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Embroidery and Crochet

Bennie Carol Burgess

Ouachita Baptist University

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SUMMARY OF HONORS PROJECT

Spring Semester, 1973

Home Economics Department

Mrs. Thomas, Supervising Teacher

By Bennie Carol Burgess

I did my Honors Project this semester in the area of Handicrafts. For my Creative Work, I crocheted an edging for a flat king size sheet, and a pair of king size pillowcases. The edging is a combination of chain stitches and double crochet stitches, and is $5/8$ inch wide. This is a total of 192 inches of edging, and took 20 hours to complete, including sewing it on the sheet and pillowcases with invisible hand stitches. I then monogrammed the sheet and two pillow cases with a decorative "B", using tiny outline stitches. The three monograms took a total of six hours to complete. One thing I learned while doing the project was that you are not to knot the thread you use to embroider. Rather, you should make a few backstitches before you begin the design. The sheet and pillow cases cost \$10.00, and the thread for the edging and embroidery costs 75¢. I am using the finished product as an anniversary present for my parents. The hours I put into working on it serve to make it more valuable to my parents, who will treasure this as a gift worth much more than

its actual monetary value.

Besides my hand work, I did a paper on the history of embroidery and crochet. This was interesting, as I found out that these crafts are not as recent as I thought, but have existed in various forms throughout the ages. I used three sources for the paper, and was surprised to find out, unlike most papers that I have done previously, they agreed exactly.

EMBROIDERY AND CROCHET

Paper for Honors Project

Spring Semester, 1973

for Mrs. Thomas

by Bennie Carol Burgess

Embroidery is sometimes called needle-painting. The word embroidery comes from the Anglo-Saxon word, meaning edge or border. There are many different kinds of stitches, some to outline a design, and others to fill in an entire area for a design. One of the advantages of embroidery is that it can be as simple or as complicated as you want.

Crochet, which developed as a way of making fine lace, has grown into a very versatile type of needlework. The French word "crochet", meaning crooked, applied to the crochet hook, and gave crocheted lace its name. There are three main stitches--chain, single, and double. Various designs are achieved by combining the three stitches.

The United States got her needlework customs from all the countries from which she got settlers, especially from the American Indian culture. Designs we have gathered and preserved show originality of the area they came from, and the era in which they were designed, but there is a similarity in the techniques and stitches, worldwide. We tend to think of needlework as being a

highly civilized craft, developed only in the more recent years, but it goes back much farther than that. Prehistoric people made designs on the skins they sewed together for clothing. We have examples of early Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Persian, Syrian, and Italian embroideries, using linen, silk, or metallic threads. Often, the gold or other metals were wound around a linen thread, probably in the same manner as the polyester bound thread we use today. These gold threads were sometimes used to outline colored silk, linen, or wool embroidery, or sometimes they were attached to the material to create a solid, filled-in effect. The decorations were used on both clothing and home decorations.

In the Orient, the very fine, richly colored silk fabrics were embroidered with silk, metallic thread, and jewels. They used seed stitch, chain stitch, outline stitch, featherstitch, and satin stitch, and sometimes used little pieces of metal in their designs to create the same effect as modern sequins. The Chinese used silk and gold thread on silk damask to embroider symbols and delicate scenes. In India, seamstresses fasten tiny mirrors, beads, and bangles on silk cloth of brilliantly colored silk. One of the tribes there used a darning stitch to decorate complete garments. In the Balkan countries, bold, simple folk designs are

used on clothes. The French and Swiss embroider dainty designs on fine linens. The Island of Madeira is known for its beautiful "festoons". (Scalloped edges) The Italians use canvas stitches on white linen to show representations of things important to them. European styles have, of course, changed with the years, but the designs and workmanship of the Orient style follow the old colors, designs, and traditions.

In the Middle Ages, embroidery reached its peak. Nuns in convents and ladies at home made beautiful, rich designs on linen for church decorations, priests' robes, wall hangings, and official clothing for state days. In Italy and Southern France, wall hangings and beautiful garments were made of fine silk fabrics, velvet, and brocade, embroidered with silken and metallic threads. In the Middle Ages and up to the 17th century, these wall hangings were important, since the castles were built of stone, often without mortar. The hangings were not only beautiful, but also kept out drafts.

During the 16th century, needlework became very important in England. Many embroideries of this time were done in wool or silk on a canvas-like linen, called canvas work. Girls aged eight through twelve were expected to make samplers, or exemplars of the stitches they could do.

The American Indians used embroidery to sew deco-

rations on their clothes in elaborate designs.

Crewel embroidery has developed into a popular form of needlework since the 17th century. This term was first used to tell the kind of thread used, a ~~thingy~~ thin, two-strand wool. Now it refers also to the type of embroidery used.

During the last 100 years, women have used crochet and embroidery as a decoration more than a necessity. Doilies, elaborate designs on towels and bed linens, went through a phase of high popularity, and crocheted scarfs and sweaters are seen everywhere. There is an ever-increasing supply of patterns and threads for the industrious and imaginative woman of today who wants to make garments or decorations that are not only beautiful and useful, but are also treasured for generations to come.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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