

THE HISTORY OF EMBROIDERY

Embroidery is the artistic detail added to fabric with a needle and thread. When it was first used, embroidery was just used to patch rips in clothing. People discovered various new stitches when they had to make the stitch more durable to withstand rough use. Eventually, new materials were introduced and those too became embroidered onto the clothing. Some of these materials were metal strips, pearls, beads and quills.

Some of the earliest samples of embroidery have been traced back to ancient Egypt, Persia, China, India, Russia and England. Each culture had its own unique style based off of the country's history and traditions.

There are various types of embroidery, but one of the more common ones is cross-stitch. Cross-stitch is a type of embroidery where a person counts each thread and follows a specific pattern.

Embroidery was a mandatory craft for a young lady to learn in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was one of the first things a young lady was taught how to stitch. To begin, young ladies were taught how to stitch numbers and letters.



The sampler on the left was stitched by Ann Fitzpatrick, mother of Bennett Fultz. The sampler is on display in the dining room of the Fultz House Museum.

THE ART OF THE SAMPLER

A sampler is an embroidered piece that was used purely for practice. The term "sampler" is derived from the old French term "essamplaire" which means any kind of work that is to be copied or imitated. This practice would include difficult stitches, new designs, and numbers and letters that would later become a young lady's personal work reference.

It is thought that the earliest sampler is from around 200B.C. – 300A.D., and was used by someone from the Nazca culture in Peru. Today, the oldest surviving samplers are from the 16th and 17th centuries and originated from Europe. It is however, difficult to explain how the sampler design evolved because there is little to no samplers that have been found from the 16th century.

As the skill of young ladies improved, the simple stitches of numbers and letters evolved into whole verses of poems or biblical references. Most times, the verse would have significant meaning to the young lady, as samplers could turn into magnificent pieces of artwork.

As the young lady became more proficient, she would begin learning how to stitch a picture. These pictures would start off basic, maybe with a small boarder, and then the boarder would become more intricate. Eventually, she would be able to stitch a whole picture and boarder. The picture might have been in regards to the verse chosen, or just a picture that they liked. It was said that once a young lady could stitch a pictorial sampler, they were deemed ready to wed.

During the 17th and 18th century, samplers were used most commonly for school exercises. Any samplers completed during this time would have been completely cross-stitched. Anne Fitzpatrick, mother of Bennett Fultz, completed a sampler (see picture on previous panel) in 1811 at the age of eleven. It is possible that she completed this sampler at school. This sampler is on display in the dining room of the Fultz House Museum.

The History of Hand-stitched Creations



The embroidered bookmark shown above can be found marking a page in a bible located in the large bedroom of the Fultz House Museum.

FULTZ HOUSE MUSEUM

WHAT IS QUILTING?

Quilting is a form of art where one gathers pieces of fabric together to form a bed covering or warm garment often used for a decorative effect. Quilting can be a long process, but it is one that many find quite leisurely. Hundreds of years ago early European settlers introduced quilting to North America. This new and exciting craft became a very sensible addition to homes because they were warm and added a touch of colour to a home. As some quilts can be quite intricate, they would often become family heirlooms.

As quilting became more popular amongst North Americans, they began to reflect the morals and values of their creator. It was also suggested that a quilt could hint at a person's economic and cultural conditions of their time. During certain periods in time, certain colours became more popular and were used quite often. During the Great Depression, a quilter would have used darker colours as the dark colours reflected the suffering and sorrow of families.

Quilting became a custom that mothers taught to their daughters. During the 1860s, women of the Fultz family would have spent the harsh winter months quilting. The Fultz House Museum is home to many quilts, some of which have been made by Fultz family ancestors.



The quilt shown in the above photo was made by Winifred King, daughter of Bennett and Mary Fultz. The quilt is kept in the Fultz House Museum. Below is a picture of the tag that is sewn into the back of the quilt.



FAMILY HISTORIES IN FABRIC

Quilts were a great sentimental gift to give on occasions such as a wedding. As the task of quilt making could be a large undertaking, it was quite common for groups of women to get together and sew a quilt as a group. When this happened, they would all gather, and together, form a masterpiece. This occurred very often as a quilt was a very valued gift.

Some completed quilts would be given to a person with empty squares. These squares were left for the new owner of the quilt to add on if they chose to. An example would be, if the quilt was given to a mother for a baby, the mother might have chosen to sew on a piece of the baby's clothes or a part of a baby's blanket as a keepsake.

A family could also show their history through a quilt by making a quilt, but leaving empty squares on the quilt for others to sew different things onto later. This might include a handkerchief, old clothing, or embroidery of a favourite verse. By doing this, the family was building a quilt emblazoned with fond memories that could be remembered for generations.



The two quilts pictured above are kept in the Fultz House Museum. The bottom one is decorated with embroidery whereas the top one is pieced together with smaller pieces of fabric.

QUILTING DESIGNS IN THE 1800s

Various quilt designs originated after blankets began to wear out. To repair these blankets, the blankets were patched, and if they were too badly worn to be repaired, the worn blanket would be combined with another blanket or used as filler inside two blankets. During this time was when early settlers discovered the many different techniques they could use to make their quilts more durable or elaborate.

There were three popular types of quilts in the 1800s. Whole cloth quilts, broderie perse, and medallion quilts. These quilts along with the patch work quilt and applique quilt could all be made during the 1800s. One of the reasons quilts were so useful was because they used up scraps of fabric so nothing went to waste. During this time, a lot of families struggled with money, and the more they could save, the better.

The whole cloth quilt was made up out of single pieces of material on top and on the back of the quilt. This quilt was normally decorated by a padded or corded quilting pattern which made for a simpler look. These quilts were cheap and easy to make, which is what made them so popular.

The broderie perse quilt detail was done by hand in a style of Persian embroidery. The top of the quilt was made out of whole cloth and smaller pieces of fabric were sewn on top of that. This style was favored greatly from the mid 1700 to 1850. However, due to the amount of time and cost, this quilt was not common in an early settler's home.

The medallion quilt originated in Europe, and was brought to North America by European settlers. This type of quilt was made by first, constructing a central motif and then surrounding that motif with multiple borders.