number Knitting method. Handknitted. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart.
 Center: The harlequin dress in red designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy includes weights at the points on the hem. Handknitted. This dress was knitted using the Number Knitting method. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart.
 Right: A long dress in blue and green mohair yarn designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy. Handknitted. This dress was not knitted using the Number Knitting method. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart.
 Photographs by Mark Anthony.



and change in needle size further tailored the shapes. Back and front were knitted separately and joined at the sides. A divided square at each armhole formed a gusset that also joins back to front.

Virginia believed that “. . . an artisan [must] move a craft into the realm of art.” Knitters who followed the wasteful styles by anonymous designers in manufacturers’ pattern books frustrated her no end. She considered knitters intelligent and creative, and her Number Knitting technique offered endless opportunities to unlock a creative sense of design using yarn and needles. Her philosophy was consistent with the mid-century American Studio Craft Movement that emerged after World War II (1939–1945). The movement nurtured such handcrafts as furniture making and weaving toward utilitarian *and* artistic applications, precisely as Virginia viewed Number Knitting. The periodicals *Craft Horizons* and *Handweaver and Craftsman* launched mid-century and promoted the revival of handcrafts. Virginia advertised her Number Knitting correspondence course in both magazines from 1950 to 1952. Articles written by and about her emphasized the geometrical characteristics and originality of her work.

The use of geometric units in Virginia’s modular approach also corresponded with early twentieth-century visual artists shifting their work toward abstraction. George Braque (1882–1963) and Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) had pioneered Cubism, promoting the use of simple geometric shapes and interlocking planes to create more abstracted forms rather than striving for realism based on perspective with a single viewpoint. Cubists dissected and fractured objects



The open-neck evening shawl in reds and pink designed for versatility by Virginia Woods Bellamy. This shawl did not use her patented Number Knitting method. Handknitted. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart.
 Photograph by Mark Anthony.

into smaller geometric facets, which they then reassembled into new forms. Cubism and abstraction influenced architecture, sculpture, interior design, and fashion design. Number Knitting fractured the knitted plane, adding all-way stretch and textural surface design to knitted fabric.

Virginia continued to explore geometric structure, texture, and color long after she published *Number Knitting*. The open-neck evening shawl was not number knitted but represents her ongoing explorations.

The ruffled neckline on the long dress mimics draw-string closures on her children's Puffbunny Wardrobe (see Further Resources) published decades earlier in *McCall Needlework*.

Knitting designers today may not realize they stand on the shoulders of Virginia Woods Bellamy. Virginia



Back view of the large wrap in purple fingering-weight yarn knitted with oversized needles designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy, using her patented Number Knitting method. Handknitted. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart. Photograph by Ann W. Braaten.



Above Left: A shawl in yellow and ivory fingering-weight wool designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy, using her patented Number Knitting method. Handknitted. Weights sewn to the shawl's corners suggest the appearance of draped clothing on Ancient Greek sculptures. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart. Above Right: A shawl knitted loosely in pink fingering-weight wool designed by Virginia Woods Bellamy, using her patented Number Knitting method. Handknitted. Collection of Vicky Jo Bogart. Photographs by Mark Anthony.

was among the earliest designers to claim name recognition when selling her designs and to include personal narratives that invited knitters into her creative realm. She also insisted on name credit for her photographers and students who photographed and knitted garments for her publications. She believed her innovative methods could free knitters from slavishly following patterns and encourage creative and intellectual expression in knitting. Her design philosophy and aesthetic relate remarkably well to contemporary concern with the wastefulness in mountains of purchased and discarded clothing that results from "fast" fashion. Number Knitting promotes sustainability through the deliberate and practical application of handcraft, minimal waste, the joy in creative making, and mindful consumption of classic designs.

← *A companion project follows* →

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ANN W. BRAATEN is an associate professor of practice at North Dakota State University (Fargo) in the Department of Apparel, Merchandising, Interior Design and Hospitality Management and curator of the Emily Reynolds Historic Costume Collection. She studies the material culture of women to reveal their artistry and the contributions they made to their families, businesses, and society. She thanks Vicky Jo Bogart for recognizing the ingenuity and artistry of Virginia Woods Bellamy's knitted work and including it in her collection.

SUSAN STRAWN researches and writes stories she finds in textile history. She is professor emerita at Dominican University (Chicago), a *PieceWork* contributing editor, and author of *Knitting America: A Glorious History from Warm Socks to High Art* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Voyageur, 2007). She thanks the Seattle Public Library for generous access to the Eulalie and Carlos Scandiuzzi Writers' Room.

Virginia Woods Bellamy's Butterfly Wrap to Knit

SUSAN STRAWN

◀ *Inspired by the preceding article* ▶



Susan Strawn's adaptation of Virginia Woods Bellamy's Butterfly Wrap, using Bellamy's Divided Square unit from her Number Knitting method. The wrap is very versatile and oh-so soft and cozy.

The Butterfly Wrap consists of three divided squares, each of which looks like two triangles knitted at once. Actually, the cast-on edge of each square forms two sides, and a line of diagonal decreases through the center shapes the right angles of the triangles. Placing a center marker as the instructions indicate keeps the line of double decreases in an even line. Fastening a locking stitch marker to the right side of the knitted fabric (the side on which decreases are made) lets you keep track of decrease rows.

These instructions are for a smaller variation of the pattern XXVIII Butterfly Wrap, one of the “Designs on Divided Squares” in Virginia Woods Bellamy’s *Number Knitting: The New All-Ways-Stretch Method* (New York: Crown, 1952). For this smaller version, make the first decrease on the third row, which is the right side as the cast-on row is counted as the first row.

M A T E R I A L S

- ♦ Isager Alpaca Merino 2, 50% alpaca/50% wool yarn, fingering weight, 270 yard (246.9 m)/50 gram (1.8 oz) ball, 2 balls of #46 Heathered Seafoam
- ♦ Needles, size 10½ (6.5 mm) or size needed to obtain gauge
- ♦ Markers as recommended
- ♦ Tapestry needle
- ♦ Beads, 4 with holes large enough to pull over the corners of the wrap (there is no bead on the point in the back)



Finished size: 48 inches (121.9 cm) at widest point and 24 inches (61.0 cm) tall at center back

Gauge: 14 sts and 28 rows = 4 inches (10.2 cm) in garter st

I N S T R U C T I O N S

Wrap

Square 1

CO 60 sts, pm, CO 60 sts—120 sts total. (CO row counts as Row 1.)

Row 2 (WS): Sl 1, k to last st, p1.

Row 3: Sl 1, k to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, k2tog, k to last st, p1—2 sts dec’d.

Rep last 2 rows 57 more times—4 sts rem.

Next Row (WS): K2tog, p2tog—2 sts rem.

Next Row: P2tog—1 st rem.

Fasten off last st.

Square 2

CO 60 sts, pm, then, with RS facing and beg at top point of Square 1, pick up and k 60 sts along left rising edge of Square 1—120 sts total. Work as for Square 1.

Square 3

With RS facing and beg at CO edge of Square 1, pick up and k 60 sts along right rising edge of Square 1, pm, then CO 60 sts—120 sts total. Work as for Square 1.

Finishing

Weave in loose ends. Add four beads, one at each corner (there is no bead on the point in the back), by pulling the fabric through the hole in the bead and tying a knot. Block lightly by immersing in cold water, rolling in a towel, and laying flat to dry.

Rita Riffolt Varney's Bjärbo Sweater

MIMI SEYFERTH

When my college roommate Natalie Varney went through her mother's cedar chest of treasured garments after her mother's death, she discovered a handknitted sweater (shown at right) that had been sent from Sweden to her mother, Astrid (Rita) Riffolt Varney (1920–2018). Judging from the size of the sweater, Natalie and I believe that the sweater must have been given to Rita in her youth in the late 1920s. Unfortunately, we do not know who gave the sweater to Rita, but we presume the sweater was a gift from a friend of Rita's parents, who were both Swedish immigrants to the United States.



Rita Riffolt's Swedish Bjärbo sweater. The family believes the sweater was given to Rita in the late 1920s, possibly by friends of her parents living in Sweden. Collection of Natalie Varney. Photographs by Matt Graves unless otherwise indicated.

Rita's father, Nils August Magnuson Riffolt (1888–1957), was born in Stockholm. Orphaned at an early age, Nils was adopted by his foster parents, the Magnusons. Although Nils was an excellent student, his foster parents could not afford to provide higher education, and, accordingly, after eighth grade, Nils attended a trade school where he learned technical instrument making. In 1914, Nils sailed steerage class, with virtually all his possessions in a straw trunk, to the United States. On that journey, Nils decided that he needed a new last name—one that was unique and, unlike Magnuson, did not carry a Swedish national identity. Nils invented the surname Riffolt, by which he was known for the rest of his life.

Nils's reputation as a highly skilled instrument maker reached rocket scientist Robert Goddard (1882–1945), who was then on the faculty at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. Goddard, who needed an instrument maker to assist in his rocket development research, convinced Nils to move to Worcester

and to enroll as a physics student at Clark University, where Nils earned both bachelor's and master's degrees. Nils persuaded Astrid Bergstrom (1893–1957), a young woman from Lappland, whom he had met in Stockholm, to join him in Worcester and to become his wife. Their daughter Astrid (Rita) was born in Worcester in 1920.

In 1924, Nils joined the physicist Louis Ten Eyck Thompson (1891–1978) at the U.S. Naval Proving Ground in Dahlgren, Virginia, where Nils worked with Thompson on a variety of naval ordnance problems, as well as nonmilitary projects; he became the director of research at the Dahlgren facility in 1954.

In 1956, Nils retired from the naval base in Dahlgren and he and Astrid moved permanently to the "second home" they had built at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Criglersville, Virginia. Tragically, on January 9, 1957, Nils and Astrid suffered a head-on car collision. Nils died instantly; Astrid died twenty-four hours later.

Rita grew up on the naval base in Dahlgren, experiencing an idyllic childhood as she paddled her green canoe on the Potomac River, played with her beloved dog, Viking, and rode her pony, Rose. Rita earned a bachelor's degree in biology at the College of William and Mary and went on to earn a master's degree in bacteriology at the University of Wisconsin. After completing her master's, Rita worked for the FDA, helping to develop penicillin.

During World War II, Rita met Robert N. Varney (1910-2011), a physicist who worked with her father on projectiles at Dahlgren. Before the war, Robert, who had earned a Ph.D. in physics at the University of California, Berkeley, had taught at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Rita and Robert married in 1948 in Dahlgren. After their marriage, they moved to St. Louis, where Robert resumed his faculty position at Washington University and Rita became a gourmet cook and an accomplished weaver. Robert and Rita had two children: Nils (1949–) and Natalie (1951–). In 1964, when Robert took a job in private industry, Robert and Rita moved their family to Palo Alto, California, where they lived the rest of their lives.



Photograph of Astrid, Rita, and Nils Riffolt. Photographer, location, and date unknown. Photograph courtesy of Natalie Varney.

Throughout their married life, Robert and Rita traveled widely. In 1954, Rita accompanied her father on a trip to Scandinavia. During 1957 and 1958, Robert and Rita and their children lived in Stockholm, Sweden, while Robert taught at the Royal Institute of Technology. During that tenure, Rita purchased several Swedish Bohus sweaters, which, sadly, were not among her belongings at her death. Robert died at age one hundred on April 9, 2011; Rita died at age ninety-seven on September 16, 2018.

Knowing of my strong interest in historical knitting, Natalie shared her mother's childhood sweater from Sweden, as well as family history and family

Sleeve Construction in Rita Riffolt Varney's Bjarbo Sweater

In re-creating Rita's childhood sweater, I mimicked the sleeve construction of the original. I knitted seven-stitch armhole steeks centered on each side of the body, and dedicated seven body stitches on each side to each armhole. In the round in which I created the steeks, I put the seven body stitches that would form the base of each armhole on a length of waste yarn and then cast-on seven new steek stitches to replace the stitches placed on waste yarn. Thereafter, I continued to knit the sweater body in pattern in the round. However, when I reached each steek, I knitted the steek in a pattern of alternating red and blue stripes, with the two outermost stitches, which formed the steek border stitches, and the center stitch knitted in white,

the background color of the sweater. After I completed the body but before I finished the shoulders, I placed each set of steek stitches on three removable markers—one marker for the three steek stitches assigned to the front of the sweater, one marker for the center steek stitch, and one marker for the three steek stitches assigned to the back of the sweater. Next, I machine-stitched down each side of the center stitch of each steek as well as the side of the second stitch on each side of the center stitch. For the sake of security, I also included horizontal rows of machine stitching at the base and top of each steek. After finishing each shoulder—the right shoulder with a three-needle bind-off

and the left shoulder with a ribbed button band on the shoulder back and plain bind-off on the shoulder front, to which crocheted button loops were later added—I cut each steek down the center stitch and picked up the requisite number of sleeve stitches between the steek border stitches and body stitches, as well as the seven stitches previously placed on waste yarn, and knitted each sleeve in the round down to the cuff. Upon completion of each sleeve, I used a hem stitch to tack down the inner edges of that sleeve's steek to the body of the sweater and a blanket stitch to secure the bottom and top stitches of that steek to the base of the armhole and the edge of the shoulder, respectively.

—Mimi Seyferth

photographs, with me. Intrigued by the pattern, I set myself the challenge of creating a replica of the sweater for my personal use.

I learned that the sweater features the Bjärbo motif (the term Bjärbo refers to a person living on the



The labels sewn to the inside of Rita Riffolt's Swedish Bjärbo sweater. The larger one indicates that the sweater was the product of Bindslöjden (the knitting craft association) in Laholm, Sweden.

Photograph by Natalie Varney.



Detail of a sleeve on Mimi Seyferth's re-creation of Rita Riffolt's Swedish Bjärbo sweater.

peninsula of Bjäre on Sweden's southwestern coast). Rita's childhood sweater bears a label featuring the Bjärbo pattern and identifying the sweater as the product of Bindslöjden (the knitting craft association) in Laholm.

Carol Huebscher Rhoades in her article "Binge: Industrious Knitting in South Sweden" (see Further Resources) describes the Bjärbo motif as follows:

The Bjärbo motif is a very stylized version of a thistle-like flower with three branches. The flowers are diamond-shaped, usually with a solid diamond topped by a check-pattern diamond. The "flower" is outlined with a hexagonal border and the motifs are staggered vertically and horizontally. The motif almost always is worked with three colors—white for the background with alternating wide horizontal stripes in blue and red.

In addition, Rhoades explains that items knitted with the Bjärbo motif were likely done by the Halland Knitting Craft Association, a handcraft association established by Berta Borgström (dates unknown), the wife of the doctor in Laholm, a city

in the county of Halland in southern Sweden. According to Rhoades, Borgström established the Halland Knitting Craft Association, which became part of the umbrella organization for Sweden's handicraft societies established by Lilli Zickerman (1858-1949), in order "to help women in need and to preserve the local knitting traditions."

Early Bjärbo sweaters appear to have been worked in just two colors. Britt-Marie Christoffersson's book *Swedish Sweaters: New Designs from Historical Examples* showcases a Bjärbo sweater knitted in two colors (red and green) dated 1863. And Alice Starmore's book *Scandinavian Knitting* includes a pattern for a Bjärbo sweater knitted in two colors (blue and white) modeled after a nineteenth-century blue-and-white sweater featuring what Starmore describes as "an unusual tile effect of complex thistle-like motifs."



Mimi Seyferth's stellar re-creation of Rita Riffolt's Swedish Bjärbo.

Bjärbo sweaters were traditionally knitted in the round from the waist up. The photographs of Bjärbo sweaters accompanying Rhoades's article show sleeves that were knitted from the cuff up, so that the direction of the Bjärbo motif on the sleeves matched the direction of the motif on the body of the sweater. However, the sleeves on Rita's sweater were knitted from the armhole down to the cuff. A Bjärbo child's sweater in the collection of the County Museum in Halmstad, Sweden, features a similar sleeve construction.

Re-creating a Bjärbo sweater was a knitting challenge. But for me, it was also a way to honor Rita Riffolt Varney and her pride in her Swedish heritage.

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MIMI SEYFERTH, a lawyer who lives outside Washington, D.C., met Rita Riffolt Varney in 1972 when Mimi became the college roommate of Rita's daughter, Natalie, at Santa Clara University. Mimi has always said that to the extent any of her rough edges were smoothed in subsequent years, she credits Rita, who was a powerful influence—and a great friend.

A Weldon's Shetland Shawl to Knit

CAROLYN WYBORN Y



Wrap yourself up in luxury in this delightful shawl, which combines two Victorian knitting patterns, designed by Carolyn Wyborny.

I took Shetland-born Gudrun Johnston's Traditional Shetland Shawls class at the Spring 2018 Knot Another Fiber Festival (KAFF). Johnston taught us how to construct what could be considered a modern Shetland traditional shawl. After doing some more research, I found that "modern" means from Victorian times and later, because before the Victorian age, such shawls in Shetland were usually constructed in pieces and sewn together with the border, which was often begun first. The speculation is that the invention of circular needles had something to do with the changes in construction techniques.

The more modern traditional Shetland construction for both triangular and square shawls consists of three sections. For a triangular shawl, there's first a center garter-stitch triangle of varying size, which is constructed by starting with a single slipknot then increased by placing a yarnover at the beginning edge of every row. Second, there's a wide border section that is created by picking up all those yarnovers on the center garter-stitch triangle and working back and forth along two edges of the center triangle. This section often contains the main design element. Finally, there is an edging to cast off, which can be simple or elaborate.

You can knit a square shawl by decreasing that initial center triangle back to a single stitch, creating a diamond, and then working the border and edging on all four sides.

When planning a triangular shawl, you can decide what final shape you would like based on some simple math. Depending on the increase rate in the border section, you can create a wide triangle, which is my preferred shape, or a standard triangle. My continuing fascination with Victorian-stitch patterns and this construction style (Victorian and later) sent me

immediately digging through my volumes of *Weldon's Practical Needlework* for ideas about Shetland-style shawls to use in my own designs.

I often like to design shawls that meet the one-skein challenge. For this shawl, I found that 30 percent of the yarn worked well to create a center triangle. For the edging, calculations indicated that the edging I wanted to use, Point Lace Border, found in *Weldon's Practical Knitter Edgings*, Sixth Series, published in London in 1887 (and compiled in Volume 2 of *Weldon's Practical Needlework*), would use about 50 percent of the yarn. To meet the one-skein challenge, my larger edging would require a smaller border, or I would need a smaller center triangle.

Choosing a smaller border would have been a simple choice—except that I had fallen in love with the Myrtle Leaf Pattern for a Shawl found in *Weldon's Practical Knitter Edgings*, Fourteenth Series, published in 1890 (compiled in Volume 5). I love how these two patterns combine in the wide Shetland-style triangle, and I am planning more variations on this theme for the future. The luxurious merino/cashmere/nylon yarn makes this shawl lovely to wrap around your neck.



Carolyn Wyborny's wide Shetland-style triangle shawl.

MATERIALS

- ◆ Hazel Knits Entice, 70% superwash merino/20% cashmere/10% nylon yarn, 400 yard (365.8 m)/113 gram (4.0 oz) skein, 1 skein of Frost
- ◆ Needles, size 7 (4.5 mm), circ 32 inches (80 cm) or larger to accommodate large number of sts
- ◆ Stitch markers
- ◆ Tapestry needle

Finished size: About 50 inches (127 cm) wide by 20½ inches (52 cm) deep at the center, after gentle blocking

Gauge: 16 sts and 44 rows = 4 inches (10.2 cm) in garter stitch, after blocking; 8-row edging rep is 1¼ inches (3.2 cm); gauge is not critical for this project

INSTRUCTIONS

Shawl

Garter Triangle

Make a slipknot and put on the needle.

Next Row: Yo then k the st already on the needle—2 sts.

Cont making a yo at each edge, knitting the rest of the sts per row until there are 121 sts on your needle. Do not break the yarn, but put these sts on a spare cable needle or some waste yarn. These will not be used again until the BO.

Border

Always going from front to back, pick up but do not knit the edging stitches. Start where the yarn is attached and pick up 60 loops from one side, pm, pick up 1 st in that 1st loop, pm then pick up 60 more loops on the other side. You can use the last yarnovers at each edge, if needed. Slide the sts to the opposite end of the needle. With the working yarn, k these normally so as to cross the loops—121 sts.

Set-Up Row 1: K1f&b, k to 1 st before m, k1f&b, sl m, k1, sl m, k1f&b, k until 2 sts from the end, k1f&b, k1—4 sts inc'd.

Set-Up Row 2: K1f&b, k to 2 sts before the end, k1f&b, k1—2 sts inc'd.

Rep these two rows 1 more time, then work Set-Up

Row 2 one more time—135 sts.

Work Row 1 of the Myrtle Leaf Right Chart (it includes the center st, which is outlined), then work Row 1 of Myrtle Leaf Left Chart to complete the 1st row. On the WS, Row 2 will beg with Row 2 of the Myrtle Leaf Left Chart, then the Myrtle Leaf Right Chart. Cont working the border by using both Myrtle Leaf Charts through Row 25—209 sts.

Edging

CO 15 sts, using the cable or knitted method. You will be working perpendicular to the shawl edge to cast off.

Set-Up Row: K6, p8, k2tog including 1 st from the body of the shawl.

Beg Point Lace Chart with Row 1. Rep Rows 1–8 of the Point Lace Chart until all the border sts are used up. Do not turn work or break yarn.

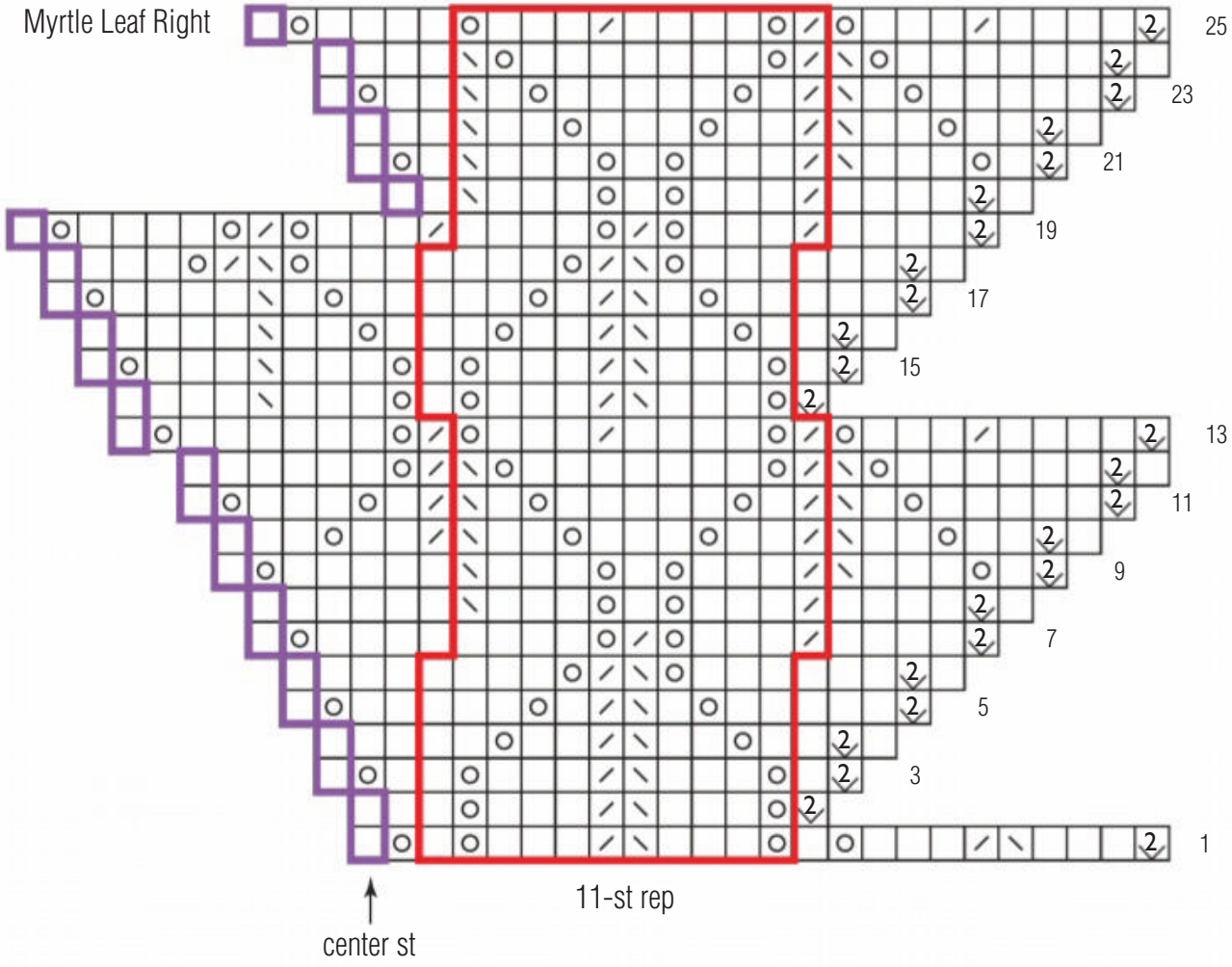
Bind off: With the 15 sts on the right-hand needle, pick up and k 1 st in each edge st across the border section, then put the 121 sts from the garter triangle from the waste yarn onto the left needle and k these sts, then pick up and k 1 st in each edge st of the border section on the other side, then pick up and k as many of the 15 sts from the edging CO as you can. These pickups are to even up the top edge, and it's not critical if each side is not exactly the same number of picked up sts. Using the Icelandic method, bind off all sts across the top.

Finishing

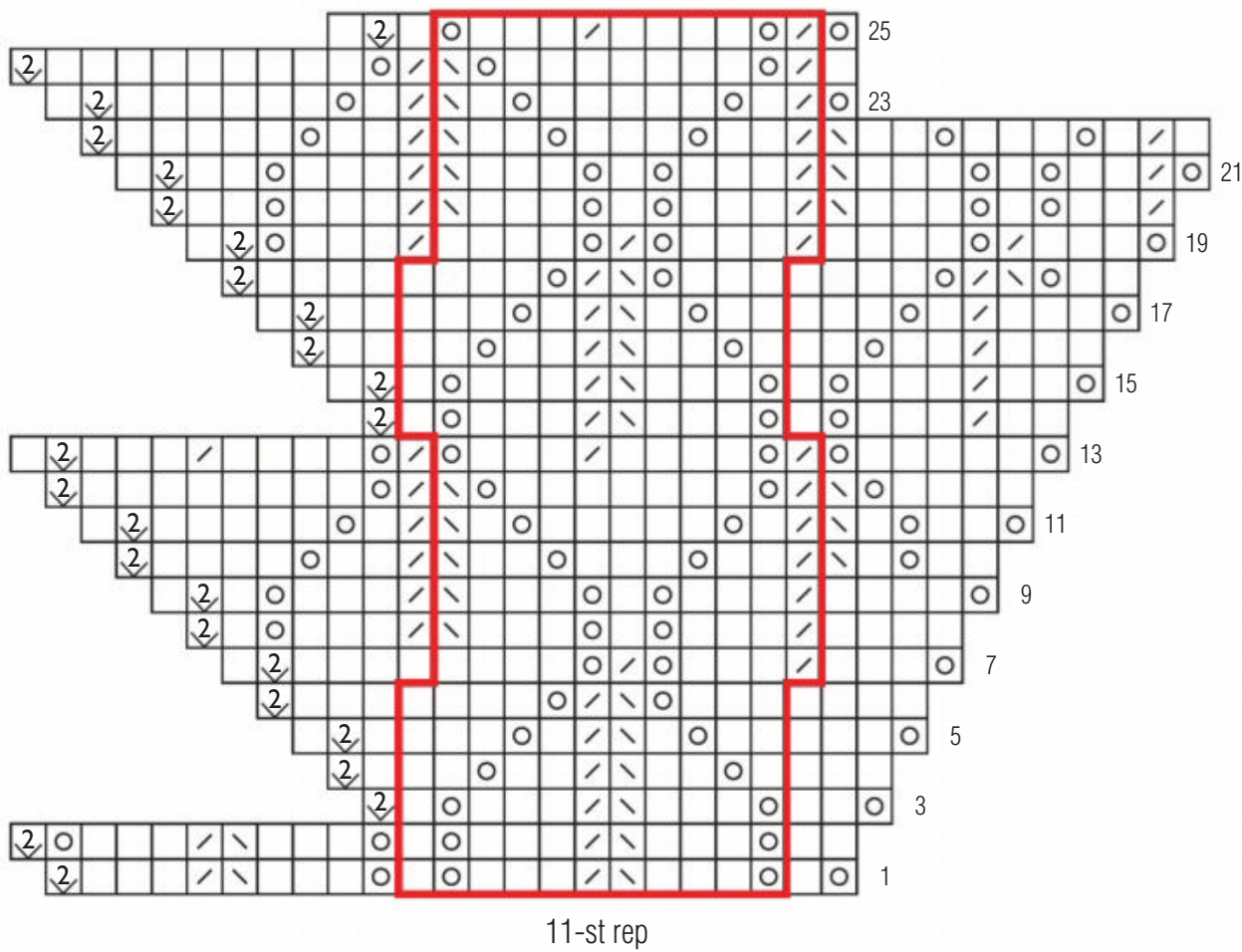
Wet-block gently into a triangle shape, pulling out the loops on the edging and easing the garter section into a wide triangle shape.

Because CAROLYN WYBORNÝ'S family was traditional, in that all the women did needlework, she's been crocheting, knitting, and tatting since she was very young. Carolyn works as a software engineer for a large high-tech company but spends most of her free time knitting and coding up knit and crochet designs. She lives west of Portland, Oregon, with her husband, children, and several pets.

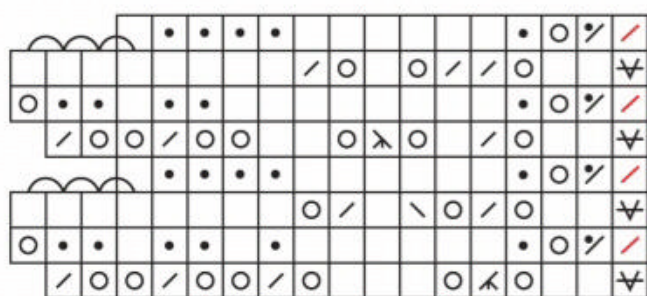
Myrtle Leaf Right



Myrtle Leaf Left











Point Lace



15-18 sts

Key

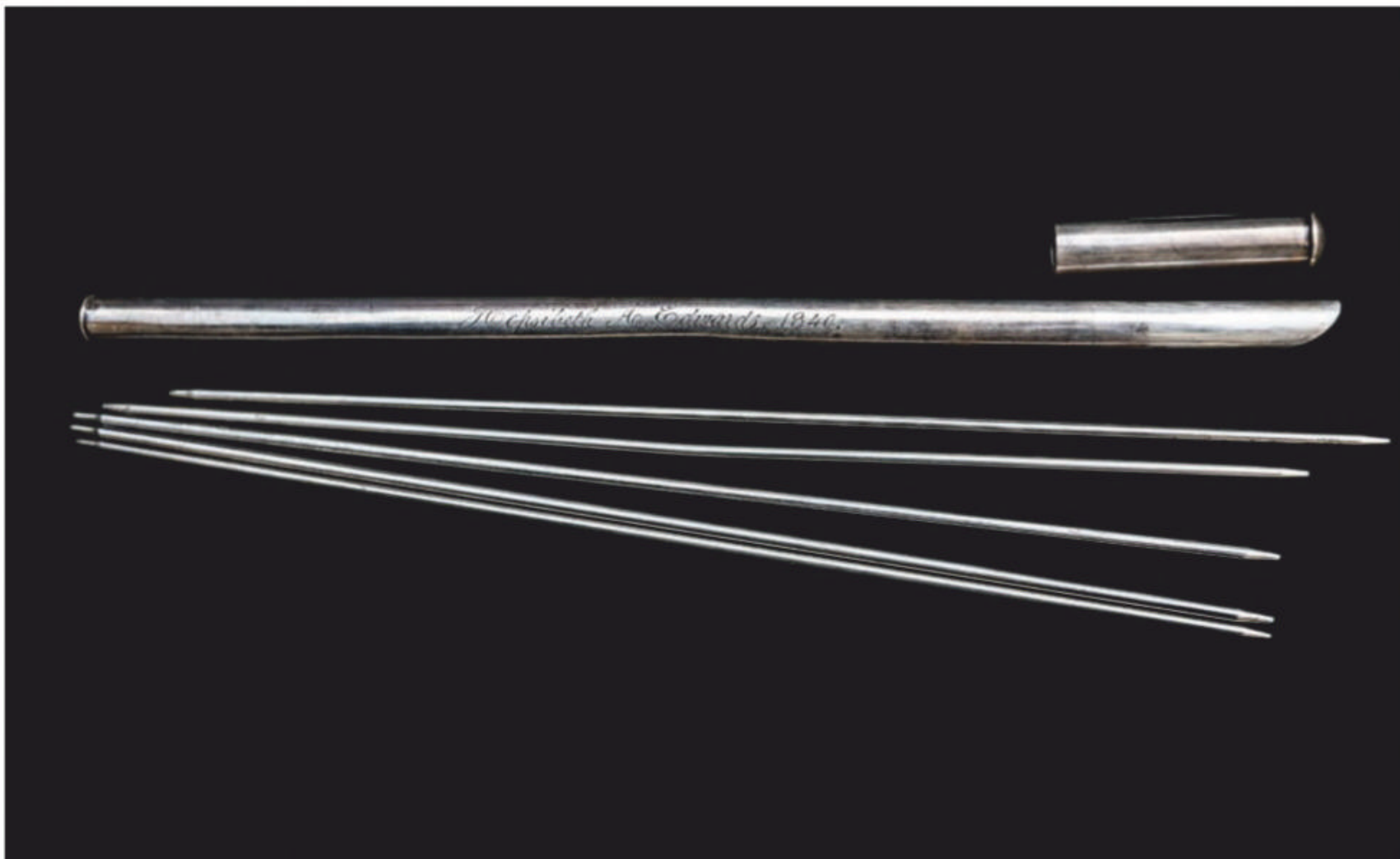
-  k on RS; p on WS
-  p on RS; k on WS
-  sl 1 pwise wyf on RS
-  yo
-  k1f&b on RS; p1f&b on WS
-  k2tog on RS; p2tog on WS
-  ssk on RS; ssp on WS
-  k2tog on WS
-  k3tog
-  sl 1, k2tog, pss0
-  k2tog (last st of edging tog with 1 shawl st)
-  bind off 1 st
-  st rem on right needle after last BO st
-  center st
-  pattern repeat

Charts may be photocopied for personal use.

Silver, Steel, and Silk

A Material Culture Mystery

HEATHER VAUGHAN LEE



Six double-pointed steel knitting needles (size two), with silver case engraved with “Hepsibeth A. Edwards, 1840.” Nantucket, Massachusetts. Collection of the Turtle Bay Exploration Park & Museum, Redding California; gift of Howard and Marion Adams. (1980.24.3AB).
Photograph courtesy of Turtle Bay Exploration Park & Museum.

While working as part of the curatorial staff on the 2017 exhibition *Material Culture: Form, Function & Fashion* at Turtle Bay Exploration Park in Northern California, I selected a small silver case containing six steel double-pointed knitting needles to include in the home crafts section. The exhibition showed how material culture is represented by the physical objects we create. As we explained in our introductory text panel for the exhibit, “These objects—how they are made, and how they are used—help to define our ‘culture’ in the more narrow sense.”

Turtle Bay Exploration Park is an art, history, and science museum in Redding, a California city three hours north of Sacramento that has a significant but little-known collection. The museum’s rich regional artifacts include more than 3,000 costumes, textiles, and related objects dating from 1816 to 2002. Most of these are “everyday” garments that were worn by local residents. However, one of these objects, the case and set of knitting needles, does not have known local ties and seems to provide more questions than answers.

The Case and the Needles

The set of six size-two double-pointed steel knitting needles was kept in a silver case engraved with a name and date, “Hepsibeth A. Edwards, 1840.” The set was made in Nantucket, Massachusetts. Hepsibeth Allen Gardner Edwards (1801–1885) and her husband, Captain David Nye Edwards (1798–1881), lived in Nantucket. The couple married in 1825, and he was a successful captain of several whaling ships through 1841, traveling as far as New Zealand and Hawaii.



Left: Mrs. Hepsibeth Allen Gardner Edwards (1801–1885); portrait by E. T. Kelley. Collection of the Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket, Massachusetts. (CDV308).

Photograph courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

Right: Captain David Nye Edwards (1799–1881); portrait by E. T. Kelley, Collection of the Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket, Massachusetts. (CDV309).

Photograph courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

By 1855, Mrs. Edwards was the superintendent in the juvenile department of the Sunday school at the North Congregational Church; Captain Edwards also served as a deacon at the church. I at first presumed the knitting needles and case were a gift from her husband or father, but they might have been a gift from her Sunday school students. For Christmas in 1855, the students gave her “a beautiful silver card basket,” as a part of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Sunday school, so it’s within the realm of possibilities.

Nantucket silver is rare and highly prized by collectors of early American silver. Wealthy captains, such as Captain Edwards, frequently had coins melted and forged into household articles. At least seven different merchants sold, repaired, and engraved silver merchandise from makers in Boston and Providence during this era. This set was probably bought from a Nantucket merchant, most likely James Easton II (1807–1903).

The Nantucket Historical Association’s collection includes an 1835 spoon engraved by Easton for BC and JC Gardner, likely Hepsibeth Gardner Edwards’s parents, Benjamin Gardner (1775–1853) and Judith Coffin (1778–1854). Easton also advertised in 1838 that he made needle cases to order. He frequently used German silver and advertised gratis engraving on silver plate during the summer of 1840. Born in Providence, Rhode Island, Easton formed a business partnership with Fredrick C. Sanford, and sometimes marked his wares as Easton & Sanford, though this case has no such marks. When Easton died in 1903 at the age of ninety-six, he was Nantucket’s oldest citizen.

The Nantucket Historical Association has five similar needle cases in its collections, some originally owned by Gardner family members; the cases date between 1830 and 1853. Of these, only three have engravings. The Nantucket Historical Association collection also includes several whalebone and ivory swifts from between 1835 and 1840 from the extensive collection of Frederick Gardner.

Knitting appeared in familiar ways in Nantucket. As early as 1829, women were knitting in social groups and in public meetings, and continue to do so today. Knitting needles were also used as educational aids: One Nantucketer recalled in 1905, “Many of us learned our letters standing at the knee of the



Engraved spoon by Easton and Sanford. Collection of the Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket, Massachusetts. (1910.0006.003).
Photograph courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

teacher, who pointed them out with a knitting-needle.” Hepsibeth may have used her needles in exactly the same way.

Local newspapers suggest that by 1838, knitting had become something of an obsession in Nantucket. *The Inquirer and Mirror* noted in the January 27, 1838, edition:

A correspondent complains sadly of the practice now generally coming into vogue at ladies carrying with them to public meetings their knitting work, and plying their needles incessantly and furiously for hours together. He thinks this does not operate as an effectual preventative of the motion of the tongue, for which it was designed as a substitute; and is sure that his nerves are vastly more disturbed by the remedy, than by the disease—for in both cases, says he, ‘the ladies may indulge their propensities for long yarns. . . .’

The Needles and Case Mystery

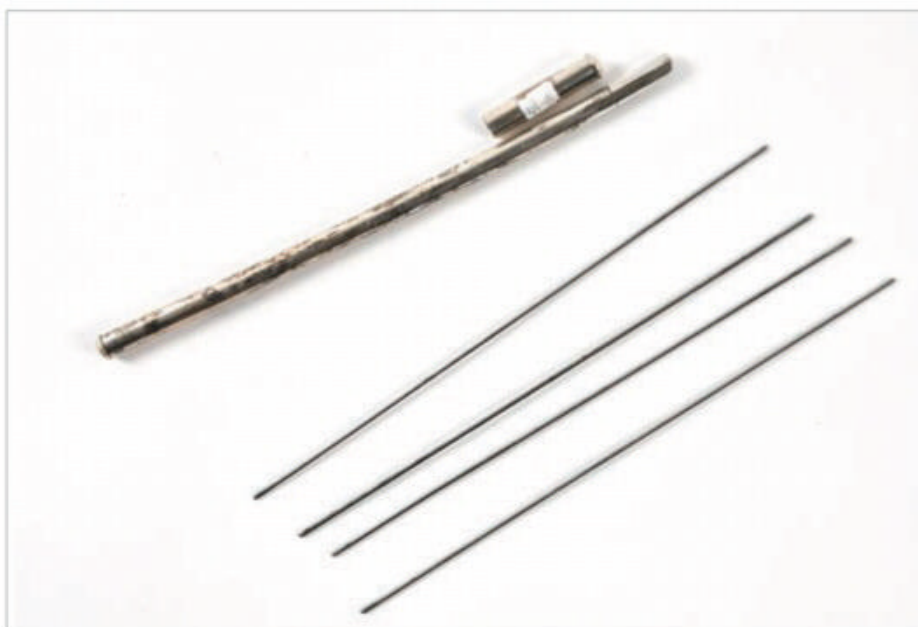
Howard and Marion Adams (1912–1991 and 1915–2008, respectively) donated the knitting needles and case to the museum at Turtle Bay Exploration Park in 1980. Unfortunately, no provenance came with the donation. How the needles and case came to be in California remains a mystery. The Edwards’s only child was daughter Phoebe Coffin Edwards (1837–1925). She never married and died in Massachusetts. Although she was a member of the Nantucket

Historical Association in 1914 and donated several items to their collection in 1905, her mother’s knitting needles did not end up there.

The draw of the Gold Rush in California may hold a clue. Apparently, Nantucketers were fascinated by the idea. One ship captain visiting Nantucket in 1857 described the effect in the “Summer Rambles – Nantucket” section of the December 11, 1857, edition of *The Inquirer and Mirror*:

The excitement occasioned by the discovery of California gold was in Nantucket as strong as in any other portion of the country. The whalemens imagined they had found a new channel for procuring wealth, while the townsmen who had resisted the thirst for ambition of harpooning a whale, threw aside their implements of industry, and flocked to the field of treasure. Family ties were severed, destined never to be re-united—plighted affections abandoned, for what chance had hearts when spades were the best in hand? There was a perfect hegira of the male population, and although some of the females went with them, the great mass were left behind.

On January 9, 1849, a converted whaling ship, the *Aurora*, had been the first to leave Nantucket for the California Gold Rush. Another ship, the *Bark Russell*, sailed on March 8, 1849. George Sprague (1826–1879), Hepsibeth Edward’s sister-in-law’s brother, was on that ship.



Engraved silver knitting needle case. Collection of the Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket, Massachusetts. (1964.0018.001a-f). Photograph courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.



Engraved silver knitting needle case. Collection of the Nantucket Historical Association, Nantucket, Massachusetts. (1897.0026.001a-c). Photograph courtesy of the Nantucket Historical Association.

The donors of the knitting needles and case might have been related to Hepsibeth Edwards. Captain Edwards had once been rescued at sea by a Captain Gardner of Warren, Rhode Island, and donor Marion Adams had relatives living in Rhode Island at the time. This connection is thin at best.

Other connections between Rhode Island and Nantucket exist in this story. Gamaliel Gay (1799–1880), the inventor of the silk-making machinery William H. Gardner’s Atlantic Silk Company used, lived in Rhode Island (for more on the Atlantic Silk Company, see the introduction to this article’s companion project, which follows). Additionally, maker James Easton II was born in Rhode Island. Perhaps the maker completed the engraving on the needles, but never delivered them to their intended recipient.

Another equally thin possibility comes from an 1848 report in Nantucket’s newspaper *The Inquirer and Mirror* of a lost silver needle case “with some knitting work” near Darling Street. The Edwards lived at 53 Centre Street, about ½ mile (0.8 km) from Darling Street.

Material Culture

Regardless of how the knitting needles came to reside in an out-of-the-way California collection, their value lies in their role as material culture. The stories that surround them reveal a complex web of politics, religion, industry, handcraft, and creativity in our ancestors’ daily lives. Discovering how these knitting needles and others like them were used, by whom, and why provides insights into our collective cultural history as well as inspiration for some fun knitting projects.

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HEATHER VAUGHAN LEE is a fashion historian, author, curator, and knitter, whose work has focused on the study of dress in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She was a co-curator of Material Culture: Form, Function, and Fashion, which ran from October 21, 2017, through January 7, 2018, at Turtle Bay Exploration Park & Museum in Redding, California. Her new book *Artifacts from American Fashion*, which explores twentieth-century American history through objects of clothing, will be available from ABC-CLIO November 2019. More about Lee and her work can be found on her blog, *Fashion Historia*, and website www.fashionhistorian.net.

← *A companion project follows* →

A Sunflower Pincushion to Knit

HEATHER VAUGHAN LEE

◀ *Inspired by the preceding article* ▶



Heather Vaughan Lee adapted a pattern in *Weldon's Practical Needlework*, Volume 3, for her stellar knitted pincushion.

Throughout the nineteenth century, size-two needles like those in the Turtle Bay collection (shown in the preceding article) were used for small items such as silk purses and pincushions. Silk was a luxurious and popular fiber in the 1830s, as a mania or craze for creating an American silk industry swept the United States.

The Atlantic Silk Company was incorporated in Nantucket in 1836 by William H. Gardner, Samuel B. Tuck, and William Coffin. The intention was to grow mulberry trees and raise silkworms on Nantucket in order to weave silk. The authors of *Hidden History of Nantucket* (see Further Resources in the preceding article) explain, “While the industries associated with whaling depended on men, it was women who provided the bulk of the labor in silk manufacturing, and approximately fifty women were hired to run the machines of the Atlantic Silk Factory.” In 1836, the company won a silver medal at the New York City Mechanics Institute Fair. By 1844, however, the company had closed.

Quakers on Nantucket preferred silk “because slave labor was not required for its manufacture and the use of silk served as a way of boycotting cotton and protesting slavery in the American South,” Jascin Leonardo Finger writes in a 2013 newspaper article (see Further Resources in the preceding article). Social activists and reformers were active on Nantucket during these years, especially among Quakers: The Nantucket Anti-Slavery Society was formed in 1839, and Nantucket’s first anti-slavery convention was held in 1841. With the support of prominent citizens, including local teacher Ann A. Gardner (1816–1891), the island’s anti-slavery movement helped to establish public schools in 1825 and to desegregate them in the late 1840s.

I adapted the pattern for this pincushion from the pattern in *Weldon’s Practical Knitter*, Seventh Series (and compiled in *Weldon’s Practical Needlework*, Volume 3, published in London in 1888). The Sunflower pincushion did double duty as a pen wiper (for pens with nibs), and the original pattern included instructions for adding ribbon by which to hang the pincushion as an ornament or decoration.

M A T E R I A L S

- ◆ Treenway Silks Kiku, 100% spun bombyx silk yarn, laceweight, 1,100 yard (1,005.8 m)/100 gram (3.5 oz) skein, 1 skein each of #403 Mexican Chocolate and #201 Golden Aspen
- ◆ Needles, size 0 (2.0 mm) steel or wooden double pointed
- ◆ Tapestry needle
- ◆ Silk fabric, Brown
- ◆ Sharp-point sewing needle
- ◆ Sewing thread to match silk fabric
- ◆ Cardboard
- ◆ Batting
- ◆ Felt, dark color

Finished size: 5½ inches (14.0 cm) in diameter

Gauge: 20 sts and 32 rows = 2 inches (5.1 cm) in garter stitch; exact gauge is not critical for this project

I N S T R U C T I O N S

Pincushion

Flower Center

Using Mexican Chocolate, CO 31 sts.

Row 1: Sl 1 pwise wyf, * p1, k1; rep from * to end of row.

Rep the last row until the piece is as tall as it is wide, forming a square (about 50 rows).

BO all sts.

Sew Cushion

Make a small circular cushion: Cut out three circles, each 4 inches (10.2 cm) in diameter, two from the dark felt (I used dark green) and one from the silk fabric. Handsew the silk circle to a felt circle (right side of silk out) with a ¼-inch (6-mm) seam allowance. Sew this pair of circles to the single remaining felt piece, with right sides facing and leaving a 2-inch (5.1-cm) opening in the seam. Match the seam allowance on the silk/felt piece to a ½-inch (1.3-cm) seam allowance on the plain felt and sew (so that the silk side is slightly raised and the other side is flat). Trim the edges and turn right side out. Stuff with batting and sew the opening shut. The cushion should be about 3 inches (8 cm) in diameter when finished. Place the knitted flower center on top of the silk fabric, wrapping the knitting around to the back, and tack in place.



Detail of Heather Vaughan Lee's knitted pincushion, showing the bottom made from dark felt.



The pincushion center is knitted in brown silk yarn and then placed over dark silk fabric.

Flower Petals, Top Layer

Using Golden Aspen, CO 8 sts.

Row 1 (WS): K7, yo, k1—9 sts.

Rows 2, 4, and 6 (RS): K1, yo, k to end—1 st increased each row.

Rows 3, 5, and 7: K to last st, yo, k1—1 st increased each row.

Row 8: K1, yo, k to end—16 sts.

Rows 9, 11, and 13: K to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1—1 st decreased each row.

Rows 10, 12, and 14: K1, k2tog, k to end—1 st decreased each row.

Row 15: K to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1—9 sts rem.

Rep Rows 2–15: twelve to fourteen more times (enough to make thirteen to fifteen petal points total). The pincushion shown has fifteen points.

BO all sts. Sew the CO and BO ends tog, being careful not to twist the piece. Weave in ends.

Flower Petals, Bottom Layer

Using Golden Aspen, CO 12 sts.

Row 1 (WS): K to last st, yo, k1—13 sts.

Rows 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 (RS): K1, yo, k to end—1 st increased each row.

Rows 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11: K to last st, yo, k1—1 st increased each row; 23 sts after completing Row 11.

Rows 12, 14, 16, 18, and 20: K1, k2tog, k to end—1 st decreased each row.

Rows 13, 15, 17, 19, and 21: K to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1—1 st decreased each row; 13 sts after completing Row 21.

Rep Rows 2–21 until the straight edge of the piece is long enough to fit around the outside of the cushion (about 11 inches [28 cm]). The pincushion shown has Rows 2–21 worked a total of nine times for nine petal points.

BO all sts. Sew the CO and BO ends tog, being careful not to twist the piece. Weave in ends.

Finishing

With the knitted side of the flower center facing up, sew the straight selvedge of the top layer of petals around the prepared cushion along the cushion seam, pleating the petal strip evenly to fit. Sew the straight selvedge of the bottom layer of petals around the prepared cushion underneath the top layer. Cut a 2¾-inch (7.0-cm) diameter circle of cardboard and a 3¾-inch (9.5-cm) circle of felt. Wrap the felt around the cardboard, and attach the cardboard to the back of the pincushion to finish.

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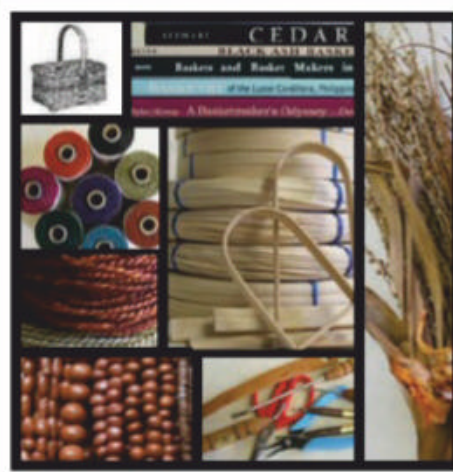
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Owner: Long Thread Media LLC; John Bolton, CEO, 311 S College Ave, Fort Collins, CO 80524. 11. Known bondholders, mortgages and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent of more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None. 12. Tax status: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months. 13. Publisher title: Piecework. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: Fall 2019. 15. The extent and nature of circulation: A. Total number of copies printed (Net press run). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 22,269. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 23,619. B. Paid circulation. 1. Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 12,478. Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 11,261. 2. Mailed in-county paid subscriptions. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. 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