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- Embroider  
Nathaniel  
Hawthorne's  
**SCARLET  
LETTER** p. 24
- Knit a **LITTLE WOMEN**  
Lace Fichu p. 40
- **FOLLOW THE THREAD:**  
Needlework in Kid Lit p. 43

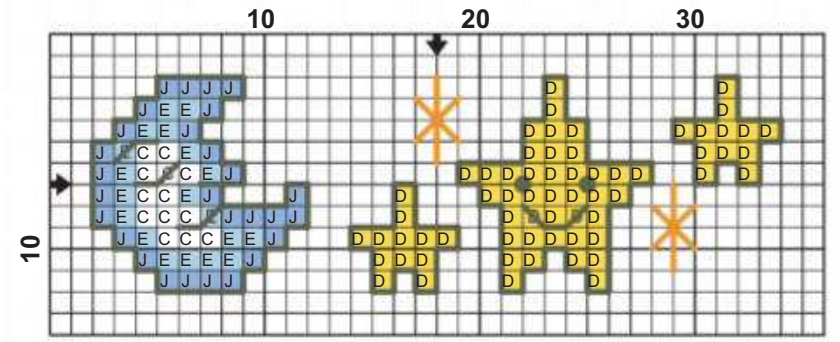
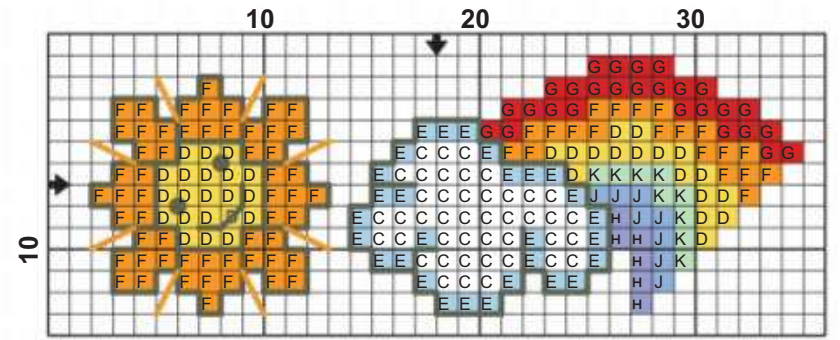


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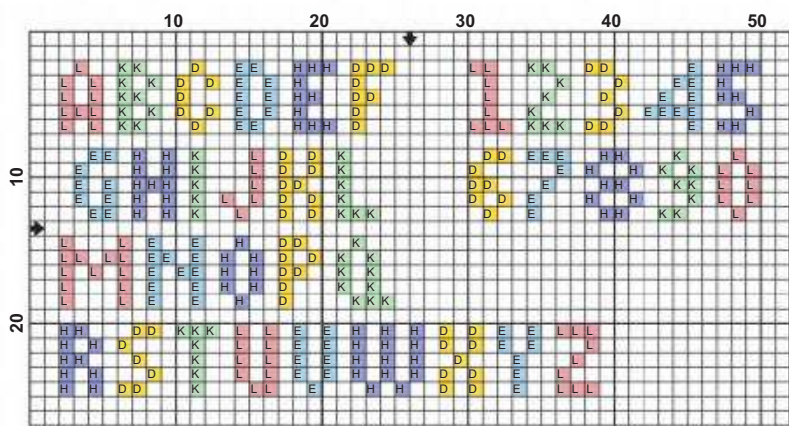
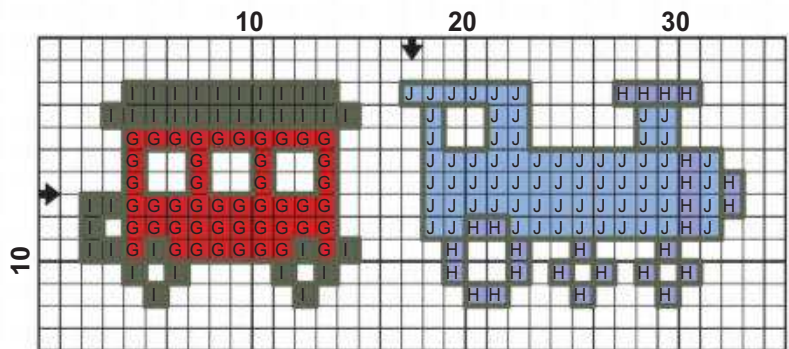
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# Contents

PIECEWORK | VOLUME XXVI, NUMBER 5 | WINTER 2018



## 14 Deep-Seated Associations: Textile Threads in Language, Myths, Fairy Tales, and Novels

Explore the “stories that feature the primacy of textiles and the way they are connected with women.”

*Beverly Gordon*

## 20 Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*—A Romance: Portrait of a Seamstress

Take a fresh look at Hawthorne’s classic and learn more about Hester Prynne’s needlework skills.

*Diane Kennedy*

## 24 Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Scarlet Letter* to Embroider

Create your own stitched letter with step-by-step instructions and a complete alphabet.

*Diane Kennedy*

## 26 The Secret Life of Mrs. Brown: Drawn from the Short Story “Art Work,” in *The Matisse Stories* by A. S. Byatt

Mrs. Brown’s textile life is delightful; A. S. Byatt’s Matisse-inspired story is brilliant.

*Mary Polityka Bush*

## 28 A Bookmark à la Matisse to Embroider

Dive into the world of Matisse-inspired color and design with this sweet bookmark.

*Mary Polityka Bush*

## 30 On Lace’s Trail: Bruges, History, Secrets—and Nancy Drew

Join Nancy Drew as she explores Bruges and its exquisite laces and (of course!) solves the mystery.

*Suzanne Smith Arney*

## 34 Belgian Needle-Lace Hearts to Make

Inspired by a glorious nineteenth-century needle-lace cuff from Brussels and the Nancy Drew mystery *The Secret of the Old Lace*, these hearts are a perfect first-time needle-lace project.

*Kathi Rotella*

## 40 A Little Women Lace Fichu to Knit

Both the author of and the characters in the beloved novel *Little Women* wore fichus; knit your own with this pattern.

*Eileen Lee*

## 43 Children’s Books: How Needlework Twists the Plot

Find the perfect books for any budding needleworker from ages four to fourteen.

*Julia Baratta*

## 45 Women and Needlework Magazines: Opportunity, Recognition, Income!

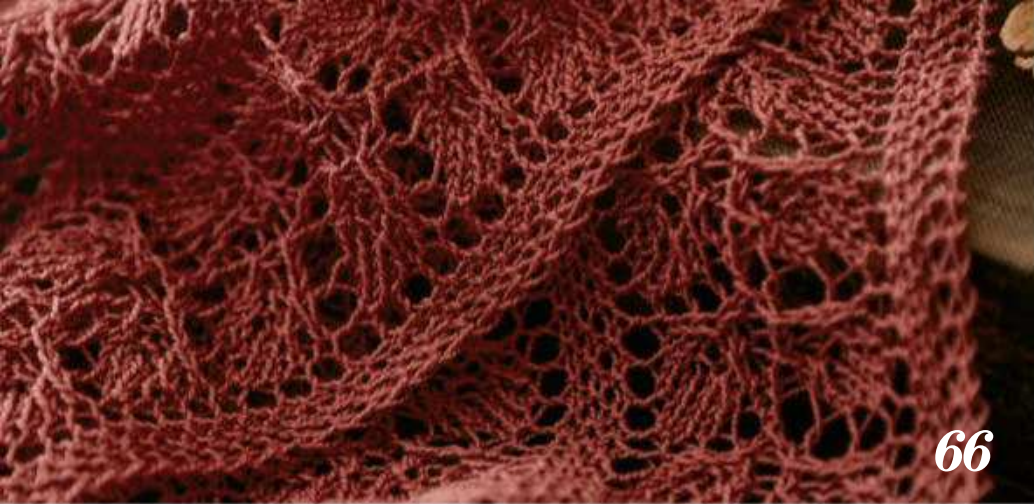
American needlework magazines from the 1880s into the 1930s provided readers with so much more than instructions, patterns, and recipes.

*Susan Strawn*



*Continued on page 2*





66



68

**52 A Handsome Centerpiece for the Library-Table**

The instructions for gorgeous embroidered butterflies on a centerpiece are exactly as they appeared in the October 1918 issue of *Needlecraft*.

**Marion Matthews**

**56 A Publishing Juggernaut—Priscilla**

The *Priscilla* magazine (also titled *The Modern Priscilla*) was a favorite of American women from its inception in 1887 until the magazine ceased publication in 1930; the company also published a wide variety of needlework books.

**Christopher John  
Brooke Phillips**

**62 The Lustrous Life of Fancy Needlework Illustrated**

Published in England between 1906 and 1960, numerous copies of *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* and objects made from the pages of the magazine are now in the collection of the United Kingdom's Knitting & Crochet Guild.

**Barbara Smith**

**66 Tea Rose Scarf to Knit**

A lace pattern on a jumper featured in *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* served as inspiration for this stunning scarf.

**Katrina King**

**68 Festival Lace Mitts to Knit**

Make your own “clothes for hands” with these instructions for festive traditional Russian fingerless mitts.

**Inna Voltchkova**

**75 Ann's Rag Book: With a Brief History of These Fabric Books**

Rag books are delightful—Ann's, with its meticulous embroidery, would make any child a very happy camper.

**Kathy Troup**

**Departments**

**4 Notions**

Letter from the editor

**6 By Post**

Letters from readers

**8 Calendar**

Events of interest

**10 Necessities**

Products of interest

**12 The Last Word**

Book of interest—*The House of Worth: The Birth of Haute Couture*

**80 Then & Now**

Objects of interest

**Don't miss out!**

We post new content every day to the *PieceWork* blog. You'll find quirky, informative, and fun posts, each with the *PieceWork* slant. Visit [www.interweave.com/needlework](http://www.interweave.com/needlework). The website also has the *PieceWork* index, editorial calendar, contributor guidelines, charts and illustrations from previous issues, the current issue's Calendar, and much more.

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# Notions

Welcome to this issue of *PieceWork*! It's filled with information on two of my favorite things—magazines and books. That each feature and project includes the historical needlework context is icing on the cake.

As with every issue, I learned some things that I hadn't known about:

- The tale of Rumpelstiltskin is from Germany; he's called Tom Tit Tot in English; see "Deep-Seated Associations: Textile Threads in Language, Myths, Fairy Tales, and Novels."
- Ray Bradbury's short story "Embroidery" is hauntingly beautiful; it was published in 1951 and is available online; see Further Resources in "Deep-Seated Associations: Textile Threads in Language, Myths, Fairy Tales, and Novels."
- Four generations of Worth men ran the haute couture House of Worth in Paris; see the review of a new gorgeous coffee-table book about the family and fashion in *The Last Word*.
- The National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London have delightful embroidered rag books in their collections; see "Ann's Rag Book: With a Brief History of These Fabric Books."

From its inception, *PieceWork* has been a fan and supporter of England's Royal School of Needlework (RSN), the gold standard for needlework education. While the school offered some courses at various locations in the United States, including a two-week summer school in August 2018 in Lexington, Kentucky, full access was only available at the school's headquarters at Hampton Court Palace in Surrey. I am delighted to let you know that you now can learn from the best anytime—wherever there is an Internet connection—with the RSN's recently launched online courses!

Two current courses are Introduction to Jacobean Crewelwork and Introduction to Goldwork. Deborah Wilding, RSN tutor, is your guide for the crewelwork course; she designed the lovely pomegranate shown above. Becky Hogg, another RSN tutor, is the goldwork instructor; she designed the stunning hellebore shown below. A kit with the materials needed to complete the course project is mailed to each student.

For complete details, visit the Royal School of Needlework's online course website at [www.rsnonlinecourses.com](http://www.rsnonlinecourses.com). We published a blog post, including a short video, about the launch of the school's online courses on the needlework section of our website; visit [www.interweave.com/article/needlework/learn-embroidery-the-rsn-way-from-the-comfort-of-home](http://www.interweave.com/article/needlework/learn-embroidery-the-rsn-way-from-the-comfort-of-home). If you take a course, we'd love to hear about it; email us at [piecework@interweave.com](mailto:piecework@interweave.com). Happy stitching!

The year 2018 is quickly coming to a close. I hope 2019 will be filled with joy, peace, and needlework for all.



Photographs by Jason Jenkins.



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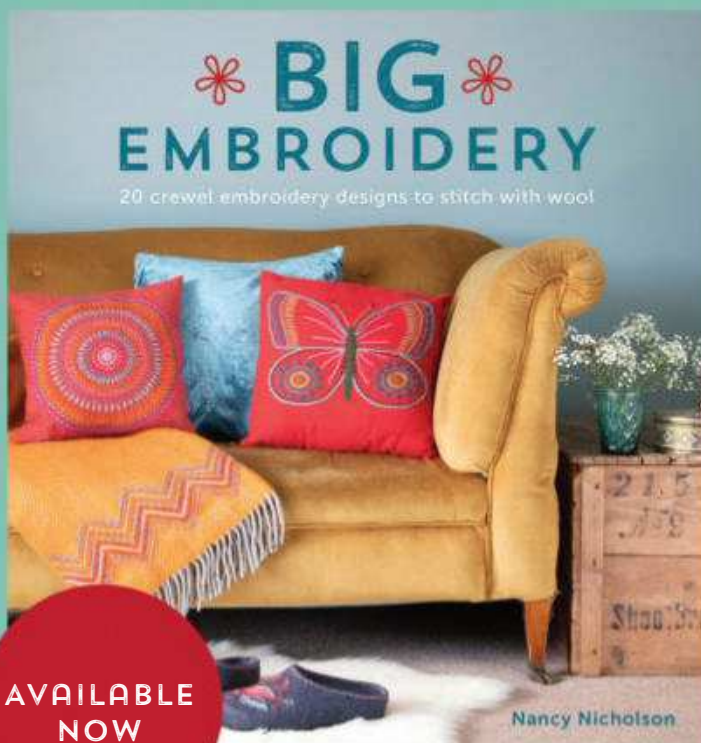
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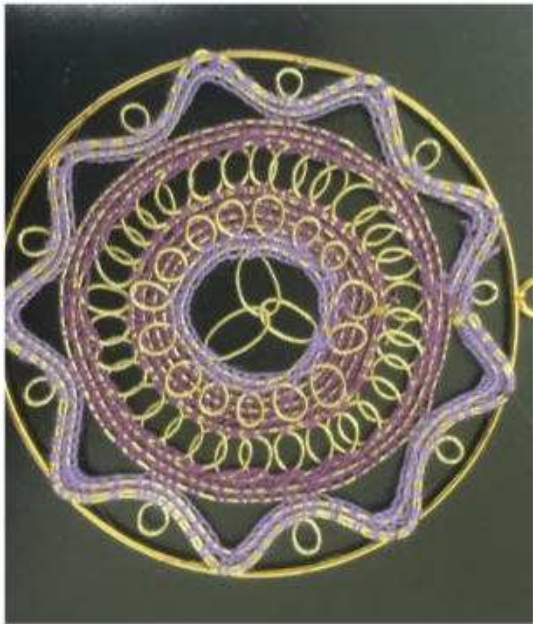
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# By Post

## From Our Readers' Hands



I made the Spanish lace medallion from *PieceWork* May/June 2018 in purple!

Via Facebook  
Norma Bucko

*The instructions are from Carolyn Wetzel's "A Medallion of Frisado de Valladolid-Style Lace to Stitch," which is the companion project to her article, "Spanish Frisado de Valladolid Needle Lace: Treasures in Gold, Silver, and Silk."*

*Reader Audrey Lintner knitted a mystery project from Weldon's Practical Needlework, Volume 1, which was featured in our blog post "Weldon's Mystery Project: Knitted Lace or Edging," [www.interweave.com/article/needlework/weldons-mystery-project-knitted-lace-edging](http://www.interweave.com/article/needlework/weldons-mystery-project-knitted-lace-edging). The knitted-lace pattern had no*

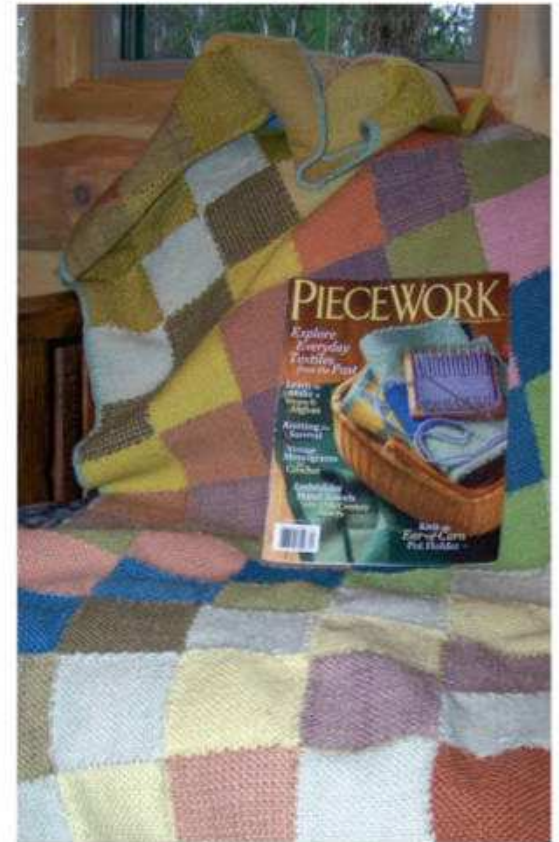


*illustration, and what it looks like was unknown until now. Audrey commented: The main body of this pattern would make a nice baby blanket or lap robe in sport- or worsted-weight yarn, and a laceweight yarn would make a great scarf. The eyelet rows across the top have an extra stitch at the end due to the single slip stitch at the beginning. Knit it plain without a yarnover to keep the stitch count even.*

Via email  
Audrey Lintner

Several years ago, I took a community-education class about using plants, flowers, bark, avocado peels, and other materials to dye wool, silk, and cotton. I took the class four times because I enjoyed it so much and wanted to learn as much as possible about the process. The instructor had indigo and a few other exotics, and we also collected plant material from ditches and fields as a class. Of all the different materials I tried at home, I found goldenrod and marigold flowers made the strongest dye. There were several of us in the class, and we each had only one skein of yarn. We wound the yarn on our arm from thumb to elbow twenty-five times to get seven or eight small skeins to try in each dyebath the instructor had prepared.

I ended up with many small balls of naturally dyed-wool yarn and several silk scarves. When the March/April 2010 issue of *PieceWork* arrived with the article about the Weave-It Loom, "The Very Best Afghans in the World" by Robin Hansen, I knew what I wanted to do with all that yarn. However, finding a Weave-It Loom proved to be a bit more difficult than I anticipated. Luckily, a local handwork



collector had three of them. I bought a 4-inch (10.2-cm) Weave-It Loom for \$3, complete with instructions and still in the box. It took me about three years to make all of the squares, stitch them together, and make a border. I worked on it during the evenings when there weren't other things going on. Thank you for introducing me to another fabulous handcraft. Thank you for the best historical handwork magazine ever.

Via email  
Joanne Rosberg

*Thanks Norma, Audrey, and Joanne—all are lovely.*

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@interweave.com](mailto:piecework@interweave.com) with By Post in the subject line or mail to By Post/*PieceWork*, 4868 Innovation Dr., Fort Collins, CO 80525. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



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# Calendar



Ellen Olenska from Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence* wears rich and brilliant color, including a red cloak and red velvet robe. Three-piece red satin dinner dress with embroidery and pearls. Circa late 1870s–early 1880s. Belonging to Maria E. Duvall Stockett of Annapolis, Maryland. Collection of the Maryland Historical Society. From the exhibition *The Fashions of Fiction from Pamela to Gatsby*, at the Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania. Photograph by Barbara A. Hunt and courtesy of the Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University.

## Exhibitions

**San Francisco, California:** Through January 6, 2019. *Veiled Meanings: Fashioning Jewish Dress*, from the Collection of The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, at The Contemporary Jewish Museum. (415) 655-7800; [www.thecjm.org](http://www.thecjm.org).

**Denver, Colorado:** November 19, 2018–March 3, 2019. *Dior: From Paris to the World*, at the Denver Museum of Art. (720) 865-5000; [www.denverartmuseum.org](http://www.denverartmuseum.org).

**St. Louis, Missouri:** Through November 25. *Balance and Opposition in Ancient Peruvian Textiles*, at the Saint Louis Art Museum. (314) 721-0072; [www.slam.org](http://www.slam.org).

**New York, New York:** November 12, 2018–February 24, 2019. *Jewelry: The Body Transformed*, at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (212) 535-7710; [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org).

**Kent, Ohio:** Through February 3, 2019. *For the Birds*, at the Kent State University Museum. (330) 672-3450; [www.kent.edu/museum](http://www.kent.edu/museum).

**Shippensburg, Pennsylvania:** Through April 11, 2019. *The Fashions of Fiction from Pamela to Gatsby*, at the Fashion Archives and Museum of Shippensburg University. (717) 477-1239. [www.fashionarchives.org](http://www.fashionarchives.org).

**Fort Worth, Texas:** Through January 6, 2019. *Balenciaga in Black*, at the Kimbell Art Museum. (817) 332-8451; [www.kimbellart.org](http://www.kimbellart.org).

**Calais, France:** Through January 6, 2019. *Haute Dentelle—Designer Lace*, at the Museum of Lace and Fashion. 33 3 21 00 42 30; [www.cite-dentelle.fr](http://www.cite-dentelle.fr).

## Symposiums, Workshops, Consumer Shows, Travel

**West Springfield, Massachusetts:** November 3–4. *The Fiber Festival of New England*, at the Mallary Complex, Eastern States Exposition. [www.easternstatesexposition.com](http://www.easternstatesexposition.com).

**Cape May, New Jersey:** November 23–24. *Holiday Crafts & Collectibles Show*, at the Cape May Convention Hall. (800) 275-4278; [www.capemaymac.org](http://www.capemaymac.org).

**Westwood, New Jersey:** November 3–4. *The Metropolitan Chapter of the International Organization of Lace, Inc. (IOLI) Annual Lace Day* with a beginners' class and vendors on Saturday and classes on Sunday (pre-registration for classes required), at the Elks Lodge #1562. [www.metropolitanchapterioli.org](http://www.metropolitanchapterioli.org).

**Quechee, Vermont:** November 1–4. *Knitting & Yoga Adventures Retreat* with Beth Brown-Reinsel, at the Quechee Inn. [www.knittingandyogaadventures.com](http://www.knittingandyogaadventures.com).

**Stowe, Vermont:** December 7–8. *Winter Lace Knitting Retreat* with Donna Druchunas, at the Trapp Family Lodge. [www.nekretreats.com](http://www.nekretreats.com).

**Williamsburg, Virginia:** November 29–December 3. *Annie's Needle Arts Festival*, at the Kingsmill Resort. [www.just-crossstitch.com](http://www.just-crossstitch.com).

**London, England:** December 1. *Selvedge Fair*, at the Mary Ward House. [www.selvedge.org](http://www.selvedge.org).

**Uruguay:** April 22–29, 2019. *Adventure in Uruguay*, for knitters, wool enthusiasts, and others; includes visits and dye workshop with the artisans of Manos del Uruguay. [www.fairmountfibers.com](http://www.fairmountfibers.com).



Please send your event information no later than January 2 for Summer, April 1 for Fall, July 1 for Winter, and October 1 for Spring. Email [piecework@interweave.com](mailto:piecework@interweave.com). Listings are made as space is available; we cannot guarantee that your listing will appear.



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People with a passion for traditional needlework, embellished clothing, and beautiful lacework—all made by hand—are *PieceWork* magazine's core audience. *PieceWork* explores the personal stories of traditional makers, what they made, and investigates how specific objects were crafted and why. The stories and projects within the pages of *PieceWork* make the traditions come alive for today's embroiderers, lacemakers, knitters, and crocheters.



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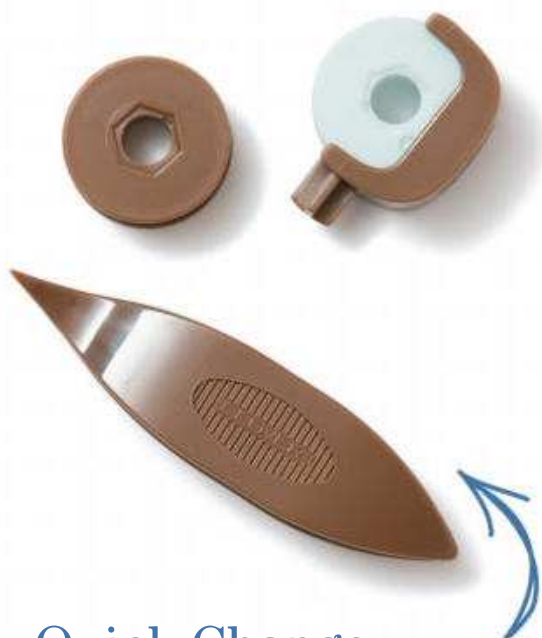


## Scrumptious Silk

Gloriana Threads imports its twelve-strand 12/2 silk floss from Switzerland and hand-dyes it in deep luscious shades that will add a special elegance to your finest needlework project. As an added bonus, this silk floss won't catch on your hands. Shown, top to bottom, are True Gray #296, Coral Sunset #287, and Crimson Light #298. [www.glorianathreads.com](http://www.glorianathreads.com).

## Shades of Gray

Indulge in hand-dyed merino, cashmere, and nylon fingering-weight yarn from Sun Valley Fibers. Owner and dyer Jeanette Sundstrom uses acid dyes to create her richly colored yarns and steam-sets her dyes to increase their fade resistance. Shown in Dust in the Wind. [www.sunvalleyfibers.com](http://www.sunvalleyfibers.com).



## Quick Change

Meet Clover's new interchangeable tatting shuttle and bobbins. A welcome addition to any tatter's toolbox, the shuttle and bobbin set lets you change threads in a snap. Each package contains a shuttle and two bobbins. Additional bobbins sold separately. Available in white and brown (shown). [www.clover-usa.com](http://www.clover-usa.com).

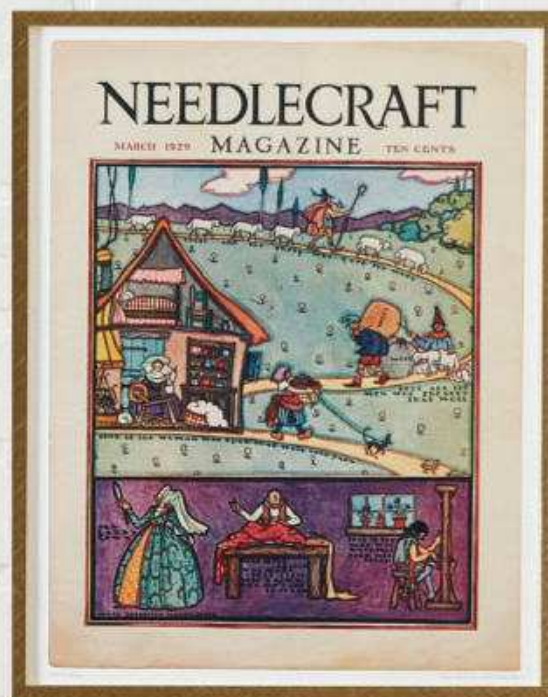


## Hoop Dreams

Stitch in style with hand-stained embroidery hoops from Jessica Rose Stitchery. The black cherry stain adds a warm depth that highlights the wood's grain. These hoops will also make charming frames for your finished handwork. Available in several diameters, from 3 to 9 inches (7.6 to 22.9 cm); shown in sizes 8 and 9 inches (20.3 and 22.9 cm). [www.jessicarosestitchery.etsy.com](http://www.jessicarosestitchery.etsy.com).



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# The Last Word

## *The House of Worth: The Birth of Haute Couture*

This gloriously illustrated coffee-table book by Chantal Trubert-Tollu, Françoise Tétart-Vittu, Jean-Marie Martin-Hattemberg, and Fabrice Olivieri tells the story of the House of Worth in meticulous detail and illuminates an integral time in the history of fashion. Englishman Charles Frederick Worth (1825–1895) arrived in Paris in 1846; eventually, he would become a catalyst for a fashion revolution and establish the House of Worth as the groundbreaking haute-couture label.



Imperial Russian court dress designed by Charles Frederick Worth. Silver moiré skirt and emerald green silk velvet boned bodice with a matching 12-foot (3.7-m) train; trimmed with a band of silk fringe and velvet ruffles; embroidered with clear glass crystals, silver sequins, silver foil, silver strips. France. About 1888. Collection of the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana; gift of the Alliance of the Indianapolis Museum of Art. (2006.3A-C). Photograph courtesy of the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields.

*The House of Worth: The Birth of Haute Couture* begins with the story of the man who started it all. As a young man, Charles Frederick Worth was fascinated by art. He spent much of his time at exhibitions and in bookstores, flipping through artists' portfolios, refining his taste, and sharpening his instinctive aesthetic sense. Worth was employed in textile stores in England until he went to Paris to further pursue fashion.

He arrived in Paris with just £5 in his pocket. He would later tell his sons of the hardships he faced in his early days in Paris with little money or food. Worth found work at Gagelin-Opigez & Cie, a well-known Parisian fabric seller. Over time, he grew to see his work there as too restrictive. In 1858, with the help of his business partner, Otto Gustaf Bobergh (1821–1882),

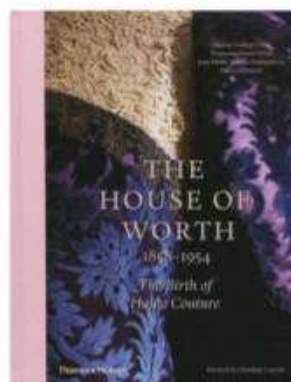
he started a dressmaking business. The business became wildly successful, and it evolved into the renowned House of Worth.

From 1858 to 1954, four generations of the Worth family managed the House of Worth. The book explores the innovations in life, business, clientele, and fashion at large that Worth and his family brought to the world of couture. The first chapter introduces Charles Frederick Worth himself. The second focuses on Frederick's sons Gaston (1853–1924) and Jean-Philippe (1856–1926), who ran the business together and led it to further success between 1895 and 1922. The next chapter outlines the reign of grandsons Jean-Charles (1881–1962) and Jacques (1882–1941) between 1922 and 1941. The fourth chapter delves into the final Worth generation to manage the business: Charles Frederick's great-grandsons Roger (1908–1984) and Maurice (1913–1985), who were in charge from 1941 to 1954. The final chapter explores the perfume and beauty products of the House of Worth that made Worth the new name in luxury perfume.

*The House of Worth: The Birth of Haute Couture* includes 486 illustrations, 324 of which are in color. Striking images—many shown full page—of exquisite dresses, gowns, capes, suits, and coats; period photographs; portraits; fashion publications; advertisements; and other documents, including invoices and catalog pages, bring the book to life in a way that can inspire innovation and creativity in readers of the kind that Charles Frederick Worth employed throughout his life to build his legacy—the House of Worth.

*The House of Worth: The Birth of Haute Couture* by Chantal Trubert-Tollu, Françoise Tétart-Vittu, Jean-Marie Martin-Hattemberg, and Fabrice Olivieri. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2018. Hardcover, 336 pages, \$85. ISBN 978-0-500-51943-1.

—Jenna Fear







Dress designed by Jean-Philippe Worth. Silk, linen. France. Circa 1895. Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York; gift of the Brooklyn Museum, 2009; gift of the Princess Viggo in accordance with the wishes of the Misses Hewitt, 1931. (2009.300.639a, b).  
*Photograph courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.*



# Deep-Seated Associations

*Textile Threads in Language, Myths, Fairy Tales, and Novels*

BEVERLY GORDON

Contemporary literature is filled with novels—especially mysteries—that use knitting or quilting as a background motif; the heroine runs a yarn shop, for example, and is part of a community of women who are drawn together through this interest. This type of book is a relatively new phenomenon, but stories that feature the primacy of textiles and the way they are connected with women are quite ancient. Our language is full of metaphors that demonstrate these deep, primal associations, as are the myths and fairy tales and treasured stories that we (Westerners) grew up with. These associations not only reflect but also help shape our assumptions and attitudes.

We literally often visualize our reality in textile terms. The expressions and metaphors refer to textile elements (fibers, filaments, cords, strings, or threads), to textile processes, and to finished cloth. Sometimes the metaphors are biological—fiber terms, in particular, are used to express the essential stuff we are made of. We have long had metaphoric expressions such

as “life cord” and “moral fiber.” Now, our metaphors even extend into the realms of sophisticated science. We routinely describe DNA—our very genetic codes and life building-blocks—as strands that twist or ply around one another. Other metaphors refer to connections with our fellow humans. We interact daily, for example, with a *World Wide Web* or *Internet*, and we use metaphors such as “life hanging by a thread.” We speak of the “web of life,” the “social fabric,” and “the fabric of human relationships.” Our lives are “entwined” or “inextricably bound” with one another.

Some textile expressions allude to the magic of creation: when we draw out a thread or make a solid fabric from mere wisps of fiber, we are seemingly making something out of nothing. We speak of “spinning a yarn” when we draw out words and put them together to tell a tale, and we “put a spin on” ideas or events, shaping them as we would like them to be. People who dabble in magic “weave” spells.

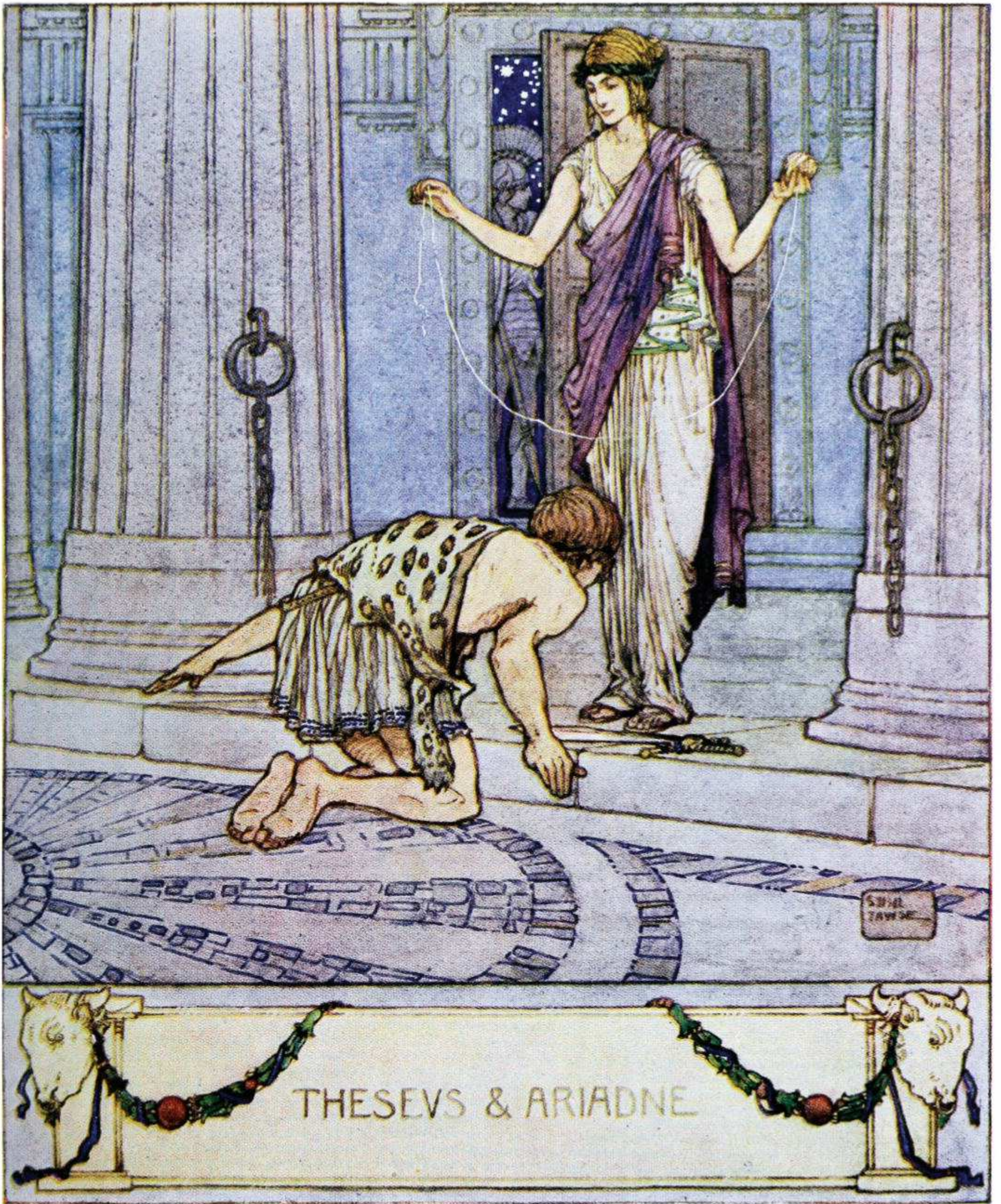
Classic literature reflects these primary associations. Threads are sometimes seen as pathways, lines to follow. A familiar example in Greek myth is the Theseus story. Theseus was sent to Crete to be ritually sacrificed to the monstrous Minotaur, who lived in an underground labyrinth. No human had ever emerged from the labyrinth alive, but Ariadne, King Minos’s daughter, who loved Theseus, equipped him with both a sword and a ball of thread. As he went in, Theseus tied one end of the thread to a doorpost at the entrance and let the ball unwind behind him as he went deeper inside. He slew the monster with the sword, but it was only by following the thread Ariadne



Statue of the Minotaur, found in Athens, Greece. Ethnikó Arheologikó Moussío (National Archaeological Museum), Athens.

Photograph by DeAgostini/Getty Images.





Theseus and Ariadne. Illustration from *Stories of Gods and Heroes* by Thomas Bulfinch with color illustrations by Sybil Tawse (1920).  
Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



had provided that he was able to find his way out of the complex corridors of the impossibly dark cave. In “Spindle, Shuttle, and Needle,” a fairy tale collected by the Brothers Grimm many centuries later, a prince similarly follows a “shining golden thread” to the girl he is bound to marry.

The very life journey is also represented as a thread. The ancient Greek *Moirae* (Fates) are female deities who determine the fates of humans. Clotho spins the thread of life; Lachesis determines the length of thread (the lifespan); and Atropos wields the shears that cut the thread at the time of death. By extension, threads are also associated with time. In *The Odyssey*, by Greek writer Homer, Odysseus’s loyal wife, Penelope, is effectively able to stop time by raveling the threads she weaves at the end of each day, thereby forestalling her suitors and giving her husband time to return from his many-year voyage. An analogous tale was told by the North American Lakota people, who describe an old woman sitting in a hidden cave, making a decorative strip for a buffalo robe. She is working in the traditional manner by embroidering with porcupine quills. However, her dog pulls out the quills whenever her back is turned, so the work is never finished. This is good, for if she does complete it, the world will come to an end at the exact moment she puts in the last quill.

The primary association between women and textiles is evident in these stories. In preindustrial times, spinning was a constant in women’s lives. It took numerous spinners to produce enough yarn to keep a weaver working (generally about ten to fifteen, sometimes far more). Almost universally, spinning was done by women; indeed, the phrase “the distaff side of the family” (the mother’s side) equates the female line with the task (a distaff is an upright support that holds the fiber being spun). On one hand, spinning was kind of magical because it made something (a coherent thread) out of almost nothing (mere wisps of fiber); it was symbolically equivalent to creating life. On the other hand, spinning was a never-ending task, a drudgery. Small wonder, then, that the task often showed up in fairy tales associated with endless work, with goodness (a good woman was a good spinner), and with magic. Supernatural helpers sometimes stepped in to complete the work. In “Rumpelstiltskin,” for example, a miller tells the king that his daughter can spin straw into gold—a kind of alchemical, magical feat. It is not



Polychrome terra-cotta relief depicting Ulysses and Penelope. 5th century BCE. Greek civilization.

Photograph by DEA / G. DAGLI ORTI/De Agostini/Getty Images.

true, but magic does enter in when she is locked in a room and a strange little man appears to do the work for her. Although he is more goblinlike than helpful and demands her first child in payment for spinning straw into gold, she is able to trick him by learning his real name. Some scholars believe this tale is actually about 4,000 years old, and has appeared in many guises. “Rumpelstiltskin” is a German tale. In the English version, the goblin’s name is Tom Tit Tot. The symbol of Rumpelstiltskin is still potent in our culture—it appears in everything from an Anne Sexton poem (included in *Transformations*) to novels such as *The Man Who Fell to Earth* by Walter Tevis and John Connolly’s *The Book of Lost Things*. However, the spinning is now less significant than the name-guessing and supernatural help.

Many other fairy tales reference spinning and related women’s textile tasks, often similarly connecting them with trickery and magic. “The Lazy Spinner” tricks her husband so she will never have to spin, and a lazy girl’s mother plays a similar trick in “The Three Spinners.” In “The Six Swans,” a ball of yarn with special powers shows a king where his children are





Embroidered pillow cover depicting the three fates. Silk, metallic thread. Kastellorizo (Megisti) Island, Greece. 1936. Collection of the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico; gift of Magdalene P. Singer. (A.2006.54.12). 28 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 45 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches (72.0 x 121.0 cm).  
 Photograph © Museum of International Folk Art.

hidden. The heroine of the aforementioned “Spindle, Shuttle, and Needle” enchants her textile tools so they will draw a prince to her and do the tedious work (again, “invisible spirits” seem to make her cloth). Another variation on the enchanted spindle theme appears in “Sleeping Beauty.” It is the spindle that pricks the princess’s finger and puts her to sleep for 100 years until Prince Charming rescues her.

None of these fairy tales references decorative needlework; rather, they focus on the basic textile tasks of spinning and weaving, which were the first fiber-related processes to be industrialized. By the Victorian era (mid-nineteenth century), most people were relying on commercially made cloth. Spinning and weaving faded from contemporary literature as they lost their symbolic potency, but sewing and needlework moved to center stage. Victorian heroines always had needlework to do. In the very first chapter of *Little Women*, which is set at the time of the American Civil War (1861–1865), Louisa May Alcott gives a “little sketch of the four [March] sisters, who sat knitting away in the twilight, while the December snow fell quietly without.” This

description epitomizes the era’s romanticized image of the fair sex. Alcott was able to demonstrate her alter-ego Jo’s feistiness by showing her resistance to staying at home with her workbasket: “I’m dying to go and fight with Papa, and I can only stay home and knit, like a poky old woman!” Jo shook the blue army sock till the needles rattled like castanets, and her ball bounded across the room.”

Other Victorian novels put a more positive spin on the conflation of needlework and female identity. Oliver Wendell Holmes captures the sense of calm that needlework brought in *The Guardian Angel*. The hero says reassuringly, “Take your needle, my child, and work at your pattern; it will come out a rose by and by. Life is like that—one stitch at a time taken patiently and the pattern will come out all right.” In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, heroine Hester Prynne is cast out from society because she has committed adultery, and must wear a symbolic *A* on her clothes as a badge of her sin. She embroiders it herself, however, and is so skilled that it is quite stunning; it functions as a sign of beauty as much as a symbol of humiliation. Hester’s fine work is in great demand, so she is able to



*Some textile expressions allude to the magic of creation: when we draw out a thread or make a solid fabric from mere wisps of fiber, we are seemingly making something out of nothing.*

comfortably support herself and her daughter with her work. Fancy sewing also serves as a means of support in Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book*, in which the heroine sells her lovely needlework in secret. Like Hawthorne, the author admires the artistry of the work and the talent of the needleworker.

Even into the Gilded Age (late nineteenth century), needlework functioned in novels as both a mainstay of the domestic scene and women's separate identity. Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* describes the way that New York society women would repair to the drawing room after dinner while the gentlemen smoked downstairs. "After dinner, according to immemorial custom," are the words Wharton uses to introduce the scene in which two women sit at a rosewood worktable facing each other, working by lamplight. They are stitching on "two ends of a tapestry band of field-flowers" that will adorn a drawing-room chair.

By the middle of the twentieth century, needlework skill and practice were no longer taken for granted, but the symbolic connection between women and textile-making was still salient. Ray Bradbury wrote the short story "Embroidery" in 1951. It is late afternoon, and three women are sitting on a porch embroidering, discussing the importance of handwork. Motif by motif their work begins to disappear, however, because the end of the world—the atom bomb—is expected to strike at about 5:00. Bradbury writes, "[She] watched an embroidered flower go. She tried to embroider it back in, but it went, and then the road vanished, and the blades of grass. . . ." Eventually, the whole design disappears as the consuming fire reaches her body. Although Bradbury was probably not aware of it, this story is eerily reminiscent of the Lakota story of the quill embroiderer—as long as the stitches keep growing, the world will continue. We are also brought back to the Greek Fates: women symbolically create life by working with fiber, and when life ends, the threads or stitches end as well.

Late in the century, when quilting gained enormous popularity, quilts and quilting became the common leitmotif in many novels. For example, Toni Morrison

uses patchwork as a symbol in her prize-winning novel, *Beloved*. One of the characters remarks, "[The quilt] gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order." In Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*, about a nineteenth-century woman convicted of murder, the quilt similarly works as a narrative device. Grace calmly stitches as she tells her story, and each chapter is named for a quilt she is working on—for example, Broken Dishes and Snake Fence.

These stories are set in the past, but the twenty-first century is now rife with novels that are firmly situated in the present. They still link women and textiles, but the focus has changed: the underlying message is on community, the idea that women bond over fibers; textile work brings them together and gives them a sense of solidarity and empowerment. "Knitting fiction" and "quilting fiction" are now recognized, profitable genres. The characters may run shops together, as in Debbie Macomber's novels centered around a store dubbed The Good Yarn. In "cozy mystery" novels, women join forces to solve crimes. There is always a sense of place and belonging. The deep-seated associations we hold with thread, cloth, needlework, life, and women are still present, in other words, but in contemporary stories, the women are more in control of their separate sphere. They choose to engage with fiber on their own terms, much as they engage in the life they create through it. ❖

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A page from *Once Upon A Time: A Book of Old-Time Fairy Tales* by Katharine Lee Bates and illustrated by Margaret Evans Price (1921). This page, from the story of “Rumpelstiltskin,” shows the titular sprite as he speaks to the miller’s daughter as she is seated at a spinning wheel.  
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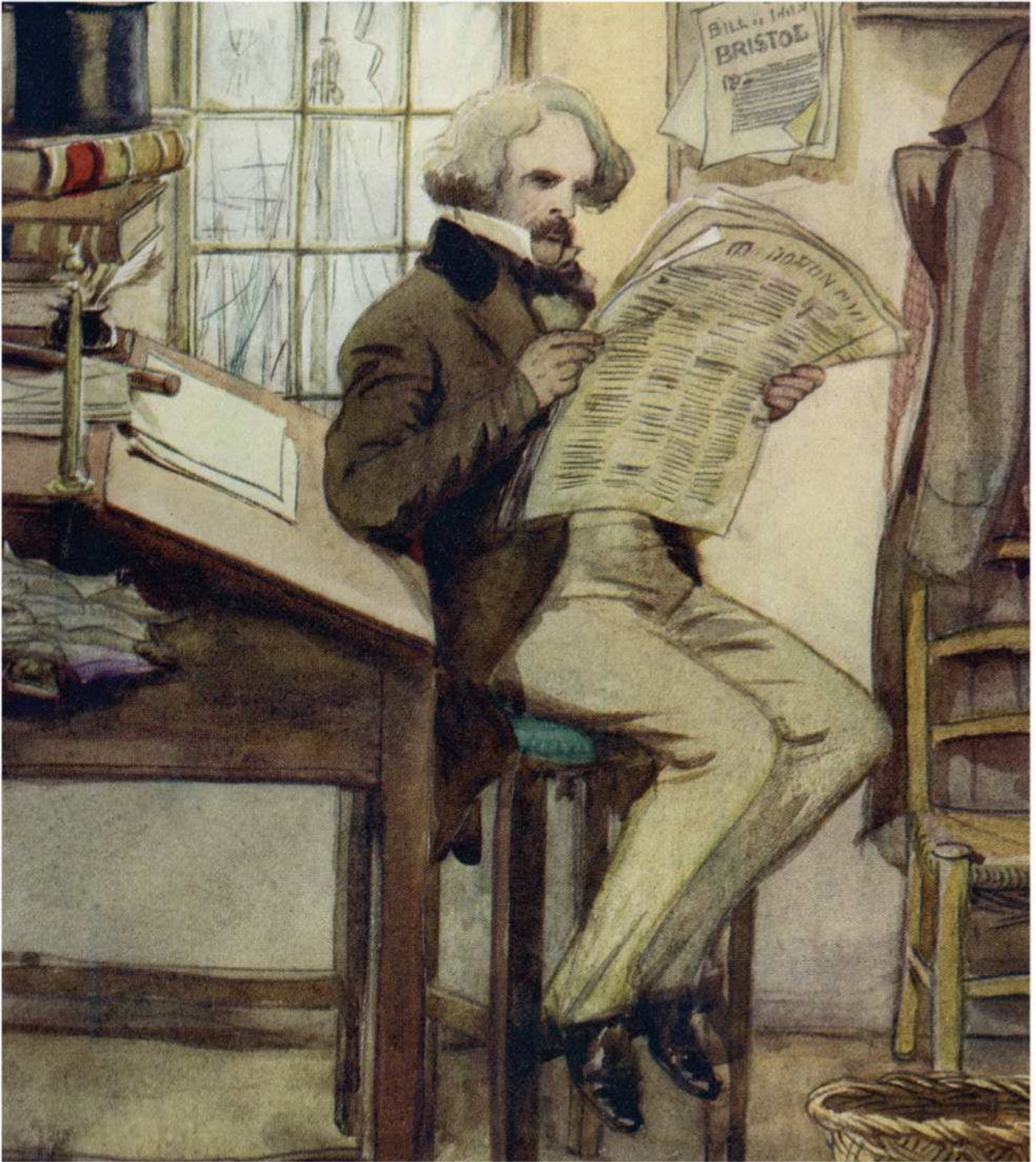
BEVERLY GORDON has followed a lifelong passion for historic textiles and their meanings in our lives. She is professor emeritus in the Design Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; in retirement, she pursues her own art. She has published previously in *PieceWork* and is the author of numerous other articles and books. Her major works include *Textiles: The Whole Story—Uses, Meanings, Significance* (she gives presentations on this topic under the title “The Fiber of Our Lives: Why Textiles Matter”); *Shaker Textile Arts* (Lebanon, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1980; almost forty years in print!); and *Feltmaking: Traditions, Techniques and Contemporary Explorations* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1980).



# Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter—A Romance*

*Portrait of a Seamstress*

DIANE KENNEDY



"Nathaniel Hawthorne in the Customs House." From the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter* as to how Hawthorne (1804–1864) discovered this story. He was chief executive officer of the Custom House in Salem, Massachusetts, during the mid-1800s.  
*Photograph by Culture Club/Getty Images.*



Whether you remember Hester Prynne from a literature class reading of *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) or from the 1995 big-screen version in which Hester is portrayed by Demi Moore, most of us are familiar with her difficult story. The novel’s setting is the seventeenth-century Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony. Mistakenly believing her husband dead, Puritan Hester Prynne commits the sin of adultery, resulting in the birth of a child, Pearl, whose father remains a mystery to the community. After being imprisoned, Hester receives further punishment in the form of a “brand”—a large, capital letter A affixed to the bosom of her dress.

One might think Hester would be so shamed at the idea of being forced to wear this symbol of her impurity that she would fabricate the letter in the simplest and most unobtrusive form. Surprisingly, Hester shows an almost defiant pride in carrying out her penance. She uses her talent as a seamstress to sew the letter from a luxurious bright red fabric, which she embroiders ornately in glimmering gold thread. Hawthorne describes the letter as “artistically done”—splendor in accordance with the taste of the times but luxurious far beyond what society allowed.

“It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself,” Hawthorne writes. This idea is demonstrated by the reaction of the town women when first setting eyes on the scarlet letter: “‘She hath good skill at her needle, that’s certain,’ remarked one of her female critics; ‘but did ever a woman, before this brazen hussy, contrive such a way of showing it! Why gossips, what is it but to laugh in the faces of our godly magistrates, and make a pride out of what they . . . meant for a punishment?’” Another embittered neighbor, who dubs the scarlet letter “curiously stitched,” suggests supplying “a rag of mine own rheumatic flannel to make a fitter one!” There are also those of a superstitious bent who claim the ignominious A was not “mere red cloth,” but instead “red-hot with infernal fire.”

With these unforgiving attitudes, it’s easy to understand the detrimental effect on Hester’s sense of self-worth and the lonely life that results from abiding with her punishment. However, it isn’t only townspeople who lay a heavy burden on Hester. The first thing that catches Pearl’s attention as a newborn is the ornate, shining letter on her mother’s bosom. As she grows older, Pearl makes regular sport out of mocking her mother’s unusual ornamentation. She throws wildflowers at her mother, aiming at the scarlet letter,



Scene from *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) by the American author Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864). The heroine, Hester Prynne, has to wear the scarlet letter A for Adultery embroidered on her bodice. Here, she is being led to the public pillory. Illustration by Hugh Thomson (1860–1920). Halftone.

Photograph by Universal History Archive/Getty Images.



*She uses her talent as a seamstress to sew the letter from a luxurious bright red fabric, which she embroiders ornately in glimmering gold thread.*

and jumps up and down whenever she hits her mark. Obsessed with Hester's A, Pearl even goes so far as to repeat the common superstition of the day, suggesting to her mother that it is the mark of the devil, and "it glows like a red flame when you meet him at midnight . . . in the dark wood." Hester is used to taunting and insults regarding the scarlet letter, and she responds to her child calmly, though evasively, in these moments: "I wear it for the sake of its gold thread." Pearl clearly understands that the symbol is an integral part of her mother and that it is a cause for shame.

When Hester finally overcomes the judgments and moral guilt that have bound her spirit for years and is able to tear the scarlet letter from her breast, flinging it away, Pearl throws a tantrum. She shrieks, stamping her foot and pointing at the bare spot on Hester's dress. There is no other way to calm her child than for Hester to retrieve the letter and replace it in the middle of her chest. "'Dost thou know thy mother now, child?' she asks, sorrowfully, in a subdued voice. 'Wilt thou . . . own thy mother, now that she has her shame upon her,—now that she is sad?'" Pearl gleefully answers in the affirmative, rushing to hug her mother, kissing her brow, both cheeks, and the scarlet letter as well.

So Hester's life, as an outcast and a mother, is full of torment and sorrow. She grows accustomed to insults and gossip wherever she goes—even by fine, upstanding citizens. To her credit, Hester never complains or responds to these personal attacks, save for the deep red blush that spreads over her face and chest, which she is helpless to suppress. Hester does her best to live honestly and seek only basic comforts for herself and her child. It is fortuitous that Hester possesses sewing skills and makes a living for herself almost the only way a woman could in Puritan times. She and Pearl move into a small abandoned thatched cottage on the outskirts of the village, facing the chill waters of the Atlantic. It is in this solitary abode that Hester plies her abundant talent to create necessary items for the common townsfolk as well as more magisterial pieces

for government and religious officials. Children from the village who dare to venture to Hester's little home look through her window to spy and witness the handy creation of baby linen, burial robes, mourning attire of sable cloth and white lawn, or perhaps a pair of gorgeously embroidered, fringed gloves. Though the commoners are plainly dressed, according to sumptuary laws of the day, Hester is kept busy with finer projects for the ruling class. She is said to have a "delicate and imaginative skill of which dames of the court might gladly have availed themselves." Though she keeps her own attire coarse and unadorned, save for the scarlet letter, Hester employs her innate taste for exquisitely beautiful things when she creates clothing for little Pearl. For Pearl, Hester allows herself to procure the finest gauzelike fabrics and dreams up strikingly beautiful decorations to complement her daughter's loveliness.

Whatever Hester makes is impeccably done no matter who is to wear it, and her work gradually becomes the desired thing to have for all but one conspicuous occasion. Hawthorne writes, "Her needlework was seen on the ruff of the Governor; military men wore it on their scarfs, and the minister on his band; it decked the baby's little cap; it was shut up to be mildewed and molder away, in the coffins of the dead. But it is not recorded that, in a single instance, her skill was called in aid to embroider the white veil which was to cover the pure blushes of a bride."

Whether townspeople want Hester's garments because they truly need her services, because they feel sorry for her, or out of morbid curiosity is unclear; however, the fact remains that Hester is as successful in her profession as she could hope to be. There is plenty of paid work available, and when that is finished, Hester toils to make coarse garments for the poor. Sadly, even those she seeks to give comfort to demean her. She feels banished from polite society. Still, when illness or tragedy strikes members of the village, Hester is there to help any way she can. "She came, not as a guest, but as a rightful inmate, into the household that was darkened by trouble. . . . Hester's



nature showed itself warm and rich; a well-spring of human tenderness, unfailing to every real demand, and inexhaustible by the largest. Her breast, with its badge of shame, was but the softer pillow for the head that needed one,” writes Hawthorne of his tragic heroine.

As the years pass, the townspeople begin to see Hester in a somewhat different light. Many began to interpret the bold red *A* as meaning “able.” They feel a general regard for Hester’s compassion and strength. The monogram becomes a symbol of Hester’s many good deeds and lends her an aura of virtuousness. However, in her heart, Hester never feels worthy of this respect. In her own eyes, her “light and gracefulness had fallen away” long ago, leaving a repulsive shadow in their place.

In the Puritan world of the novel, Hester’s reprieve from shame cannot, however, be complete or lasting. Near the end of the story, as a large crowd gathers for a celebration, sailors in port, curious Native Americans, and visiting strangers take note of Hester’s scarlet letter, and the old story is revived and repeated again, instigating new hecklers who gape and mock. Even those familiar with Hester cannot help but join the others, standing in cruel judgment. As Hawthorne writes, “At the final hour, when she was so soon to fling aside the burning letter, it had strangely become the center of more remark and excitement, and was thus made to sear her breast more painfully, than at any time since the day she put it on.”

Hester pursues her plan to leave the country, sailing away with Pearl. However, she finds she cannot stay away from the birthplace of her enduring shame. Hester returns to New England and to her desolate cottage by the sea, once again displaying the scarlet letter on her breast. Though it appears that Hester is loved and cared for from afar by a well-off Pearl, Hester feels the life she has made for herself through her sin is the one she must live out. “Here had been her sin; here, her sorrow; and here was yet to be her penitence,” writes Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hester finds her penitence is now to be served in a different manner than she might have expected, however. The Puritan town has not forgotten her past, but time has softened the collective opinion once again, and Hester is returned to a curiously respected status. Hawthorne writes, “In the lapse of the toilsome, thoughtful and self-devoted years that made up Hester’s life, the scarlet letter ceased to be a stigma which attracted the



Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864), author of *The Scarlet Letter*, regarded this painting, which William Walters (1820–1894) commissioned from Hugues Merle (French painter; 1822–1881), as the finest illustration of his novel. Collection of The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland. (37.172).  
*Photograph courtesy of The Walters Art Museum.*

world’s scorn and bitterness, and became a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too.”

People in the vicinity begin to come to Hester, not just for the exquisite needlework that has sustained her, but looking for a confidante and source of advice regarding their troubles. Most particularly, women confused by matters of love and passion seek her guidance. And though she had once imagined she might be a powerful advocate for a new understanding in relations between men and women, Hester Prynne eventually realizes that her past sin and sorrow would dim any message she might espouse to others. The scarlet letter has become her loss, her legend, and her life. When she dies, Hester is buried under a simple tombstone which reads only, “On a black ground, the letter *A* in red.” ❖

DIANE KENNEDY writes and does needlework in her spare time. She resides in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan.

← *A companion project follows* →



# Nathaniel Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter to Embroider

DIANE KENNEDY

◀ *Inspired by the preceding article* ▶

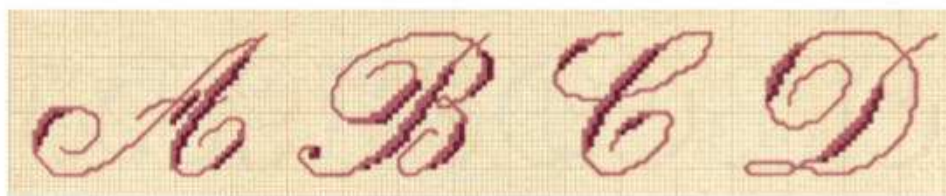


Stitch an elegant monogram to appliqué to garments, accessories, or linens.

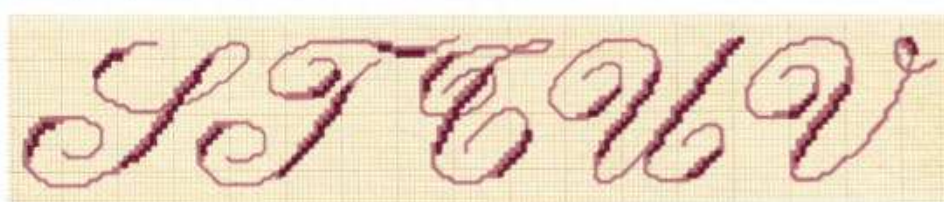
**T**he embroidered scarlet letter Hester Prynne is forced to wear on the bodice of her dress is meant to be a punishment. She chose, however, to make this symbol of her sin into something beautiful. With deft flourishes of glittery gold thread, the infamous scarlet letter became, perhaps, an easier burden to bear. What a lovely adornment a similar letter would make today, appliquéd onto a favorite blouse or sweater or onto a tote bag or household linens.

Follow the directions below to create your own sumptuously stitched letter. As Hester would have, use the instructions as guidelines, and feel free to embellish, change, or substitute stitches, fabrics, and form where you wish. In addition to the monograms provided here, various font types with or without serifs are available in alphabet or calligraphy books or on the internet. Make your monogram a true expression of your inner spirit, as our heroine did.





Patterns may be photocopied for personal use.



The alphabet from *Alphabet de la Brodeuse: Lettres, Chiffres, Monogrammes et Ornaments*.

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### Materials

- ◆ Kreinik Fine Braid (#8) Hi-Lustre, metallic thread, 1 spool of #002HL Gold
- ◆ Fabric of choice, 1 piece 8 x 12 inches (20.3 x 30.5 cm), Red
- ◆ John James Needles, embroidery size 7 and sharps size 10
- ◆ Sewing thread, Red, 1 spool
- ◆ Pellon Ultra Weave Stabilizer, fusible, style #UW2024, 1 piece 8 x 12 inches (20.3 x 30.5 cm)
- ◆ Transfer Pen, water soluble
- ◆ Embroidery hoop, 8 inches (20.3 cm) in diameter

**Finished size:** About 4 x 6 inches (10 x 15 cm)

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### Instructions

#### The Letter

Use a photocopier to enlarge or reduce your letter of choice to desired size. Using a pencil, trace the letter's outline on a piece of white paper and cut along the pencil lines. Press the stabilizer to the back of the fabric, following the manufacturer's directions. Center and pin the pattern on the right side of the fabric and

trace the outline of the letter with the transfer pen. Add any desired embellishments to the inside or around the letter.

Place the fabric in the hoop with the letter centered. Using one strand of the braid, stitch the outlines of the letter in a back, stem, or outline stitch. Stitch any internal letter embellishments, using a satin stitch worked in circles and triangles or any stitch of your choice, such as French knots, seed, split, chain, and cross (arranged in rows, isolated, or clustered).

#### Finishing

When stitching is complete, remove the fabric from the hoop and rinse in cool water to remove any remaining transfer pen marks. Blot dry; do not wring out because it creates sharp wrinkles that are almost impossible to iron out. Place the fabric flat to dry completely.

Using a cool iron and thin towel, iron the design fabric on the wrong side. Use sewing thread and the sharps needle to appliqué the letter to garments, accessories, or linens.



# The Secret Life of Mrs. Brown

*Drawn from the Short Story “Art Work,” in The Matisse Stories by A. S. Byatt*

MARY POLITYKA BUSH



Work by Henri Matisse is pictured at the exhibition *Matisse, His Art And His Textiles: The Fabric of Dreams*, at the Royal Academy of Arts on March 1, 2005, in London, England. The first exhibition exploring the inspiration Matisse found in his collection of textiles from all over the world presented a selection of his fabrics and costumes alongside drawings, prints, and around thirty related paintings.

*Photograph by Gareth Cattermole/Getty Images.*

Mrs. Brown is not the drab personality her name might suggest. Debbie Dennison realizes that the instant she beholds the first of Mrs. Brown’s many startling ensembles: a flowery bandeau and “pantaloons made of some kind of thick cream-coloured upholstery linen, wonderfully traversed by crimson open-mouthed Indian flowers and birds of paradise and tendrils of unearthly creepers, and a royal-blue jumper embroidered all over with woolen daisies, white marguerites, orange black-eyed Susans.” These two women shape the narrative of “Art Work,” the centerpiece of the three stories that comprise *The Matisse Stories*; author A. S. Byatt uses the art of Henri Matisse (1869–1954) as inspiration for each story.

As the design editor of *A Woman’s Place* magazine, a job that means sacrificing her own dreams of illustrating children’s books, Debbie is her family’s sole breadwinner. She has two children, ten-year-old Jamie and fourteen-year-old Natasha. Moreover, she has single-handedly kept her home and family intact—shopping, cooking, laundering, cleaning, and such—all the while enabling her artist husband, Robin, to pursue his passion for painting in a studio that encompasses all three rooms of their home’s third floor. Meanwhile, she has struggled to dispatch her publishing duties from a lower-floor room so tiny and cramped that she must move the desk to work at the drawing board. Robin is totally oblivious to her tight quarters and to all she does. She can no longer manage alone.

Into her hectic world, in answer to Debbie’s help-wanted ad, steps Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown is exactly what’s needed: calm, reassuring, organized, hardworking, and reliable. She is hired on the spot. So begins the mutually respectful relationship between Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Dennison, the only names by which the two address one another until pivotal events unfold. Mrs. Brown’s life outside the Dennison household is a mystery over the years she works for the Dennisons. Debbie doesn’t even know her first name. Although Mrs. Brown is not forthcoming, over the years clues leak out. Eventually, Debbie learns that Mrs. Brown has two sons. There is a man in her life by the name of Hooker, who may be her husband, boyfriend, or simply a lodger; Debbie never really knows



for sure. She does know, however, that Hooker is the man who has bruised and battered Mrs. Brown, including inflicting injuries that sent her to the hospital. Hooker also gave her a knitting machine he'd gotten off the back of a lorry.

Mrs. Brown knits—prolifically, apparently non-stop—and she is good at it, though her color and design choices sometimes defy even avant-garde parameters. Why? Because she has developed her own theory of color. “They always told us, didn’t they, the teachers and grans,” she says, “orange and pink, they make you blink, blue and green should not be seen, mauve and red cannot be wed, but I say, they’re all there, the colours, God made ‘em all, and mixes ‘em all in His creatures, what exists goes together somehow or other. . . .”

In addition to knitting, Mrs. Brown is masterful at crochet, sewing, patchwork, weaving rags into rugs, felting, soft sculpture, silk embroidery, and canvaswork. However, as Byatt notes, buying materials for the latter two is impossible given Mrs. Brown’s meager budget. She is beyond thrifty, a paragon of recycling who finds supplies and inspiration in jumble-sale remnants, rejects, and ends of lines. She is not shy about asking Debbie for family cast-offs: Jamie’s shrunken socks or outgrown sweaters, plum-and-mustard neckties that Robin has refused to wear, and the mulberry taffeta cocktail dress—a misguided purchase—that Debbie has consigned to the dustbin. Mrs. Brown has knitted rainbow-colored sweaters “from the ping-pong-ball-sized unwanted residues of other people’s knitting.” She knitted one sweater for Jamie with red engines and blue cows that he refuses to part with even after he wears it out.

Mrs. Brown makes all her own clothes from “whatever comes to hand, old plush curtains, Arab blankets, parachute silk . . . discarded trousers,” hence the magenta and vermilion overalls she wears over salmon-pink crepe pantaloons. She makes a day-glow yellow, salmon pink, and swimming-pool-blue fringed bolero for Natasha, who actually likes it, if only because it draws attention in a disco. Mrs. Brown frequently adds flamboyant touches, including patches, fringe, braid, bizarre buttons, and, in the case of a certain striking lime-green shift, black lace inserts.

Mrs. Brown’s clashing colors and free-wheeling pattern mixes cause Robin no end of hysterical frustration. “Hideous!” he shrieks, bristling and chafing

at Mrs. Brown’s utter disregard for the rules of good design, denouncing her choices as an affront to his art school training in which he takes pride. So it is that he, a slave to the color wheel, lectures her on complementary colors and juxtaposition, information she solemnly pronounces “interesting.”

Robin is a decent artist, good enough to merit attention from Shona McRury, owner of the Callisto Gallery. She visits the Dennison home to appraise Robin’s work for possible display in her gallery. After she leaves, Debbie watches through the window as Shona walks away down the block. Then something curious happens. She is joined by Mrs. Brown in her bird-of-paradise upholstery trousers, shirt of rainbow patches feather-stitched in red, and plaited head wrap of orange and lime. The two talk; they walk together; they turn the corner.

Weeks later, Debbie and a staff photographer from *A Woman’s Place* are sent to the Callisto Gallery to cover a one-woman show that has recently opened to critical acclaim. The entire gallery has been “transformed into a kind of soft, even squashy, brilliantly coloured Aladdin’s Cave.” Taken in as a whole, the jaw-dropping calliope of raucous color and madcap inventiveness is utterly overwhelming yet minutely engrossing. Debbie recognizes the mulberry taffeta of a dragon’s scales as having been cut from her discarded cocktail dress. Then she notes the artist’s first name, Sheba—the name that in ten years she never asked for.

Readers will want to savor “Art Work” slowly; they’re likely to read it more than once. Like the artwork of Mrs. Brown, inspired by the work of Henri Matisse, the vivid prose of Byatt’s “Art Work” never fails to excite or enthrall. ❖

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#### FURTHER RESOURCE

Byatt, A. S. *The Matisse Stories*. 1991. Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

MARY POLITYKA BUSH reads, writes, and designs from the apartment she shares with her husband, Tom, in Northern California. She knits, sews, felts, and enjoys patchwork, canvaswork, and several types of embroidery. She recycles. The electricity generated by unexpected combinations of color and pattern fascinates her, although she admits she is far more cautious than A. S. Byatt’s character Mrs. Brown in that area.

↪ *A companion project follows* ↩



# A Bookmark à la Matisse to Embroider

MARY POLITYKA BUSH

◀ *Inspired by the preceding article* ▶



Mary Polityka Bush used *The Dessert: Harmony in Red (The Red Room)* by Henri Matisse as inspiration for her eye-catching bookmark.

Colors sing and botanicals dance in *The Dessert: Harmony in Red (The Red Room)* painted in 1908 by Henri Matisse (1869–1954). Perhaps the epitome of Fauvist art, Matisse’s oil-on-canvas work is considered by some to be his masterpiece. It hangs today in The Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia, although a trip to the museum is not required to experience its visual power. An image of the painting is on the museum’s website: [www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/01.+Paintings/28389/?lng=en?](http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/01.+Paintings/28389/?lng=en?)

I designed this embroidered bookmark to echo the energy and electric effect of the bold palette and lively composition in Matisse’s painting—and the genius of the artist. Simple stitches—stem, chain, and French knot—in crewel wool on linen make up the pas de deux of stylized leaves. If the Matisse-inspired palette of colors shown here seems a trifle tame, opt for the raucous, free-wheeling brights—swimming-

pool blue, salmon pink, lime, day-glow yellow—that A. S. Byatt’s memorable character Mrs. Brown would choose for a livelier effect. Anything goes.

## MATERIALS

- ◆ Brown Sheep Company Waverly Wool, 100% wool yarn, 8 yard (7.3 m)/hank, 1 hank each of #1050 Black, #3004 Yellow, and #7052 Blue
- ◆ Zweigart Belfast, 100% linen fabric, 32-count, 1 piece 12 x 12 inches (30.5 x 30.5 cm) of #3609/902 Red
- ◆ John James Needles, size 22 chenille, size 22 tapestry, and size 10 sharps
- ◆ Sewing thread, Red
- ◆ Embroidery hoop, 8 inches (20.3 cm) in diameter or stretcher bars, 10 x 10 inches (25.4 x 25.4 cm)
- ◆ Marking pen, washout

**Finished size:** Design, 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches (6.0 x 16.8 cm); bookmark, about 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 7 inches (6 x 18 cm)





## INSTRUCTIONS

### Bookmark

Hand-overcast or machine zigzag the edges of the linen to prevent raveling. Place the pattern on a light box or tape it to a sunny window; tape the linen over the pattern, centering the design and aligning it with the straight grain of the fabric. Trace the pattern onto the linen with the marking pen. Mount the linen in the hoop or on the stretcher bars.

Cut the yarn into 15-inch (38.1-cm) lengths; separate each length into its three component strands; embroider with one strand throughout. Use the tapestry needle for whipstitching the stem-stitch leaf veins; use the chenille needle for all other embroidery. Begin and end threads with three small running stitches placed in an area that will later be covered with embroidery or run the threaded needle through the backs of existing stitches. Do not use knots to keep the wrong side of the embroidery as flat as possible; do not carry threads across unworked areas of the linen.

Embroider the leaves first, completing them one at a time. First, work the Black center vein and stem in whipped stem stitch; add two to three short straight stitches at the lower tip of the stem to form a small wedge, referring to the photograph for placement. Use Blue to outline the leaf with chain stitches. Fill the leaf with Blue French knots, spacing them close together but not crowding them. Use Black to work stem stitches closely around the outer edge of the leaf.

Embroider the chain-stitch spirals and circles with Yellow; for the small circles, make sure to loop the last link of the chain stitch around the base of the first one to make a continuous circle.

### Finishing

Remove all traces of the washout marker by soaking the embroidery in three changes of cold water. Place the embroidery between thick terry towels to absorb excess moisture, stretching the embroidery gently by hand. Allow it to dry flat. Press around the motifs, if necessary.

Trim away excess fabric on all sides so the piece measures 7 inches (17.8 cm) wide x 8 inches (20.3 cm) long with design centered. Fold ½-inch (1.3-cm) hems top and bottom toward the wrong side of the embroidery; finger press. On each side, fold and finger press 1¾ inches (4.4 cm) toward the wrong side once and then again, making sure the folded edges abut at the center back but do not overlap. Use the sharps needle and sewing thread to sew a ladder-stitch seam up the back and across the top and bottom.

To make the tassel, cut six 12-inch (30.5-cm) lengths of Yellow wool; separate one length into its three component strands and set aside. Fold the other five lengths in half and tie them tightly at the fold with one of the set-aside strands. Separate the strands that have been tied together into their individual component strands; fold and arrange them smoothly over the knot to hide it. Use one of the remaining set-aside strands to wrap the neck of the tassel, knot, and hide the ends of the wrapping strand by threading them into the tapestry needle one at a time and “sewing” through the neck of the tassel once or twice; trim ends. Trim the length of the tassel to 4½ inches (11.4 cm). Tack tassel to the center point at one end of the bookmark.

Steam the bookmark, gently pulling it into shape. Comb the strands of the tassels with your fingers; trim ends again if necessary.



Pattern may be photocopied for personal use.  
Enlarge pattern by 170 percent.



# On Lace's Trail

*Bruges, History, Secrets—and Nancy Drew*

SUZANNE SMITH ARNEY

Although its origins cannot be traced exactly, lace emerged in sixteenth-century Europe and quickly became a status symbol denoting wealth and taste. From its Renaissance debut to its use in today's haute couture, lace has enthralled admirers: France's kings of luxury, Louis XIV, XV, and XVI; paramours such as Madame de Pompadour; artists, including Rembrandt van Rijn; Queens Elizabeth I and Victoria; royal designers such as Alexander McQueen; and celebrities, including Gloria Swanson, Marilyn Monroe, and . . . Nancy Drew.



The Kantcentrum in Bruges, Belgium, is on the right side of this street. The sign on the left has the words for lace in Flemish (top) and French (bottom).  
*Photograph courtesy of the Kantcentrum.*



Yes, that all-American amateur sleuth gets enmeshed in mystery, danger, and lace. In *The Secret in the Old Lace*, Nancy enters a short-story contest that solicits an imagined solution to a mystery that becomes very real. The fictional riddle presented in the writing competition centers on François Lefèvre, a handsome young nineteenth-century Belgian aristocrat who disappeared from his Brussels apartment, taking only a few cherished belongings, including a pair of ruffled lace cuffs (which may contain a clue) but not his fortune. It is up to contestants to imagine the outcome.

Nancy shares her account with her stalwart cousins, George and Bess, and Bess presents another mystery: A family friend has recently moved to Bruges, Belgium, and found a jeweled cross in the house. Soon, the three teens are guests of the friend, following the city's narrow cobblestone streets in search of secrets. In typical Nancy Drew fashion, the mystery is replete with more twists and turns than passementerie, amazing serendipity, and ultimate resolution. (My article took on a bit of its own surprising serendipity when designer Kathi Rotella discovered a forgotten lace cuff in her collection! See the companion project that follows.)

A visit to Bruges in search of lace is always an adventure. It is a place where time swirls back and forth, like the mist that rolls in from the North Sea or the design on a band of lace. Swans and passenger barges still ply the many canals, the red-tiled roofs peak in steep step gables, and lace is made, patiently, by hand. (These are some of the reasons Bruges has been named a Unesco World Heritage City.) Although you may not encounter desperate thieves, hidden rooms, or antique jewels, you can visit many of the sites where Nancy found clues.

An obvious destination is Kantcentrum (*kant* is “lace” in Flemish, a Dutch dialect that is spoken in northern Belgium; French is the language of the southern provinces). The center, renovated in 2014, is housed in a former nunnery, apropos because convent schools were required by Emperor Charles V (1500–1558) to teach lacemaking, sometimes called “nun’s work.”

“Middle-class girls learned all kind of hand-work—embroidery, knitting, and also lace,” Rudy De Nolf, curator of the Kantcentrum, wrote to me in an email. “We are the keepers of the heritage of



Bobbin lace in progress at the Kantcentrum in Bruges, Belgium. Photograph courtesy of the Kantcentrum.



Fragment of a Hunger Cloth. Bobbin-lace passement, filet lace, network, and whitework. Antwerp, Belgium. 1615. Collection of the Kantcentrum, Bruges, Belgium. Photograph courtesy of the Kantcentrum.



*A visit to Bruges in search of lace is always an adventure. It is a place where time swirls back and forth, like the mist that rolls in from the North Sea or the design on a band of lace.*

the sisters who were active in lace teaching and are the only institution in Belgium that still organises courses for lace teachers.”

In fact, Kantcentrum offers workshops for all ages and skill levels, as well as interactive computer programs in the museum and live demonstrations on most afternoons. The center has its own publishing house; in addition to books, patterns, and other materials, it produces *Kant*, a beautifully illustrated quarterly journal in English, Dutch, French, and German.

Among the center’s treasures is the exquisite Hunger Cloth, which honors Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). A medieval tradition, the sacramental panel symbolized a church’s fasting during Lent. This cloth was made in 1615 in Antwerp, Belgium, the year work began on a church there dedicated to the saint.

“Only this small fragment has survived,” wrote De Nolf. “The edging is bobbin-lace passement. The other crafts used in this piece are older but related techniques: filet lace, network and white work.”



Detail of a piece of Brussels duchesse lace. Flowers, needle lace on tulle; remainder, bobbin lace. Probably Brussels, Belgium. Collection of the Kantcentrum, Bruges, Belgium. Photograph courtesy of the Kantcentrum.



Handtinted photograph of women and a child making lace on a street in Bruges, Belgium. Someone wrote “1904” in the lower right corner. Collection of the Kantcentrum, Bruges, Belgium. Photograph courtesy of the Kantcentrum.





Handtinted photograph of the lace school organized by the Apostoline Sisters in the Court Bladelin in the Naaldenstraat in Bruges, Belgium. Circa 1900. Collection of the Kantcentrum, Bruges, Belgium. Photograph courtesy of the Kantcentrum.

Nancy and her cousins also visit the Gruuthuse museum, a fabulous former home. Currently undergoing renovation, the museum is scheduled to reopen in early 2019. One gallery will be dedicated to lace and textiles, putting the Gruuthusemuseum's focus on fashion on display.

The last stop of the day for Nancy and her cousins is an art museum (perhaps the Groeningemuseum), where they find a portrait of a young man wearing a red velvet jacket with a lace jabot and cuffs. Using a magnifying glass carried for just such situations, Nancy is able to discern a message stitched into the design of one cuff—the words *Je vous aime* (I love you).

Lace patterns have provided a setting for inscriptions, monograms, dates, and images throughout their history. The Hunger Cloth, for example, displays scenes from the life of Saint Ignatius. More recently, Belgian war lace, an effort organized by the Commission for Relief of Belgium, supported Belgian lacemakers and commemorated the Allies' role in World War I (a collection is housed at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History).

Nancy Drew solves the mysteries with her usual blend of good luck, clever common sense, and derring-do. She finds the jeweled cross and missing fortune, and she just happens to meet the great-grandson of the mysterious François Lefèvre—a cowboy from Dallas who's visiting Bruges! Oh, and she also wins

the writing contest. As for me, I consider Bruges itself a cache of jewels, with each visit revealing some new and unexpected treasure. ❖

#### FURTHER RESOURCES

- Augustine, Kathy. "The Secret in the Stitches: Nancy Drew and Knitting." *PieceWork*, September/October 2016.  
Groeningemuseum; [www.visit-bruges.be/see/museums/groeninge-museum](http://www.visit-bruges.be/see/museums/groeninge-museum).
- Gruuthusemuseum; [www.visitbruges.be/en/gruuthusemuseum](http://www.visitbruges.be/en/gruuthusemuseum).  
Kantcentrum; [www.kantcentrum.eu/en](http://www.kantcentrum.eu/en).
- Keene, Carolyn. *The Secret in the Old Lace*. 1980. Reprint, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 2005.
- McMillan, Evelyn. "Gratitude in Lace: World War I, Famine Relief, and Belgian Lacemakers." *PieceWork*, May/June 2017.  
National Museum of American History; [www.americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object-groups/world-war-one-laces](http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/collections/object-groups/world-war-one-laces).

SUZANNE SMITH ARNEY is a writer and educator in Omaha, Nebraska. As a child, she often did homework at the dining-room table, which was covered with a handmade Belgian lace cloth. That, and chocolate sandwiches for lunch, are just two of the perks of having a Belgian mother. In the summer after lunch, there was always time to read, and she followed Nancy Drew's adventures with eager anticipation of those she would have herself one day. She hasn't brought down a thief with a stunning tackle—yet—but finds that exploring art and artists has brought her a lifetime of insight, wonder, joy, and the best kind of adventures. Whether you are a collector, admirer, teacher, or student of lace, or an amateur sleuth, she recommends you try Lace Cookies, a traditional Bruges recipe; Ruth Van Waerebeek includes a recipe in her cookbook with the oh-so-true title, *Everybody Eats Well in Belgium: 250 Recipes from a Rich Culinary Tradition* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1996).

← *A companion project follows* →



# Belgian Needle-Lace Hearts to Make

KATHI ROTELLA

*◀ Inspired by the preceding article ▶*



Kathi Rotella's sweet Belgian needle-lace double-heart motif represents the bond of love between two people.



Anyone traveling to Belgium will be awestruck by the lace they find there, as well as by the country's cultural history. Belgium, a small country nestled in northwestern Europe, has traditionally displayed great prowess in the art of lacemaking. Over the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the lacemakers of Bruges, Brussels, Mechelin, Antwerp, and Zele became superbly skilled and proficient in needle-lace techniques (sometimes referred to as "point lace"), bobbin lace, and mixed laces using both needle and bobbins. Belgium was known to have the greatest lacemaking centers in all of Northern Europe.

Flanders, a region now consisting of parts of Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, became the center for producing exquisite needle lace with an incomparable aesthetic. The creation of needle lace seems a rather simple and undemanding challenge because the lacemaker uses only a needle and thread and works over an outlined design on parchment. But the true secret to the development of such lovely historical needle lace lies not only in the skill and dexterity of the lacemakers but also in the finely spun linen fiber that allowed them to create such beautiful pieces.

Historically, the Flanders region provided all the natural resources needed to grow the annual tall willow flax plant with tiny blue flowers with an inner core containing the long fibers that can be extracted and then spun to produce a very fine but strong linen thread. Cultivation was arduous in the wet and cool environment, but not too difficult for the Belgian people, who took deep pride in their prestige fiber. The fine linen threads from Belgium were known to be of the highest quality and were often more valued than silver or gold. With this exceptional linen fiber at the lacemakers' disposal, needle lace became an outstanding and prized achievement.

Hidden in my personal collection is a *point de gaze* (literally translated from the French as "gauze point") nineteenth-century needle-lace cuff from Brussels that I purchased long ago. This type of lace is light, airy, and gauzelike because of the appearance of the background mesh. Its stitches consist of a variety of detached-buttonhole stitches, which create both dense and open areas within the outlined motifs. The repeated upright flower motifs joined by gentle swags of outlined pearls are beautifully balanced. What mystery does this lace cuff hold? What might these motifs represent? Who was this made for? I have so many questions. Unlike Nancy Drew, I will never solve the mystery of my lace cuff, but I nonetheless will enjoy its magnificence, and it served as partial inspiration for this project.

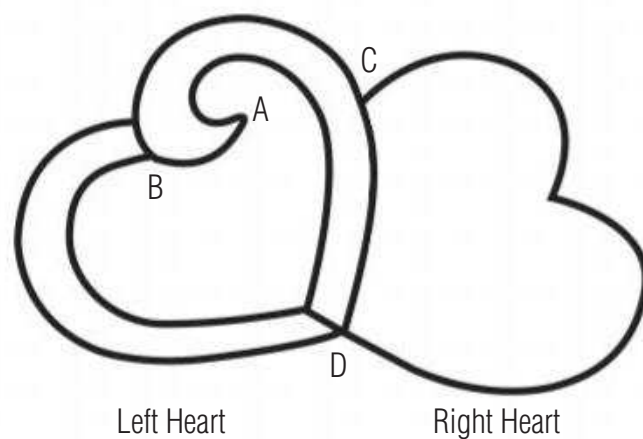
The other source of my inspiration came from the Nancy Drew book *The Secret of the Old Lace*, which reveals a romance in Bruges, Belgium. The pattern is of two joined hearts that represent the bond of love between two people. No mystery message in my design, just a message of love. I stitched it in the traditional needle-lace technique, using basic buttonhole, corded single Brussels, and treble Brussels stitches (the latter two are variations of the detached-buttonhole stitch).

#### M A T E R I A L S

- ◆ DMC Cordonnet, 100% cotton thread, size 80, 394 yard (360.3 m)/20 gram (0.7 oz) ball, 1 ball of #0002 Ecreu
  - ◆ DMC Cordonnet, 100% cotton thread, size 20, 175 yard (160.0 m)/20 gram (0.7 oz) ball, 1 ball of #0002 Ecreu
  - ◆ John James Needles, size 26 tapestry, beading, and size 10 sharps
  - ◆ Darice Beading Wire, 28 gauge, 17 yard (15.5 m)/spool, 1 spool of Gold
  - ◆ Madeira Metallic Thread, rayon/polyester blend, 40 weight, 200 meter (218.7 yd)/spool, 1 spool of Gold
  - ◆ Seed beads, Gold, 20
  - ◆ Frisket Film, low-tack, self-adhering, Clear, 1 sheet, 9 x 12 inches (22.9 x 30.5 cm)
  - ◆ Cotton fabric, Ecreu, 2 pieces 3 x 3½ inches (7.6 x 8.9 cm)
  - ◆ Sewing thread, contrasting color for couching
- Finished size:** 1½ x 2½ inches (3.8 x 6.4 cm)







Pattern may be photocopied for personal use.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### Hearts

Trace the pattern onto a piece of white paper and cut out along the outside lines. Center the pattern on top of the two pieces of fabric. Cut the Frisket Film the same size as the fabric and place it on top of the pattern. To secure the film/fabric sandwich together, machine zigzag or handstitch around the edges, going through all layers. *Note:* Only the couching threads pierce the film/fabric sandwich; the rest of the stitching is done only on top of the film. After the laid threads are couched down, weave the remaining working threads within these threads to start and end each stitching procedure.

#### Outline Frame

To create the outside design frame, use a double thread laid around all outlines of the design: Cut a 30-inch (76.2-cm) length of size 20 thread and fold in half. Lay the point of the fold at Point A of the Left Heart. Hold the loop in place and secure with a small couching stitch through all layers of the sandwich using the sharps needle and sewing thread. *Note:* Using a slightly contrasting thread color is visually helpful, and these colored stitches will be removed later.

Space the couching stitches about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch (3 mm) apart. Continue laying and couching the doubled threads around the entire *inner line* of the Left Heart to Point B. Take only one of the threads, thread it into the tapestry needle, and travel it back to Point A. Secure it in the loop at A and bring it back to B. Several additional couching stitches may be needed to hold these threads in place. Remove the needle from the thread.

Continue couching the doubled thread along the *outer side* of the Left Heart to Point C and then travel it along the Right Heart stopping at Point D, continuing to couch every  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch (3 mm). At Point D, take one of the threads, thread it into the tapestry needle

and travel it up to Point C, going under and over the previously couched threads at that point and back to D. Continue outlining with the doubled threads on the Left Heart until they meet the previous couched threads at the Left Heart's notch. Place the threads in the tapestry needle and weave them under and between the already laid threads to secure them under several previous couching threads.

#### Left Heart

The filling stitch on the right side of the Left Heart is the corded-single Brussels stitch (detached buttonhole with straight return) stitched with the size 80 thread and the tapestry needle. Work from Point A around to Point D, stitching with even tension. When finished, this area will appear dense and solid. To start, stitch around the outlining threads at Point A two times and proceed left to right around the heart, completely filling in this area of the Left Heart.

To stitch the beaded area on the left side of the Left Heart, thread the beading needle with the metallic thread and secure under several couching threads of the laid threads at Point D. Pick up one bead on the needle, secure the thread to the other side by taking the needle under and over the outlining threads, and work one buttonhole stitch. Take the needle back through the bead and to the beginning side. Secure the thread to this side with another buttonhole stitch. Move to the right a bit, allowing the beads to lie next to each other but not crowded against each other. Continue repeating this procedure until this area is completely filled, using about eighteen beads. End the thread within the laid threads.

#### Right Heart

The filling stitch on the Right Heart is the treble Brussels stitch (treble buttonhole) worked with size 80 thread and the tapestry needle. Stitch around the laid threads at the bottom of the Right Heart at Point D to secure the thread. Sew a series of spaced single





*Point de gaze* nineteenth-century needle-lace cuff from Brussels, purchased by Kathi Rotella. This glorious example of Belgian needle lace served as her inspiration for this project.





Detail of Kathi Rotella's *point de gaze* nineteenth-century needle-lace cuff from Brussels.

buttonhole stitches across to Point C and then under and over the laid stitches to anchor this thread to the opposite side. Travel back to Point D, making three buttonhole stitches in each loop formed by the previous buttonhole stitches. Secure the working thread to the laid threads. Travel back to the opposite side, making three buttonhole stitches in each loop. *Note:* This filling stitch creates a lovely texture but requires some work to keep even tension and to make a continuous row of evenly spaced stitches. Be aware that the rows tend to “ride up” a bit.

Place the beading wire around the outer outlines of the hearts, giving the hearts a sturdier frame. Using the size 80 thread and the tapestry needle, work buttonhole stitches very closely together around the entire perimeter, incorporating the wire and the laid threads and covering the couching stitches (they will be removed later).

To stitch the decorative buttonhole swags at the notch of the Right Heart, secure a single size 80 thread at the midpoint of the notch, then travel (swag) the thread to a spot about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch (6 mm) to the right and secure it, being careful to retain the swag-loop configuration; travel back to the initial point and secure the thread; travel back again to the outer point. Work buttonhole stitches closely and tightly around all three threads back to the initial point and secure the thread.

Repeat this procedure on the other side of the notch. Sew one bead at the center of the two swags.

### Finishing

To release the finished design, cut off the zigzag stitches along all four sides of the film/fabric sandwich using craft scissors. Cut the couching stitches on the back using fine-pointed scissors. Gently separate the fabrics and carefully snip any remaining couching stitches. Use tweezers to remove the couching stitches. Carefully remove the design from the remaining fabric and film. If desired, tie a two-loop ribbon bow  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches (3.8 cm) wide and tack to bottom of hearts; add a pin back to the reverse to make the design into a brooch.

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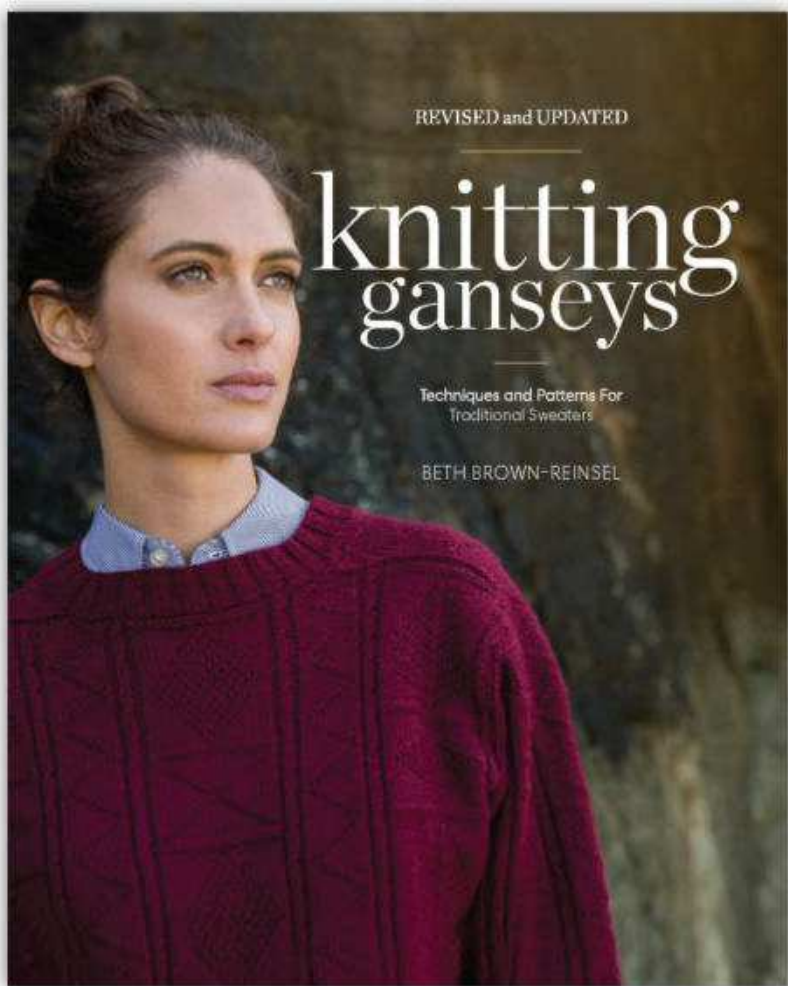
### FURTHER RESOURCE

“Beginning Needle Lace” by Ronna Bruce; [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2naOqJli5HE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2naOqJli5HE).

KATHI ROTELLA is a lacemaker and an embroiderer who lives in Nebraska. She is an active member of the International Organization of Lace, Inc. (IOLI) and the Embroiderers’ Guild of America (EGA). She holds an MA in Clothing, Textiles, and Design from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and is the founder of Living Lace of Omaha. You can email her at [kathirotella@gmail.com](mailto:kathirotella@gmail.com); she is happy to hear from people who share her passions.



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# A Little Women Lace Fichu to Knit

EILEEN LEE

One of my favorite books as a young girl was *Little Women* by American author Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888). Originally published in two parts in 1868 and 1869, it is a story of four teenage girls coming of age during the time of the American Civil War (1861–1865) and living in a state of genteel poverty in Concord, Massachusetts.

The March sisters were often characterized by their clothing and accessories. Looking respectable but not showy was the sign of a good woman. It meant that one was reserved and proper but not extravagant and wasteful. Several illustrations in the book depict the mother and girls wearing fichus, a fashionable but modest accessory of the time.

The fichu, a large kerchief, was typically made of linen, muslin, cotton, or silk fabric. Women wore fichus to fill in the fashionably low-cut neckline of a bodice. Fichus probably originated in France in the eighteenth century; they remained popular there and in the United Kingdom and the United States through the nineteenth century. Women of the upper class usually wore white fichus; those of the lower class wore



Photographic portrait of Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888).  
Photograph by Universal History Archive/UIG via Getty Images.

fichus in darker colors that would show less dirt. They came in a variety of shapes: long rectangles, squares folded in half diagonally, triangles, and diamond shapes. Women wore a fichu over the shoulders and tied at the front, fastened with a pin (often called a “buckle”), or tucked into the waistband; an alternate method involved crossing two lengths in front, passing them under the arms, and tying them at the small of the back.

Knit your own fashion accessory with the instructions for a fichu that follow. It will be perfect for chilly weather. The fichu is worked in two separate sections, one longer than the other, which are knit together across their top edges. The stitches are decreased for working the upper band, which has stitches cast on at each side for the ties.

## MATERIALS

- ◆ Cascade Yarns Forest Hills, 51% silk/49% merino wool yarn, laceweight, 785 yard (717.8 m)/100 gram (3.5 oz) ball, 1 ball of #17 Ivory
- ◆ Needles, size 3 (3.25 mm) or size needed to obtain gauge, size 5 (3.75 mm) for cast-on and bind-off, and size 2 (2.75 mm) for top band and ties
- ◆ Smooth waste yarn

**Finished size:** 21 inches (53.3 cm) wide at upper edge and 10 inches (25.4 cm) high, after blocking, not including ties

**Gauge:** 28 sts and 37 rows = 4 inches (10.2 cm) in lace patt using middle-size needles

## SPECIAL PATTERN

### Lace Pattern (multiple of 14 stitches + 1)

Row 1 (WS): P.

Row 2 (RS): K1, \*yo, k3, skp, yo, sk2p, yo, k2tog, k3, yo, k1; rep from \* to end.

## INSTRUCTIONS

*Notes:* See above and visit [www.interweave.com/interweave-knitting-glossary](http://www.interweave.com/interweave-knitting-glossary) for Abbreviations and Techniques.

### Fichu

#### First Section

With largest needles, CO 281 sts. Change to middle-size needles. Work Rows 1 and 2 of lace patt a total of 25 times, then work Row 1 once more, ending with a WS row. Place sts on waste yarn holder and set aside.





Illustration by British artist Harold Copping (1863–1932) of Beth, Mr. Laurence, and Mrs. March from *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888).  
Photograph by Culture Club/Getty Images.





Eileen Lee's cozy fichu, inspired by those worn by the characters in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and by Alcott herself, will take the chill off indoors and out.

### Second Section

With largest needles, CO 281 sts. Change to middle-size needles. Work Rows 1 and 2 of lace patt a total of 44 times, then work Row 1 once more, ending with a WS row. Place sts on waste yarn holder and do not break yarn.

### Blocking

Block sections into rectangles: both 40¼ inches (102.2 cm) wide, 5½ inches (14.0 cm) high for the first section, and 9½ inches (24.1 cm) high for the second section

### Upper Band and Ties

Place 281 held sts of each section on separate middle-size needles. With right sides of both pieces

facing, hold needles tog and parallel with the 1<sup>st</sup> (shorter) section in front. With RS facing, using yarn attached to 2<sup>nd</sup> section and smallest needle as the working needle, \*insert working needle into 1<sup>st</sup> st on each section needle and k them tog; rep from \* to end—281 sts on one needle.

*Next Row (WS):* Using the other smallest needle, k2tog, \*k3tog; rep from \* to end—94 sts.

*Next 2 Rows:* Using the cable method, CO 108 sts at beg of row, k across new sts, then k to end—310 sts.

Using largest needle, BO all sts.

### Finishing

Block again lightly, if desired. Weave in ends.

EILEEN LEE has a textile background in textiles, having worked for eighteen years at Levi Strauss & Co. and for eleven years at MeadowFarm Yarn Studio in Nevada City, California, managing the shop, teaching, and designing. She currently teaches knitting, weaving, spinning, and dyeing. Her designs have appeared in several publications, and many of her patterns are available at [www.mzfiber.com](http://www.mzfiber.com) and on Ravelry as mzfiber.



# Children's Books

*How Needlework Twists the Plot*

JULIA BARATTA



*Reading (La Lecture)* by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919). Oil on canvas. Circa 1891. Collection of the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (BF107). 18 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 22 $\frac{1}{16}$  (46.0 x 56.0 cm).

*Photograph courtesy of the Barnes Collection Online.*

One way to introduce children to needlework is through some of the delightful and thoughtful picture, chapter, and young adult books available today. Although traditional pioneer stories are still quite popular and expose young people to the needle arts in a daily setting, new works present the old arts through unusual connections. Myths with old ladies knitting? Check. Chinese tales incorporating embroidery and stories? Yes. A spy transferring secrets via a tapestry? Got it. These books reveal that old-fashioned pastimes have some highly intriguing histories, and authors use those histories for creative storytelling. Here is a sampling of books available for children of all ages.



## Extra Yarn

Annabelle finds a box of yarn, but it turns out to be so much more than that. She uses the yarn to knit herself a sweater. Then she knits one for her dog and one for a neighbor and his dog. Many stitches later, the town is changing and becoming more colorful. Her never-ending strand of yarn catches the attention of an archduke, with some surprising results. This book was awarded a Caldecott Medal Honor.

**Author:** Mac Barnett **Illustrator:** Jon Klassen

**New York:** Balzer + Bray, 2012

**Age range:** 4 to 8 years

## Fiona's Lace

Lace plays an important part in Fiona's life; it was through lace that her mother met her father. As the family leaves Ireland for a better life in America, family members will take their lacemaking skills with them. After they reach Chicago, they encounter hard work and broken dreams. But Fiona's talent helps their lives take a turn for the better. Even after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 destroys much of the city, Fiona's lace helps bring the family together during this difficult time.

**Author/Illustrator:** Patricia Polacco

**New York:** Simon & Schuster, 2014

**Age range:** 4 to 8 years

## When the Sea Turned to Silver

The third installment of a series features Pinmei, the granddaughter of the famed Storyteller. Pinmei's grandmother is kidnapped because of her storytelling ability, and Pinmei sets out to search for her. As with the other two volumes in the series, the narrative introduces Chinese legends and stories, incorporating them into the dialogue. One of the tales describes a woman's embroidery skills and the picture she creates. The Storyteller herself shares the legends of the land, but is also known for her stitching skills.

**Author/Illustrator:** Grace Lin

**New York:** Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2017, reprint

**Age range:** 8 to 12 years

## Girl in Blue

Private Neddy Compton of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Michigan Infantry has two secrets: her real name is Sarah Wheelock, and she is only sixteen. Sarah enlists to avoid an unwanted marriage proposal and to get away from her domineering and abusive father. Unfortunately, Sarah's identity is discovered after only three months of service. When she becomes an undercover agent in the house of Rose Greenhow, a famous Civil War spy for the South, Sarah figures out that messages are being sent out of

the house via Rose's tapestry and balls of yarn to the Confederacy.

**Author:** Ann Rinaldi

**New York:** Scholastic Paperbacks, 2005, reprint

**Age range:** 9 to 14 years

## The Lightning Thief

Percy Jackson struggles to get everything right in his life, but it is an uphill battle. He is being kicked out of his boarding school, he doesn't make friends easily, he suffers from dyslexia—and he must learn how to fight characters that are straight from his Greek mythology textbook. In one of Percy's introductions to residents of the Underworld, he encounters three old ladies knitting very large socks at a roadside fruit stand. But as Percy and his friends find out, things are never as they seem. *The Lightning Thief* is the first in the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series.

**Author:** Rick Riordan **Illustrator:** John Rocco

**New York:** Disney-Hyperion, 2006

**Age range:** 10 to 14 years

## Tangled Threads: A Hmong Girl's Story

Mai Yang and her grandmother have lived in a refugee camp in Thailand for ten years. During this time, Mai has learned the art of embroidering story cloths. After many years of residing in the camp, Mai and her grandmother are allowed to go to America, where they move in with Mai's uncle and her cousins. Mai is exposed to a new lifestyle and culture that force her to re-evaluate her life.

**Author:** Pegi Deitz Shea

**New York:** Clarion Books, 2003

**Age range:** 10 to 14 years

## Princess of Glass

This sequel to *Princess of the Midnight Ball* (2010) features another of the princesses, Poppy, in a retelling of the Cinderella story. In this version, knitting plays an important part in breaking magic spells as Princess Poppy knits various articles of clothing. The traditional tale is replicated with balls, beautiful gowns, and of course, the famous glass slippers. The princess discovers true love, and a spell is broken. Two knitting patterns printed at the end of the book let readers create their own pieces of magic.

**Author:** Jessica Day George

**New York:** Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2011, reprint

**Age range:** 12 years and up

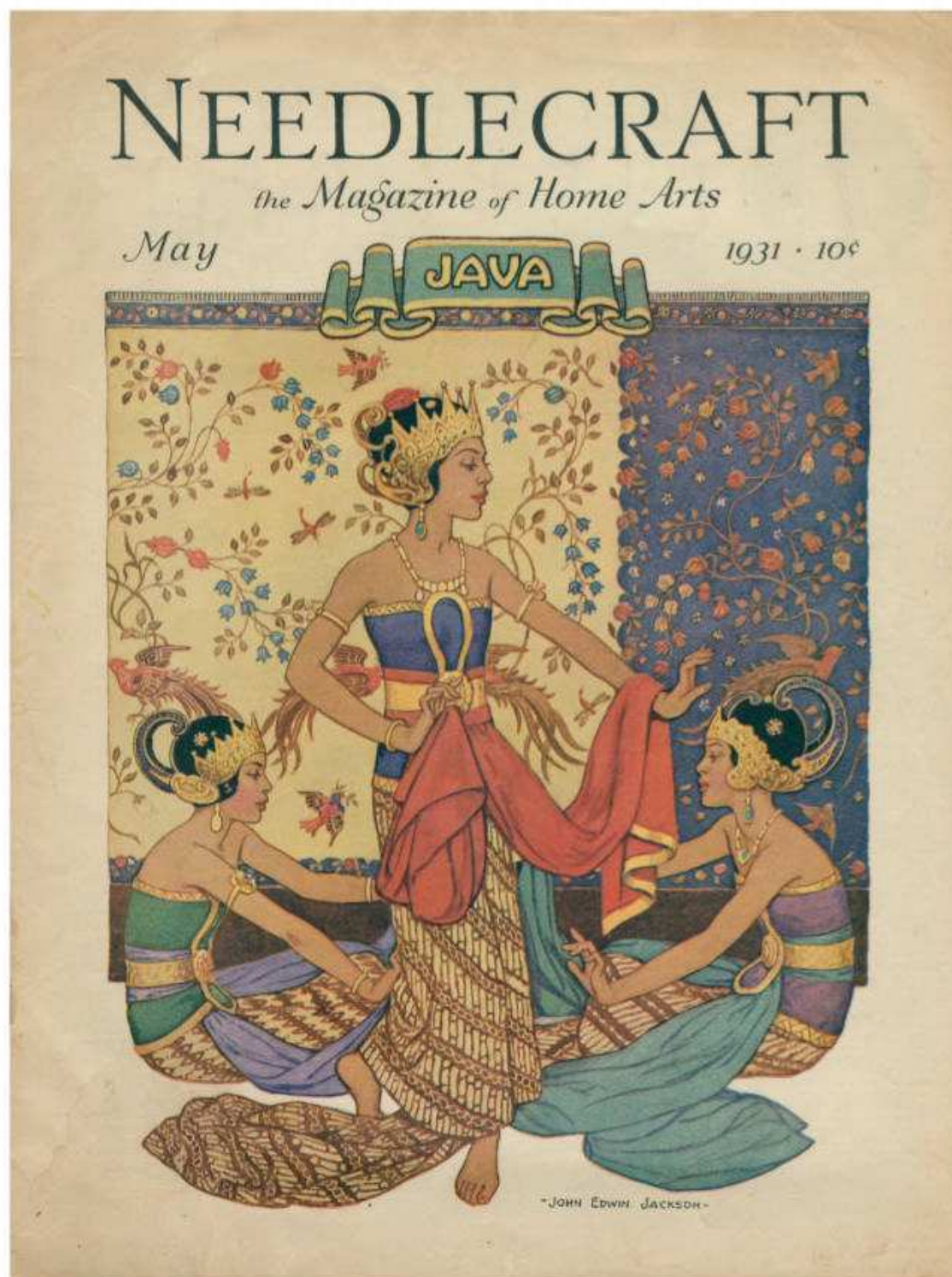
JULIA BARATTA is an adult, but her preferred reading list includes children's books along with needlework, gardening, cooking, and other home arts. She thanks her mother, Margaret Sies, for teaching her to work with a needle and be creative in everything she does.



# Women and Needlework Magazines

*Opportunity, Recognition, Income!*

SUSAN STRAWN



Cover of the May 1931 issue of *Needlecraft*. Collection of *PieceWork* magazine.

**A**cross time and under economic duress, women have turned to needlework. Closely reading a selection of American needlework magazines published between 1885 and 1930 reveals an often-overlooked history of women who were needlework editors, designers, and aspiring entrepreneurs. The classic *Needlecraft Magazine* provides the most insight into this history, with glimpses into various issues of *Modern Priscilla*, *Home Needlework Magazine*, *The Delineator*, *The Farmer's Wife*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and *The Ladies' Home Journal*.



Although women were breaking new ground in higher education and white-collar occupations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, society in general held fast to the notion that women should center their lives on domesticity and the home. Needlework, closely associated with the home, offered more acceptable and less defiant ways for women from all walks of life to earn money and recognition.

What opportunities did women find in needlework magazines? Educated career women could become magazine editors serving tens of thousands of subscribers who eagerly awaited every issue. Domestic science professors and businesswomen could become consulting field editors. Women with needlework proficiency could submit original design samples and pattern instructions for publication. Those who needed to bolster household coffers with extra “pin money” could sell needlework magazine subscriptions and consult the ideas and inspiration found in editorials and advertisements.

Numbers on women who worked for needlework magazines, let alone actual numbers on women who worked for pay between 1885 and 1930, are elusive. The United States Census and the Bureau of Labor have chronically underreported numbers of women employed in the workforce. Perhaps some women who earned income from needlework fell into the category of “women adrift,” ordered by Congress in 1907 and defined by the Bureau of Labor in 1910 to describe the estimated 14 percent of women not moored to stable sources of financial and moral support. (The category quickly fell out of favor.) Fortunately, many needlework magazines published names of contributors, revealing an impressive tally of published needlework designers, some of them remarkably prolific.

### The Model for Needlework Magazines

*Needlecraft Magazine* in particular followed the business and editorial model pioneered by Cyrus Curtis (1850–1933) and his wife, Louisa Knapp Curtis (1851–1910), for *The Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Practical Housekeeper* during the 1880s (the second part of the title was dropped in 1886). Louisa Knapp Curtis was listed in the magazine as Mrs. Louisa Knapp; she was the editor from the magazine’s inception in 1883 until 1889. The magazine sold individual issues and subscriptions at very low prices and relied on profits from advertisements that targeted women

as newly emerging and highly desirable consumers. The burgeoning American consumer market grew astronomically between 1885 and 1930, especially after World War I (1914–1918). Magazines for women, including needlework magazines, allowed manufacturers to brand and target advertising specifically for female consumers.

The Curtis magazine model also personalized magazines and advertisements, offering an illusion of friendship to readers and consumers alike. *Needlecraft*, initially marketed to lower- and middle-income women at 35 cents a year for twelve issues, encouraged readers to consider the magazine “a golden thread that seems woven” of friendship among readers, editors, contributors, and the magazine itself. Readers who saw the magazine as a friend were perhaps more likely to submit needlework designs and consult editors about ways to make money with their needlework. In contrast, the pricier *Modern Priscilla* (\$2 per year) targeted affluent female consumers with upscale advertising, not promises of friendship.

### Income from Needlework Magazines

Editors with business and editing acumen typically claimed the inherent domesticity that society expected of all women. Editor Louisa Knapp, for example, earned \$5,000 a year at *The Ladies’ Home Journal* obliging more than 400,000 subscribers during the 1880s. An 1886 *New York Journalist* article praised her, one of the highest paid women in the country, as a driving force in publishing *and* as “thoroughly domestic in her habits,” someone who did not “neglect her own housekeeping for business matters.” Interestingly, men dominated advertising and management positions at magazines, including needlework magazines.

Some readers considered needlework magazine editors personal friends who sympathized with their interest in making money with needlework, especially at home. In November 1924, an anonymous *Needlecraft* reader wrote, “Won’t you please suggest some way by which I can earn a little money at home? I very much need to do this—if you knew how much I am sure you would help me by giving the very best advice in your power.” A great many such appeals came to *Needlecraft*, replied A. C. Stoddard (about 1893–unknown), the magazine’s editor. Needlework magazines did offer many different ways for readers to earn money.



*Closely reading a selection of American needlework magazines published between 1885 and 1930 reveals an often-overlooked history of women who were needlework editors, designers, and aspiring entrepreneurs.*



Cover of the February 1930 issue of *Needlecraft*. Collection of *PieceWork* magazine.



*Needlecraft is an especially rich source of information about ways that women looked to needlework for income.*

A tempting array of premiums, many desirable to needleworkers, enticed readers to sell magazine subscriptions for *Needlecraft*. Similarly, *The Woman's Home Companion* sponsored a Pin Money Club to “turn spare hours into spare dollars” by signing up new subscribers. At the very least, readers who submitted the three most clever tips or tricks to readers’ departments at *Needlecraft* could receive one dollar each. Needleworkers who wanted to publish original designs simply followed editorial guidelines: mail the editor accurate directions and samples, preferably “nicely mounted on black material ready for photographing.” Ever coy about payment, editors claimed quality of work alone determined payment. There were no “usual rates of payment.”

The number of design submissions must have been staggering. In July 1915, *Needlecraft* editor Margaret Barton Manning (dates unknown) reported “letters flutter to her desk like so many white-winged birds.” Needleworkers submitted tatting, knitting, crochet (especially filet crochet), drawnwork, coronation braid, and embroidery patterns that included cross-stitch, whitework, Maltese, Hardanger, and Madeira. They tackled designs for collars and waists, baby layettes, lingerie, and household linens—and they designed new patterns for edgings added to nearly every garment or linen with a border.

*Needlecraft* credited designers by name. What a thrill it would have been for a reader from anywhere across the nation to see her name in print, making her known to all the “friends” coast to coast who read the magazine. A page-by-page review of needlework designs in monthly issues throughout 1915 alone tallies more than ninety contributors, with nearly as many in 1916. Most needleworkers published only one design, though a few created dozens of original patterns. Policies for name credit varied among different needlework magazines. *The Farmer's Wife* gave name credit to its few needlework designers (but saved highest praise for women who raised livestock). *Home Needlework Magazine*, however, credited only 25 percent of needlework contributors, though nearly fifty designers did receive name credit in a sample of issues from 1910 and 1911. *The Ladies' Home Journal*

printed photos of completed projects by anonymous designers, but readers had to order and pay for instructions and patterns. *The Delineator* did not give name credit for published designs.

Another page-by-page review of *Needlecraft* for 1925 showed the number of contributors had dropped to fewer than sixty, and about thirty designers contributed more than 70 percent of published designs. Clearly, such frequent contributing designers as Addie May Bodwell (1885?–unknown), Ethelyn J. Guppy (dates unknown), Helen Grant (dates unknown), and Emma L. Boardman (1885–1956) had found stable sources of design work in *Needlecraft*. In fact, designer Helen Grant not only published embroidery designs but also illustrated *Needlecraft* covers. A few designers published in more than one magazine.

*Needlecraft* also originated and managed a list that connected needleworkers with markets for their work. Names of those who submitted needlework samples could be added to *Needlecraft's* referral list and matched with requests for special orders to be completed at “reasonable rates.” Any reader who mailed the *Needlecraft* editor a request and enclosed a stamp for reply would receive the address of someone proficient in the desired needlework technique or who could craft a particular piece. The address of a suitable needleworker would be sent. No dues, no membership fees, no commissions.

The *Needlecraft* referral service intended to secure work for those “who are unable to leave home, yet who have time to use doing needlework of different kinds.” In December 1915, for example, Mrs. J. L. S. in Maryland wrote that she “had a good deal of time, am considered a neat worker, and should be glad of a chance to add a few dimes to my ‘very own’ purse.” The same year, Mrs. F. B. L. wrote to ask how to purchase articles that she saw already made up in the magazine. The maker could sell the piece directly or make a duplicate. Alternatively, the magazine would find another worker to make a similar article. The purchaser dealt directly with the maker, not the magazine, after the initial connection was made.

*Needlecraft* is an especially rich source of information about ways that women looked to needlework for



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**White Applique Cutwork On Color**

BY CHRISTINE FERRY



**L**OVERS of fine needlework will welcome this variation in cutwork embroidery which adds the charm of color to the contrast of dark and light afforded by the open spaces of the usual method.

Each decorative motif consists of a single piece of fine white material, which is cut out very carefully just outside the edges of the design and basted in position on the linen, then buttonholed through both thicknesses exactly as when doing a piece of cutwork in the ordinary way.

When basting on the applique motifs the outlines should be run with fine stitches through both materials in order to provide a foundation for the buttonholing and prevent the edges from stretching after they have been cut out. Spaces between the leaves and the flower centers should not be cut out until after the embroidery is completed.

**T**HERE are but few connecting bars and these are worked as usual by buttonholing over threads laid back and forth from one side of a space to the other in the process of working the edges of a motif. The button-hole stitches should be of uniform length throughout and placed closely without crowding. There are a few leaf veins to be worked in satin outline on the patches, preferably before applying to the linen, and pressing them smoothly before basting.

When all parts have been worked, the scalloped edges as well as the motifs, cut away the surplus linen close to the pari of the buttonholing.

Salmon pink linen was chosen for the background material of the liners illustrated. Copen blue, reseda green and dull pumpkin yellow are also suggested for dining-room uses, the stitchery in each instance being done with white floss.

No. 4500 N. The runner pictured above, combined with six place-mats similar to the one under the flower holder on the buffet, forms a very decorative set of linens for the luncheon table. Individually it is suitable for use on a buffet or dresser.

No. 4400 N. A three-piece daily set, which is always popular for use on a buffet. For the best effect it should be so placed as to leave a considerable margin of space between the individual pieces. These mats may also be used on a sandy dresser.

Patterns may be ordered from any Needlecraft Club-Raiser, or by mail, postpaid, from Needlecraft Magazine, Augusta, Maine, at prices listed on page 32.

Top: The masthead from the November 1923 issue of *Needlecraft*. The editor, fashion editor, and advertising manager are listed in the far right column at the bottom. Collection of *PieceWork* magazine.

Above: "White Applique Cutwork on Color" by Christine Perry featured in the May 1931 issue of *Needlecraft*. The magazine offered two patterns, including the runner shown as the background for the photograph and "six place-mats similar to the one under the flower holder on the buffet." This line appears at the bottom of the page: "Patterns may be ordered from any Needlecraft Club-Raiser, or by mail, postpaid, from Needlecraft Magazine, Augusta, Maine, at prices listed on page 32." Collection of *PieceWork* magazine.

Right: Ads in the February 1930 issue of *Needlecraft*. The ad at the top is a solicitation for people to sell Jiffykake, "the marvelous new Prepared Cake Flour. . ." The bottom ad for the lamp let readers know what they could receive for selling subscriptions to the magazine. Collection of *PieceWork* magazine.

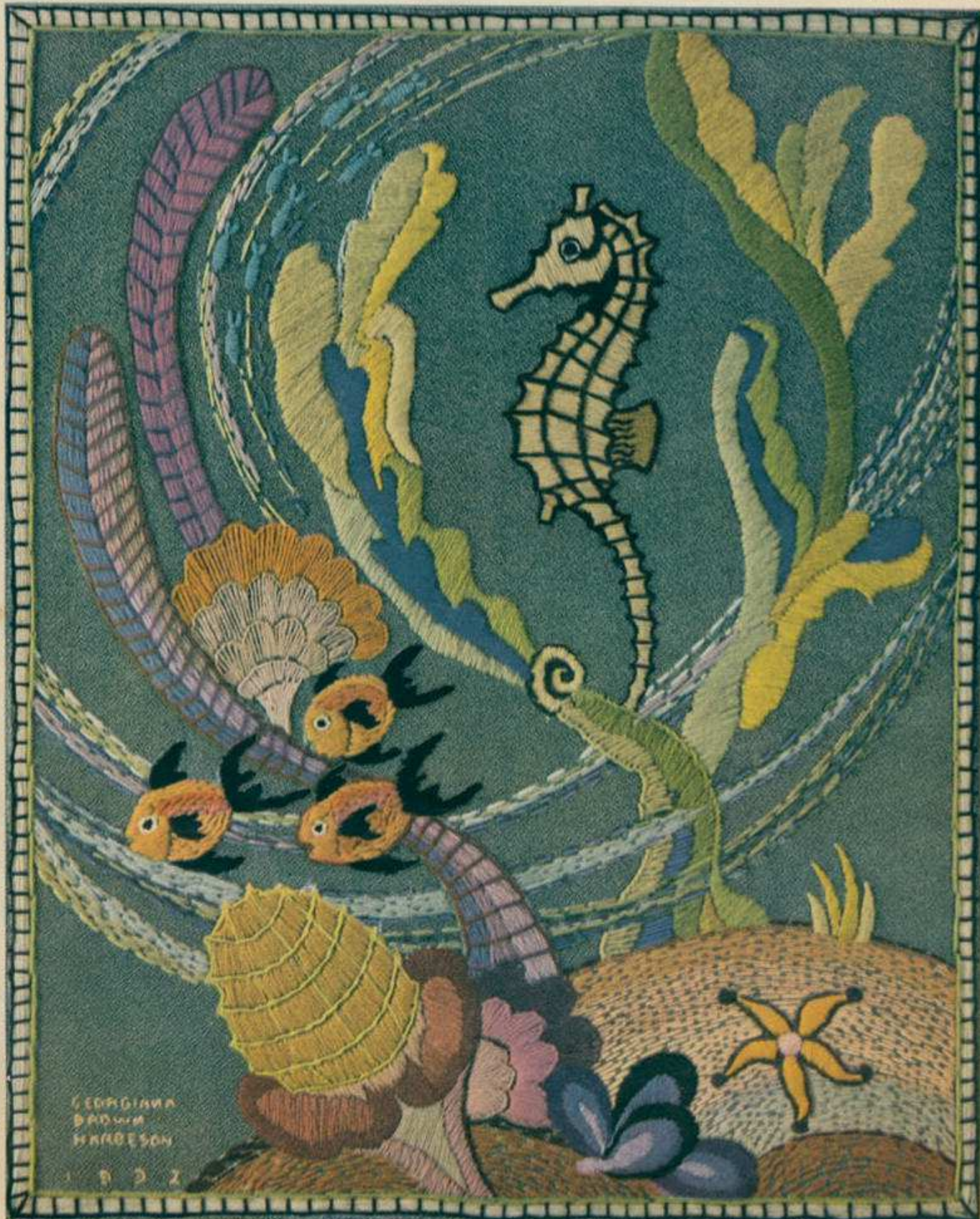


# NEEDLECRAFT

*the Home Arts Magazine*

August

1932 · 10¢



Cover of the August 1932 issue of *Needlecraft*. Collection of *PieceWork* magazine.



*Some readers considered needlework magazine editors personal friends  
who sympathized with their interest in making money with  
needlework, especially at home.*

income. Editorials dispensed advice about setting up a “Woman’s Exchange” to sell needlework: locate the shop near a tearoom, include only the finest quality work, and schedule before the holidays. Mrs. L. H. B. of Massachusetts organized a sale of needlework at a Woman’s Exchange each year before the holidays and could clear \$75 in three days. Editorials also bolstered their advice with inspiring success stories. In 1916, a reader who crocheted a doily from a *Needlecraft* pattern won \$5 for her work at a fair and then sold the doily for a “generous” price. Another reader confined at home with an invalid mother began a lucrative business stamping embroidery designs to order—with guaranteed delivery within 24 hours.

Editorials in *Needlecraft* quoted readers who claimed needlework had saved them from poverty. In 1915, a woman left destitute after the father she had cared for lost all his money on a stock scheme founded a business crocheting baby booties. She borrowed \$50 and traveled 20 miles (32.2 km) to the nearest city, where she photographed her crocheted booties, sent the photograph to publications as advertisements, bought \$11 worth of yarn and ribbon, and set to work. Her business succeeded, and she recommended that other needleworkers could also find success by making something that was in general demand and never letting down their standards. Other needleworkers reported brisk sales of baby layettes and rag dolls. An elderly widow darned and mended for young men at a nearby college, and a former necktie factory department head who had fallen ill claimed she earned more money working at home making custom ties than she had made in the factory. Similarly, *Home Needlework* shared the story of a woman disabled by illness who supported herself embroidering coats of arms.

During the 1920s, editorial pages endorsed women who set up needlework shops and targeted wealthy markets. Miss M. H. H. of Massachusetts wrote that she had fallen on hard times, had to earn her own living, and had only her needlework skills for support. She swallowed her pride and admitted to a wealthy woman of her acquaintance that she needed to earn

money with her craft. The woman hired her and recommended her to friends. Word spread, and she kept afloat financially with a needlework business. She also learned to repair old laces and embroideries by taking classes at an art museum. Mrs. J. C. in Iowa succeeded in finding customers for her needlework skills by word of mouth in a rural community, recommending that readers be “neither afraid nor ashamed to let people know they want to earn money.” Whether truly from readers or fabricated by editors, such testimonials offered encouragement and fresh ideas to the magazines’ readership.

Advertisements in needlework magazines often promised additional income. Tucked among ads to learn hair dressing, painting show cards, and selling everything from corsets to kerosene pressing irons were promises of handsome returns for investing in loom-weaving and sock-knitting machines. Oddities for needleworkers included crocheting lingerie for Paris Art Works in New Haven, Connecticut, and for selling Primart Embroidery Packages, a “dignified business that will make you real money.”

The Internet age has created an explosion of opportunities for needlework, an occupation that women continue to dominate. Today’s editors, designers, and entrepreneurs continue to build on the pioneering work of women who found a voice and earned recognition and income in early needlework magazines. ❖

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Damon-Moore, Helen. *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies’ Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880–1910*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Lopresti, Robert. *When Women Didn’t Count: The Chronic Mismeasure and Marginalization of American Women in Federal Statistics*. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, 2017.

SUSAN STRAWN is professor emerita at Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois. She researches and writes about stories held in textiles and is a *PieceWork* contributing editor.

↵ *A companion project follows* ➤



# A Handsome Centerpiece for the Library-Table

MARION MATTHEWS

◀ *Inspired by the preceding article* ▶

**B**elow are the instructions for the lovely butterfly centerpiece shown on the cover of the October 1918 issue of *Needlecraft*. They are printed here exactly as they appeared in that issue. In smaller type at the end of the first column are the options for the pattern, fabric, and thread that *Needlecraft* offered: “Perforated stamping-pattern, 25 cents. Transfer-pattern, 15 cents. Stamped on 24-inch tan linen, 75 cents. Floss to embroider, \$1.30. Crochet-thread for edge, 30 cents extra.”

—Editor

The butterfly is a popular motif, always; and probably it has never been used to better advantage than in the decoration of the centerpiece illustrated. The colors are well chosen and effectively combined; although rich in appearance there is nothing about the work to hint of gaudiness—it is in the best of taste, and the centerpiece may well find a place in the library, living-room or hall of any attractive home.

The butterfly measures nine and one-half inches from tip to tip of upper wings, and reminds one of the rare specimens sometimes found in collections, but never seen outside them unless in some tropical land.

The legs and antennæ are outlined with black, in close, heavy stitch; body and wings are also outlined with black, but this is not done until the embroidery is completed. The upper part of the body is done solidly with black, as are the tips of the wings. Beginning with the lower part of the body, work the tip in satin-stitch with the darkest shade of golden brown; make the next bar of black, the next with a medium shade of golden brown, the next of black, next of yellow, next with medium brown and finish with the lightest shade of brown. Work the edge of the lower wings, between the lines that are to be outlined with black, with medium brown, taking stitches of this up into the black of the tips; inside the second line fill in the tip

with dark blue, leave a space which is filled with scattered French knots of yellow, make a narrow band of blue across the wing—outlined on both sides with black, as are all the bars save those across the body; leave a space to be filled with the knots, as before, and finish with blue. The upper wings have the space between the lines, or the edge, worked with the darkest shade of brown, taking stitches up into the black tip, as before; two narrow bars of yellow, curved, cross the wing at even distances apart, and the spaces between these and the portion joining the body — also of yellow — are filled in with scattered knots of blue. At the base of the antennæ two tiny circles are outlined with yellow and filled in with black. As a whole, the butterfly seems very real indeed, and is certainly a lovely creation of the needle.

The edge of the centerpiece is buttonholed in a plain circle, and finished with a crocheted border of ecru thread, matching the linen. No. 5 or No. 10 may be used, as preferred, or even a finer thread, if preferred.

Commence with a chain of 3 stitches, join.

1. Chain 7, a double treble in ring, (chain 3, a double treble in ring) twice, turn.

2. (Chain 2, 2 doubles under 1st 3 chain) twice, (2 doubles, chain 2 and 2 doubles under next chain) twice, turn.





The cover of the October 1918 issue of *Needlecraft*, featuring a centerpiec with six butterflies. The copy for this cover project states: “[i]t is in the best of taste, and the centerpiec may well find a place in the library, living-room or hall of any attractive home. . . .” Collection of Susan Strawn.



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NEEDLECRAFT  
Augusta, Maine

# A Handsome Centerpiece for the Library-Table

Illustrated on Front Cover

By MARIION MATTHEWS

THIS butterfly is a popular motif, always, and probably it has never been used to better advantage than in the design of the centerpiece illustrated. The colors are well chosen and effectively combined, although, rich in appearance, there is nothing about the work to hint of goldness—it is in the best of taste, and the centerpiece may very well indeed, if it is certainly a lovely creation of the no. 26.



Detail of Butterfly

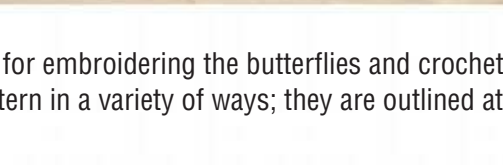
well find a place in the library, living-room or hall of any attractive home. The butterfly measures about one-half inch from tip to tip of upper wings and remains one of the rare specimens sometimes found in collections, but never seen outside them unless in some tropical land. The legs and antennae are outlined with black, in close, heavy stitch; body and wings are also outlined with black, but this is not done until the embroidery is completed. The upper part of the body is done solely with black, as are the tips of the wings. Beginning with the lower part of the body, work the tan in satin-stitch with the darkest shade of golden brown; make the next bar of black, the next with a medium shade of golden brown, the next of black, next of yellow; next with medium brown and finish with the lightest shade of brown. Work the edge of the lower wings, beginning from the line that was to be outlined with black, with medium brown, rather outside of this up into the back of the tips, inside the second line fill in the tip with dark blue, leave a square which is filled with scattered French knots of yellow, make a narrow band of blue across the width of the wings, outlined on both sides with black, as are all the lines save those across the body, leave a space to be filled with the knots, as before, and finish with black. The upper wings have the space between the lines of blue, or the edge, worked with the darkest shade of brown, taking stitches up into the black tip, as before; two narrow lines of yellow, worked, cross the wing at even distances apart, and the space between them and the junction joining the body—also of yellow—is filled in with scattered knots of blue. At the base of the antennae two tiny circles are outlined with yellow and filled in with black. As a whole, the butterfly seems

1. Chain 7, a double treble in ring, chain 1, a double treble in ring twice, turn.  
2. Chain 2, 2 doubles under last 2 chain twice, 2 doubles, chain 2 and 2 doubles under next chain twice, turn.  
3. Chain 6, miss 1st 2 chain of last row, a double treble in 3d 2 chain, chain 3, a double treble in same chain 3 times, \* miss next 2 chain, a double treble in next (or 1st of last row), chain 2, a double treble in same place 3 times, turn.  
4. Chain 2, (2 doubles, 2 chain and 2 doubles, all under 3 chain of last row) 8 times, a double in 1st stitch of 6 chain, turn.  
5. Like 3d to \*; turn.

Repeat from 2d row; at end of 3d row, join the scallop to the 5th picot of preceding 4th row. When completing the 4th row of the last scallop, having made a sufficient length of lace to border the centerpiece, fill the 1st 5 chains with 2 doubles, 2 chain and 2 doubles, 2 doubles under next chain, chain 1, catch in top of last double treble of 3d row, chain 1, 2 doubles under same 3 chain, 2 doubles under next 3 chain, catch in loop of chain with which you started, 2 doubles under same chain, 2 doubles, 2 chain and 2 doubles under next 3 chain, a double in top of 6 chain, chain 5, fasten in top of 4 chain of 1st row, and fasten off. Whip the chain neatly to edge of centerpiece. It is a good plan to sew it on before quite finished, then finish and join, unless you can be quite sure of the length required.

I wish to crochet a hanging using the "Roman stripe," can you tell me what colors to use and in what order?—Mrs. J. B. P., New Mexico.  
There are many different color-combinations called as "Roman stripe," an especially attractive one is as follows: Red, dark green, red, black, yellow, orange, yellow, red, black, light green, cream or sand-cream, orange, yellow, black, red, dark green, red.

No. 108, P. (Illustrated on Front Cover). Perforated damask, pattern 22, once. Transformation, 2 rows, worked on 24-inch tan lace, 75 ends, finished with 2 rows. Crochet thread for edge, 30 ends extra.



Detail of Crocheted Bands

The page from the October 1918 issue of *Needlecraft* with the instructions for embroidering the butterflies and crocheting the edging for the centerpiece shown on the cover of the issue. The magazine offered the pattern in a variety of ways; they are outlined at the bottom of the first column of instructions. Collection of Susan Strawn.

- 3. Chain 6, miss 1st 2 chain of last row, a double treble in 2d 2 chain, (chain 3, a double treble in same chain) 3 times, \* miss next 2 chain, a double treble in next (or 1st of last row), (chain 3, a double treble in same place) 5 times, turn.
  - 4. Chain 2, (2 doubles, 2 chain and 2 doubles, all under 3 chain of last row) 8 times, a double in 1st stitch of 6 chain, turn.
  - 5. Like 3d to \*; turn.
- Repeat from 2d row; at end of 3d row, join the scallop to the 5th picot of preceding 4th row. When completing the 4th row of the last scallop, having made a sufficient length of lace to border the

centerpiece, fill the 1st 5 chains with 2 doubles, 2 chain and 2 doubles, 2 doubles under next chain, chain 1, catch in top of last double treble of 3d row, chain 1, 2 doubles under same 3 chain, 2 doubles under next 3 chain, catch in loop of chain with which you started, 2 doubles under same chain, 2 doubles, 2 chain and 2 doubles under next 3 chain, a double in top of 6 chain, chain 5, fasten in top of 4 chain of 1st row, and fasten off. Whip the chain neatly to edge of centerpiece. It is a good plan to sew it on before quite finished, then finish and join, unless you can be quite sure of the length required. ❖



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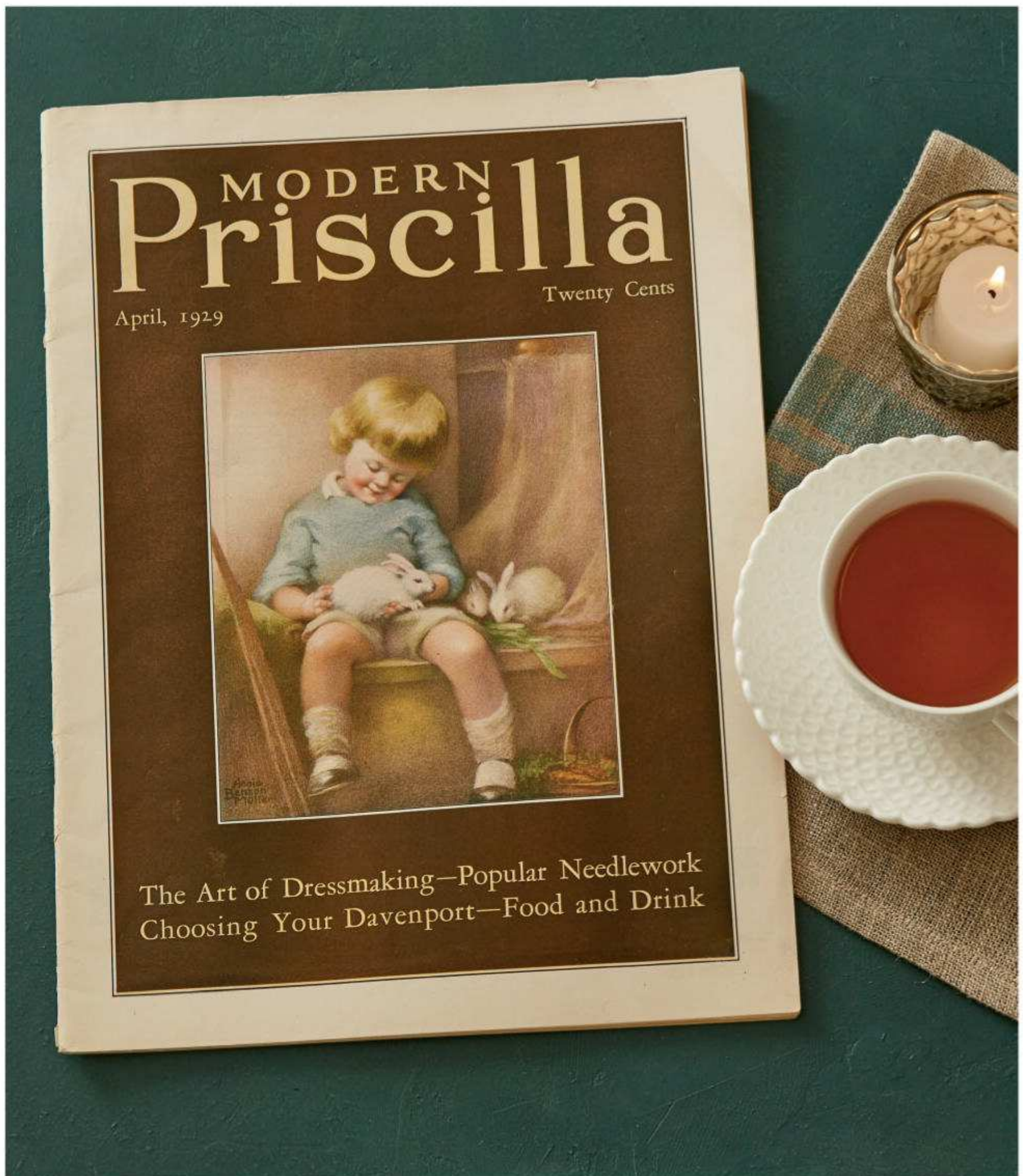
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# A Publishing Juggernaut— Priscilla

CHRISTOPHER JOHN BROOKE PHILLIPS



The April 1929 issue of *Modern Priscilla*. Collection of *PieceWork*.  
Photograph by George Boe.



The late nineteenth century saw a surge in the availability of magazines and publications directed at the female market. Increased affluence, more leisure time, the introduction of electric light, the groundswell of feminism, and the Arts and Crafts movement all contributed to a rise in the popularity of needlecrafts and a demand for information on “how to.” In Europe, North America, and Australasia, an industry blossomed, supplying magazines that not only offered fashion news but also included instructions on dressmaking, knitting, crochet, other forms of needlework, lacemaking, and more.

In 1887, T. E. Parker (dates unknown) of Lynn, Massachusetts, published the first issue of *The Priscilla* magazine. The magazine’s name is attributed to Priscilla Mullins, born about 1602 in Dorking, in the County of Surrey, England. In 1620, she was among the first settlers to arrive in the American colonies on the *Mayflower*; she married John Alden, a cooper, in 1621. She was well-known in the Plymouth Colony for her spinning and weaving. As was common at the time, she raised a large family (one of her descendants was the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow [1807–1882]). She died in 1685 and was buried at the Myles Standish Burial Ground in Duxbury, Massachusetts.



The “Shopping Page” from the April 1929 issue of *Modern Priscilla*. Collection of *PieceWork*.



A page from the April 1929 issue of *Modern Priscilla*. Collection of *PieceWork*.

The first editors of *The Priscilla* were Frank S. Guild and Miss Beulah F. Kellogg. It is suggested that Frank Guild was the well-known illustrator of that name (circa 1866–1929), a regular contributor to *The Ladies' Home Journal*. Miss Kellogg was not a “miss” at all but Isaiah Clarkson Parrot (1851–1918), who edited the magazine from 1887 to his death. In 1893, W. N. (William Newton) Hartshorn (1843–1920), publisher of *Household*, another female-interest magazine, purchased *The Priscilla* and moved operations to Boston. Hartshorn was a recognized leader in Christian society and published various books on the subject, supported Christian education among African-Americans, and in 1904 was listed as the chairman of the World’s International Sunday School Association.





The cover of the August 1917 issue of *The Modern Priscilla*, including *Home Needlework* and *Everyday Housekeeping*. Collection of *PieceWork*. The subscriber's name and address were removed at some point in time from the top left corner.

Hartshorn also bought *Ingalls' Home and Art Magazine*, and the three magazines were combined and published under the title *The Modern Priscilla*. In 1907, the cover design of the magazine changed from black halftone to a red-and-black halftone, incorporating green later that year. In March 1912, the Priscilla Publishing Company acquired *Everyday Housekeeping* from C. M. Clark Publishing Company of Boston, a company founded by Carro Morrell Clark (1867–1950), who was reported to have been the only female publisher in the United States. With this incorporation, *The Modern Priscilla* became two magazines

in one—part devoted to household management, and the other devoted to needlework and associated skills. The November 1914 issue featured the magazine's first full-color cover; the September 1916 issue began the continuous publication with a full-color cover.

In April 1917, *Home Needlework Magazine*, published by Florence Publishing Company, Florence, Massachusetts, announced that beginning in May of that year, they were to amalgamate with *The Modern Priscilla*, citing the duplication of subject matter and rising production costs brought about by World War I (1914–1918). As part of the announcement, the



## Priscilla Publishing Books

YEAR	TITLE	PAGES	AUTHOR/EDITOR
1889	<i>Mexican Drawn Thread Embroidery Work</i>	30	Kate McCrea Foster
1891	<i>Priscilla Crochet Work</i>	72	None Listed
1898	<i>Priscilla Needlework Book</i> (cutwork, point and Battenberg lace, silk embroidery)	48	None Listed
1899	<i>Priscilla Cross Stitch Book</i>	48	Harriet Cushman Wilke
1900	<i>Priscilla Battenberg and Point Lace Book</i>	42	Nellie Clarke Brown
1903	<i>Priscilla Crochet Book</i>	62	None Listed
1905	<i>Priscilla Manual</i> (knitting, crochet, cross-stitch, Hardanger)	48	None Listed
1906	<i>French Eyelet and Shadow Embroidery</i>		Inez Redding, Ethelyn J. Morris, and Others
1908	<i>Wallachian Embroidery</i>	18	None Listed
1909	<i>Priscilla Drawn Work Book</i>	48	Mae Y. Mahaffy
1909	<i>Priscilla Hardanger Book</i>	48	Nellie Clarke Brown and Elma Iona Locke
1909	<i>Priscilla Tatting Book</i>	32	Jessie M. DeWitt
1910	<i>Priscilla Italian Cutwork Book</i>	32	Lilian Barton Wilson
1911	<i>Priscilla Colored Cross Stitch Book, No. 1</i>	8	Ethelyn Jones Morris
1911	<i>Priscilla Filet Crochet Book, No. 1</i>	48	Belle Robinson
1911	<i>Priscilla Bobbin Lace Book</i>	36	Ellen Lawrence
1912	<i>Priscilla Punched Work Book</i>	38	Lilian Barton Wilson
1911	<i>Priscilla Colored Cross Stitch Book, No. 2</i>	8	Ethelyn Jones Morris
1912	<i>Priscilla Wool Knitting Book</i> (first published 1908)	44	Gwen Keys
1912	<i>Priscilla Bead Work Book</i>	48	Belle Robinson
1912	<i>Priscilla Irish Crochet Book, No. 1</i>	48	Lula M. Harvey
1912	<i>Priscilla Irish Crochet Book, No. 2</i>	48	Eliza A. Taylor
1912	<i>Priscilla Colored Cross Stitch Book, No. 2</i>	9	Ethelyn Jones Morris
1912	<i>Priscilla Wool Crochet Book</i> (first published 1908)	48	Lola Burks Hettich
1913	<i>Priscilla Crochet Book: Edgings &amp; Insertions</i>	48	Eliza A. Taylor
1913	<i>Priscilla Macramé Book</i>	40	Belle Robinson
1914	<i>Priscilla Netting Book</i>	52	Belle Robinson
1914	<i>Priscilla Italian Cutwork</i>	32	Lillian Barton Wilson
1914	<i>Priscilla Crochet Book: Bedspreads</i>	48	Helen Garbutt
1914	<i>Priscilla Juniors' Crochet Book</i> (for girls from eight to twelve years old)	36	Belle Robinson
1915	<i>Priscilla Crochet Book: Centerpieces &amp; Doilies</i>	48	Belle Robinson
1915	<i>Priscilla Baby Book, No. 1</i> (knitting, crochet)	36	Elsa Barsaloux
1915	<i>Priscilla Tatting Book, No. 2</i>	48	Julia E. Saunders
1916	<i>Priscilla Crochet Book: Edgings and Insertions, No. 2</i>	52	Belle Robinson
1916	<i>Priscilla Yoke Book</i> (crochet, tatting) in	48	Georgette Batt
1916	<i>Priscilla Monogram &amp; Initial Book</i>	40	Ethelyn Jones Morris
1916	<i>Priscilla Hedebo and Cutwork Embroidery Book</i>	44	Lilian Barton Wilson
1916	<i>Priscilla Smocking Book</i>	32	Louise Flynn
1917	<i>Priscilla Sweater Book</i> (knitting, crochet)	48	Elsa Barsaloux
1917	<i>Priscilla War Work Book</i> (knitting from the American Red Cross)	32	Elsa Barsaloux
1918	<i>Priscilla Cotton Knitting Book</i>	48	Belle Robinson
1920	<i>Priscilla Cluny Crochet Book</i>	32	Elsa Barsaloux
1920	<i>Priscilla Patchwork Book</i>	20	Belle Robinson
1923	<i>Priscilla Netting Book</i>	40	Belle Robinson
1923	<i>Priscilla Armenian Needlepoint</i>	32	Nouvar Tashjian
1924	<i>Priscilla Tatting Book, No. 3</i>	32	Julia E. Sanders
1924	<i>Priscilla Hardanger Book, No. 2</i>	32	Maren Thoresen
1925	<i>Priscilla Smocking Book</i> (flower, Bulgarian)	48	Louise Flynn
1927	<i>Priscilla Hardanger Embroidery Book, No. 1</i> (first printed 1909; reprinted 1922)	48	Nellie Clarke Brown
1933	<i>Priscilla Wool Knitting and Crochet</i>	32	None Listed



In 1887, T. E. Parker (dates unknown) of Lynn, Massachusetts, published the first issue of *The Priscilla* magazine.



Left to Right: Page 1 of the December 1918 issue of *The Modern Priscilla* with a tribute to Isiah Clarkson Parrot, the magazine's editor from 1887 until his death in 1918; patterns for "War Workers" from the December 1918 issue of *The Modern Priscilla*; recipes and menus from the December 1918 issue of *The Modern Priscilla*. Collection of PieceWork.

publisher promised that annual subscribers to *Home Needlework* would receive the remaining balance of magazines owed, even though the annual subscription for *Home Needlework* was 75 cents and *Modern Priscilla* was \$1.25. By 1918, *Modern Priscilla* claimed a monthly circulation of 600,000. (At some point, the word "The" in the title was dropped.)

The magazine contained how-to articles covering every aspect of needlecraft. In conjunction with the magazine, the company also published a wide variety of how-to books, each specializing in a specific subject from knitting and crochet to lacemaking and basketry. As advertised, the books were originally available for 25 cents each from needlework suppliers, local news dealers, and by mail-order direct from Priscilla Publishing. For a list of many of the books, see the "Priscilla Publishing Books" sidebar.

Although Priscilla Publishing moved its headquarters to New York in an attempt to increase business and compete nationally, *The Modern Priscilla* failed in 1930. The catastrophic economic downturn of the Stock Market Crash of 1929 was sufficient to bring about its demise. Original copies of *The Modern Priscilla* magazine are frequently for sale online. Both the magazines and the books provide details and instruction that are as valid today as when they were originally published. ❖

CHRISTOPHER JOHN BROOKE PHILLIPS was born in England and now lives with his wife, Patricia Ann, near Valencia, Spain. A retired businessman, he researches and writes on matters of historical interest. Two historical novels set in the twentieth century are in the works.



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# The Lustrous Life of *Fancy Needlework Illustrated*

BARBARA SMITH

In 2011, I started out as a volunteer working on the publications in the collection of the United Kingdom's Knitting & Crochet Guild (KCG). I knew relatively little about the history of knitting and crochet and discovered several magazines published in the early twentieth century that I had not heard of, including *Weldon's Practical Needlework*, *Needlecraft Practical Journal*, *Needlework for All*, and *The Lady's World Fancy Work Book*. Sorting through boxes of mixed publications, I began to distinguish between these titles. Some must have been quite popular in their day, and copies turned up over and over again, whereas we had only a few issues of other magazines. *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* was one of the popular magazines, and it became a personal favorite, partly because it was one of the first cases in which I matched a published pattern with a textile item in the collection: the "Welcome Home" tablecloth design on the front cover of No. 33, published in February 1915. (Note: The issues of *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* were not dated, but it is possible to determine from the content the year of publication and the month for all but the first few issues.)

The first issue of *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* appeared in 1906, priced two pence (2d.). It was printed on glossy paper, about 12 by 10 inches (30 by 25 cm), with clear illustrations based on photographs. It contained instructions for designs in embroidery, crochet, knitting, netting, tatting, and macramé, and announced a "Grand Prize Competition" with a total of £110 offered in prizes. The first issue seems to have been intended to test the market, as no date for a second issue was given. Evidently it sold well enough because No. 2 appeared the same year. In 1907, two more issues followed; beginning in 1908, the magazine became a quarterly.

Although *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* was published by the Northern School of Art-Needlework in Manchester, it was closely associated with, and possibly owned by, the English Sewing Cotton Company, a consortium of cotton-spinning businesses formed in 1897. Instructions in the magazine specified threads made by consortium companies (notably, Lawrence Arden & Company, John Dewhurst and Sons, Bagley and Wright, and W. G. and J. Strutt), and advertising in the magazine was largely from these companies.

Mercerization, invented in the 1840s, had been improved in the 1890s to give cotton yarns a lustrous finish. This enormously increased the appeal of cotton for crafts such as embroidery, crochet, and knitting.



The woman in the photograph sits at a small table; the tablecloth has a filet-crochet edging made with the instructions for the "Winchester" design first published in *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* No. 20 in December 1911. It is not a studio photograph; the background is the outside wall of a house. We can imagine that the woman crocheted the edging herself and was proud of her handwork. Photographer unknown. Collection of the United Kingdom's Knitting & Crochet Guild. Photograph courtesy of the United Kingdom's Knitting & Crochet Guild.



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No. 83.

2<sup>D</sup>



# FANCY NEEDLEWORK

ILLUSTRATED.

No. 83—VOL. 7.

Published 1st of March, June, September, and December.  
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The cover of *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* No. 83 published in September 1927 shows two young women enjoying afternoon tea in the garden and displaying several of the pieces that can be made from the instructions in the issue. The woman on the left is wearing a knitted “tennis” pullover worked in Ardern’s Star Sylko cotton and a crocheted hat in Strutt’s Macramé Twine. The woman on the right wears a scarf in black satin lined with peacock blue with peacock blue tassels and a matching hatband; both are embroidered in Star Sylko, using a transfer that could be bought by post. The tablecloth has a crocheted border and corner triangle; the design is “Cranford,” named after Elizabeth Gaskell’s novel, which was originally published in 1851. Collection of the United Kingdom’s Knitting & Crochet Guild.

*Illustration courtesy of the United Kingdom’s Knitting & Crochet Guild.*



*Although Fancy Needlework Illustrated was published by the Northern School of Art-Needlework in Manchester, it was closely associated with, and possibly owned by, the English Sewing Cotton Company, a consortium of cotton-spinning businesses formed in 1897.*

The editorial in the first issue of *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* describes its effects: “This marvellous process, which is shrouded in mystery—being only known to the manufacturers of mercerised merchandise—effects a complete change in the character of the cotton to which it is applied, rendering it soft and flossy to the touch, and silky and lustrous in appearance.” (Given the close links between the magazine and manufacturers of mercerized cotton, it seems somewhat disingenuous to present mercerization as a mysterious, unknown process.)

The first issue does include knitting—stockings, gloves, counterpanes, and so on—but in practice, knitting was a poor relation to crochet, and in some issues it did not appear at all. Many of the crochet designs were filet crochet, which was highly popular at the time. We have several items of filet crochet in the KCG collection, including the “Welcome Home” and “Dresden” tablecloths that were made from designs published in *Fancy Needlework Illustrated*, and there are probably more that have not yet been identified.

The competitions remained a regular feature of the magazine; usually, there were two a year. For the competition that closed in January 1915, the total prize money had risen to £500, and there were one thousand cash prizes in five different categories. In keeping with the unstated aim of the magazine, competition entries had to use specified threads made by consortium companies of the English Sewing Cotton Company. For instance, in the January 1915 competition, one contest was for a “Crochet Trimmed Tea Cloth, worked with Arden’s new Lustrous Crochet.” The largest individual prize in that competition was £20, equivalent to nearly £2,000 today. Beginning with issue No. 23 in September 1912, the price of the magazine was reduced to a penny (1d.), though the size and quality was unchanged. The total value of the prizes awarded in the competitions up to that time was £3,270, equivalent to over £350,000 now; the cover price of a penny is equivalent to around 90p. Given the sums of money expended and the low cover price, the magazine and its competitions must have been very successful in boosting the sales of the consortium’s products.

The early issues were kept in print for some time (although anyone wishing to enter a competition had to buy the magazine promptly to get the required

coupon). The second issue was in print until 1910, having by then sold 200,000 copies. But more usually, as an editorial explained in 1917, the magazine preferred to reprint “such patterns as are insistently called for”; the “Dresden” tablecloth design, for instance, was reprinted at least twice.

The start of World War I in 1914 resulted in enormous efforts to knit for the armed forces. *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* took no part in these endeavors because cotton was not a suitable yarn to use. The only signs of the war in the magazine’s content were designs for what might be called “patriotic crochet,” featuring the flags of the Allies, pieces of military equipment, or slogans such as “For King and Country.” These designs were worked in filet crochet, which is very suited to pictorial designs, although recognizing the British and French flags in an all-white design (as in the “Welcome Home” tablecloth) takes some imagination. The war did affect the magazine, however: in common with other magazines, the increasing cost of paper caused an increase in the cover price to 2d. in 1917. The prize competition was also suspended in 1917, reappearing in 1921.

Toward the end of the war, designs for practical items of clothing began to appear more frequently in the magazine. This was probably a side effect of the huge push to knit socks, mittens, scarves, and other comforts for the troops. Issue No. 46, June 1918, was a “Special Glove Number,” with seven patterns for knitted gloves or mittens, all of course in cotton; a “Special Jumper Number,” issue No. 50, was published in June 1919. This special issue was the beginning of what Richard Rutt in *A History of Hand Knitting* called “the jumper craze of the 1920s.” For the next few years, jumper patterns dominated the magazine, knitted or crocheted, or often both in the same design. Rayon, usually called “art silk” or “artificial silk,” was a popular yarn in the 1920s, especially for jumpers, but for *Fancy Needlework Illustrated*, Arden’s Star Sylko mercerized cotton was the chosen substitute. Like rayon, it is beautifully lustrous. We have several 1920s jumpers in the KCG collection, but sadly none have been identified as *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* designs.

Starting in 1923, the cover of the magazine was printed in color. It kept the original masthead, showing an Edwardian lady at her needlework, but in a



color version, and the cover illustration often showed a charming idealized scene displaying some of the designs inside. By 1926, the craze for knitted and crocheted jumpers was beginning to die away, as far as *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* was concerned. Jumpers made in plain fabric in simple shapes and then embroidered began to appear, and in general, embroidery and crochet for household linens began to dominate again. This content change probably occurred because jumpers knitted and crocheted in wool were becoming extremely popular, and *Fancy Needlework Illustrated*, being restricted to cotton yarns, could not compete. But the magazine still flourished; beginning at the end of 1928, it was published six times a year.

During the 1930s, the magazine increased its emphasis on embroidery, though patterns for knitted garments still appeared, especially for summer clothes. But the restriction to cotton was perhaps getting more out of step with what readers wanted, and in 1937, Weldon's purchased the magazine. The content was broadened to include knitted garments in wool, and the cover was redesigned. In 1940, the title of the magazine changed to *Needlework Illustrated*. It survived until 1960, with further changes of title: first to simply *Needlework*, then to *Needlework & Homecrafts*, and finally to *Knit & Sew*.

In addition to the pieces in the KCG collection, there must be many other surviving pieces of filet crochet made from designs published in *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* during the 1910s and 1920s—tablecloths, doilies, tea cozies, and other household linens, representing uncountable hours of work by their makers. As we read *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* now, it is good to ponder this legacy, as evidence of what the magazine meant to readers at the time. ❖

#### FURTHER RESOURCES

Rutt, Richard. *A History of Hand Knitting*. 1987. U.S. edition reprint. Fort Collins, Colorado: Interweave, 2003.

Smith, Barbara, and Angharad Thomas. "Treasure Trove: The United Kingdom's Knitting & Crochet Guild Collection." *PieceWork*, November/December 2017.

DR. BARBARA SMITH retired from an academic career in computer science in 2009 and took up knitting again after a gap of twenty-five years. She joined the Knitting & Crochet Guild, became a volunteer working on the guild's collection, and is now the publications curator. (She finds that some of the research skills she developed in her previous role are still applicable.) Since 2010, she has written a blog ([www.barbaraknitsagain.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.barbaraknitsagain.blogspot.co.uk)) that records her growing fascination with knitting and knitting history.

↪ *A companion project follows* ↩



The "Tennis" Knitted Jumper from No. 78 of *Fancy Needlework Illustrated*, published in June 1926. The Rose Leaf pattern used in this design inspired the companion project that follows this article. Collection of the United Kingdom's Knitting & Crochet Guild. Illustration courtesy of the United Kingdom's Knitting & Crochet Guild.



The "Dresden" design for a filet-crochet tablecloth edging was first published in *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* No. 26 in June 1913. The KCG collection contains four tablecloths with this edging and one side of the matching tea cozy from a design published in No. 34 in June 1915. The tablecloth design was reprinted in No. 52 in December 1919; later editions of that issue claim it to be "The most Popular Pattern ever published." It was reprinted again in No. 74 in June 1925. The design also appeared in advertisements for Ardern's Crochet Cotton. Shown here are one of tablecloths with the "Dresden" filet-crochet edging (notice the crossed teaspoons and sugar tongs in the corner), issue No. 52 of the magazine with the reprinted "Dresden" design, and the advertisement for Ardern's Crochet Cotton from No. 69 published in March 1924. Collection of the United Kingdom's Knitting & Crochet Guild.

Photograph by Barbara Smith.



# Tea Rose Scarf to Knit

KATRINA KING

◀ *Inspired by the preceding article* ▶

One of my favorite things to do with vintage lace patterns is dissection, a possible holdover from my college days of studying anatomy. The lace pattern I used for this scarf is from a jumper pattern in an issue of *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* magazine, which was published in the United Kingdom from 1906 to 1939. For the scarf itself, I drew inspiration from my pattern Gerard's Seaman's Scarf, which was featured in *PieceWork's* special issue *Knitting Traditions* (Spring 2015). This scarf is constructed with ribbing at the neck to reduce bulk. This option also let me preserve the directional flow of the leaves in the lace pattern.



Wrap yourself up in Katrina King's lovely Tea Rose Scarf. The lace pattern is from a jumper pattern in an issue of *Fancy Needlework Illustrated* magazine, which was published in the United Kingdom from 1906 to 1939.



Key

- k on RS; p on WS
- p on RS; k on WS
- ∨ sl 1 pwise wyf on RS
- ∨ sl 1 pwise wyf on WS
- yo
- / k2tog
- \ sl 1, k1, pss0
- ↙ k3tog
- ↘ sl 1, k2tog, pss0
- no stitch
- pattern repeat

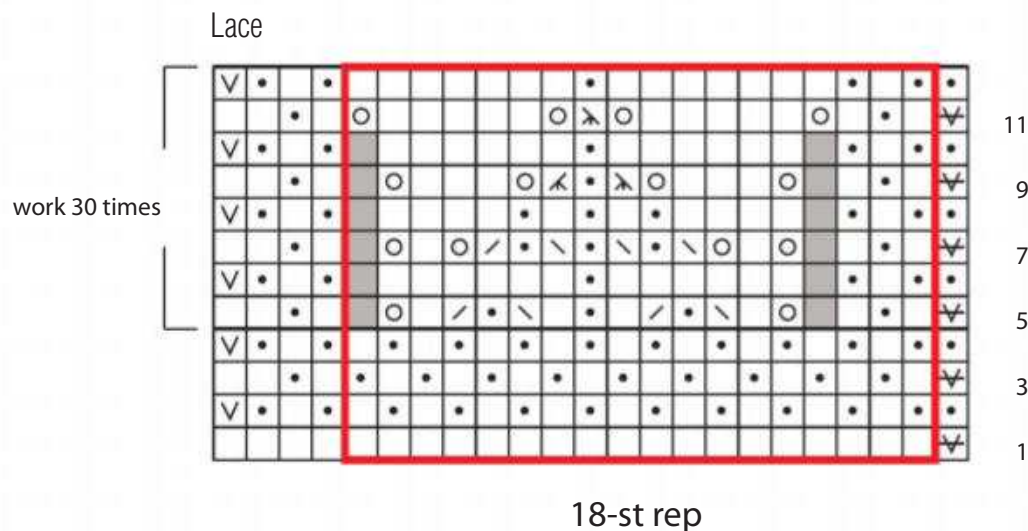


Chart may be photocopied for personal use.  
The chart for this project is available in PDF format at  
[www.interweave.com/piecework-charts-illustrations](http://www.interweave.com/piecework-charts-illustrations).

### M A T E R I A L S

- ◆ Knit Picks Curio, 100% cotton yarn, laceweight, 721 yard (659.3 m)/100 gram (3.5 oz) ball, 1 ball of Tea Rose
- ◆ Needles, size 2 (2.75 mm), 10 inches (25.4 cm) straight or size needed to obtain gauge
- ◆ Waste yarn or second needle for holding stitches
- ◆ Tapestry needle
- ◆ Blocking wires and pins

**Finished size:** 82 inches (208.3 cm) long and 8 inches (20.3 cm) wide, after blocking

**Gauge:** 30 sts and 32 rows = 4 inches (10.2 cm) in lace patt, after blocking

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

*Notes:* Visit [www.interweave.com/interweave-knitting-glossary](http://www.interweave.com/interweave-knitting-glossary) for Abbreviations and Techniques. The scarf is worked from the bottom up on each side. The first side is placed on waste yarn or a second needle while the ribbing is worked on the second side. Kitchener stitch is used to graft the two pieces together.

#### Scarf

Holding two needles tog and using the long tail method, CO 59 sts. Work Rows 1–12 of Lace Chart. Cont in lace patt, working Rows 5–12 twenty-nine more times.

*Next Row (RS):* Sl 1 pwise wyf, k to last st, M1, k1—60 sts.

*Next Row (WS):* Sl 1 pwise wyf, p to last st, k1.

*Next Row:* Sl 1 pwise wyf, k to end.

*Next Row:* Sl 1 pwise wyf, p to last st, k1.

Place sts on waste yarn or 2<sup>nd</sup> needle. Cut yarn, leaving 6 inches (15.2 cm) for weaving in.

Rep above for 2<sup>nd</sup> side through last WS row.

*Next Row (RS):* Sl 1 pwise wyf, \*k1, p1; rep from \* to last st, k1.

Rep last row for 18 inches (45.7 cm), ending with a RS row.

*Next Row (WS):* Sl 1 pwise wyf, p to last st, k1.

Cut yarn, leaving 1 yard (0.9 m) for grafting.

#### Finishing

Holding wrong sides together and using the tapestry needle, graft the two sides together using Kitchener stitch. Block, placing wires only in the edges of the lace panels; the ribbing is not stretched. Weave in ends.

KATRINA KING has yet to meet a fiber craft she doesn't like. In addition to knitting, she also has crochet, weaving, spinning laceweight yarn, and tatting in her tool bag. You can follow her craft adventures at [www.threadeddreamstudio.com](http://www.threadeddreamstudio.com). When she's not crafting, she can be found teaching at her local yarn shops, volunteering at the Blue Moose Art Gallery, and chasing her daughters to various activities in and around Fort Collins, Colorado.



# Festival Lace Mitts to Knit

INNA VOLTCHKOVA



Inna Voltchkova's exquisite Festival Lace Mitts will brighten up any occasion. They are shown here with vintage Russian-style knitting needles from her collection.



I have traveled to St. Petersburg, Russia, many times and have been able to visit many museums. Highlights at the Hermitage Museum include the Gates to the Winter Palace, Leonardo da Vinci's painting the *Madonna Litta* (which surprised me with its unexpected colors and its size—just 16½ by 13 inches [42.0 by 33.0 cm]), Edgar Degas's drawings of dancers, and opulent rooms with royal decorations. At the Russian Museum of Ethnography, highlights include the Marble Hall and the ethnic costumes.

N. M. Kalashnikova's book *Perchatschki da rukavitsy, chulochki da nogovitsy—Aksessuary Traditsionnogo Kostyuma iz Sobraniya Rossiiskogo Etnograficheskogo Muzeya* [Gloves and Mittens, Stockings and Leggings—Traditional Costume Accessories in the Collections of the Russian Museum of Ethnography] (Moscow, Russia: Russian Museum

of Ethnography, 2015) delves into the Museum of Ethnography's collection. Among the more than two hundred photographs in the book are images of "clothes for hands," which were worn in everyday life and on festive occasions. Included are gloves of two types (with and without fingers) and two lengths (short to the wrist and long up to the elbow). Usually knitted from thin white cotton thread, the gloves were made at home or bought ready-made in shops and at fairs.

One of the images from Kalashnikova's book shows young women in festive dress from Arkhangelsk Province. I think the women were celebrating a church wedding ceremony for a friend. It inspired me to design and knit these festive fingerless gloves. I hope you will knit your own Festival Lace Mitts for a special occasion in your life.



Photograph of young women in festive dresses from Arkhangelsk Province, Village Red Hill, Russia. 1910. Collection of the Russian Museum of Ethnography, Moscow.

Photograph © the Russian Museum of Ethnography.



## MATERIALS

- ◆ DMC Petra, size 5, 100% cotton thread, 437 yard (399.6 m)/100 gram (3.5 oz) ball, 1 ball of Ecrú
- ◆ Needles, size 00 (1.75 mm), sets of 5 double pointed 8, 6, and 3 inches (20, 15, and 7 cm) long, or size needed to obtain gauge
- ◆ Stitch marker
- ◆ Stitch holders, 2 small and 2 medium
- ◆ Tapestry needle
- ◆ Handmade wooden glove boards or blockers kit (optional)

**Finished size:** 8 inches (20.3 cm) hand circumference and 10 inches (25.4 cm) long

**Gauge:** 32 sts = 4 inches (10.2 cm) in patt from Right and Left Hand Charts; 59 rnds of Right or Left Hand Chart measure 3¾ inches (9.5 cm) high

## SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

### Work-3 BO

[P2tog, sl new st back to left needle] 2 times, p2tog leaving new st on right needle, then cont as charted.

### Make Bobble (MB)

Work [k1, yo, k1] all in same st—3 sts made from 1 st.

### Bobble Bind-Off

**Step 1:** K1, MB, sl 3 bobble sts just made to left needle and k3tog (2 sts on right needle). Pass 2<sup>nd</sup> st on right needle over 1<sup>st</sup> st (1 st on right needle). Move st on right needle to left needle and p2tog—1 st on right needle.

**Step 2:** MB, sl 3 bobble sts just made to left needle and k3tog (2 sts on right needle). Pass 2<sup>nd</sup> st on right needle over 1<sup>st</sup> st (1 st on right needle). Move st on right needle to left needle and p2tog—1 st on right needle.

Rep Step 2 until 1 st rem. Break yarn and fasten off last st.

## INSTRUCTIONS

*Notes:* See above and visit [www.interweave.com/interweave-knitting-glossary](http://www.interweave.com/interweave-knitting-glossary) for Abbreviations and Techniques.

### Mitts

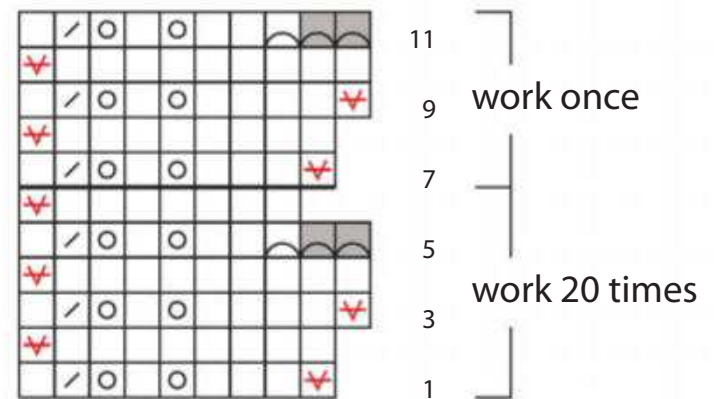
#### Cuff (same for right and left hand)

*Notes:* The lace border is worked back and forth in rows, then stitches are picked up along its straight selvedge for working the cuff in the round. For the Lace Border Chart, blank squares represent knit stitches on both right-side and wrong-side rows. Slip the first stitch of every row as if to purl with yarn in front (sl 1 pwise wyf).

Using the 6-inch (15-cm) needles and the long-tail method, CO 8 sts.

Work Rows 1–6 of Lace Border Chart 20 times, then

### Lace Border



see instructions

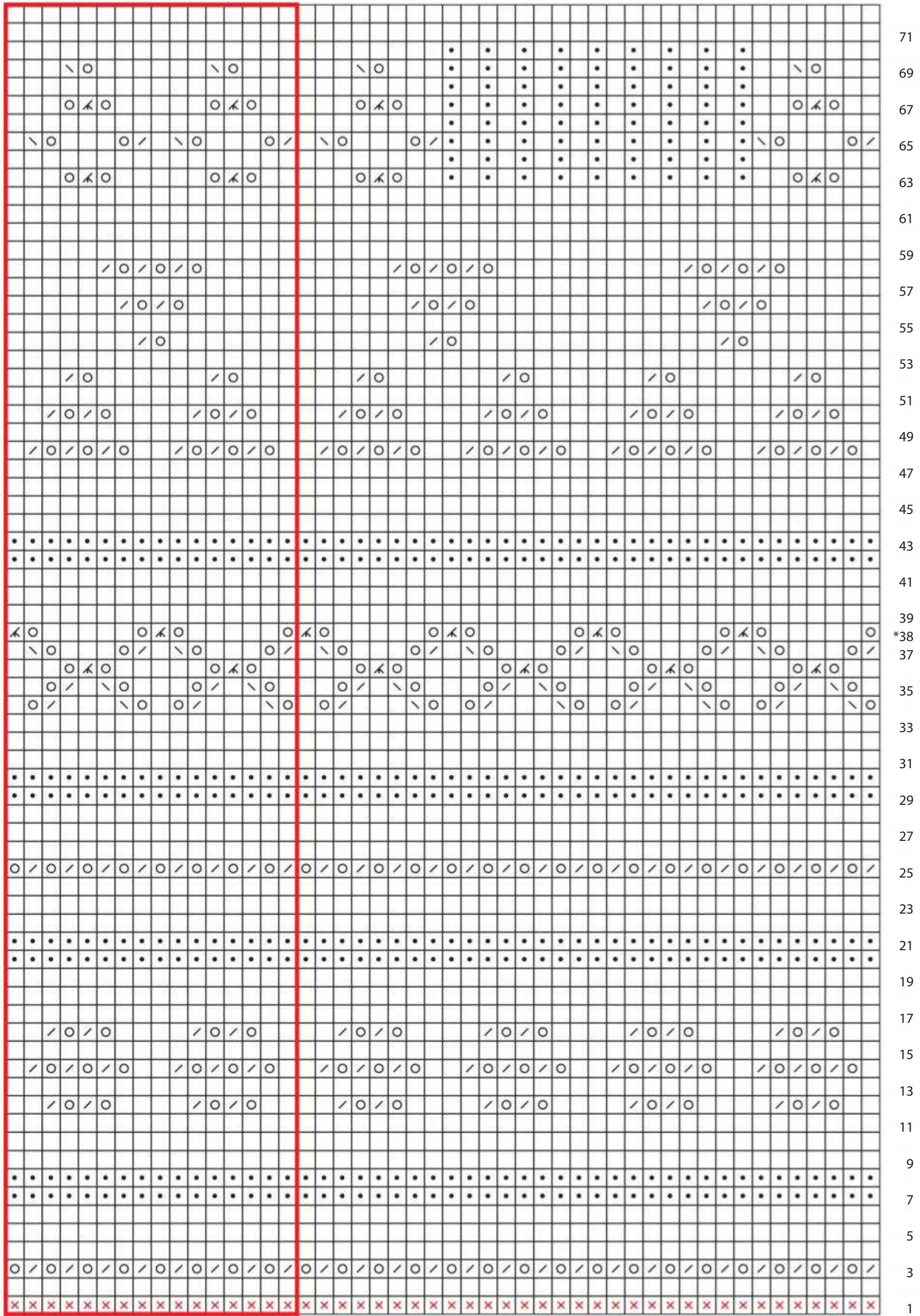
Charts may be photocopied for personal use. The charts for this project are available in PDF format at [www.interweave.com/piecework-charts-illustrations](http://www.interweave.com/piecework-charts-illustrations).

- k (see Notes)
- p
- yo
- k2tog
- k2tog tbl
- k3tog
- sl 1 pwise wyf on RS and WS
- k picked-up loop tbl
- CO 1 st with backward-loop method
- pattern repeat
- no stitch
- work-3 BO (see Special Techniques)

work Rows 7–11 once, ending with a RS row—8 sts rem; 21 lace “teeth” completed. Do not cut yarn. Place 8 live sts on a holder. Pick up 8 sts along the CO edge by sliding the needle into one lp of each CO st (these sts are just placed on the needle, not picked up and knit), then place these sts on a separate holder. The ends of the edging will be grafted together later.

With 8-inch (20-cm) needles and RS facing, pick up 64 slipped edge sts (3 sts for each tooth plus 1 extra) along the border’s straight selvedge by sliding the needle into the front lp of each edge st (do not pick up and knit). Divide sts evenly onto 4 needles (16 sts each needle), join for working in rnds using 5 needles, and pm for beg of rnd. Using yarn attached at end of last RS border row, work Cuff Chart as foll.



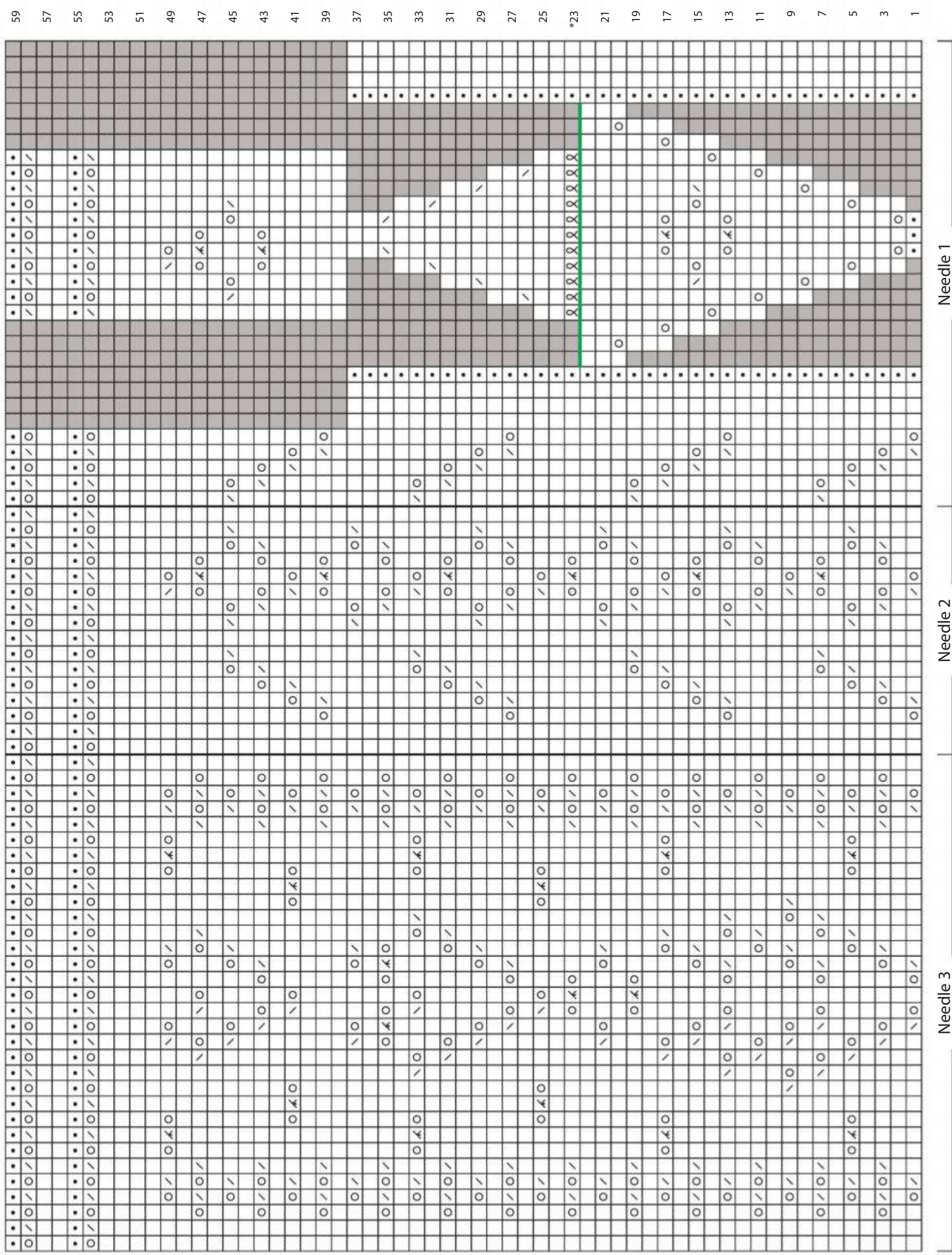


16-st rep  
work twice

\*see instructions



Right Hand



\*see instructions









Inna Voltchkova's lace mitts shown on and with handmade wooden glove boards (made by a friend's father).

*Rnd 1:* K all sts through the back lp; this gives the 1<sup>st</sup> round a crossed appearance (shown as red Xs on chart).

Work Rnds 2–37 of chart.

*Rnd 38:* Remove m, k the 1<sup>st</sup> st on Needle 1 onto the end of Needle 4, replace m at end of Needle 4—15 sts on Needle 1 and 17 sts on Needle 4. Work Rnd 37 as shown, transferring sts between needles as needed to work any k3togs that fall at the end of a needle. If necessary, rearrange sts evenly (16 sts on each needle).

Work Rnds 39–72 of chart.

Cont according to instructions for the right or left hand.

#### Right Hand

Rearrange sts on 3 needles as foll: 16 sts on Needle 1, 16 sts on Needle 2, and 32 sts on Needle 3.

Using 4 needles, work Rnds 1–22 of Right Hand Chart—78 sts; 30 sts on Needle 1.

*Rnd 23:* On Needle 1, k3, p1, place next 17 sts on holder for thumb (shown by green line), use the backward-loop method to CO 11 sts across thumb gap, p1, k8; on Needles 2 and 3, work as shown—72 sts; 24 sts on Needle 1.

Work Rnds 24–35—64 sts rem; 16 sts each on Needles 1 and 2, and 32 sts on Needle 3.

Work Rnds 36–59.

BO all sts using the bobble BO method.

#### Left Hand

Rearrange sts on 3 needles as foll: 16 sts on Needle 1, 16 sts on Needle 2, and 32 sts on Needle 3.

Using 4 needles, work Rnds 1–22 of Left Hand Chart—78 sts; 30 sts on Needle 2.

*Rnd 23:* On Needle 1, work 16 sts as shown; on Needle

2, k8, p1, place next 17 sts on holder for thumb (shown by green line), use the backward-loop method to CO 11 sts across thumb gap, p1, k3; on Needle 3, work 32 sts as shown—72 sts; 24 sts on Needle 2.

Work Rnds 24–35—64 sts rem; 16 sts each on Needles 1 and 2, and 32 sts on Needle 3.

Work Rnds 36–59.

BO all sts using the bobble BO method.

#### Thumb (same for right and left hand)

Place 17 held thumb sts on 3-inch (7-cm) needle, and join yarn at end of needle. Pick up and k 1 st in corner of thumb opening, pick up and k 11 sts from base of thumb CO sts, pick up and k 1 st in corner, then knit across 17 live sts—30 sts. Distribute sts on 3 needles (10 sts each needle).

*Rnd 1:* K.

*Rnd 2:* [K8, k2tog] 3 times—27 sts; 9 sts each needle.

*Rnd 3:* K.

*Rnd 4:* [K7, k2tog] 3 times—24 sts; 8 sts each needle.

*Rnds 5–18:* K.

*Rnd 19:* [K2tog, yo] 12 times.

*Rnd 20:* P.

BO all sts.

### Finishing

Place eight held stitches from each end of the lace border on separate needles. Join the ends as follows.

*Step 1:* Insert right needle tip into first stitch on the left needle and draw the second stitch on the left needle through the first stitch and onto the tip of the right needle. Drop the first stitch from the left needle.

*Step 2:* Insert left needle tip into first stitch on the right needle and draw the second stitch on the right needle through the first stitch and onto the tip of the left needle. Drop the first stitch from the right needle.

Repeat Steps 1 and 2 until one stitch remains.

Thread a 5-inch (12.7-cm) length of yarn on a tapestry needle, draw the yarn through the remaining stitch and tie a knot to prevent the remaining stitch from raveling.

Weave in loose ends, using yarn tails to close any holes. Place the mitts on blockers, wrap in a wet towel, and leave overnight to settle the stitches.

INNA VOLTCHKOVA was born and raised in Kiev, the oldest city in Eastern Europe, and started knitting when she was ten years old. She is a graduate of the Kiev National University of Technology and Design. A 1991 trip to Chicago introduced her to the love of her life, and she moved to the Chicago area. For the past twenty years, her passion has been lace knitting, especially Russian-style lace. She has worked with Galina Khmeleva's Skaska Designs for many years. Follow her at Russian Knitting Design on Facebook.



# Ann's Rag Book

*With a Brief History of These Fabric Books*

KATHY TROUP

A small, rather insignificant greeting card from the gift shop of the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh has been pinned up on my notice board for several years. Something about the image of an embroidered fox captivated me, and the scant amount of information on the back of the card made me want to find out more. It was described as:

## Fox

Detail from a white woollen child's rag book embroidered with coloured mercerised threads and showing various animals and the inscription 'Ann's Book'. English, by Jeanne Mount, 1951.



The pomegranate from *Ann's Book* made by Jeanne Mount. Embroidered. Cotton thread on wool. England. 1951. Collection of the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. (1962.1077).  
*Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland.*





The lion from *Ann's Book* made by Jeanne Mount. Embroidered. Cotton thread on wool. England. 1951. Collection of the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. (1962.1077).  
 Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland.



The camel from *Ann's Book* made by Jeanne Mount. Embroidered. Cotton thread on wool. England. 1951. Collection of the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. (1962.1077).  
 Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland.

I wanted to see the book's other animals and find out how the book had found its way into the museum's textiles collection. I contacted the National Museum of Scotland and discovered that the piece was not currently being exhibited. Undeterred, I arranged to visit the National Museums Collection Centre in Granton, a suburb of Edinburgh, where the book was stored.

The storage facility is huge, but the book had been brought out for my visit and was displayed on a table. The folding book has four "pages." The cover declares that it is *Ann's Book*; the lettering is embroidered in black stem and tan chain stitches; cream stitches, probably coral stitch, outline each letter. Within the o's in the word "book," embroidery in buttonhole stitch and stem-stitch filling make the o's resemble eyes, adding a playful touch. The border that surrounds the words is in blue and yellow herringbone stitch with additions of detached-chain stitches; the rest of the cover is decorated with small stars stitched in coral, salmon, and tan threads. The remaining pages on this side of the book feature a palm tree, a shell, and a pomegranate. The whole construction of the book is stitched, including the divisions between the pages and the decoration where the red and blue twisted cord fastenings are attached.

Turning the book over reveals the fox and another three animals—a lion, a badger, and a camel. All are just as enchanting as the fox, and the stitching is just as exquisite. The bodies are predominantly worked in chain-stitch filling, but other stitches such as feather stitch (for the ground at the camel's feet), buttonhole stitch (for the badger's claws and the camel's mane), and tête de beuf (for the blue ground below the lion

and the larger markings on the badger's back) are used to good effect.

The pristine condition of this beautiful book makes it seem unlikely that a child ever loved and used it. In fact, as I discovered, this rag book and others were part of the Needlework Development Scheme (NDS) in Scotland, a venture that ran from 1934 to 1939 and 1944 to 1961. Funded by the thread manufacturer J & P Coats of Paisley, the scheme was set up to encourage greater interest in needlework and to improve the standard of design—and, of course, to sell more thread.

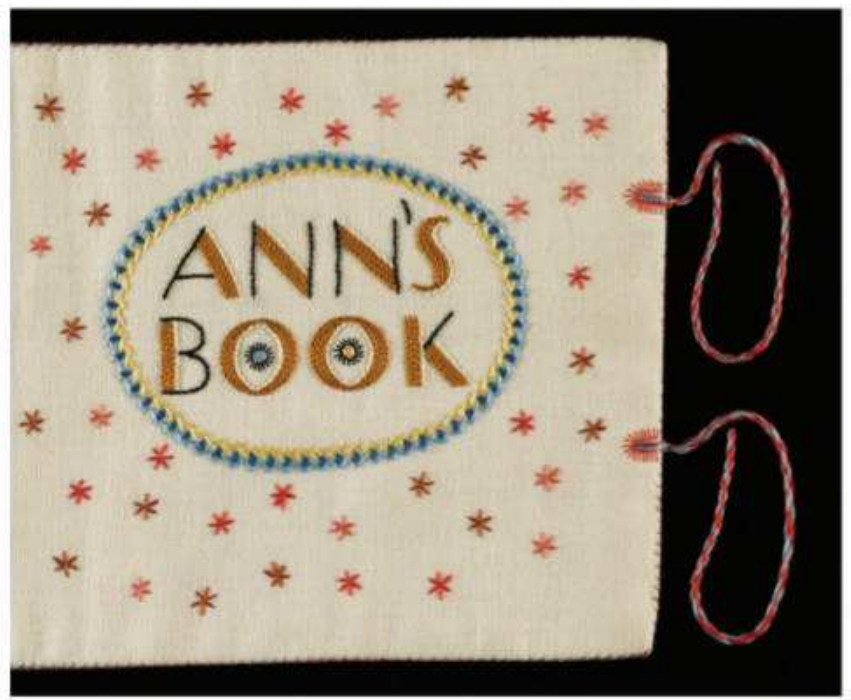
Eventually, the NDS amassed a collection of some 3,500 pieces, which included both purchased and donated pieces. The committee tasked with acquiring the pieces was instructed to concentrate on modern embroideries rather than on historical pieces because it was assumed that museum collections would specialize in historical embroideries. The embroideries were split into smaller circulating collections and loaned, free of charge, to schools and educational groups throughout the United Kingdom. When the funding for the program ran out, the collection was broken up and sent to museums, art colleges, and groups such as the Women's Institute and the Townswomen's Guild in Ireland.

*Ann's Book* was made by Jeanne Mount, who lived in Hampshire, England. She made at least two additional books now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London—*Elsie's Book*, which shows embroidered butterflies on the four pages adjacent to the cover and caterpillars on the pages on the reverse, and *Henry's Book*, which shows birds (hen, turkey,





The badger from *Ann's Book* made by Jeanne Mount. Embroidered. Cotton thread on wool. England. 1951. Collection of the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. (1962.1077).  
 Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland.



The cover of *Ann's Book* made by Jeanne Mount. Embroidered. Cotton thread on wool. England. 1951. Collection of the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. (1962.1077).  
 Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland.



The shell from *Ann's Book* made by Jeanne Mount. Embroidered. Cotton thread on wool. England. 1951. Collection of the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. (1962.1077).  
 Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland.



The palm tree from *Ann's Book* made by Jeanne Mount. Embroidered. Cotton thread on wool. England. 1951. Collection of the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. (1962.1077).  
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The animals from *Ann's Book* made by Jeanne Mount. Embroidered. Cotton thread on wool. England. 1951. Collection of the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, Scotland. (1962.1077).

Photograph courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland.

goose, and drake) on one side and bugs and the title page on the other.

In contrast to these seemingly spotless examples, another cloth book in the Victoria and Albert's collection is one that Mary Ellen Seabrook created in 1950 for her one-year-old daughter. Made from scraps of leftover fabric, the book, which looks a little more used and loved, is beautifully sewn and embroidered. The information on the museum's website states: "The owner of the book remembers her mother as a talented needlewoman who taught her dress-making, knitting and crochet. The daughter grew up in the post-war years when food was rationed and playthings hard to come by. The quality of this well-made book is at least on a par with, if not better, than commercially produced examples from companies such as Deans



The "fox" greeting card from the gift shop of the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh that Kathy Troup purchased several years ago. Photograph by Kathy Troup.

Rag Book Co." (See the "Dean's Rag Book Company" sidebar.)

I have many embroideries in my collection, most of them small pieces bought at needlework shows or brought back from holidays, but when I visit museums or see other textile collections, I can't resist buying postcards and images of special embroideries so that I can take them home with me. The delightful fox shown on the card is one of my favorites. I am so glad that I brought him home, as he led me on a wonderful adventure into the world of rag books—and allowed me to meet his "friends": the camel, the lion, and the badger . . . and discover other beautiful rag books in other collections. ❖

## Dean's Rag Book Company

Rag books were developed because they were ideal for babies and small children: the pages couldn't be torn out and eaten, and the books were soft and comfortable and wouldn't cause harm. In 1903, Henry Samuel Dean founded Dean's Rag Book Company, also known as Dean's Rag Books (or just Dean's in London), to produce rag books for children. The rag books Dean's made were simple printed cloth books whose edges were cut with zigzag clothmaking shears. The company's expertise in working with cloth, printing, and patterns also led it to branch out into other enterprises such as making soft toys and cut-out books. In addition, the company produced printed cloth. For many years, the company's trademark was a bulldog and a terrier fighting over a rag book, which was meant to show the near-indestructibility of the items that they produced.

—Kathy Troup

### FURTHER RESOURCES

Cope, Peter, and Dawn Cope. *Dean's Rag Books & Rag Dolls: The Products of a Famous British Publisher and Toymaker*. London: New Cavendish Books, 2009.  
The National Museum of Scotland; [www.nms.ac.uk](http://www.nms.ac.uk).  
Victoria and Albert Museum; [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk).

KATHY TROUP, born in the north of England, has lived in Scotland for many years. She edited a U.K.-published stitching magazine for seventeen years and continues to write about the subjects she loves.



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## Advertiser's Index

Brown Sheep Company .....	3
Cascade Yarns .....	C4
Colonial Needle .....	5
DMC Corporation.....	C2
Handy Hands .....	5
Jacuzzi, Inc.....	61
Knotty Lady Yarns, LLC .....	79
Oomingmak, Musk Ox Producers .....	79
Royalwood, LTD.....	79
Safe Step Walk-In Tub Co.....	55
Signature Needle Arts .....	3
Treenway Silks.....	3

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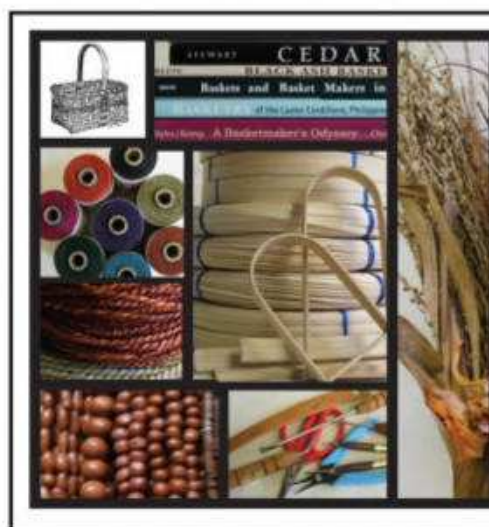
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# Then and Now

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French women's fashions. 1780. A print from *La France et les Français à Travers les Siècles*, Volume IV, 1882–1884, by Augustin Challamel. Photograph by The Print Collector/Print Collector/Getty Images.

A fashion illustration of a Leanne Marshall runway look for New York Fashion Week at Spring Studios on February 13, 2018, in New York City. Illustration by Emily Brickel Edelson / Chic Sketch via Getty Images.



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