

**A LEGACY IN LACE:
Marian Powys' Scrapbooks
by June Burns Bové
Photographs by Gunnel Teitel**

The legacy of enthusiasm and accurate knowledge left in certain published works is an enduring source of inspiration and information that becomes more valuable to students and scholars as time elapses. *LACE AND LACE-MAKING* by Marian Powys is such a book, first published in 1953 and back in print now after being unavailable for many years.

Marian Powys left scholars more than her published work, however, in the form of notebooks – really handmade scrapbooks – containing samples of lace from her collections complete with her handwritten notes. Although some of these notebooks were made for friends and are privately owned, two were gifts to the public and are available to serious students of the art and history of lace.

The first of these two notebooks was given by Marian Powys to the Palisades Free Library in Palisades, New York, in May of 1965. Inscribed, “To the Palisades Library from Marian Powys Grey,” the gift was presented at a reception for Miss Powys, a beloved and prominent citizen of that small, historic town at the edge of the Hudson River.

Containing eighty-two separate pieces of lace on fifty-five leaves of stiff grey paper, the leather-bound album is about nine by twelve inches and was really intended to contain photographs. Miss Powys wrote in dark blue ink and affixed her laces, often two to three to a page, with pins. Marian Powys believed that lace should be accessible, and she thought that the artistry of lace was best appreciated by direct observation. She began with samples of drawn work (*punto tirato*) and early Flemish bobbin lace and included pieces representing both various periods and centuries and the products of all the important lace-making centers through the mid-twentieth century.

As time has passed, unfortunately, the format Miss Powys chose for her notebook was not kind to the lace. The album contained perforated leaves so that every other leaf could be removed when material was placed on the pages, but Miss Powys did not remove any leaves, so the finished album did not close smoothly and the lace was crushed and wrinkled. In addition, the paper was of a high acid content, and the lace samples, in contact with the paper on both sides, have begun to discolor.

Realizing that it should not circulate, the Librarian had placed the album in the reserved section of the Palisades Free Library, but despite this precaution, the album was badly in need of conservation. This album has been lent to the Textile Study

Room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art so that the best way of conserving both the lace samples and Miss Powys' handwritten notes may be determined. As soon as the conservation work is completed, the album will be returned to the Palisades Free Library.

The second notebook was given to the Newark, New Jersey, Museum in 1966. J. Stewart Johnson, then Curator of Decorative Arts, had learned of the Palisades album and asked that Miss Powys supply a similar reference work for the Newark Museum Library. This book is a brown leatherette binder about twelve by fifteen inches in size with an inscription inside the front cover reading, "The Story of Lace from the XVI Century to the XX Century. Marian Powys." This inscription is in her handwriting, but the leaves all contain typed notations. Though records of the Museum do not indicate any conservation steps taken at the time of the receipt of the gift, it seems certain that Marian Powys' handwritten notes were transcribed by a typist onto acid-free rag paper leaves and that each sample was given a separate page whether or not Miss Powys had grouped them on a single page. Possibly the order of the samples was altered as well. Instead of following the chronological development of needlepoint and bobbin laces, with further indication for the important lace-making centers, as is the case with the Palisades notebook, the Newark album laces are grouped by country in alphabetical order. The scholar must be careful when examining these captions because some headings seem to have been carried over to samples to which they do not apply. In addition, the typist had difficulty with Miss Powys' handwriting and evidently did not know French, transcribing, for instance, *neige* as *nuje*. These are but small difficulties, however, as the samples are in a good state of preservation.

Eighteen samples in the Newark book are from the same pieces of lace as those in the Palisades book, but with a total of ninety samples in the Newark book, this compilation represents a further, rich variety. About ten of the samples may be cut from the pieces used for Miss Powys' published work, in the section called "The Key of Lace," but Miss Powys' son, Peter Powys Grey, has in his possession all of the prepared samples for the published book, and it is certain that Marian Powys chose larger, and in many cases, more interesting examples for the notebooks.

Making the photographs accompanying this article presented several problems. The Palisades album, a bound book, could not be held completely flat. In both cases the paper does not afford enough of a color contrast for a clear picture. Finally, removal of the pins securing the laces to the pages of the Palisades album will be a conservation problem because a number of them bear evidence of corrosion. In the case of the Newark album, moving the pins might have damaged the laces. These photographs were made by inserting small pieces of colored paper, trimmed to size, under each lace, avoiding the pins.

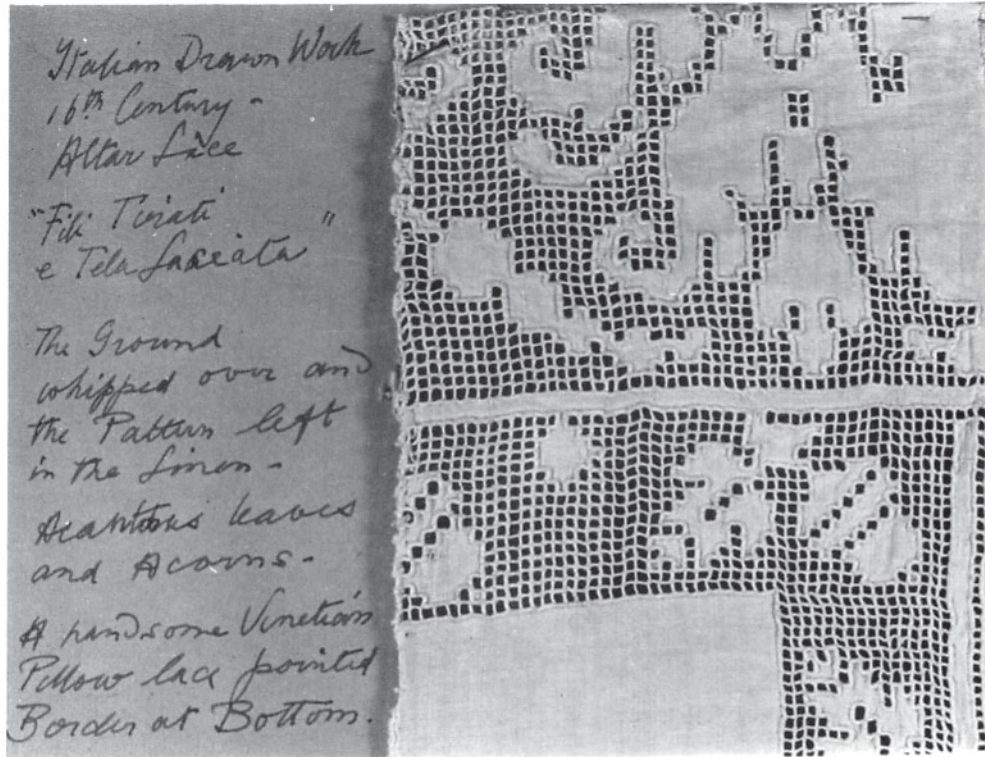
The following selection of pictures from both albums is arranged in the order Miss Powys used for the Palisades album. The texts of the captions in both albums

are in italics.

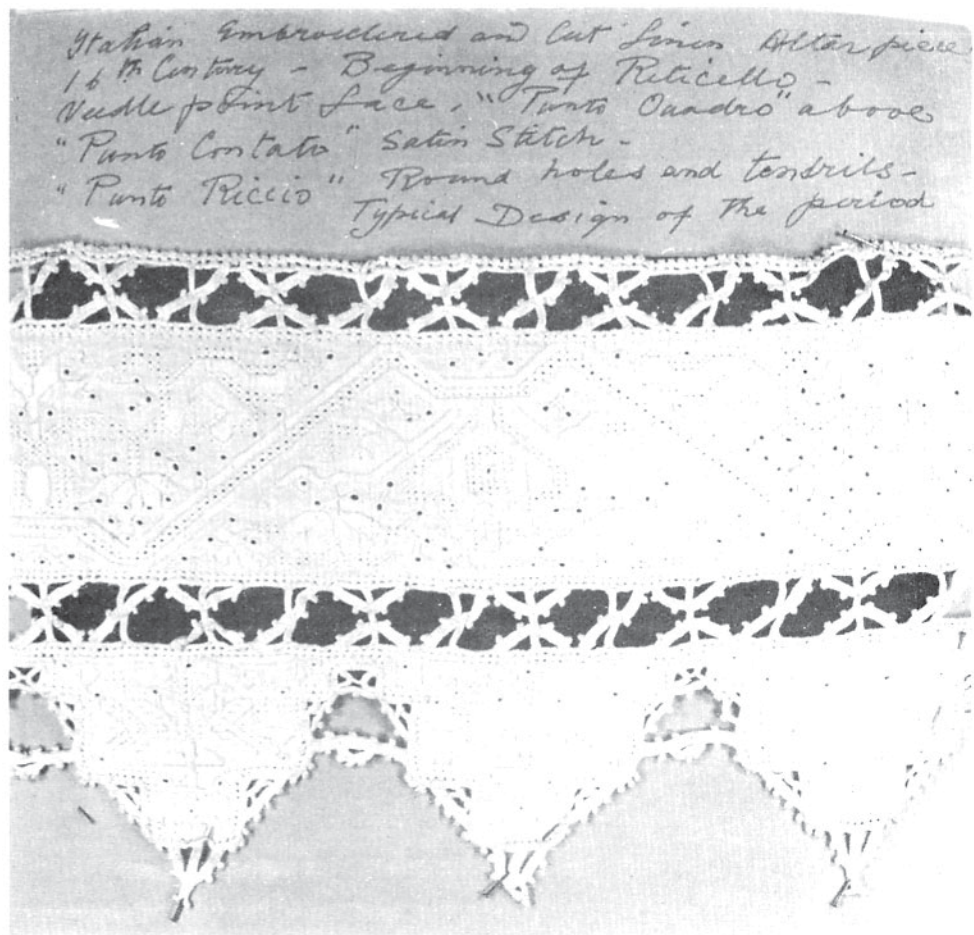
The mood of Miss Powys' handwritten captions is informal, almost conversational, as if she were commenting on each sample for the student. It is for this reason that an effort will be made to preserve the handwritten notation in the conservation of the Palisades album. Where possible, the photographs include her handwriting.

The Palisades album contains eighty-two samples of lace and the Newark album, ninety. Scholars wishing to examine the Newark book should write to Mr. Ulysses Dietz, Curator of Decorative Arts, Newark Museum, Post Office Box 540, Newark, New Jersey 07101, as the album is kept in the storage area, not the library. Those interested in seeing the Palisades album should wait for a year from the date of this publication, as the conservation work must be done before the book is returned to the reserve section of the Palisades Free Library in Palisades, New York.

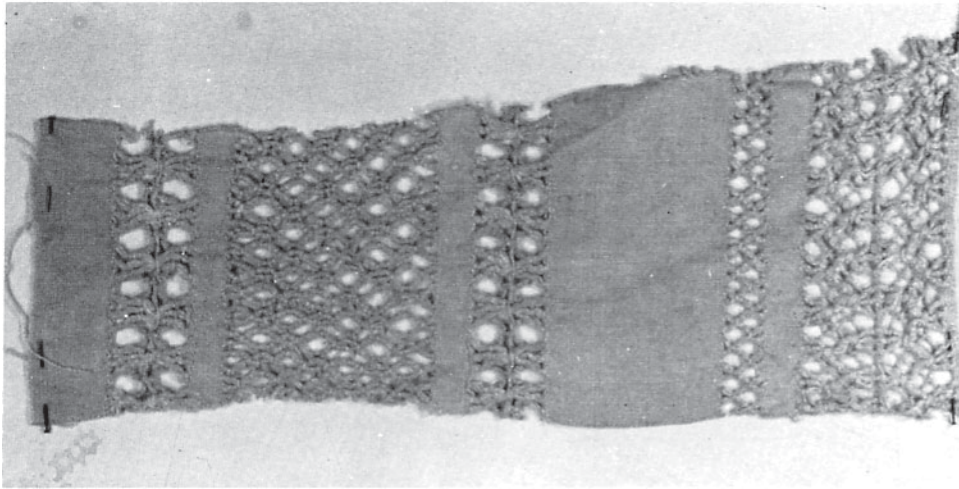
Miss Powys' enthusiasm and her love of the beauty of lace lives after her not only in her published work, but in these albums she so thoughtfully left to us.



1. Palisades: Italian Drawn Work 16th Century--Altar Lace "Fili Tirati e Tela Laciata"
The ground whipped over and the pattern left in the linen.
Acanthus leaves and Acorns--
A handsome Venetian Pillow lace pointed Border at Bottom (not pictured).
Miss Powys begins the Palisades album with examples such as this one showing the transition from laces incorporating selected warp and weft threads from a woven fabric to free laces.



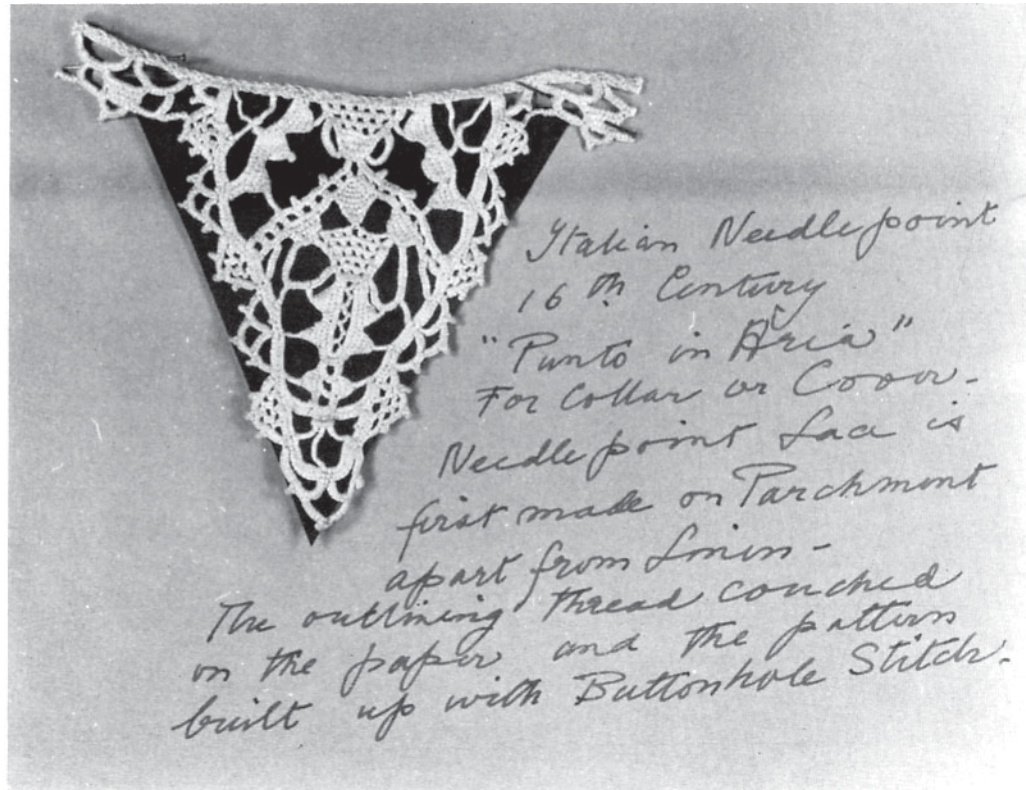
2. Palisades: Italian embroidered and cut linen Altarpiece 16th Century--Beginning of Reticello--Needlepoint Lace, "Punto Quadro" above "Punto Contato" Satin Stitch. "Punto Riccio" Round holes and tendrils--Typical design of the period. Another piece of this lace was used for the illustration in LACE AND LACE MAKING, page 9 bottom. A further sample is in the Newark album, 66.649A66, mounted wrong side up. This may not be an error, as Miss Powys sometimes pinned her laces to show the working on the wrong side.



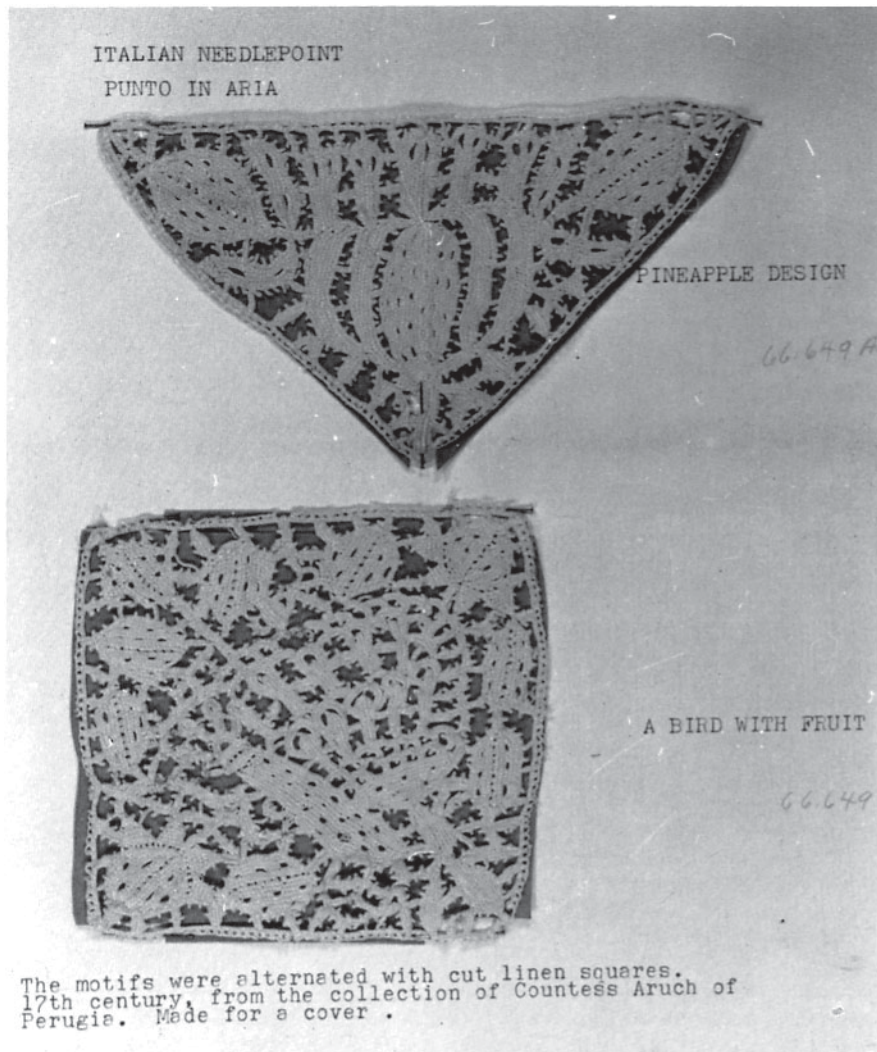
3. Newark 66.649A87 *Spanish Drawn Work Part of a decorated shirt or cover 17th century.*



4. Newark 66.649A64 *Italian Reticello Geometrical pattern, needlepoint, 16th century.*

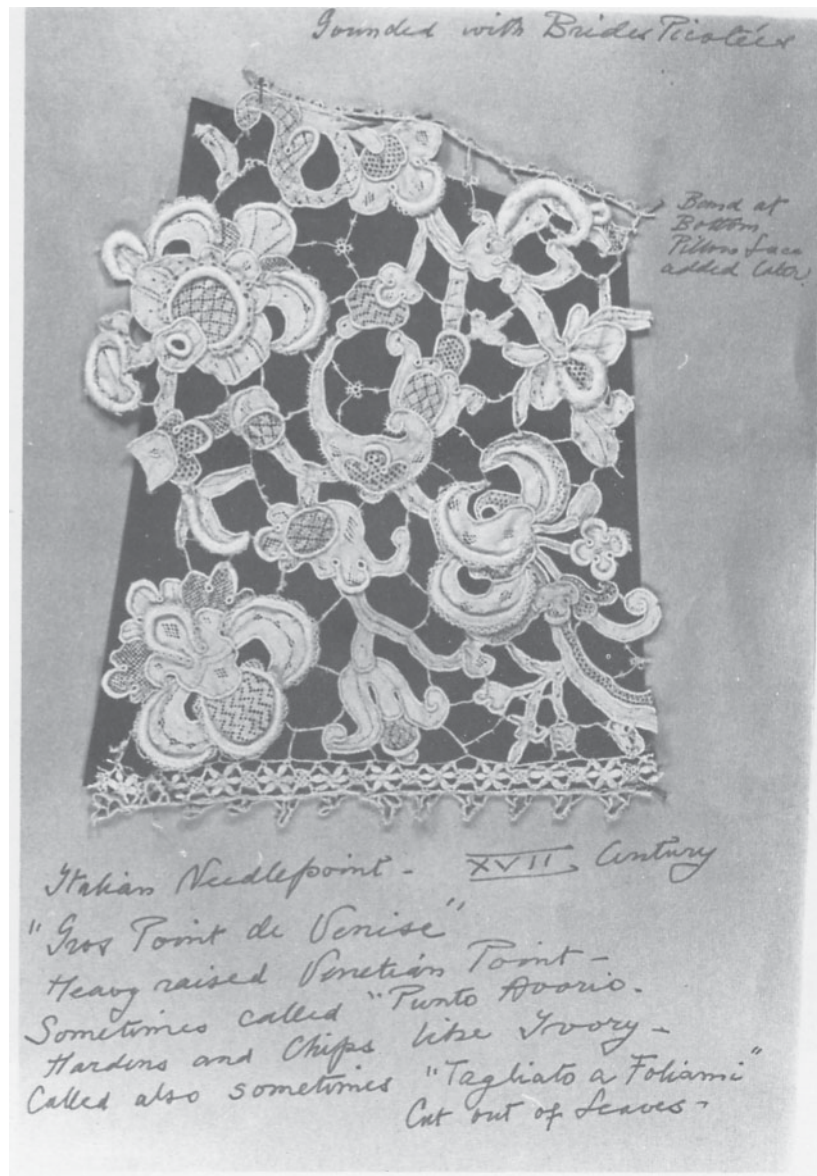


5. Palisades: Italian needlepoint 16th Century "Punto in Aria" For Collar or Cover--Needlepoint lace is first made on Parchment apart from Linen--The outlining thread couched on the paper and the pattern built up with Buttonhole Stitch.



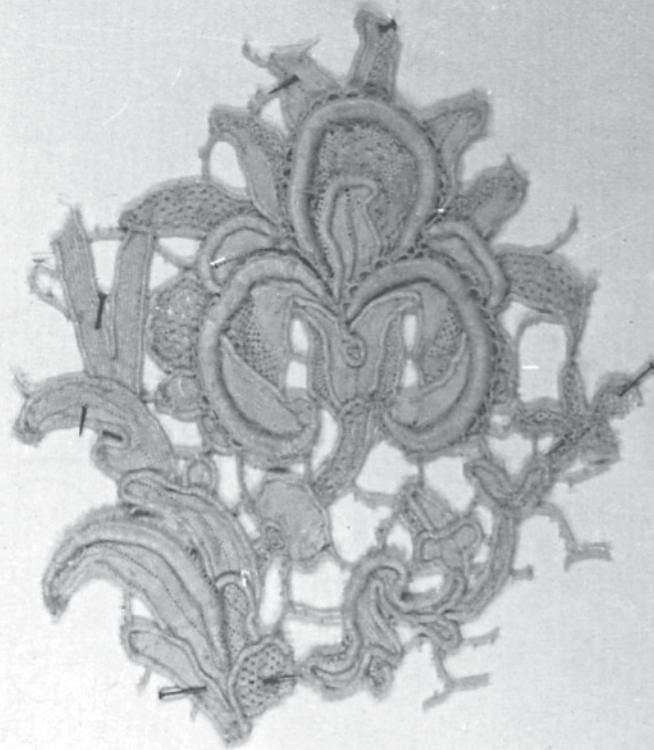
6. Newark 66.649A62 (triangle shape) 66.649A63 (rectangle) *Italian Needlepoint Punto in Aria*

This is one of the few leaves in the Newark album with two samples on a single page. The upper triangular piece is labeled *pineapple design* and the rectangular piece, *a bird with fruit*. The caption reads, *The motifs were alternated with cut linen squares. 17th century, from the collection of Countess Aruch (sic.) of Perugia. Made for a cover.* In the Palisades album is a rectangular motif, similar to these, also from Perugia and dated by Miss Powys XVI century.



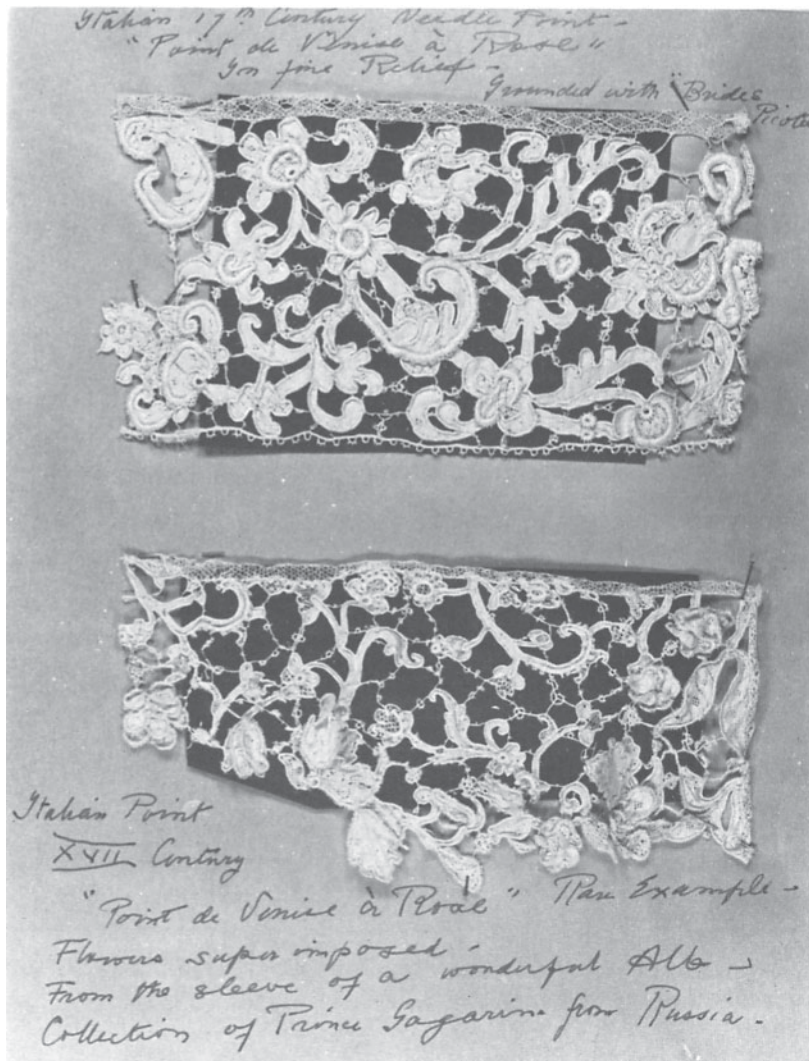
7. Palisades: Notation at the top: *Grounded with Brides Picotées*
 Notation upper right: *Band at bottom--Pillow Lace added later. Italian Needlepoint XVII Century "Gros Point de Venise" Heavy raised Venetian Point--Sometimes called "Punto Avorio--Hardens and Chips like Ivory--Called also sometimes "Tagliato a Foliami" Cut out of Leaves.* The author has not been able to find a published reference for this explanation of the term "Punto Avorio."

ITALIAN NEEDLEPOINT-GROS POINT DE VENISE



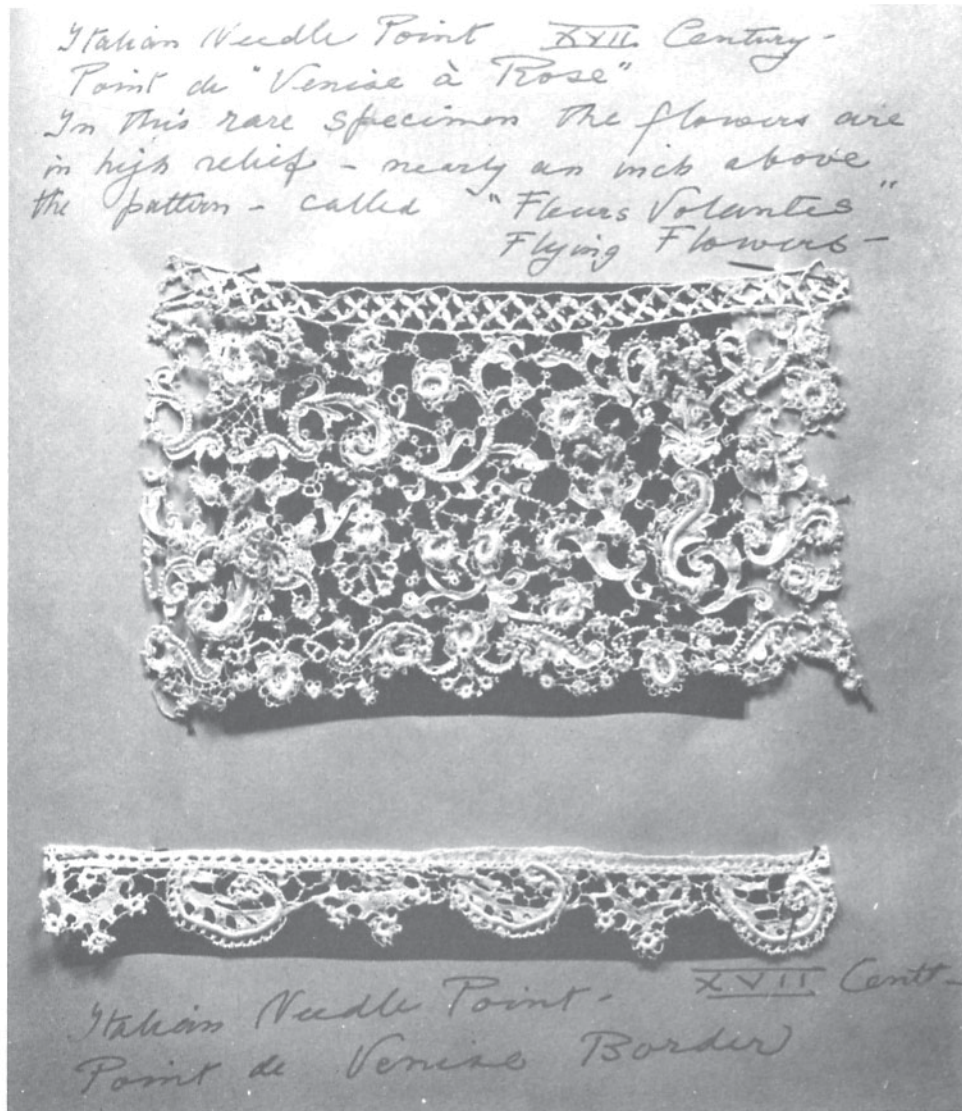
With a variety of fillings, 17th century

8. Newark 66.649A57 *Italian Needlepoint--Gros Point de Venise With a variety of fillings, 17th century.*



9. Palisades: Upper Piece: Italian 17th Century Needlepoint--Point de Venise à Rose," In fine relief--Grounded with Brides Picotées.
 Lower Piece: Italian Point XVII Century "Point de Venise à Rose" Rare Example-
 Flowers superimposed--From the sleeve of a wonderful Alb--Collection of Prince Gagarin from Russia.

These samples of lace and the two in the photograph immediately following are among the exciting surprises of the Palisades album. Incredibly delicate, the petals and flowers are in nearly three-dimensional form, though the crushed condition of the laces at present prevents the camera from revealing these details, especially those of the "flying flowers" in the next picture.



10. Palisades: Upper Piece: Italian Needlepoint XVII Century--Point de Venise à Rose
 In this rare specimen the flowers are in high relief--nearly an inch above the
 pattern--called "Fleurs Volantes" Flying Flowers--
 Lower Piece: Italian Needle Point--XVII Cent-- Point de Venise Border
 The lower piece is on page 12 of LACE AND LACE MAKING, the third example
 down, in reversed position, possibly because of a reversed photographic image.
 Another piece of this lace is 66.649A59 in the Newark album. With the preced-
 ing three magnificent examples in hand, one wonders why Miss Powys chose this
 narrow border for her book.



11. Palisades: Upper Piece: *French Needle Point--Regence Period Point de France*
 Asterix at upper left: *Point Mignon*
 Lower Piece: *French Needle Point "Point à Trou" Point de France "Oeil de Perdrix"*
Transitional between Point de France and Point d'Argentan--
 A delight in both albums, for both the expert and beginner, is Miss Powys' inclusion of transitional pieces and laces less frequently seen, such as the Point de Sedan sample from the Newark album which follows.

FRENCH NEEDLE POINT
Point de Sedan



Brides Picotées with fine fillings
Regence period

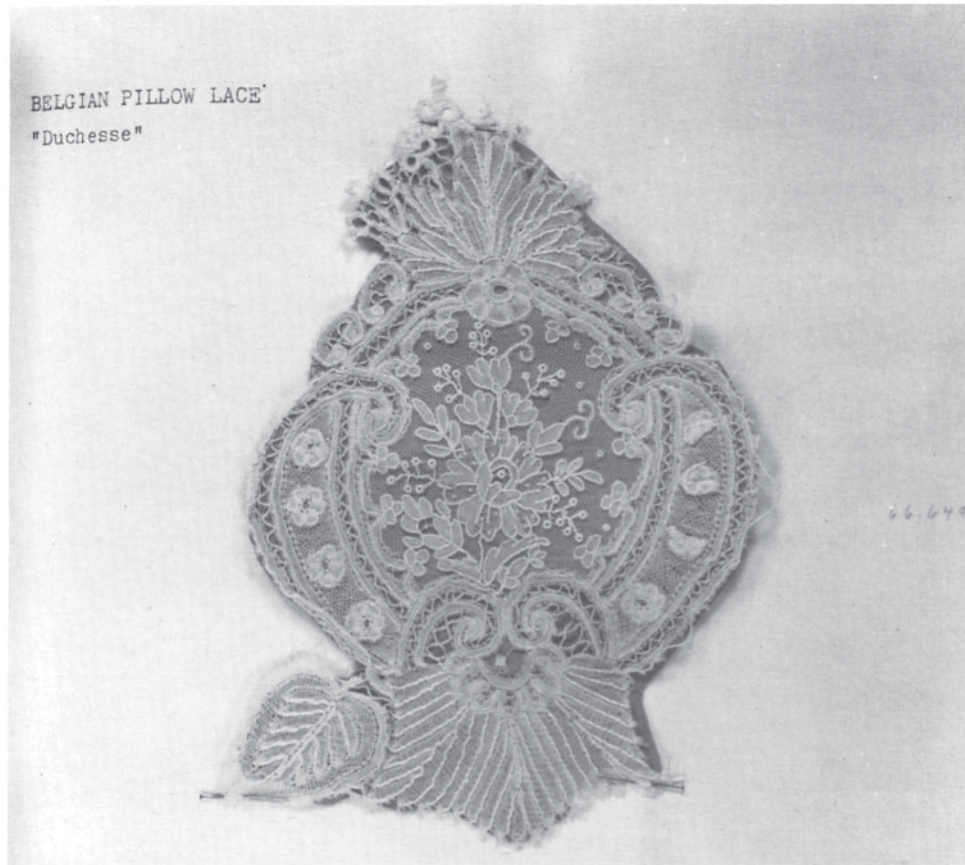
12. Newark 66.649A37 *French Needle Point, Point de Sedan Brides Picotées with fine fillings--Regence Period.*



13. Palisades: *French Needlepoint, Point d'Argentan Louis XV period. Grounded with the Brides Bouclées--Repointed (?--word not legible) Mesh: 1/10 inch with 6 sides, worked each with 6 buttonhole stitches--Fine Filling called the 'Partridge Eye' and 'Point Mignon'* Remarks to the left: *Well balanced floral design--Finest Quality.*

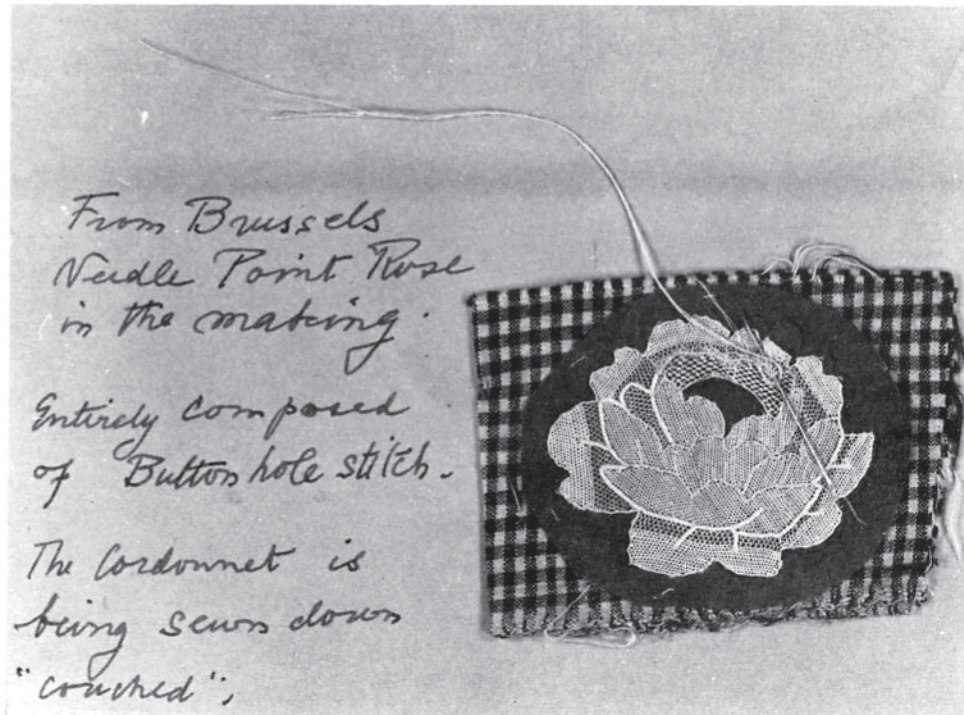


14. Newark 66.649A35 *French Needle Point, Point d'Argentan with Brides Bouclées Hexagonal mesh--buttonholed on each side--very fine work. The petit reseau treated as a filling. Handsome Floral Pattern with curving leaves, flowers and buds, XVIII Century.* These two laces are very similar; the leaf sprays, flowers and bottom scalloped borders are identical. They may be the work of the same maker.

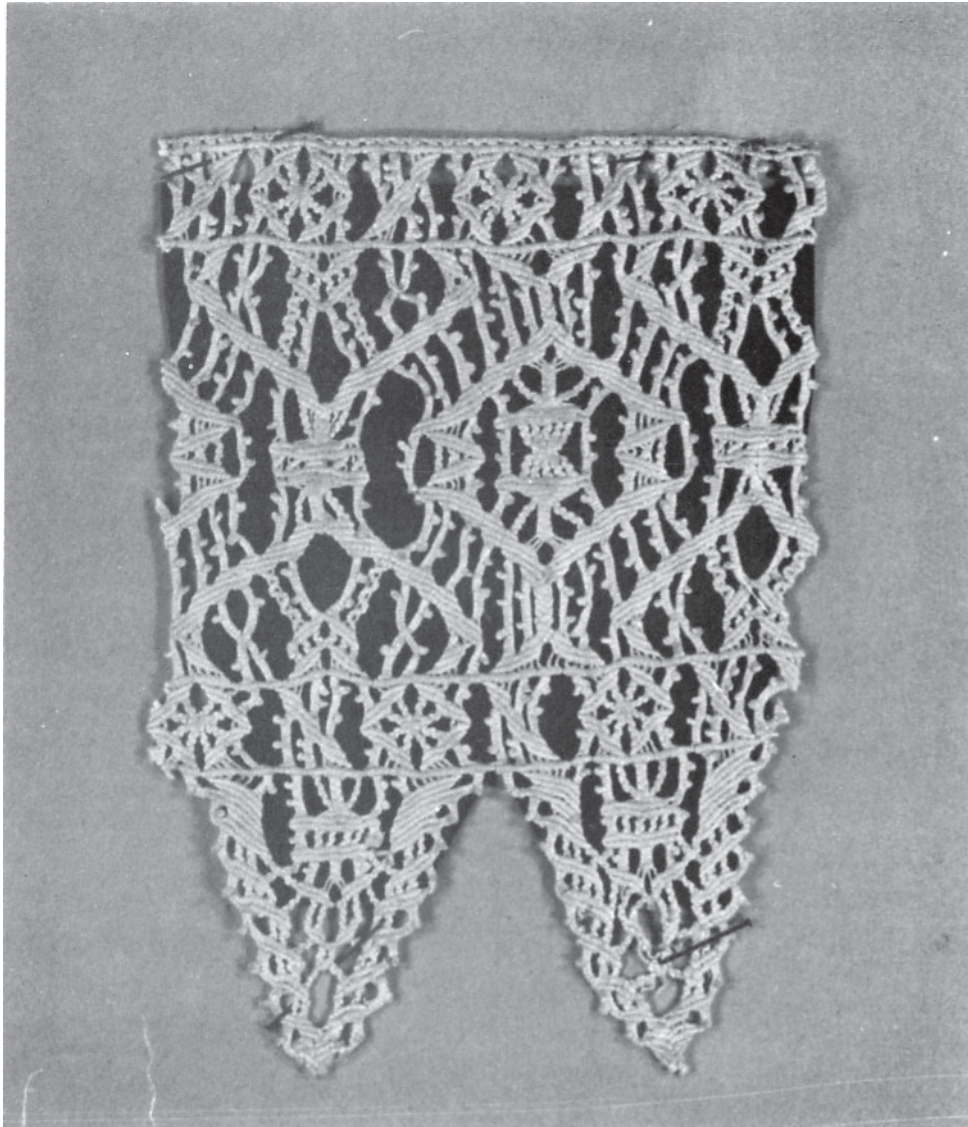


15. Newark 66.649A5 *Belgian Pillow Lace, "Duchesse"* In fine relief with raised flowers and a large central motif of Brussels needlepoint "Rose Point". Laces made facing down. First the raised work, then whole stitch attached with sewings (thread looped up and a bobbin slipped through), Then half stitch, then whole stitch with picots on the border. XIX Century.

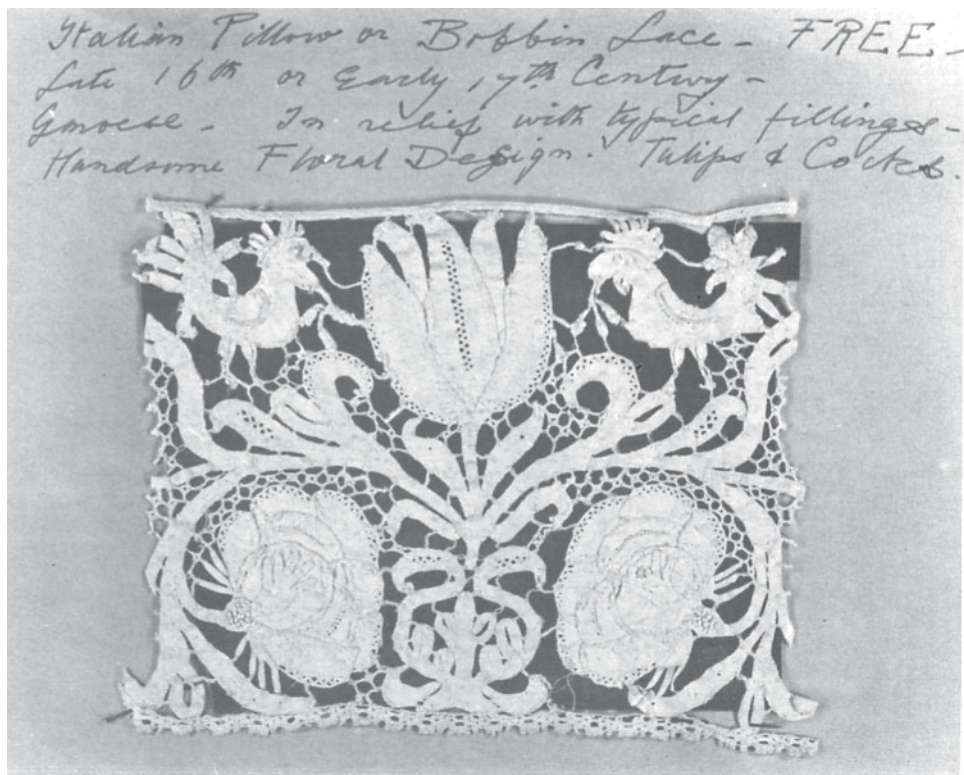
This caption is an example of the importance Miss Powys attaches to understanding the construction of the various laces. The following picture from the Palisades album is one of the samples from page 164 (Plate 95 #C) of LACE AND LACE-MAKING.



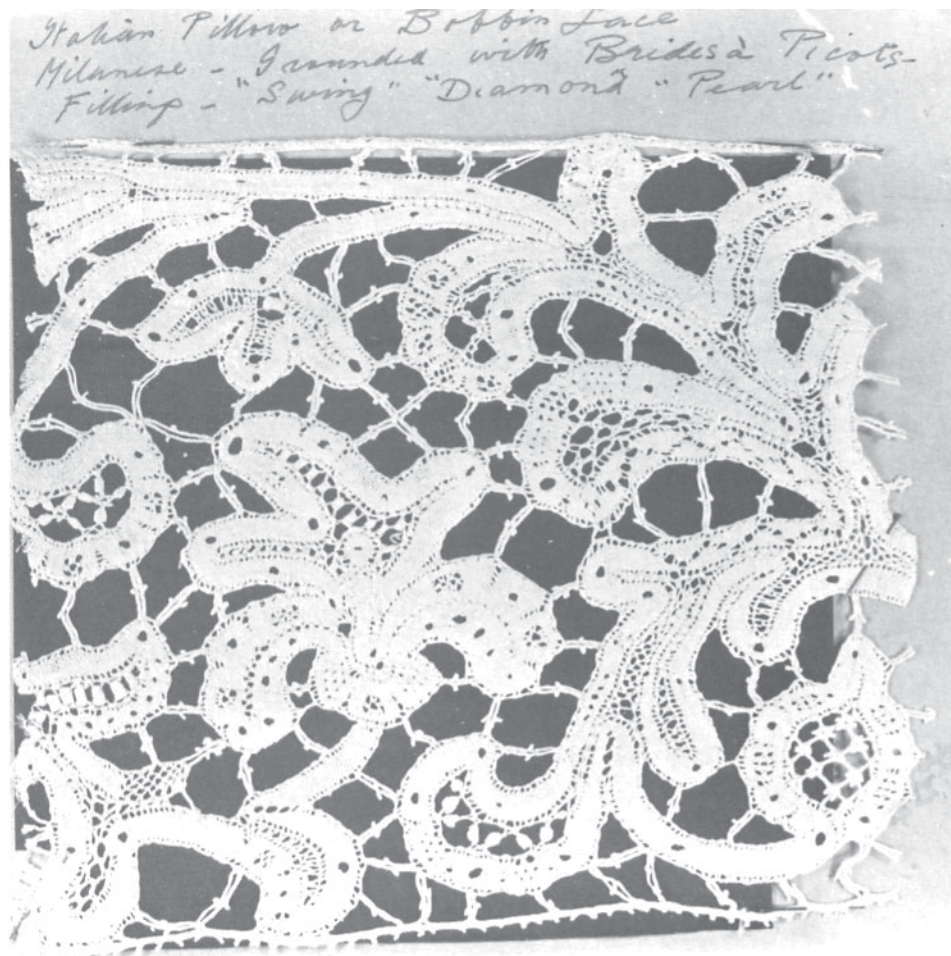
16. Palisades: *From Brussels, Needle Point Rose in the making. Entirely composed of Buttonhole stitch. The cordonnet is being sewn down "couched."*



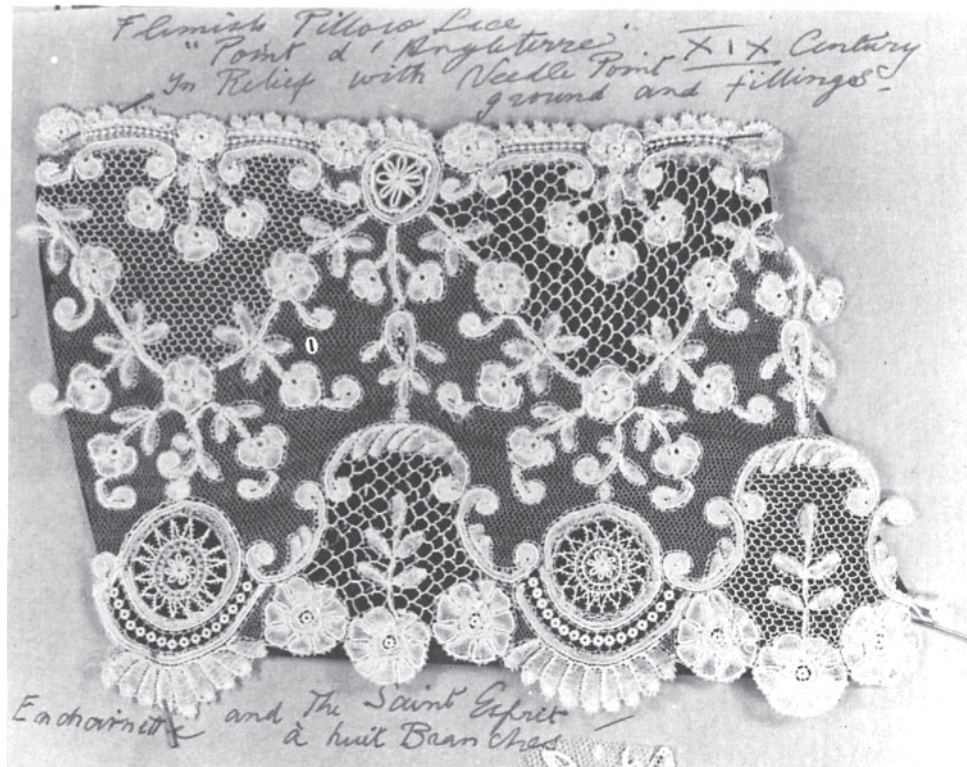
17. Palisades: *Italian 16th Century Knotted Thread work--"Punto a Grappo"*
On page 19 of *LACE AND LACE-MAKING* Miss Powys gives a different example of Italian macramé of the sixteenth century. Thus in both her book and in the *Palisades* album, she places the early sample of macramé, made of knotted threads without the use of bobbins, just before her examples of free bobbin laces, which she classifies by construction, explaining that the motifs are made first and the ground put in afterwards.



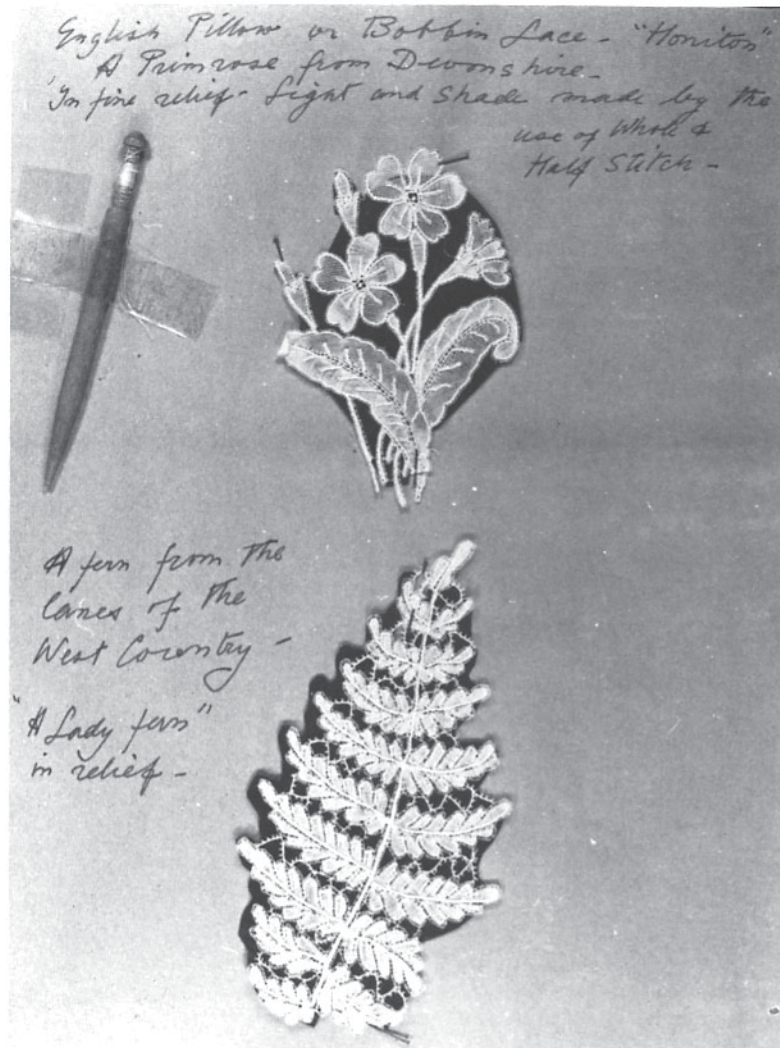
18. Palisades: *Italian Pillow or Bobbin Lace--FREE Late 16th or Early 17th century--Genoese--In relief with typical fillings-- Handsome floral Design. Tulips and Cocks.* This lace is a piece of the same sample given by Miss Powys on the top of page 20 in *LACE AND LACE-MAKING*. It might have been cut from the right side of the lace pictured here. As the piece in the book is but a small area between the main pattern repeats, it is only when this lace is examined in the Palisades album that one understands why Miss Powys gave it such a prominent place in her published work.



19. Palisades: *Italian Pillow or Bobbin Lace Milanese--Grounded with Brides à Picots--Fillings--"Swing" "Diamond" "Pearl"*
 In the Newark album, 66.649A74 is a piece of this same lace. It is captioned *Italian Pillow or Bobbin Lace; Milanese a Brides; With fillings like Flemish*. That Miss Powys was under some pressure to complete this album for the Newark Museum is evident when one examines 66.649A27 which is a piece of the identical lace but pinned to the page the wrong side up. It is labeled *Old Flemish Lace With the Swing Filling and others. Brick and Diamond. XVII Century*.



20. Palisades: *Flemish Pillow Lace, "Point d'Angleterre" XIX Century In relief with Needle Point ground and fillings--*
 Notations at bottom: *Enchainette and The Saint Esprit à huit Branches--*
 This lace is duplicated in the Newark album, 66.649A31, with a larger sample. Miss Powys' description is more detailed, so-called *Point d'Angleterre. Needle-point ground--called "Point de Gaze". Needlepoint filling. The "Point d'Esprit à huit Branches" "Enchainettes," "Etoile"*.



21. Palisades: Upper Piece: *English Pillow or Bobbin Lace--"Honiton" A Primrose from Devonshire--In fine relief--light and shade made by the use of whole & half stitch.*
 Lower Piece: *A fern from the lanes of the West Country-- "A Lady fern" in relief.*
 To the left of the primrose motif is a bobbin for the making of this lace, wound with thread. While it is an interesting addition, this bobbin has deformed the pages of the album. Similar sprays of primroses are on page 25 of *LACE AND LACE-MAKING* and in the Newark album, 66.649A20, where it is labeled *A Primrose--Drawn from life*. It is known from members of her family and from her own writings that Marian Powys found design inspiration in her garden and her extensive knowledge of wild flowers. Quite possibly these laces are her own design.

ENGLISH LACE - DEVON PILLOW LACE

"Honiton"

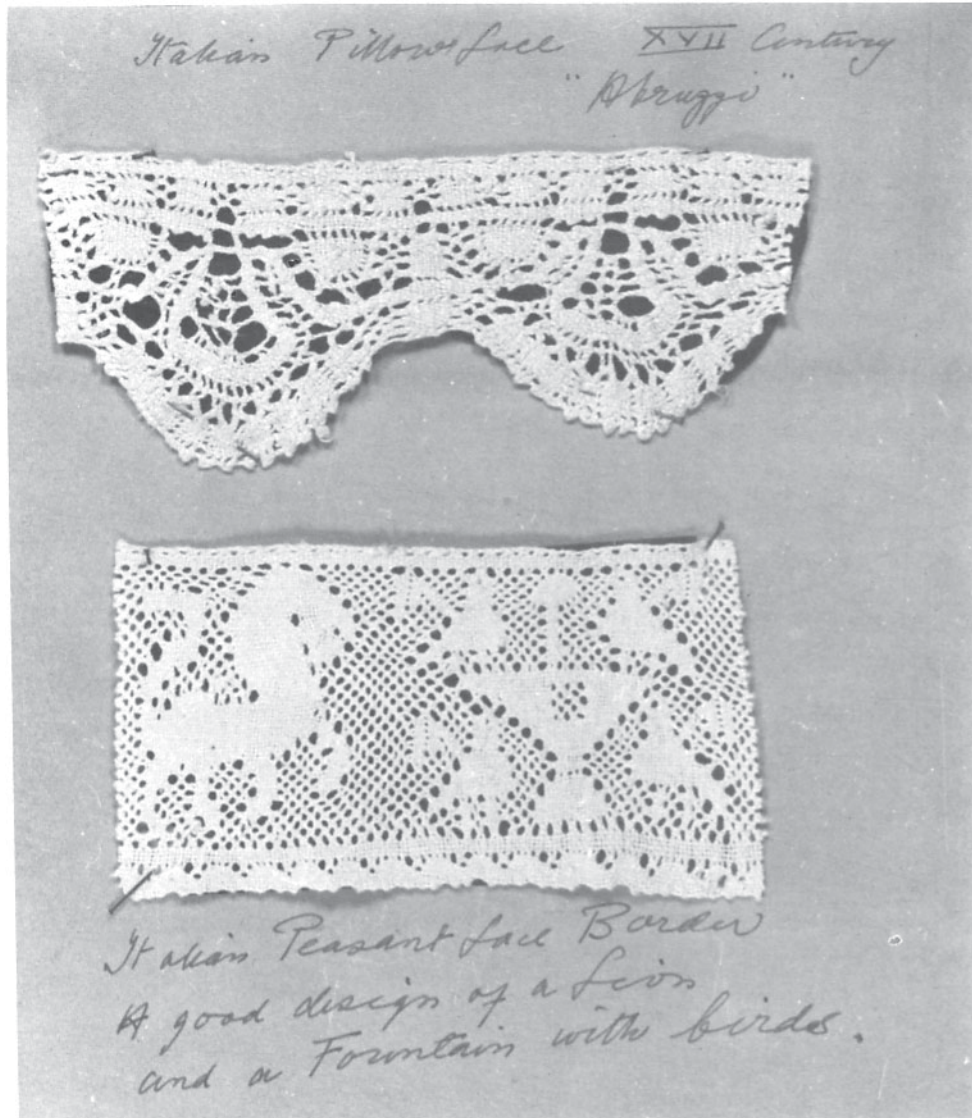


A Bat - in relief with swing fillings

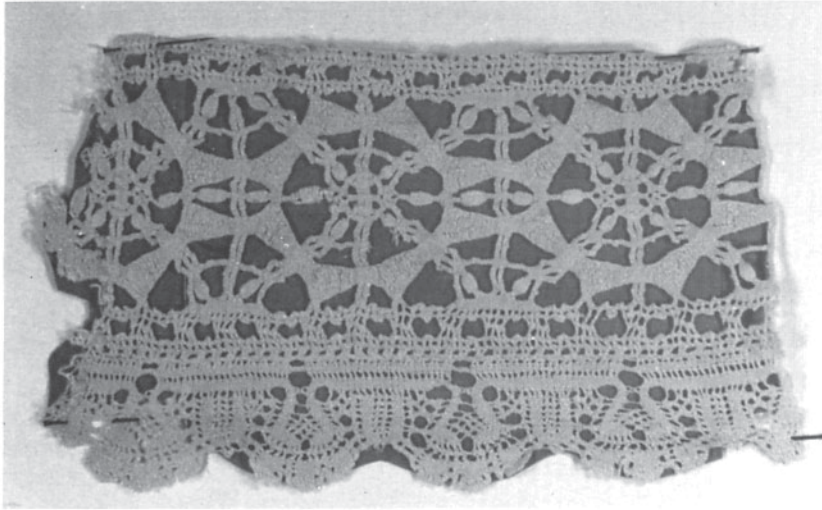
XX Century

designed by Marian Powys.

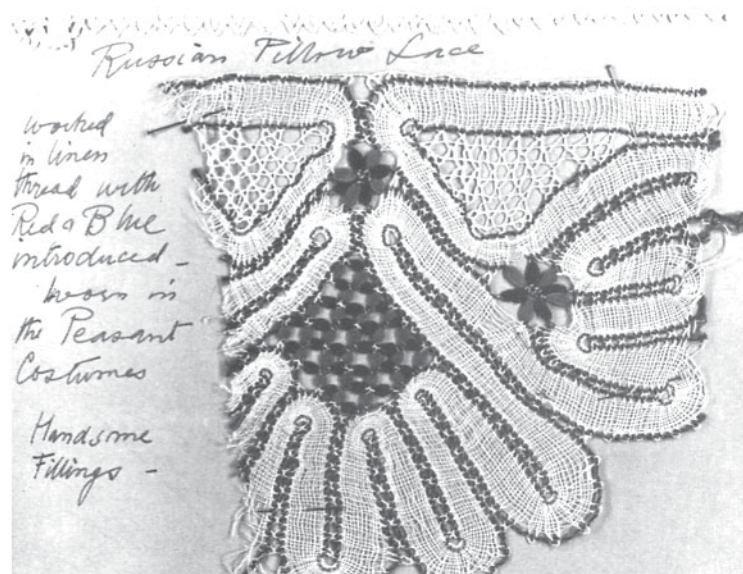
22. Newark 66.649A21 *English Lace--Devon Pillow Lace "Honiton" A Bat--in relief with swing fillings XX Century Designed by Marian Powys.* There is no doubt that this lace was designed and made by Miss Powys. The water-color design and other examples are in possession of her son.



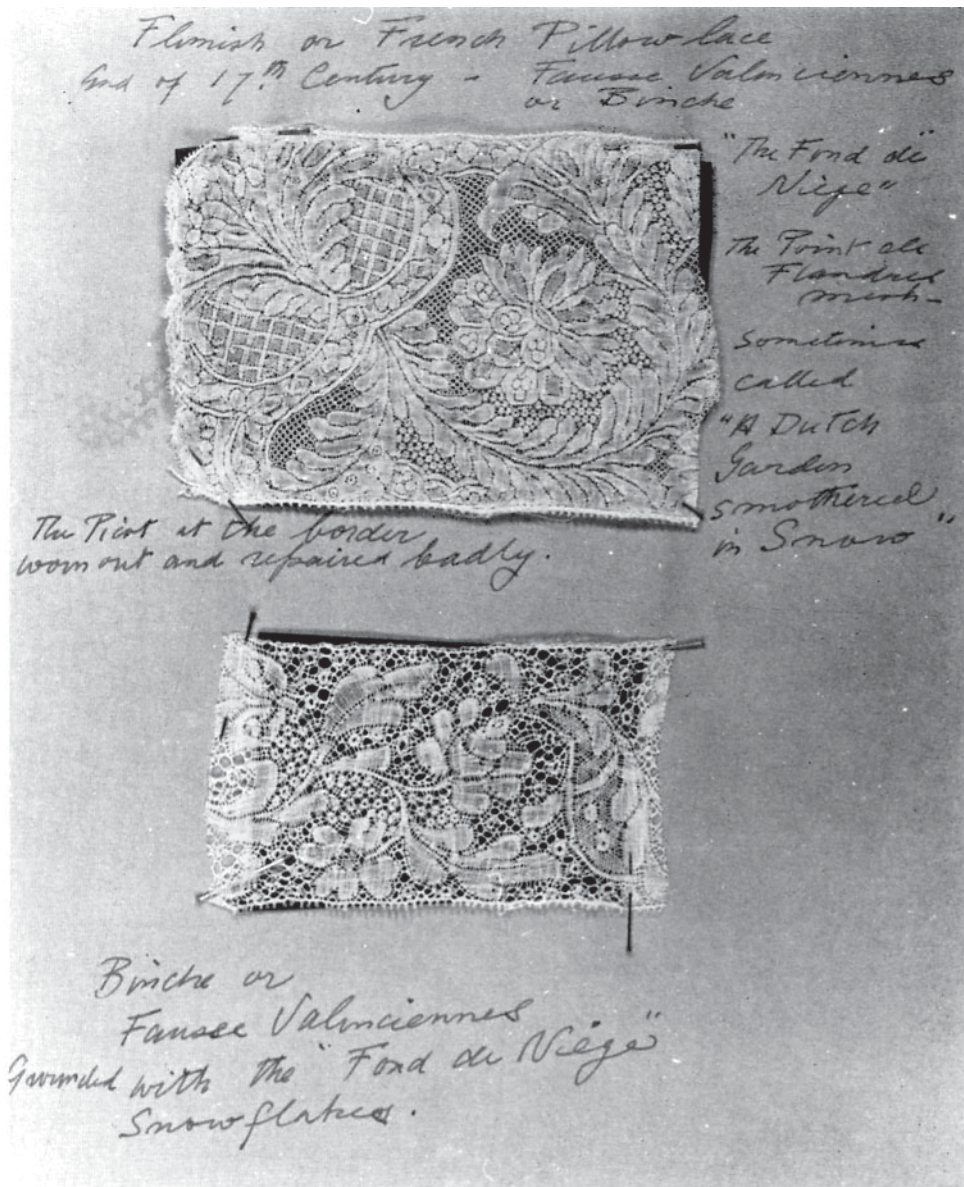
23. Palisades: Upper Piece: *Italian Pillow Lace XVII Century "Abruzzi"*
Lower Piece: *Italian Peasant Lace Border. A good design of a Lion and a Fountain with birds.* Miss Powys does not neglect the peasant laces and gives good examples in both albums.



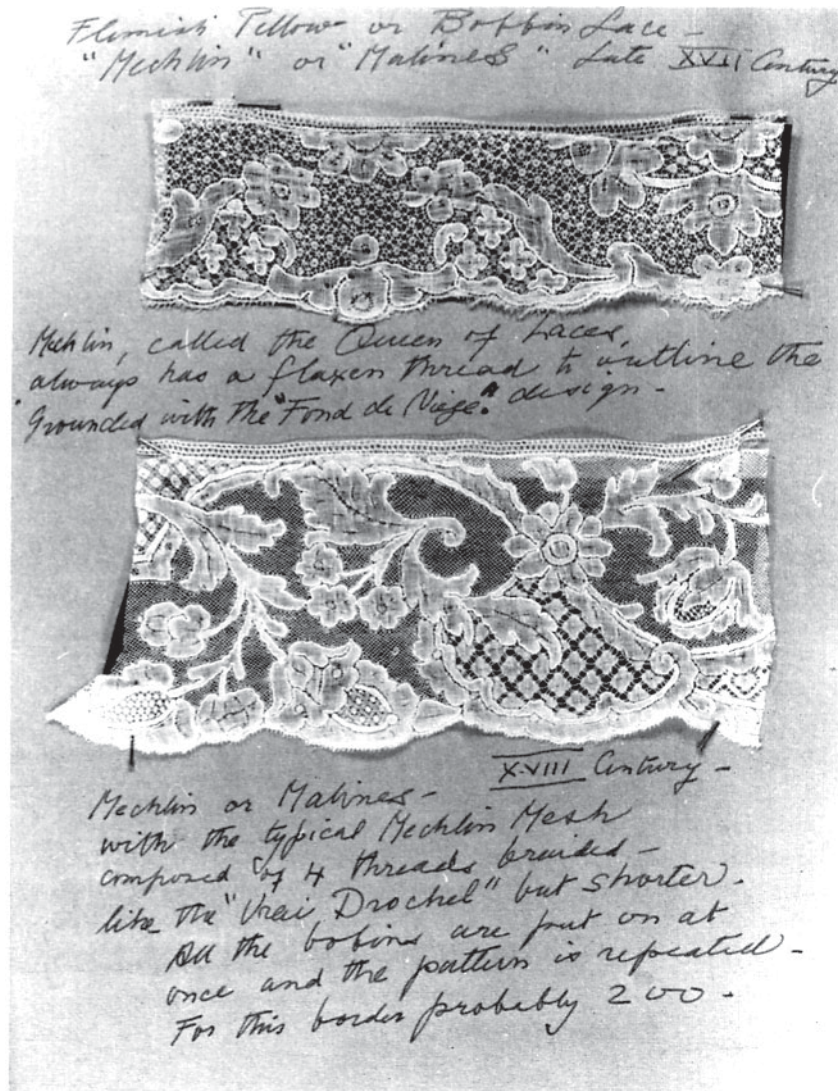
24. Newark 66.649A75 *Italian Pillow or Bobbin Lace Genoese, With lead works, XVIII century.* The sketch of the lead works was evidently transcribed from Miss Powys' notations.



25. Palisades: *Russian Pillow Lace Worked in linen thread with Red and Blue introduced--Worn in the Peasant Costumes. Handsome fillings--*



26. Palisades: Upper Piece: *Flemish or French Pillow Lace End of the 17th Century--Fausse Valenciennes or Binche, "The Fond de Nieve," the Point de Flandres mesh, sometimes called "a Dutch Garden smothered in snow." The Picot at the border worn out and repaired badly.*
Lower Piece: *Binche or Fausse Valenciennes, Grounded with the "Fond de Nieve" snowflakes.*

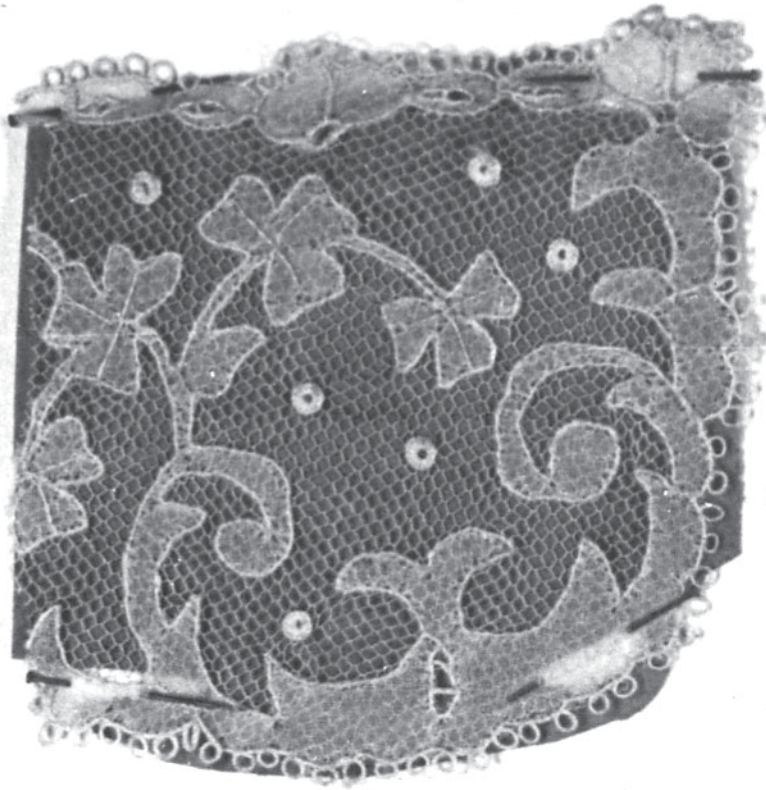


27. Palisades: Upper Piece: Flemish Pillow or Bobbin Lace "Mechlin" or "Malines" late XVII Century Mechlin, called the Queen of Laces, always has a flaxen thread to outline the design. Grounded with the "Fond de Nieve" design.
Lower Piece: Mechlin or Malines XVIII Century- With typical Mechlin mesh composed of 4 threads braided like the "Vrai Drochel" but shorter. All the bobbins are put on at once and the pattern is repeated-for this border probably 200.
These laces, and the two on the preceding page, are outstanding pieces of their types and are far superior to the examples given by Miss Powys in LACE AND LACE-MAKING.

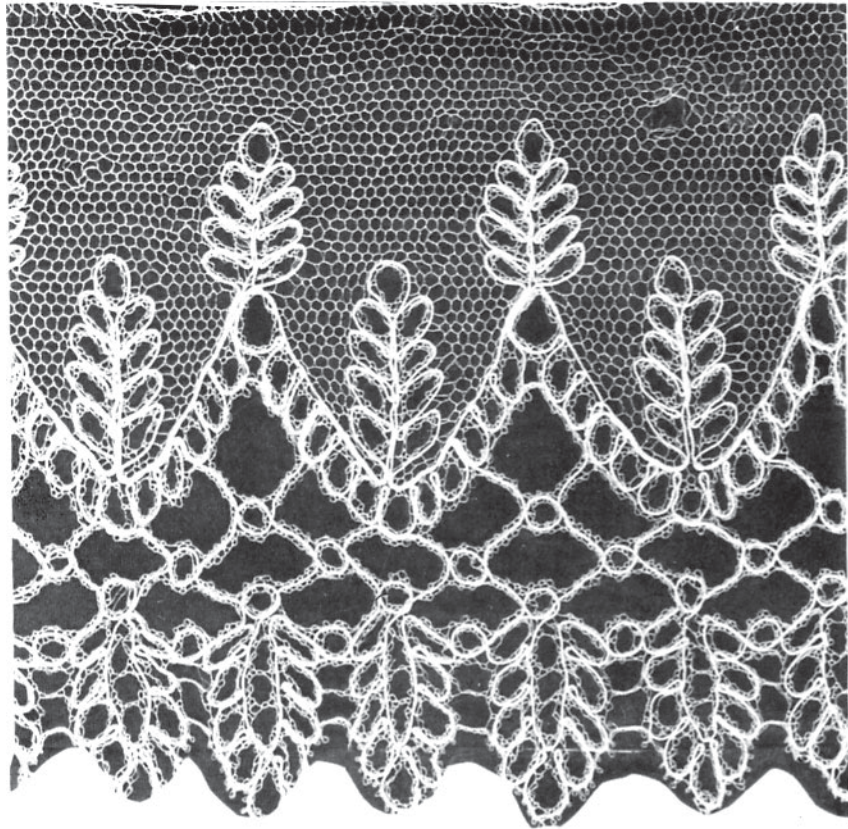
Irish Needle Point "Youghal"
 Fine Quality -
 Grounded with Brides à Picot,
 Fillings as in Point de France -
 "L'Oeil de Perdrix" Partridge Eye -



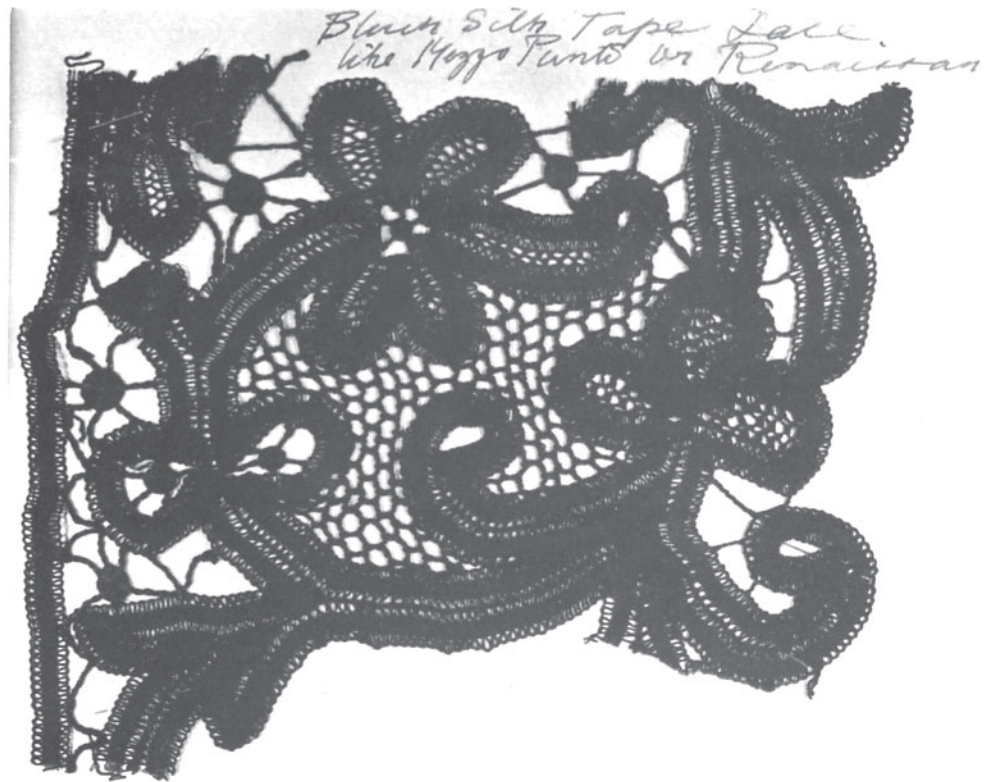
28. Palisades: Irish Needle Point "Youghal", Fine Quality Grounded with Brides à Picot--Fillings as in Point de France--"L'Oeil de Perdrix" Partridge Eye. Another piece of this lace is in the Newark album as 66.649A48. It is captioned *Grounded with Brides Picoteés. Starpointed fillings allied to the "Pheasant Eye."* Influenced by Point de France. Fine Quality. 19th Century. In both albums there is a generous variety of Irish laces including various types of Limerick and Carrickmacross and samples of Irish Crochet.



29. Newark 66.649A51 Carrickmacross Applique with Point d'Esprit Drawn pattern on shiny white material. Tack net all over. Tack linen or muslin all over. Sew down (couching) heavy thread on outline of design & making picots at border. Cut away the background, leaving the net. Buttonhole stars at intervals for decoration of ground.



30. Newark 66.649A82 *Spanish Blonde Lace Spanish Silver Blonde, the lace for Mantillas is black or white.* This large handsome example is a little more than five inches deep. Miss Powys gives numerous examples of Spanish laces, especially in the Newark album.



31. Palisades: *Black Silk Tape Lace like Mezzo Punto or Renaissance*. There are samples of black lace and laces of silk in both albums.