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# THE BULLETIN OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CLUB

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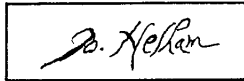
## JOHN NELHAM'S NEEDLEWORK PANEL

By Margaret Swain

Blair Castle in Perthshire, the home of the Duke of Atholl, has thirty one rooms open to the public, displaying furniture, paintings, silver, china and textiles used by the family over the past three hundred years. The textiles alone are impressive: bed hangings, chair covers, samplers, costume, and the highly individual collection of embroidery amassed by Lady Evelyn Stuart Murray (1868-1940), who worked the exquisite white panel of the British Royal Arms about 1912.

*Earl John's Room* contains furniture of the seventeenth century, including a handsome and remarkably complete red velvet bed. On the opposite wall is a well-preserved needlework picture in a black frame. [Plate 1.] Mindful of the other rooms that lie ahead, filled with pieces of absorbing interest, one may be forgiven for according no more than a cursory glance at what appears to be a typical piece of seventeenth century raised work. The panel was given to Lady Dorothea Ruggles-Brise, by her cousin, Frances Murray (1858-1927), daughter of Lord James Murray, and is now back at Blair Castle, the ancestral home of the Murrays, as it had been a Murray possession, though it is not known who worked it.

I have, indeed, looked at it carelessly many times as I hurried ahead, until my attention was drawn to a faint inscription in ink, written along the exposed satin at the base. It apparently read: —



*Jo. Helam Suger close grayfriars newgate market.*

Where the detached stitches have curled away, the drawing is seen to be in the same ink as the caption.

I wrote immediately to John Nevinson, whose publication of the names of London printsellers in the seventeenth century has transformed our knowledge of how these pictures came to be made. (1) They have been collectors' pieces for many years. Framed and glazed they are exceedingly decorative, and even the most fastidious of antique dealers, who would not normally handle textiles, is not ashamed to display a selected piece or two on the walls of his establishment. They were, however, the objects of somewhat patronising approval, regarded as 'quaint' or 'amusing'. The belief that these crowded panels of unrelated flowers, creatures and insects were designed and drawn out by the needlewoman herself was implicit and strongly held, in spite of the obvious repetition of many of the motifs.

John Nevinson's earlier research showed that, far from being the invention of the needlewoman herself, the designs were well-drawn motifs taken from sheets of engravings sold by printsellers, whose addresses he established in the City of London. This work was reinforced by that of Nancy Graves Cabot (herself a member of the Needle and Bobbin Club) whose unrivalled visual memory enabled her to identify

many of the engravings from which the figures derived. (2) The apparent distortion of these well-drawn designs is due to the complicated stitches, often detached, in metal thread, purl and chenille as well as silk, that were known and used by the domestic needlewoman of the seventeenth century.

It seemed to me important that John Nevinson should know of this picture, signed with the name and address of the man who had drawn it out. I hoped that it might be that of yet another printseller: one who offered drawn out designs ready for working, in addition to his main business of dealing in the prints from which the designs derived.

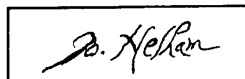
In the meantime, I looked for panels similar to the one at Blair Castle, in the hope of finding others, perhaps even signed specimens. The Victoria and Albert Museum has a picture postcard on sale of one showing a related oval medallion, enclosing the scene of *Susanna and the Elders* (T.50 1954). The oval is embellished with eight scrolls in addition to the leaves and there are pomegranate motifs in place of the leafy flowers at the four quadrants. However, there are the identical two birds at the top and the crouching lion and leopard at the base. The flowers are smaller and the panel two inches wider all round than the Blair Castle example. No inscription can be discerned at the base.

On a visit to the United States, I was enchanted to recognise, on the wall of the Pine Room at Bayou Bend, Houston, Texas, the now familiar oval medallion, almost identical with the Blair Castle picture, enclosing a scene of David and Abigail. In this, Abigail stands upright instead of adopting the humble kneeling attitude usually depicted, but the food and wine she had brought to placate David is clearly shown, laid out on the ground. [Plate 2.] Below are the lion and leopard. The birds above are the song birds of the English hedgerow, the thrush and the wren, in place of the exotic parakeet. The flowers are the same size as those at Blair Castle, but more stylised.

The whole panel is worked with greater precision, but the arrangement bears a striking similarity to the Blair Castle piece.

Another panel was located at the St.Louis Art Museum. The oval, worked in purl, is close to that at Blair Castle. Within the oval, the Queen of Sheba, in a richly flowered gown with detached lace stitch train held by her maid, greets Solomon seated on his throne. [Plate 3.] The Queen's pose is identical with that of the unidentified lady at Blair Castle. There are no animals or birds outside the oval. The flowers: rose, tulip and iris, are more freely drawn. (3) The oval includes the scrolls of the *Susanna* panel at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

John Nevinson now found that my reading of the name and address was inaccurate. Confirmed by other scholars, he read it as:-

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jo. Nelham".

*Jo. Nelham, Suger Lofe, Grayfriars, Newgate Market*

I began a search for other panels with the characteristic foliage around the oval. In the collection of Sir William Plender, in the 1920's, a picture showing an oval medalion encloses the grim scene of Queen Tomyris being shown the severed head of the defeated Cyrus. [Plate 4.] The composition is taken from the design by Rubens, engraved by Peter Pontius in 1630, although the headdresses of the ladies have been somewhat altered in the embroidery.(4)

Another panel belonging to Sir William Plender is illustrated in Seligman and Hughes folio volume *Domestic Needlework* (1926, Plate 79). It shows a similar oval worked in metal purl, with the scene of David and Abigail in raised work. In this, David is mounted, and Abigail kneels before him in the traditional pose. Outside the oval the familiar leopard, lion and stag crouch, but in place of flowers, the four corners show personifications of the Four Seasons. Spring is a seated maiden holding a bunch of flowers, Summer sits beside a sheaf of wheat, Autumn is a man pruning a tree, while Winter is an old man wearing a cap warming himself at a fire. Below the oval the letters A H are worked in seed pearls. The present location of these two panels is unknown to the writer.

Marcus Huish, in *Samplers and Tapestry Embroideries* illustrates a piece of satin (9½" x 8") drawn but unworked, which he rightly describes as 'worthy of careful study'. It is said to be a portrait of the Princess Mary and the Prince of Orange, presumably the mother and father of William III. The design 'has been made with a pointed stylus, the deep incised lines made in the thick material having been coloured black, probably by a transferring medium similar to carbonised paper. The shadows have been added with a brush, evidently wielded by an experienced hand, for not only are they graduated in the original, but there are no signs of any difficulty in dealing with the flow of colour on the absorbent textile.' (5) The drawing shows the Blair leaf and flower frame to the oval, but with the scrolls of the *Susanna* and *Cyrus* panels in addition. The birds appear to be two parakeets, one gazing forward, the other with head turned back. The crouching animals are no longer the lion and leopard, but a unicorn and stag. Unfortunately, the present whereabouts of the panel is unknown.

There is, however, an unworked panel in the Museum of Costume and Textiles, Nottingham. It is skilfully drawn in ink and shaded. The lines are crisp and unwavering. The oval, vertical instead of horizontal, is embellished with the Nelham flowers and leaves, with the pomegranate motif at the sides. [Plate 5] The birds face forwards. There are a unicorn and stag, as well as a dog and fox. The flowers, rose, marigold, tulip and iris, are familiar. The oval encloses a portrait of a seated lady, carrying a tulip.

Another portrait in an upright oval with leaves and flowers of the Nelham type, is in the Metropolitan Museum. The lady wears a wreath of flowers in her flowing hair, and is said to be Elizabeth Coombe 'the most celebrated needlewoman of her period'. Four stylised flowers curve gracefully in the corners. At the sides a small dog gives chase to a hare. The panel is worked with great assurance, and powdered with spangles. [Plate 6] (6)

This links up with an embroidered casket, with an oval of the Nelham type on the lid. Within stands a couple in seventeenth century costume, the lady with a large

tulip at her feet. This casket, dated 1678 with the initials E C in seed pearls, said to represent Elizabeth Coombe, was in the collection of Sidney Hand, Ltd., art dealers in London, before the last war. In spite of her reputation, singularly little appears to be recorded about Elizabeth Coombe.

A portrait in a horizontal Nelham type oval at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, is unmistakably of Henrietta Maria, Queen of Charles I, and mother of Charles II. The modelling of the raised work skilfully depicts her straight nose and drowsy eyelids. The lion and the leopard, worked in lace stitch with beads for eyes, crouch in their familiar poses. In the upper corners, a rose and a pink (carnation) are skilfully worked, the petals detached in a realistic manner. [Plate 7.]

The Fitzwilliam Museum has two other needlework portraits enclosed in ovals, but these lack the stylised flowers and leaves of those so far discussed. They are of interest, however, because although they obviously derive from the same engraving: the hair, comb, jewels and drapery are identical, but the background of each differs. One shows a shepherdess and sheep, the other has small figures including a fisherman.

## CONCLUSION

It would be tempting to assume that all the panels here described were drawn in the workshop of John Nelham. Such a temptation must be firmly resisted, however, since so sweeping an assumption is both facile and unscholarly.

The motifs inside and outside the oval medallions, especially the lion and leopard, derive from woodcuts or engravings, and were not the exclusive design of John Nelham. Indeed, as John Nevinson has discovered, John Nelham and his father, Roger Nelham, both left a collection of 'prints' when they died: Roger's so extensive that they were divided between John and his other children. Such prints were freely available to any pattern drawer who cared to buy them.

Huish's suggestion that the unworked design illustrated in *Samplers and Tapestry Embroideries* appeared to be incised led me to explore the possibility that the oval medallion enclosing the different scenes might have been applied by means of a stamp or block. Only the dimensions of the unworked Nottingham panel tallies with that at Blair Castle; the others show marked differences, so this hypothesis had regretfully to be discarded. (7)

Finally, and perhaps most conclusive of all, is the fact that on the Blair Castle panel, John Nelham has signed his name and address. Why has no similar inscription (a useful piece of advertisement) been discerned on any of the related pieces, particularly the unworked panel at Nottingham? Until other pieces are located bearing a name, it cannot be assumed that these panels on satin with oval medallions were, without exception, drawn out in the workshop of John Nelham, though there is a strong possibility that the unworked panel at Nottingham, with the same dimension of the oval, may have issued from the same place.

Much new information has been gained by this investigation, however. John Nevinson's current researches have now shown that the Blair Castle panel did not, as was supposed, emanate from the booth of a London printseller, but was drawn out by a professional embroiderer, a citizen of London, a substantial and respected mem-

ber of the Broderers' Company, and the son of a professional embroiderer. At the time the design was drawn out on the satin, Nelham's workshop 'at the sign of the Sugar Loaf' (a popular sign, used by others) in Newgate Market, was near the old Greyfriars churchyard. After the great fire of 1666, the site of Newgate Market was moved further south, though Nelham retained his shop sign when he moved to the Old Bailey.

We can, therefore, confidently date this panel to the years between 1654, after the death of Roger Nelham, when John took over his father's business in his own name, and 1666, the year that Newgate Market ceased to be at Greyfriars. Indeed, the date may be narrowed even further, to before 1660, the year of the restoration of Charles II and his court to London after the Commonwealth. The lot of a professional embroiderer during the Puritan government of 1649 to 1660 must have been exceedingly bleak, with few if any commissions for ecclesiastical, heraldic or court embroidery. Edmund Harrison, another member of the Broderers' Company, was reduced to penury, and Charles II was petitioned on his behalf when he returned to the throne. John Nelham, like his father, may well have found the drawing-out of designs for the domestic needlewoman a modest way of ekeing out his income and employing his expertise until better times returned with the King and court in 1660.

#### REFERENCES

- (1) John L. Nevinson 'Peter Stent and John Overton, publishers of Embroidery Designs' in *Apollo* XXIV no. 145, Nov. 1936, pp 279-283; also 'English Domestic Embroidery Patterns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Journal of the Walpole Society*, Vol. XXVIII, 1939-40, and *Catalogue of English Domestic Embroidery*; Victoria and Albert Museum 1938.
- (2) Nancy Graves Cabot 'Pattern sources of scriptural subjects in Tudor and Stuart embroideries', *The Bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club*, Vol. 30, nos. 1 and 2, 1946, pp 3-57.
- (3) Lynn E. Springer, 'Biblical scenes in embroidery', *Antiques*, Vol. 101, Feb. 1972, Fig. 3, p. 118.
- (4) *Old Furniture*, Vol. II, 1927, p. 118.
- (5) Marcus Huish, *Samplers and Tapestry Embroideries*, 1900, p. 131.
- (6) Y. Hackenbroch, *English and other Needlework in the Untermyer Collection*, 1960, Fig. 95.
- (7) The dimensions ascertained of the interior dimensions of the oval area: —
 

Blair Castle panel	24.6 x 31.2 cm.
Nottingham panel	24 x 31.2 cm.
Bayou Bend, Houston panel	21 x 28 cm.
Victoria & Albert Museum panel	33 x 42.5
St. Louis Art Museum panel	22 x 28 cm.



1. Needlework picture on white satin worked in silks and metal thread in a variety of raised and surface stitches. Topic unidentified Inscribed at the base in ink: *Jo. Nelham Suger Lofe Grayffriars Newgate Market.* W22" x H 20" (56x51 cm.) 1654-1660.

*His Grace the Duke of Atholl, Blair Castle*





2. Needlework picture on white satin worked in silks and metal threads in a variety of raised and surface stitches. The scene depicts Abigail offering food and wine to David (1 Samuel XXV 20). Third quarter of the 17th century.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
The Bayou Bend Collection, Gift of Miss Ima Hogg



3. Needlework Picture on white satin, worked in silks, metal purl, pearls and mica, in raised and surface stitches. *King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba* (1Kings x 2). Second half of the 17th century. W16¼" x H 11¾" (41.5x30 cm.)  
St. Louis Art Museum (5.1972)  
Gift of Mrs. William A. McDonnell



4. Needlework picture on white satin worked in silks and metal thread. The scene shows *Queen Tomyris being shown the severed head of the defeated Cyrus* and is taken, with slight modification, from the engraving by Peter Pontious after the design by Peter Paul Rubens. This picture was in the collection of the late Sir William Plender, Bt., in the 1920's.



5. Unworked satin panel, drawn in ink and shaded, with portrait of a seated female, holding a tulip. Third quarter of the 17th century. Museum of Costume and Textiles, City of Nottingham



6. Casket top of white satin, worked in silks and metal thread, silk wrapped purl, spangle and silk wrapped paper strips. Said to be Elizabeth Coombe, “the most celebrated needlewoman of her time”.  
Third quarter of the 17th century W17¼” x H12¾” (43.8x32.4cm)  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
New York (64.101.1326)



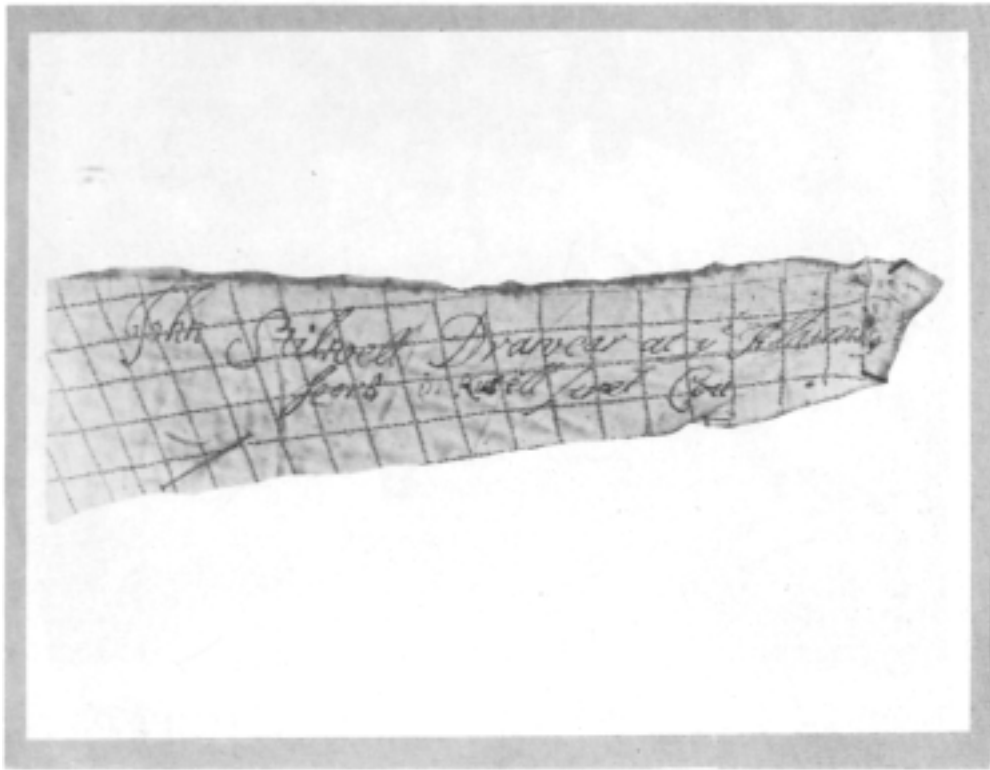
7. Needlework picture on white satin worked in silks and purl with seed pearls in raised and surface stitches. The portrait is of *Queen Henrietta Maria* (1609-1669), wife of King Charles I.

*Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (T19-1945)*



8. Woman's waistcoat. English. Quilted satin worked in silks. Chain stitch. Inscribed on the lining *John Stilwell Drawear att ye Flaming Soord in Russell Street Cou.* . Early 18th century.

*Doris Langley Moore Collection,  
Costume Museum, Bath (4750/2)*



9. Detail showing inscription on the lining of Plate 8.



## JOHN NELHAM, EMBROIDERER

By John L. Nevinson

When Margaret Swain wrote to tell me of her discovery at Blair Castle, I realized that a new line of research had been opened now that we had the Christian name and surname of a pattern drawer and the address of his shop. I was able to go to the Guildhall Library in London, where it was confirmed that the Blair Castle embroidery was signed *John Nelham* (not John Helham as we had at first thought) and that the address was the Sugar Loaf (Lofe) in Newgate Market. I was recommended to search in the books recording the rates paid by householders for the support of poor persons in the City of London, in the records of the Broderers' Company and also amongst London Wills. (A)

Then it dawned on me that in 1939 when I was studying the sources of English Domestic Embroidery patterns the name *Nelham* had already come to my notice, but without a Christian name and without an address. (B) In 1638 Lady Brilliana Harley writing from Brampton Bryan Castle, Herefordshire, to her son at Oxford, urged him to have his father's agent "hasten the sending of the pease of cloth" which was drawn by Mr. Nelham (spelt Neelham also). (C) Next year she thanked her son for sending Mr. Nelham's designs for a petticoat, together with the silk and wire needed. When Edward Harley later came to London to stay with his father, the member of Parliament, he obtained designs which his mother proposed to use for working "a shute of chairs". We do not know whether she finished this work before her death in 1643, during the siege of Brampton Bryan Castle by the Royalists.

Probably this Mr. Nelham, embroidery designer, was Roger Nelham whose first marriage took place in 1625 in St. Martin's, Ludgate Hill. Roger Nelham married, secondly, Margaret Webb in St. Swithin's, London Stone, on September 18th, 1638, by license from the Bishop of London, but nothing more is known of him until he made his will in 1653. The Will was proved in 1654 (P.R.O. 1654/170) when Roger Nelham gave his principal bequests to his son John with "the halfe of my books and prints and patterns which I do use for the drawings of workes . . . all my beames and lathes and working instruments . . . which do appertain and belong to my worke house." (D) (the other half was bequeathed to his son Samuel, who evidently was not yet of age).

The Rate Book of Christ Church, Newgate Street, is in poor condition and incomplete at this date, but it shows that a Mr. Nelham (no first name given) was paying rates in 1656, two years after the death of Roger. In 1666 Newgate Market and all around it were swept by the great fire of London, and we have no more information about how much of Mr. John Nelham's business was saved. However, from 1679 onwards, his name as a member of the Court of Assistants appears frequently in the Court books of the Broderers' Company, which are now on deposit with Guildhall Library. John Nelham was a Broderer who supplied cloth, took part in Civic Functions and approved the "stand" in which members of the Company stood to view the Lord Mayor's procession in 1683. (E) The timber stand was raised above the heads of the onlookers and its front was covered with a cloth embroidered

with the coats of arms of the City of London and of the Broderers' Company. It cost £16 and John Nelham signed a note that it was "Well done and very reasonable."

At this date John Nelham was associated with Mr. Rutlish, Embroiderer to Charles II, who died in 1687 and was buried at Merton, Surrey, where his tombstone in the churchyard has been restored, and the school founded with the funds he bequeathed still continues. After 1684 John Nelham's name no longer appears in the Company's books. He must have died suddenly without making a will, but the Inventory of his estate has survived (F) with the docket "Old Bailey, at the Sugar Loaf". This shows that after Great Fire John Nelham carried on his business under the same sign, leasing a new house, which was well furnished, and contained his "working tools" which were in a garret. In the shop were "a parcel of pictures and prints, 5 dressing boxes and a parcel of printed books". The Broderers' Company administered his estate, which was divided between his widow and children. His youngest daughter was cared for "in orphanage", that is, looked after by the Company till she reached the age of 21 or married.

Encouraged by success in finding out so much about Newgate Market, I returned to the hunt for a shop, "The Flaming Sword", in Covent Garden market. Many years ago I had searched in vain for this in the Russell archives at Woburn (Duke of Bedford). The only other signed embroidery of which I had a record was a jacket (Plate 8) embroidered with Chinese birds and floral sprigs on a quilted ground. This was part of Doris Langley Moore's collection and is now in the Museum of Costume in the Assembly Rooms, Bath. In the lining of one of the sleeves is written (Plate 9) "John Stilwell Drawear at ye Flaming soord in Russell Street, Cou. . . . ." Nothing has yet been found about John Stilwell, who was presumably a draughtsman working in the shop, but the type of exotic embroidery on the jacket is roughly dateable by the coverlet, completed by Sarah Thurston, who signed it in 1694 (Victoria and Albert Museum, T.223-1953). There is a similar coverlet in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

The Flaming Sword, that is the mark of a large straight sword with a wavy edge, is well known as a mark of the Cutlers' Company. But I found an advertisement in the London Evening Post in 1738 which recorded it as the sign of Mr. Reinhard's Toy Shop in Russell Street, Covent Garden. At that date a toy was not something bought for a child to play with, and a Toy-shop was "a shop for the sale of trinkets, knick-knacks, or small ornamental articles". Many of the shops in the re-built Covent Garden market today have reverted to the sale of these wares.

The Rate Books of St. Paul's Covent Garden are now in the Westminster Public Library, and, as I expected, Mr. Reinhard was found to be a rate-payer. Often referred to by the Collector of Rates as *Mr. Regnier*, he had been paying various sums regularly since the early 1700's, and at first was associated with Mrs. Dorothy Bickerstaff, who took over her husband's shop in Russell Street in 1693. Edward Bickerstaff has been Renter-Warden of the Cutlers' Company and was involved in disputes about the election of the Master in 1690. He was outvoted and withdrew, probably dying in 1692. The mark of the Cutlers' Company, the Flaming Sword, was no doubt retained by Dorothy his widow in his memory after 1692, when she

employed John Stilwell as a draughtsman for embroidery which may have appealed to her more than cutlery and metal “toys.”

We feel that further examination of the margins of embroidered pictures and the hems of embroidered dresses should reveal the names of more designers and draughtsmen, and the addresses of their employers. Once we know where there was a shop in which professional needlework pieces could be bought or designs commissioned, we can search for more about other types of 17th-century embroidery. Parish registers show the dates of occupiers, rate-books will list their names; their personal titles will emerge from their wills, legal actions, and the books of the Guilds or City Companies to which they belonged.

- A. My thanks are due to Miss Betty Masters, Archivist to the City of London, and to Mr. Frank Britton.
- B. Walpole Society XXVIII (1939), p. 12.
- C. Lady Brilliana Harley *Letters*. Camden Society, 1853 (pp.35, 86, 137).
- D. *Beams* and *lathes* were the ends and sides of the heavy frames on stands used by professional embroiderers. *Beams* were the rollers on which the excess cloth was wound; *lathes* were the straight side pieces to which the selvages were lashed to keep the cloth taut while working.  
Compare *nyne payre of beames for imbroderers (Hardwick Inventory of 1601, Furniture History Society, London, 1971, p.25.)* Also: *Certane werklumes for ane brodinstare* [worklooms for an embroiderer] in Edinburgh Castle in 1578. (Thomson, T. *Collection of Inventories of the Royal Wardrobe and Jewelhouse*, 1815, p.238). The same terms were also used for weavers' looms.
- E. Document printed in C.Holford. *A Chat about the Broderers' Company*, 1910, p. 306.
- F. (Inventory)  
Common Sergeant's Book No.4. 1678-93. Guildhall, London.

## THE KNITTING CRAFTS IN EUROPE FROM THE THIRTEENTH TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

By Irena Turnau

Early knitted fabrics have been described elsewhere in a paper on the spread of knitting in medieval Europe, and also in my Polish book on European knitting history.<sup>1</sup> This paper presents primarily a summary of the history of the knitting handicrafts in Europe. The formation of guilds is related to the increasing demand for knitted fabrics which could not be satisfied by domestic workers. The diffusion of the guilds was not simultaneous nor identical in the various parts of Europe. Artisan production was organized in guilds mainly in France, Germany and the countries of central Europe. In France the medieval guilds appeared quite early. The first known mention of the craft of knitting in Paris goes back to the year 1268. Later confirmations of the new guild bear the dates 1366, 1380 and 1467. Knitters had also been working outside of Paris. There is evidence of knitter's journeymen visiting towns of northern France.<sup>2</sup> Later, similar guilds appear: in Tournai in the southern Netherlands in 1429, and in Barcelona in 1496.<sup>3</sup> Small groups of knitters may have also been working in many other towns. The beginning of the sixteenth century saw many confirmations of guild statutes in France, Alsace and south Germany.

"Chapeliens de gants et de bonnets", mentioned by Etienne Boileau in 1268 did not, however, stand high in the hierarchy of medieval crafts. They worked not only with woolen yarn, and are found protesting against the use of spinning wheels to process cotton. During the following two centuries their importance grew considerably. By the year 1514 they were one of the six most important Paris guilds.<sup>4</sup> The beginning of the craft in England has not yet been studied. London "cappers", mentioned in the years 1300-11, produced felt rather than knitted caps. "Hosiers" existed at least since 1328; they may have produced leggings sewn out of cloth, but knitted gaiters are mentioned in 1320.<sup>5</sup> K.G. Ponting wrote about the most important of all references, the Coventry Leet Book. This volume constitutes our best source of information concerning the cappers in the fifteenth century. The references prove that the knitting of caps in Coventry was a well established industry. Ponting has made suggestive hypothesis that the English cappers purchased knit fabrics from domestic workers and only did the felting.<sup>6</sup>

Scattered information about the initial confirmations of guild statutes, and the use of various knitted fabrics in western Europe in the late Middle Ages show the continuing diffusion of hand-knitting. Some guild organizations worked in France, Catalonia, south Netherlands and England. The existence of numerous knitter guilds in west and central Europe at the beginning of the sixteenth century does not evidence the start of a new branch of production, but rather shows the increasing demand for knit garments. This is related to the growing fashion for knitted stockings and other clothing that became indispensable elements of Italian and Spanish Renaissance male attire. Among various items in a knitted wardrobe, like children's frocks, jackets and gloves, there were also knit berets which became more fashionable than caps. The fancy forms of the latter required elastic material. Thus as early

as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the production of items of clothing knit on two to five needles spread through Italy, Spain, France, the British Isles and in certain German speaking areas. The late medieval-period activity prepared the ground in western Europe for the technical revolution in knitting which occurred in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Until recently the history of European knitting was a matter of interest chiefly relating to the early development of the then most complicated machine known in the textile industry - the knitting frame of William Lee from Calverton, patented in 1589. This invention, however, developed after a long period of skilled hand-knitting, to which little careful attention has been paid.

The history of knitting guilds from the early sixteenth century began with production in the south and west of Europe. No major research has been made on Italian and Spanish knitting history. One is able to find only a rare mention of such production in books on the economic history of these countries. I wrote about Arabian knit fabrics from Los Huelgas near Burgos in another paper.<sup>7</sup> In the sixteenth century, the guild of knitters in Barcelona, established in 1496, was active. There were also knitters working in Seville and Toledo. The latter centre produced mainly stockings. They were sold in several European countries, such as England, West Pomerania and Poland (Plate 5)<sup>8</sup>. The stockings of Toledo were worn at the French court in Paris. There is a document from 1586 telling about the stockings which were in fashion: "3 paires de vert marin, 3 argentées, 3 rouges. 3 bleu céleste, 3 gris foncé, 3 châtain, 3 couleur de pigeon, 1 jaune, 1 blanche, 1 violette, 12 noires. En 1590, Diego del Campo demande 4 paires fauves, 3 gris cendrés, 3 bleu ciel, 2 jaunes, 2 vertes et 2 cramoisies. Le prix d'une paire s'établissait en 1584-1587 a 66 reaux en noir et 68 en couleur."<sup>9</sup> This trade information concerns expensive silk stockings in a large range of fashionable colours. So we have some idea of the export production of Spanish knitting in the sixteenth century. It probably was organized in guilds.

The export centres for knitting in Italy were Naples, Milan, Genoa and Mantua. But so far it has only been possible to find mention of the knitted fabrics from these towns, with nothing concerning guild organization.<sup>10</sup> Italian knitting history has not been thoroughly studied. It seems necessary to make further research. There is an interesting iconographic source, in which an Italian itinerant knitter from the late sixteenth century appears. (Plate 1). He is shown making stockings from two coloured threads. The itinerant Spanish knitter from the eighteenth century was making stockings too, and also carried on his back a stocking tree. (Plate 2). Not only archive notes from other nations, but iconography as well show the spread of knitting in Italy and Spain. The progress of this production needs study by historians.

In the sixteenth century France was a most important centre of European knitting. (Plate 3). In 1514 the Parisian knitters had one of the leading guilds, one of the "Six Corps".<sup>11</sup> The knitters of Troyes in Champagne received the guild statute in 1505. Eight workshops were in production there, making woolen caps and stockings. An apprentice worked three years before obtaining the rights of journeymen. The assortment of production is given in the archive sources dating from 1698: there were not only caps and stockings but also socks, gloves, mitts and

overcoats. Partly it was export production for the Middle East and north Africa.<sup>12</sup> In the fifteenth century the knitters of Compiègne still worked together with the clothiers, but in 1527 they received their own statute. They made mainly woollen caps and stockings dyed in blue and heavily fulled.<sup>13</sup> The knitters' guild in Rennes got its statute in 1513, and in Orléans in 1575.<sup>14</sup> At that time there were some knitters in Dourdan, but this town is known more for machine production in the seventeenth century.<sup>15</sup> In the early seventeenth century hand-knitting spread to the south of France. Usually the Huguenots in Sevelles were involved. But it was not the main occupation in that area. That part of France later was noted for the hosiery industry, at Nîmes and lower Languedoc, in the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Normandy traded heavily in English knit goods, mainly from Jersey and Guernsey. For instance, in 1663 – 240,000 pairs of stockings were imported officially. In addition, there was a major smuggling trade.<sup>17</sup> In the years 1610-1614 the first manufacture with the machines invented by William Lee began in Rouen.<sup>18</sup> This town shows an interesting example of two co-existing knitting guilds. The hand-knitters – “Marchands bonnetiers”, were separately commercially active in Rouen till 1778, alongside the knitters working on the mechanical frame. The hand-knitted fabrics were worse but cheaper than those from the machines. In 1747 the guild had 50 workshops. Numerous hand-knitters also worked in Caen and other towns of Normandy.<sup>19</sup>

A long coexistence of hand and machine-frame knitters appeared not only in France but in England as well. As the historians have been mainly interested in the spread of the machine frame, references to hand-knitting are only found scattered in several papers and histories of certain towns.<sup>20</sup> In spite of the book of F.A. Wells and important studies in Pasold Fund editions,<sup>21</sup> the detailed history of hand-knitter guilds is still waiting its author. The hand-knitters of London and from other big towns were opposed to labor-saving machines. The frame was always suspect as likely to cause unemployment among hand-knitters. The volume of production in numerous towns and villages in England and on the adjacent isles during the seventeenth century was possible in good part because of the hand-knitters. We hardly know anything about the organization of hand-knitting in Scotland at that time.<sup>22</sup>

The guilds of hand-knitting spread to all the borderlands of France. Production developed early in the southern Netherlands. The guild of knitters in Tournai existed from 1429. About 1680 there were approximately 2000 workshops which produced woollen stockings, partly for export to Spain. But this area in 1667-1708 became a part of France, and perhaps some workshops used the mechanical stocking frame.<sup>23</sup> The Dutch were certainly known for their knitting. In the sixteenth century England imported knitted gloves from the Low Countries and, according to one authority, it was from Holland that the art of knitting was carried to Scandinavia.<sup>24</sup> But we know nothing about the organization of this hand-knitting in guilds.

From the late sixteenth century, the upper Rhine area was one of the main centers of European hand-knitting; guild statutes in Sundgau and Brisgau date from 1596. They show the spread of production. Important debate concerning statutes was held in Brisach in 1598. Delegates of 25 guilds from towns in Alsace, Switzerland

and Baden were there. Questions of technique and guild organization were discussed. The guilds were from the towns: Basel, Ferrete, Altkirch, Belfort, Giromagny, Mulhouse, Thann, Soultz, Guebwiller, Colmar, Memmerschwihl, Kayserberg, Algosheim, Selestadt, Saint-Marie-aux-Mines, Strasbourg, Molsheim, Phalsbourg, Offenbourg, Lahr, Freiburg, Brisach, Soultzbourg, Neuenbourg and Rheinfelden. These knitters decided to send a master from Strasbourg, Simon Marcutha, to Prague to Rudolph II, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>25</sup> A new statute dated 1605 was issued for all the upper Rhineland towns. In a long list of knitted fabrics is a mention of a knitted carpet: "Selon la coutume de Prague et d'autres lieux, un tapis a fleurs, long et large de quatre aunes".<sup>26</sup> The production of a knitted carpet was the most important and most complicated of all the tasks that the aspiring master craftsman had to accomplish before receiving full master status in a guild. An exemption could be obtained but it was costly. In their master-work carpet manufacture, up to twenty different colors of wool were used. The largest carpets measure about three metres long and two metres wide.<sup>27</sup> The production of these knitted masterworks in the upper Rhineland shows the technical and artistic level of that area.

In 1599 there were 210-220 workshops altogether working in the towns of the upper Rhineland. The guilds of knitters competed with the domestic village production. A new statute of 1653 noted about 28 towns at that time in Alsace alone. The town knitters turned out an assortment of goods, such as woollen jackets, caps, stockings and gloves. The patterned carpet always remained the most difficult thing for them, so the statute allowed the possibility of making trousers instead. Hand-knitting spread also into another part of Switzerland. There is an ordinance from 1591 referring to the journeymen in Fribourg.<sup>28</sup> There were also guilds in Bern in 1672, and in Unieraargau, Aarwangen, Wagen and Bipp. In 1687 about 1000 hand-knitters were working in Aargau. They were organized partly in a cottage industry system.<sup>29</sup> In this mountainous country, many knitted parts of woollen costumes were produced. Not all of this production was organized by guilds.

Bohemian knitting was the most important in central Europe. The oldest relics of hand-knitting here are two pairs of silk liturgical gloves from the fourteenth century. The knitter-artisans worked in Prague in the sixteenth century. In 1570 they left the cloth guild, although their statutes were confirmed only in 1612. The guild of hand-knitters worked also in Kutna Hora, and from 1660, in Strakonice. In the statutes of 1612, confirmed in 1716, the masterworks are the fulled carpet, a pair of gloves of black and coloured wool, and the beret.<sup>30</sup> Bohemian knitting had a direct connection with North Italy. Italian patterned knits, utilized mainly for making woollen carpets, had been adapted to Bohemian art. The hand-knitter guild worked in Prague at least to the end of the eighteenth century. A bowl belonging to this handicraft guild from 1792 shows the stockings, a ball of wool with four needles and a brush of fuller's thistle.<sup>31</sup> (Pl. 6).

Austria also adopted textile techniques from Italy. Large herds of sheep in the mountains provided much rough wool for cloth. The oldest of Austrian knitter guilds is found in Vienna. The two oldest statutes of this guild date from 1609 and 1614. The hand-knitter guilds are registered also in Hallein in the province of Salzburg about 1620, in Linz from 1655 and in Styria from 1699. The 1614 statute

from Vienna referred to the patterned carpet with flowers, the beret, the woolen shirt and a pair of gloves made as masterpieces. <sup>32</sup>

Hand-knitting spread into Hungary and Slovakia later than into Bohemia. One of the reasons for the retardation was the weakness of textile production in these countries. The most important reason was a slower demand for stockings, and also the berets and waistcoats worn with the west European costumes. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, men in Hungary and Slovakia wore long national costumes with boots and without stockings. Only those men and women who favored west European fashion, wore knit fabrics.

The oldest hand-knitter guild worked in Bratislava, probably by the first half of the seventeenth century. Its statutes were confirmed in 1651. The masterworks were "like in all the Roman Empire" a knitted patterned carpet with flower ornaments, "two elles long and large", a beret, a woolen shirt and a pair of "reiter" (or cavalier) socks. The masterworks had to be made in thirteen weeks. The statutes also limited the productivity of one workshop. Only three journeymen and one apprentice could be employed. If the master works were not accepted by the senior of the guild, the candidate for master was obliged to wander a year longer (and the obligatory travel was already four years). The statutes contained much information attesting to the demand for workers and for knit goods in Slovakia. In this country all hand-knitters were organized into one common guild from Bratislava and its suburbs: Komarno from 1698, Trbava from 1714, Trencin from 1723, Samorin from 1728, Nove Mesto from 1729, Stupava from 1747, Devin from 1751, Dunajska Streda from 1756 and lastly Nitra from 1771. In a charter from 1770 there is also a mention of the knitter guilds in eastern Slovakia: Sobotiste, Holica and Sastin. The Bratislavian statutes from 1767 give information only about the assortment of knitted fabrics. <sup>33</sup>

The Hungarian handknitter guilds were organized comparatively recently, only in the eighteenth century. The textile production of this country was retarded, owing to the Turkish conquest. <sup>34</sup> In 1715 the statutes of the oldest knitter guild in Buda were confirmed. An interesting mark of that guild, a pair of stockings, a pair of scissors and a brush of fuller's thistle, dates from 1725. (Pl. 7) The mark shows the main product of the guild. The scissors served for shearing the fulled stockings which were previously napped. Other woollen fabrics were also napped before shearing. The mark shows the type of product from the Buda knitters. They made the simplest woollen articles, mainly stockings. These were then fulled in small hand-fulling presses. The guild of knitters in Sopron confirmed its privilege in 1774. From at least 1776 there are hand-knitters in Győr and from 1781 there is a dated statute and mark of a guild in Veszprem. In 1782 there is information about the hand-knitter production in the district of Tolna. <sup>35</sup> The mark from Veszprem dated 1781 has been published. <sup>36</sup> It shows stockings and gloves as the main fabricated articles, also a brush made from fullers' thistle and a large pair of scissors. The production of Veszprem knitters was like that of Buda and Slovakia. They too made the simplest woollen stockings and gloves and fulled them with combing and shearing. They were all shaped by drying on wooden forms, sewn together and sometimes embroidered.

The registration of numerous hand-knitter guilds in Hungary in the eighteenth



century shows clearly the growing demand for stockings and other types of knit clothing. The hand-knitters worked for the Hungarian middle class, mainly townspeople. The requirements of the wealthiest Hungarians were met by goods imported from Austria, Bohemia and Western Europe. Machines came to Hungary rather late, only at the end of the eighteenth century, and the mechanical knitting frames were widely used only later. (Pl. 8).

From the sixteenth century, hand-knitting came into prominence in trade for Italy, Switzerland, and other parts of Germany. Perhaps hand-knitters had workshops in Cologne, but no mention of guild organization has been found so far. Only one guild of hand-knitters worked in Frankfurt-Am-Main from the late sixteenth century. "Hosenstricker, Teppich und Barettmacher" obtained the confirmation of their statutes in 1640, 1646 and 1649. The master-works from 1659 were: "Erstlich einen Teppich drey ehlen lang und dritthalb ehlen bret mit Blumenwerck versetzt. Zwyten ein Baretlein, drittens ein wollen Hembd, und viertens ein Paar Strumpff mit Spanischen Zwickelen, zum langsten innerhalb dreyzehn Wochen".<sup>38</sup> This information indicates a high technical level for hand-knitting as well as a large assortment of patterned carpets and fashionable costume.

Hand-knitting spread rather early into northern Germany. The guild in Lubeck existed from 1613, and Hamburg early became a center both of trade in English fabrics and for the production of woollen stockings.<sup>39</sup> Saxony had also some knitting guilds. In Dresden "Barettmacher und Strumpfstricker" were registered in 1563. At Apolda in Thuringia "David der Stricker" was a founder of hand-knitting in 1593. Various Saxon towns differed in their assortments of production. The Dresden statute from 1653 noted fabric made for the master work requirement: Spanish men's berets, women's caps, woollen shirts, men's trousers, and gloves. Stockings were mentioned only in the statute from 1687. (Pl. 4) The guild in Leipzig in 1674 had different master works: A woollen beret and shirt, and a patterned carpet. The guild in Zittau was organized early in 1574. The hand-knitters in Berlin had the statute from 1697 with the typical variety consisting of woollen beret, shirt, stockings and carpet. (Pl. 10) Only in 1710 was a knitting frame used in this guild. Lusatia formed the borderland between Saxony and Lower Silesia. In Zgorzelec (Gorlitz) the guild of knitters worked from the early seventeenth century, and the statute of 1683 described the following masterworks: "Ein Spanisch Bareth, ein Weiber Bareth, ein wollen Hembde und ein Paar lange Mannes Strumpfe gestrickt, gewalckt und aussgebri – in 5 Wochen Anfertigen".<sup>40</sup> The knitters of this town were able to make patterned carpets as well. (Pl. 11).

Silesia was a very important center of hand-knitting in Europe, like Alsace and Bohemia. The fulling mill for the knitter guild worked in Wrockaw (Breslau) from 1534. (Pl. 9) That is certainly a sign of significant production. The statute from 1573 noted the Spanish beret, women's caps and shirts as the masterworks. In 1550-1577 the guild in Wroclaw had only 26 workshops, but in 1649 there were already 67. In the statute of 1675 the patterned carpet is included as a master work. It also mentions the Spanish or Jewish beret, English summer stockings with Spanish gussets, berets and stockings for women, and woollen shirts or jackets. The knitter guild from Legnica had a statute from 1576. Berets, socks and gloves

were made there. The statute from Nysa (Neisse) of 1602 included the patterned "carpet" for a table or for a bed, besides other fabrics. In the statute of 1611 from Brzeg (Brieg) the carpet was considered to be the most complicated of the master works. In Silesia other knitters also existed such as one in Kowary founded in 1619, and in Lwowek Slaski with a statute from 1791. <sup>41</sup> In the seventeenth century in Upper Silesia the guilds of hand-knitters worked in Glubczyce and in Raciborz. The latter had an official mark from 1685. But as the knitters were organized in a common guild with haberdashers, the mark shows only the tools of the latter. <sup>42</sup> The strong hand-knitter guilds in Silesia, maintained until the late eighteenth century, retarded the spread of the mechanical knitting frame.

Gdansk (Danzig) had a craftsmen guild in the early seventeenth century with the statute dated 1620. Soon afterwards guilds were registered in Cracow, Poznan, Lublin, Opole Lubelskie, Strzyżów and Opatów. Up to the early nineteenth century, the hand-knitters worked independently of the mechanical frame goods manufactures. The latter were established mainly near Warsaw. Some hand-knitter guilds worked also in towns now a part of Byelorussia and the Ukraine. In the seventeenth century the guilds were registered in Wilno, Kowek, and Sluck. <sup>43</sup>

In spite of the inadequacy of sources and their fragmentary nature, one can deduce that from the seventeenth century onwards, in certain Russian towns, there were a number of professional knitters producing handmade goods. They were probably organized into trade-guilds, but some may also have been independent of organizations, or may have been women. By about 1630-40 stockings were an indispensable part of the uniform of certain military detachments. In the autumn of 1633, for instance, a considerable order was placed for long stockings coming above the knee. These were for regiments newly organized and fitted out on West European lines. The small number of Muscovite knitters could not cope with such a large order in a short time, so the authorities turned to the workers in towns from the Vladimir and Galic districts. <sup>44</sup> This brief reference to the fulfillment of a very large order is of great significance. It proves the existence of a hand-knitting industry, not very developed, but still somewhat organized in many Russian towns. Further research in the archives would probably reveal its extent and the manner of its organization. There was a cheapness of labor which made it possible to produce luxury items, needing a great deal of handwork, according to changed fashion or economic conditions.

Hand-knitting spread early in all Scandinavian and Baltic countries. Scandinavian museums have collected knitted parts of different costumes from as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But it was rather a popular knitting diffused in the villages and in the small towns without any guild organization. Latvian and Estonian knitting was classified as one of the most archaic and with the most varied patterns in Europe. Jutland in Denmark was one of the biggest export production centers in European knitting. But the results of current research indicate a cottage-industry system of production. It is difficult to find information about guilds of Danish hand-knitters. In the late seventeenth century some manufacturers with mechanical knitting frames began to work in Denmark. <sup>45</sup>

Knitting is believed to have been introduced into Iceland by English or German

merchants, and the practice spread quickly. The oldest information dates from the sixteenth century. The first mention of export of knitted goods is from 1624.<sup>46</sup> The knitting was done by men as well as women or children and not in town guild organizations. In Sweden also, hand-knitting was not organized in guilds. The main center for stocking production was southern Holland.<sup>47</sup> In Norway and Finland, hand knitting was a popular art.<sup>48</sup> In Rumania and the Balkans, only popular household knitting was known. Italy influenced the hand-knitting which developed in Dalmatia.

In this paper I wish to show the major spread of hand-knitting as a branch of guild production in different towns. In another paper, I have written about European popular knitting. Other details of the spread of the mechanical knitting frame and of manufacturing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were described in my European knitting history. I gave there also more detailed information about the spread of hand-knitting in Europe.<sup>49</sup> The history of the knitting craft is important. The hand-knitters in each town worked mainly for the local market, but sometimes also for the entire country. The biggest export centers preferred using the farming-out system together with guild production. There are some archive sources, mainly the statutes, referring to guild activity and organization. It seems possible to gather full and particular information about the assortment and technical level of knit production by further research in all European countries. In this short article I was only able to present the more important information concerning the spread of knitting guilds in western central and eastern Europe.

Finally, a few conclusions. Guild hand-knitting in Europe involved mainly woolen fabrics. Cotton, silk, and linen yarns were as widely diffused as wool. The use of the latter in fabric production usually demanded final dressing, fulling, raising with a teasel and shearing. Woolen fabrics had to be fulled either in small hand-fulling mills, by being walked on, or beaten with a club, and while in the wet condition. The hand-fulling effaced mistakes of hasty knitting, the use of uneven and rough thread, and prevented dropped stitches. The fulled knit fabrics did not have closed surfaces like woven cloths. The stitch was always visible. As previously noted, caps and gloves were shaped by drying on wooden forms, sewn and at times embroidered. Coloured fabrics were often produced from dyed yarns. Finally, fabrics had to be ironed, arranged in sets and packed for sale. In the assortment of items produced, the patterned knit carpets were technically the most complex products of hand knitting generally known. The art of knitting masterworks for full guild status was concentrated in the territory within the German-speaking world, and was common throughout the Holy Roman Empire. The most important centers were Alsace, Silesia, Bohemia, Slovakia, and Austria.

Knitting craft history in Europe from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries shows clearly the development of that branch of guild production. It shows as well that of cottage industry and also the popular and the mechanical manufacturing development. The numerous statutes and a rich iconography indicate the large variety of fabrics and the high level of technique in the production of patterned parts of costumes and carpets. I have been concerned with knitting only as one of the purely textile fiber techniques. The papers of Braham Norwick show earlier wire

worked pieces. They introduce an interesting question but should be considered in relation to the details of European knitting history information given in my book.<sup>50</sup> This short article shows the major spread of handknitting in the greater part of Europe since the sixteenth century. Machine-knitting then spread during the seventeenth century, but some of these enterprises were unsuccessful due to opposition and competition from strong group of handknitters organized into guilds.

Studies of European knitting show a close relationship between production and consumption. The manufacture of knitted clothing had the advantage of delivering ready-made products. Therefore that branch of the textile industry was particularly linked with actual fashion requirements. The slow development of knitting in Russia, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldavia and Wallachia was due to the fact that the national male costume did not require stockings. The spread of West European dress certainly increased demand for knits. As the small guilds of knitters were not able to meet this demand, manufacturers with the mechanical knitting frames of William Lee were able to expand.

Notes:

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7. *The Diffusion of Knitting in Medieval Europe, op. cit.*

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10. I. Turnau, *Historia dziewiarstwa, op. cit.*, s. 37

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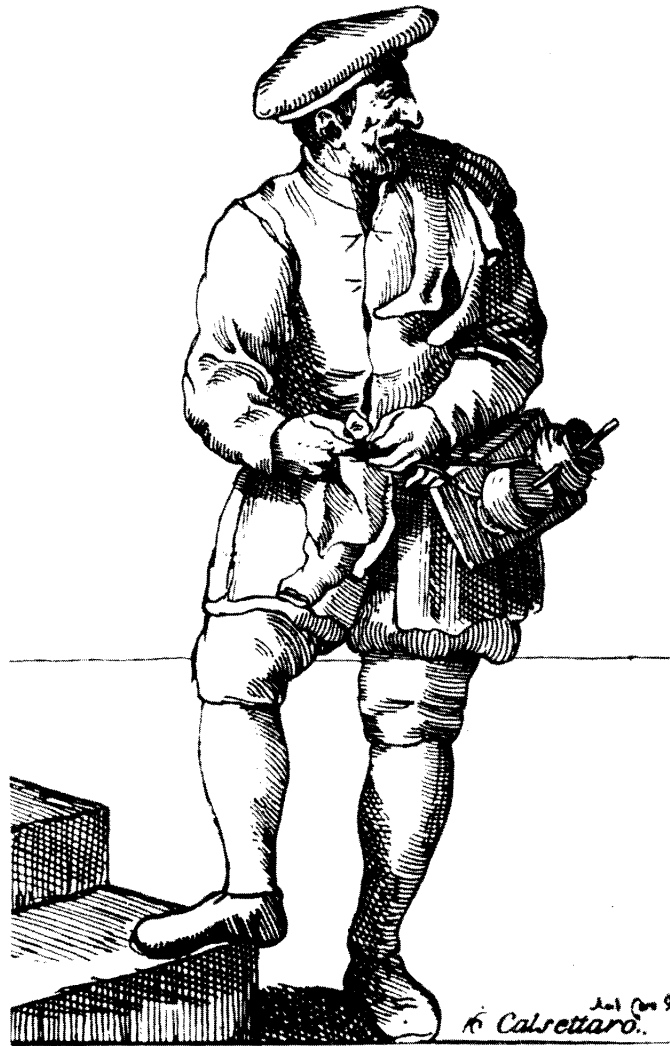
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## QUILTING AND PATCHWORK - WORLD-WIDE NEEDLE ARTS

By Shiela Betterton

It may come as a surprise to many to realise that quilting and patchwork have been known for such a long time, particularly as patchwork, or pieced work as it is often known, has come to be regarded as something peculiarly American. However, study and research have shown that these two forms of needlework are to be found in countries as far apart as Britain and Australia, India and North America, and there are few countries in the world where these crafts cannot be found in one form or another.

The true quilt is a textile sandwich, with a top layer, a bottom layer and a filling in the middle. Quilting is the pattern in running stitch which holds the three layers together and is the last process in the making of a quilt. A quilt top may be of whole cloth, pieced work or appliqué or a combination of them all. In Britain a quilter is one who quilts only, but in the United States of America the term "quilter" is used for those who make patchwork whether it is quilted or not.

In Britain and Europe patchwork and quilting are two very different forms of needlework. Both come from the east, spread through the middle east and North Africa to Europe, to Britain and eventually to North America.

Some of the earliest patchwork in existence today was made between the 6th and 9th centuries. It is of a type now known as mosaic patchwork and the pieces have been whipped together on the wrong side in the English manner. The work formed part of votive offerings in a temple on one of the silk routes between China and India. It is interesting to note that this work would probably have been done by a man as women were not usually allowed in temples.<sup>1</sup>

Quilting too came from the east. Quilted jackets have been worn by the Chinese people for many hundreds of years. During the Crusades, and later, men wore quilted jackets under their heavy metal armour in order to be more comfortable. For light troops a quilted jacket was the only protection. When soldiers first came to Jamestown in 1607 they wore padded jackets in place of armour.

Early quilts were purely utilitarian, just a stuffed sack (the word quilt is derived from the Latin "culcita" meaning a stuffed mattress or cushion). The three layers were tied together at intervals just sufficient to prevent the padding from moving. Gradually fine stitching and elaborate patterns evolved. Houses were cold, glass for windows unknown and thick warm bedcovers and bed hangings were essential.

The reasons for patchwork were obviously repair and economy. When textiles were scarce, pieces left over from rich clothing or the best pieces left when church vestments had worn out were applied to another background to make a new piece of

1 Patchwork, A. Colby

cloth. The appliquéés took the place of embroidery. The original coat-of-arms was actually a jacket with shapes appliquééd to it. <sup>2</sup>

During the eighteenth century quilted clothing was high fashion. Men wore quilted breeches and quilted waistcoats (vests), women wore quilted bodices and lovely quilted petticoats. Many of these were made of silk with a homespun backing and a sheeps wool filling, but some were made of a fine worsted fabric called calamanco. Fashions in clothing crossed the Atlantic and women in the American colonies would be wearing the same fashionable clothes as were being worn in London, within a very short time.

Before the War of Independence British and American best quilts were very similar, often made of calamanco which was imported into America from England with the sheep's wool filling. The traditional North of England and Welsh quilts were, and still are, whole cloth, usually in solid colours, white or pastels, with perhaps one colour for the top and a contrast for the back. Contrary to the opinion expressed in many American books, British quilts are always quilted in running stitch, not back stitch. Running stitch means that the quilt can be completely reversible.

Quilting skills were taken out to America from Europe but there is no mention in contemporary literature of patchwork as we know it today. Early patchwork would have been literally "patched" work where a patch would have been applied to a threadbare spot. The main quilting areas in Britain are in the north of England and south Wales, and the quilting patterns are regional. Those from the north are free and flowing and all the feather patterns come from this area - patterns called in the United States of America the Princess Feathers. The pattern layouts from Wales are inclined to be more geometric. Of course when women emigrated to North America they took their quilting patterns with them, and as they journeyed throughout the north American continent so the patterns spread. Similar patterns are used for both quilting, appliqué and patchwork, and the meanings are the same. For instance the pineapple is the symbol of hospitality, the pomegranate fruitfulness, the vine plenty and so on.

It was usual in Britain for a girl to have just one quilt for her dowry but in America, tradition has it that a girl should have twelve or even thirteen, the thirteenth being the grandest one of all, her Bride's Quilt. Factory-made blankets were not readily available until after the Civil War. Cold winters and unheated homes meant that young women would need a goodly store of quilts, even if not as many as thirteen, before marriage as there would not be too much time for making quilts in the early years after marriage. The continuing westward expansion meant that there was always a need for warm bedding, and throughout the years women continued to meet the challenge of finding new ways of piecing together their scraps of fabric, old and new, found in the family scrap bag. By the middle of the nineteenth century designing quilt block patterns had become one of the most popular

<sup>2</sup> Patchwork, A. Colby

domestic pastimes. It is not known exactly when, in America, the block method of construction superseded the whole cloth quilt. No doubt there was a transitional period when both types were being made simultaneously. The straight lines of the geometric patterns were easy to sew, and pieces could be cut economically.

Leisure meant time for sewing and distances between the homes of many of the pioneer women meant that they had to concentrate on occupations and hobbies which could be carried on in the home. Quilting bees were welcome social occasions where the whole family could join in. The women sewed and provided a grand supper. After work was over for the day the men joined in the festivities which often included dancing and social activities. The young people particularly enjoyed these occasions as it gave them a chance to meet others of their own age and perhaps do a little courting. In Britain, as in America, quilting served many purposes. Many a church or chapel has been built or repaired from the proceeds of quilting bees, and women in both countries have kept the family together by quilting for a living when times were hard.

However many more quilts must have been made at home than ever were made at quilting parties, and a quilting frame was an essential piece of furniture. Types of frame varied from the simple "stretcher" type which could be rested on the backs of two chairs for support, to a full-sized frame which was pulled up to the ceiling when quilting was over for the day. Similar types of frames to those used in America were used in northern England and Wales.

Quilting in Britain persisted in country districts and particularly in the mining areas of south Wales and the northeast of England. In these areas the fashion for wearing quilted petticoats lasted well into the twentieth century. Many Welsh women owned a black satin quilted petticoat, and on the northeast coast fisherwomen wore heavy woollen petticoats with a thick rib quilted horizontally. Others wore the more traditional type of quilted petticoat.

The north of England produced a type of quilt which was not made elsewhere. Called "Strippy" quilt, it consisted of seven or nine bands of fabric sewn together down the length of the quilt. Pieced or patterned fabric bands alternated with solid colour bands and the whole was skilfully quilted in traditional patterns. Did the Amish copy the idea for their "Bars" quilts or did the idea emerge simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic?

During the last quarter of the 19th century Victorian "crazy" patchwork reached its peak. Silks, velvets, brocades and ribbons were all sewn together in seemingly careless abandon. The seams were heavily embellished with embroidery stitches and women vied with each other to see how elaborately they could sew. These ornate pieces of needlework were seldom used on beds, but were rather "throws" to be used on a sofa when resting. Many pieces of this work are still in existence, often in private homes, treasured pieces handed down in the family.

One pattern which seems to be common to all countries is that known as the "Log Cabin." In many parts of the north of England the pattern is known as "Log Wood" while in the Isle of Man it is known as "Roof" patterns and is considered to be "the true Manx pattern."<sup>3</sup> In Ireland a Log Cabin quilt is called a "folded" quilt while Averil Colby mentions in her book *Patchwork* that a woman in Scotland possesses a number of quilts made by her family from patterns which had been handed down to them from the 18th century, some of which were "Log Cabin" made of tweed and homespun woollen cloth. Because ribbons were often used for the narrow "logs", Caulfeild's *Dictionary of Needlework* calls the pattern "ribbon patchwork."

In America the central square of the block traditionally is red, representing the fire. The light side of the block represents the firelight and the dark side the shadow. Sometimes the centre square is yellow which signifies the lantern put in the window to guide travellers. However there is no such symbolism in Britain. This pattern has been used to great effect in Holland but there the influence is directly from America.

Patchwork and quilting have often been undertaken by men. One of the first quilters to receive recognition was Joseph Hedley who lived near Hexham in Northumberland. Known as Joe the Quilter he became famous for his beautiful designs and exquisite stitchery. Unhappily for him in 1826 he was found cruelly beaten to death, some say for the wealth he had made by his quilting, but his murderers were never found.

During the 19th Century several men were known to have pieced coverlets from scraps of woollen cloths which were used to make military uniforms. In Wales, James Williams, a tailor of Wrexham, Denbighshire, spent ten years making a large coverlet from approximately 4,500 pieces of cloth left over from the garments he had made. This is now in the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagans, Cardiff. More recently, Mr. Rowley of Oxfordshire pieced coverlets (they were not quilted). He used fabrics given to him by the ladies of his village so that the coverlets were a record of all the dresses which they had worn.

There are many different types of quilts and quilts were made by many different types of people. Early in the 19th century textile manufacturers printed panels which commemorated some special event. These were often incorporated as the centre panel of a "medallion" or "framed" quilt. Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887 produced a great number of these prints as did the Centennial in 1876. Many Album quilts were made. They honoured someone, and each block would be executed by a different person or group of people and be signed and dated. The finished article would be presented to the recipient to mark some special occasion. One in the Museum's collection has inscribed in indelible ink "Presented to the Rev. Mrs. Waterbury by her friends on April 1st, 1853." Weldon's "Practical Patchwork" published about 1900 explains that "Hospital quilts are made of good-sized squares of red twill and white calico placed alternately like squares

on a chess board, the white pieces having texts written on them or Scripture pictures outlined in marking ink; they are much appreciated and prove a great source of interest to the poor invalids.”

Needlework skills have been acquired by many women who had no tradition of sewing with needle and thread, and the quilts made in Hawaii and by the Plains Indian women show that a very high standard of work has been attained.

Patterns did not always go from east to west. Most countries have records which show the influence of American patchwork on their own designs. A quilt made in the north of England in 1840 and used by the maker to pay her rent, shows a pattern of rather flamboyant tulip-like flowers. The maker’s sister had emigrated to Philadelphia and was known to have sent back patterns to her family in England. A large pieced top which had never been backed or quilted was made in Ireland in 1860, and is now in the possession of the Cheltenham Museum. It shows considerable Pennsylvania influence – blocks resembling hex signs, hearts and two love birds. The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum has set a set of six quilts made by one woman, some sewn in Co. Antrim and some in San Francisco, but it is impossible to tell which quilts were made in which country. Once again we see the interweaving of ideas between Britain and North America.

Contemporary literature mirrors the interests of the day and throughout the centuries references to quilting and patchwork abound. Quilts were mentioned in the fifteenth century and a quilted “cappe” in the sixteenth. In 1666 John Smith, clothier of Bradford on Avon, England left in his will, “one green rug, one pair of blancotts and one red coverlid.” It was not specified whether the coverlet was quilted. But in 1726 William Trent of New Jersey had “feather beds, bolsters, blankets, ruggs and quolts to the value of £38.9s”

References to patchwork can be found in 18th century literature. In *Gulliver’s Travels*, published in 1726 he states that his clothes, measured and fitted by three hundred Lilliputian tailors, “looked like the patchwork made by the ladies in England, only that mine were all of a colour.”<sup>4</sup> Patchwork is mentioned in many nineteenth-century works such as *Oliver Twist* by Dickens and in most of the American and Canadian girls’ stories. Books such as these provide valuable references to the type of patterns then in use.

During the summer of 1882 the writer, Oscar Wilde, held meetings in the U.S.A. He talked to select circles of women each of whom was busy embroidering and stitching an “Oscar” Crazy Quilt, the season’s rage, thus described by an expert: “On a piece of cambric half a yard square there is basted in the centre a sunflower made of either yellow broadcloth, silk or velvet; or else a lily, daisy or pansy. The squares are filled with bits of silk or velvet of all colours, the edges turned in, and the pieces sewed down firmly with a chain stitch of old gold colour, alternating with cardinal sewing silk.”<sup>5</sup>

4 Patchwork, A. Colby

5 The Life of Oscar Wilde by Hesketh Pearson, Methuen 1946

One of Scotland's oldest homes is Traquair House in Peebleshire. The family were Jacobite and faithful to the Young Pretender, Charles Stewart. As it was then an offence to practice the Catholic religion, services were held in secrecy in the house. The priest's vestments, which were white and quilted, were folded and placed among the piles of household linen and were thus quite unnoticed when not in use.

Legend has it that a white satin quilt on the bed in the King's Room at Traquair was made by Mary, Queen of Scots and her four Maries, but it has been established that the quilt is of a slightly later date. It is highly probable that Mary learnt to quilt when she lived in France but there is no record of any quilting actually executed by her. However, when she was imprisoned it was recorded that her steward sent her a "Holland cloak and a quilted bodice."<sup>6</sup>

It is thought that the English gentry introduced patchwork and quilting into Ireland during the 18th century, and these crafts spread through all classes of society. Strangely enough it was often the upper classes, who had no need of economy, who saved the best pieces from worn-out textiles for re-use, whereas the poorer people bought bundles of cloth pieces from the dressmaker or later the factory, for a very small sum of money. Was this because their clothes and household textiles were so worn that they could not be re-used? However, although thrift was a primary concern, even these quiltmakers designed their own patterns.

Most early work was chintz appliqué, often known in America as *Broderie Perse*. This was a process where motifs were cut from chintz, perhaps worn-out bedcovers or curtains, which were then sewn to a calico background thus making a new piece of patterned cloth. Most of the early Irish appliques were sewn down with buttonhole stitch whereas in America the raw edge was turned under with the needle and neatly hemmed.

For piecing the Irish invariably used the American method whereby the geometric shapes of fabric were octagonal and sewn with a running stitch. Many of the hexagonal patterns were made by the English method, in which the cloth was basted over paper shapes which were then oversewn or whipped together on the wrong side. In Ireland it was quite usual to have best quilts and "using quilts".

The upper class ladies encouraged plain sewing and the making of patchwork among the less well-off. These were taught in the schools set up by landlords for the children of their tenants.

By the middle of the nineteenth century a good turkey red dye had become readily available, and like her sisters in Wales, northern England and the Isle of Man, the Irish needlewoman incorporated red-dyed fabric into many bedcovers. It looked

5 The Life of Oscar Wilde by Hesketh Pearson, Methuen 1946

6 The Needlework of Mary, Queen of Scots, by Margaret Swain



well with white, and a plentiful supply of white fabric was always available, and it gave the illusion of warmth and cheer.

The quilting was kept very simple, - diamonds, squares or zig-zags, known as "wave" quilting. Most Irish quilts are just two layers, the batting being omitted.

The fashion for the Victorian crazy patchwork was short lived in Ireland, perhaps because there was not the wealth of rich fabrics available.

In northern Ireland, Ulster, women generally were thrifty and loved bright colours, so patchwork made a great appeal to them. Nearly all Ulster quilts have patchwork or appliqué tops and use one quilting pattern over the whole surface. As in southern Ireland the pattern is known as "Waves" and resembles chevrons. These quilts seldom were padded but if padding was used it could have been old blankets, neatly cut up.

Quilting was a winter pastime and involved the whole community. The quilting parties held in Ulster very much resembled those of the United States of America. A woman who had a top ready for quilting sent out invitations and prepared as fine a supper as she could afford. The guests, men and women, started arriving in the late afternoon and as the women sewed in teams of six there was time for those not actually quilting to join in the general festivities. Young people particularly enjoyed these parties.

The Isle of Man, which is situated in the Irish Sea between the north-west coast of England and northern Ireland, had a strong tradition of patchwork. The Manx were a practical people and thought patchwork was an appropriate occupation for even the well-to-do. Such families could afford to buy materials from the mainland, England, to make quilts and had the time to piece blocks.

The main characteristic of Manx patchwork is the square used as a diamond and the more typical Manx quilts had larger blocks than was usual elsewhere. Suitings, flannels and tweeds were used as well as cottons, and the interlining was often worn blankets. Quilting was quick and simple just zig zag lines, known, as in Ireland, as the "wave" pattern. Whereas in England and Wales a quilting frame was always used, this was not the case in the Isle of Man, although itinerant quilters would travel from house to house carrying a portable quilting frame with them. "Flowers" of hexagons were often arranged in the manner of the American "Grandmother's Flower Garden" pattern but the most usual form was the framed quilt. A central panel, which was sometimes specially printed for the purpose, was surrounded by a number of borders either pieced or with solid colour borders alternating with pieced borders. These were sewn on until the required size had been reached.

Many quilts were made from bands of woollen cloth in the manner of the well-known Amish quilts. Immigrants from the Isle of Man settled in Ohio and other

parts of the mid-West. Could it be that the Amish in the mid-west adopted the Manx idea for their “Bars” quilts?

A favourite pattern in American is known as the “Ohio Star.” A block in this pattern was made at a school in Castletown, Isle of Man, about 1840. Cleveland, Ohio, was largely settled by people of Manx origin<sup>7</sup> so again the intriguing question arises - Was this pattern taken from the Isle of Man to Cleveland, Ohio, where it became the “Ohio Star.”

As in the north of England the women of the Isle of Man wore quilted skirts and quilted hoods even into the 20th century.

It has been recorded by Dr. Larch Garrard of the Isle of Man and Manx Museum that the cutting of patches, and the rag strips for the hooked rugs was the task of the daughters of the household, particularly of strict non-conformists, on summer evenings before they were allowed to go out. The use of patchwork quilts was widespread in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and during the nineteenth century all boarding houses in Douglas, the principal town of the island and a popular holiday resort, furnished their bedrooms with a “patchwork coverlet on every bed and a rag rug on every floor.”<sup>8</sup>

Further afield in Holland, early Indian palampores (printed or painted bed-covers). were padded and quilted, and one in the Ryksmuseum is quilted in the clam-shell pattern. This pattern, of great antiquity (it was used at Pompeii) is not often seen on quilted or patchwork bedcovers. Another palampore which bears the arms of the City of Amsterdam is quilted overall in a Log Cabin pattern.

During the 19th century Dutch quilts were made of hexagons and many of the log cabin pattern. It is not known whether these particular patterns were used simultaneously in Holland and America or whether they show the influence of Dutch citizens on their return from the United States of America.

The nobility in Sweden slept under quilted silk bedcovers in the 17th century. As in the early Dutch quilts the clam-shell pattern was used, often as an all-over design. This same use can be found in quilts made in the north of England. These silk quilts had very little padding so it is presumed they were used as bedspreads only. Therefore a pile rug or “rya” was put on top for warmth.<sup>9</sup> Here we come across another similarity between Europe and America, where in Connecticut, for approximately one hundred years (1722-1833) needlework bed rugs were used as the top cover of the bed.

7 Dr. Larch Garrard

8 Dr. Larch Garrard

9 Nordiska Museet

The early 17th and 18th-century quilts were all made of silk but by the 19th century cotton, wool and silk were all commonly used. During the 18th and 19th centuries thicker wadding became more common and the quilts served a more practical function.

As time went on quilted bedcovers became common to most classes of people, and during the second half of the 19th century some patchwork was known to have been made by Swedes who had returned from America, showing the influence of the American block system of working.

Quilting skills from the Far East spread over most of Asia where men carried on the trade of quilters. In Persia prayer mats were quilted and even today it is possible to buy modern examples. In India and Pakistan, as in China itself, garments were quilted either overall or perhaps just around the bottoms of sleeves and trouser legs. In 1710 Celia Fiennes wrote in her diary "the next room has such a bed but that is fine Indian quilting." However, no explanation is given as to the type of quilting this could have been.

At the other side of the globe in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand there is some tradition of quilting, no doubt derived from the skills taken out by British settlers. Elizabeth Fry the, great Quaker reformer, and her ladies taught patchwork to women prisoners in London's Newgate Goal while they were awaiting deportation to Australia. She believed in cheerful community work. Each woman was given a bag of pieces to sew together on her long journey to the Antipodes and she would be hopeful to sell her work when she landed thus earning a little money to start her new life there.<sup>10</sup>

The padding of Tasmanian quilts is not always, as one would expect in a wool-producing country, sheep's wool, but layers of cloth, similar to the padding used by the Chinese.

In America patchwork developed often to the detriment of quilting which was reduced to straight lines and the outlining of geometric shapes. In England and Wales, quilting was the first consideration, but sadly the art has almost died out. However, during the last few years patchwork has become increasingly popular and a few of the old time quilters are passing on their skills to younger women. Quilting groups are being formed on the lines of many in America. If American women did not invent patchwork, they certainly developed it to an art which other countries have not yet been able to surpass. It is encouraging to hear of the many groups meeting regularly perpetuating the old skills and experimenting with new.

10 Life of Elizabeth Fry, Janet Whitney.  
Patchwork, A. Colby

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Nordisk Museet, Stockholm, Sweden

Open luchtmuseum, Arnhem, Holland

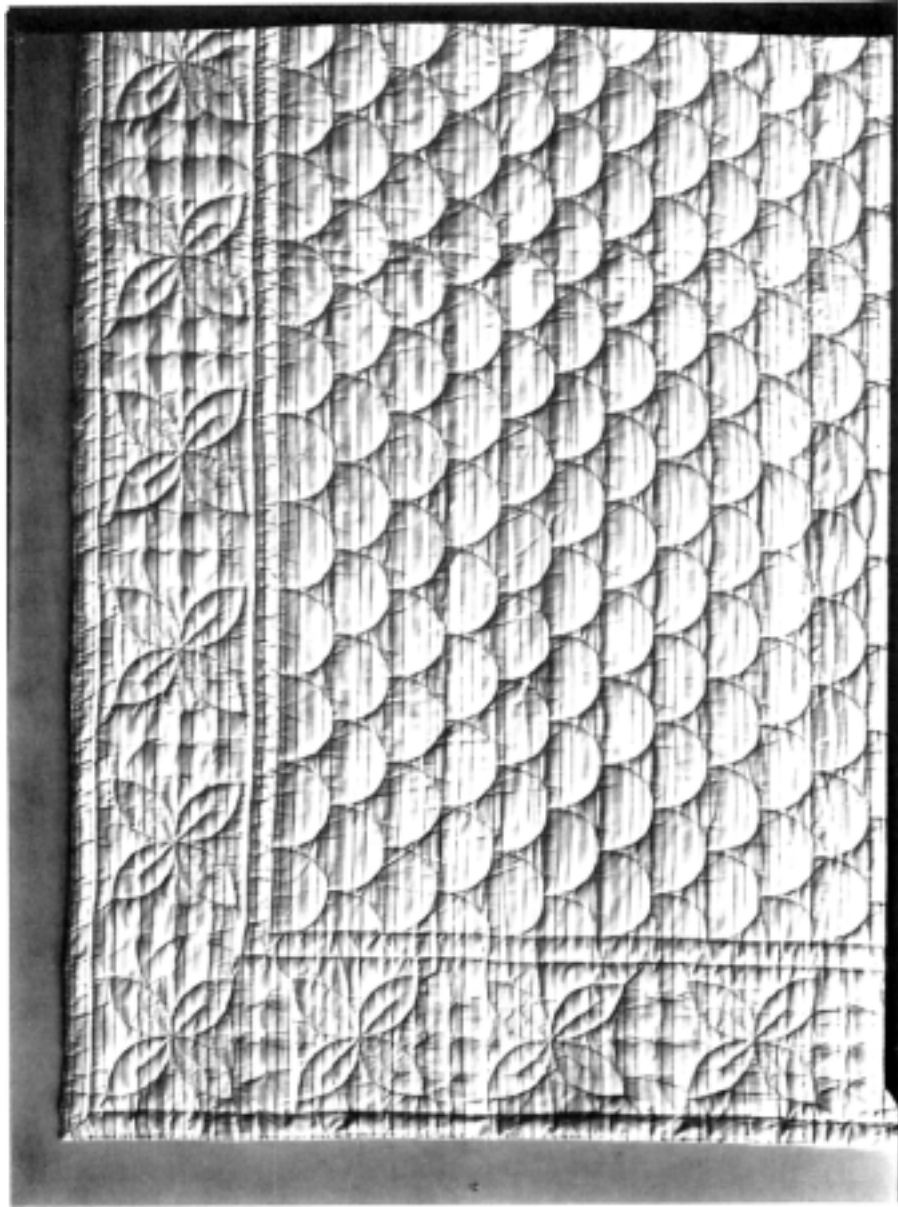
Beamish North-of-England Open-Air Museum.

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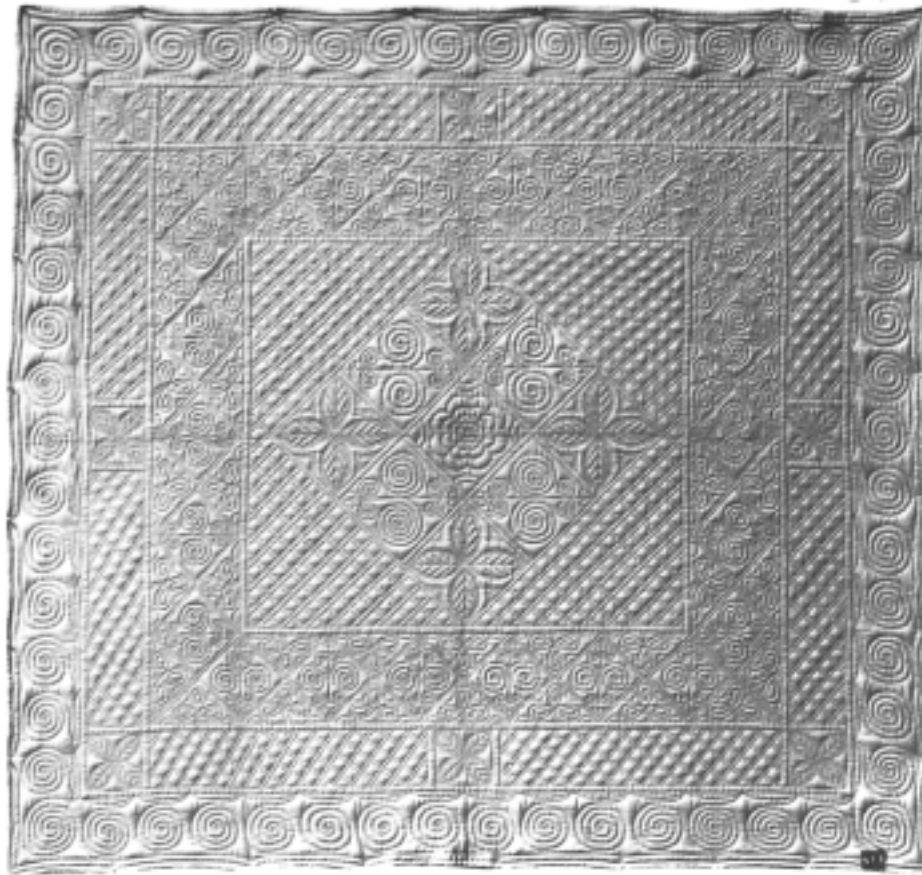
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- Orlofsky, Myron and Patsy - Quilts in America, McGraw Hill, 1975
- Petrie, Sir Flinders - Decorative Patterns of the Ancient World, Quaritch, 1930
- Safford, Carlton and Robert Bishop - America's Quilts and Coverlets, Dutton, 1972
- Webster, Marie - Quilts, their story and how to make them



1. Whole cloth quilt. Top of indigo dyed calamanco, natural homespun backing with sheep's wool filling.  
American. Third quarter 18th C.  
American Museum in Britain.



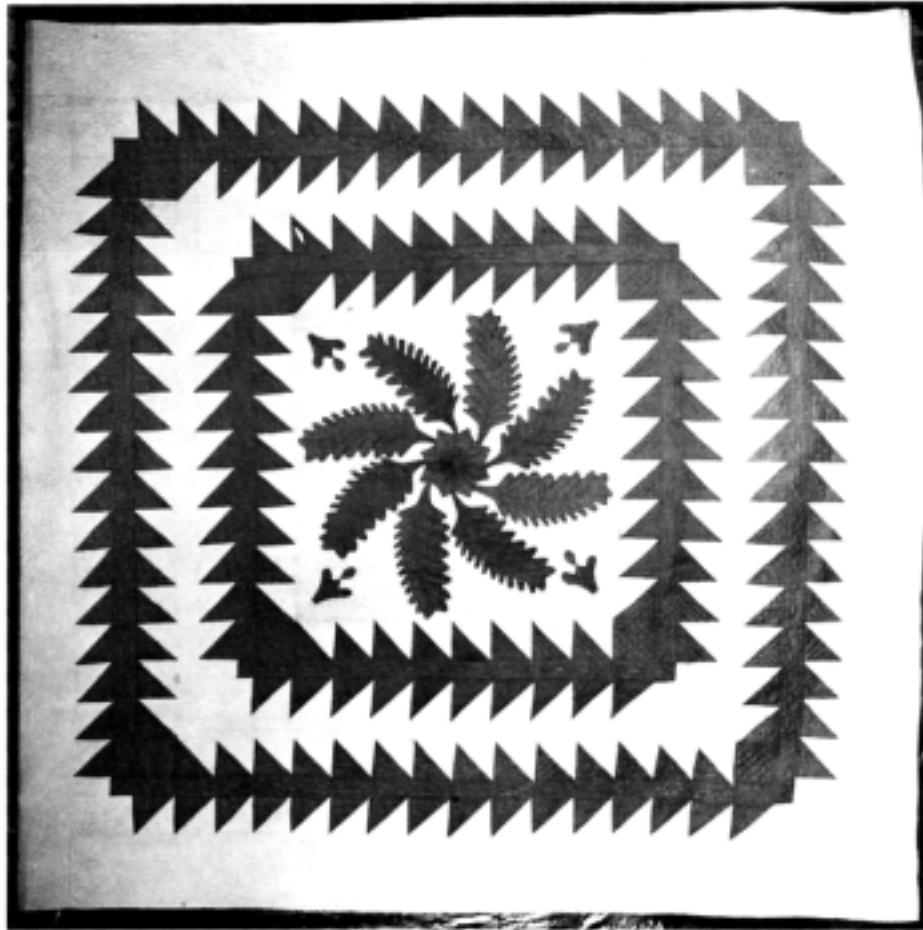
2. Whole cloth quilt. Striped silk in pale colours.  
Swedish. Late 18th C.  
Nordiska Museet, Stockholm.



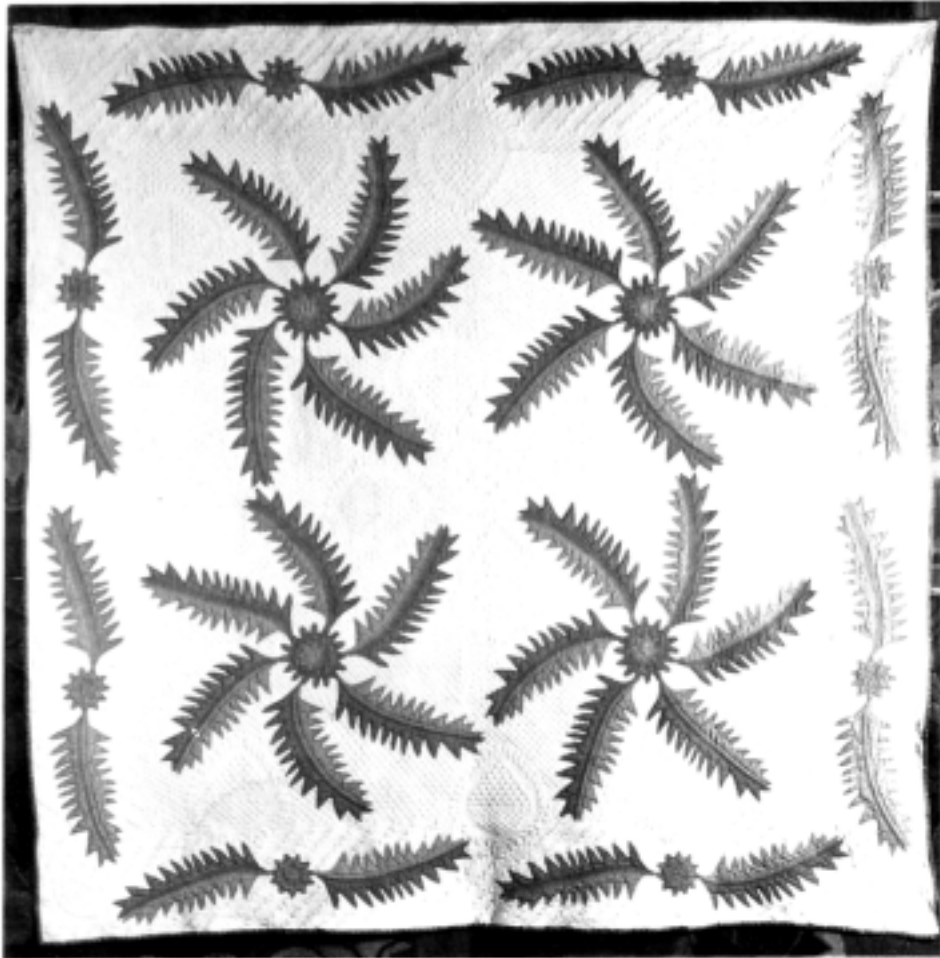
3. Whole cloth quilt of cream silk poplin shirting, wool filling. The quilting is a geometric design of great intricacy incorporating many traditional Welsh patterns.  
Welsh. Made in 1952 by Miss Edwards of Glamorgan.  
Welsh National Folk Museum, St. Fagans.

In the 1920's Miss Edwards had been taught the traditional patterns of the Glamorganshire valleys. In the 1930's she was one of the people appointed to be one of the official instructors to groups of miners' wives throughout the county thus instigating a revival of quilting. It was partly a "home industry" and partly social therapy for the wives during the difficult years of the depression.

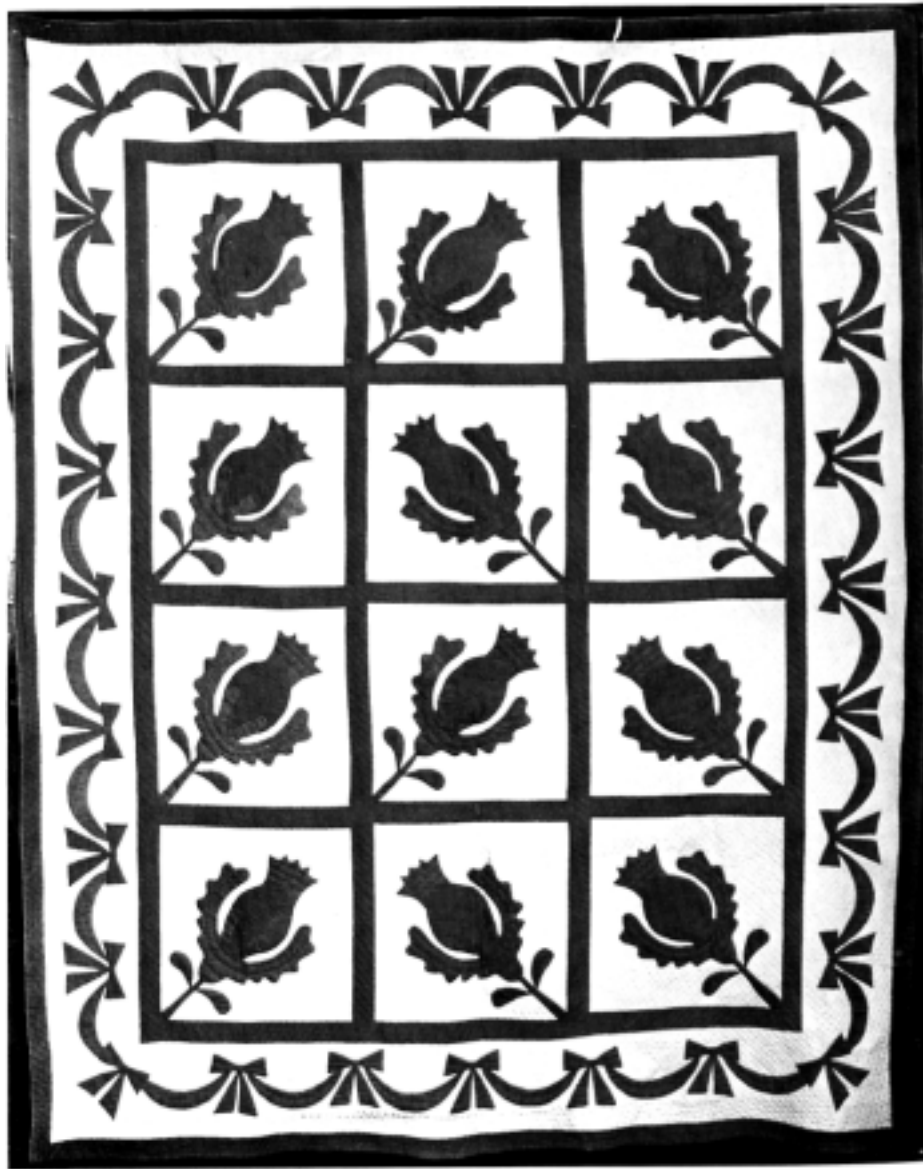




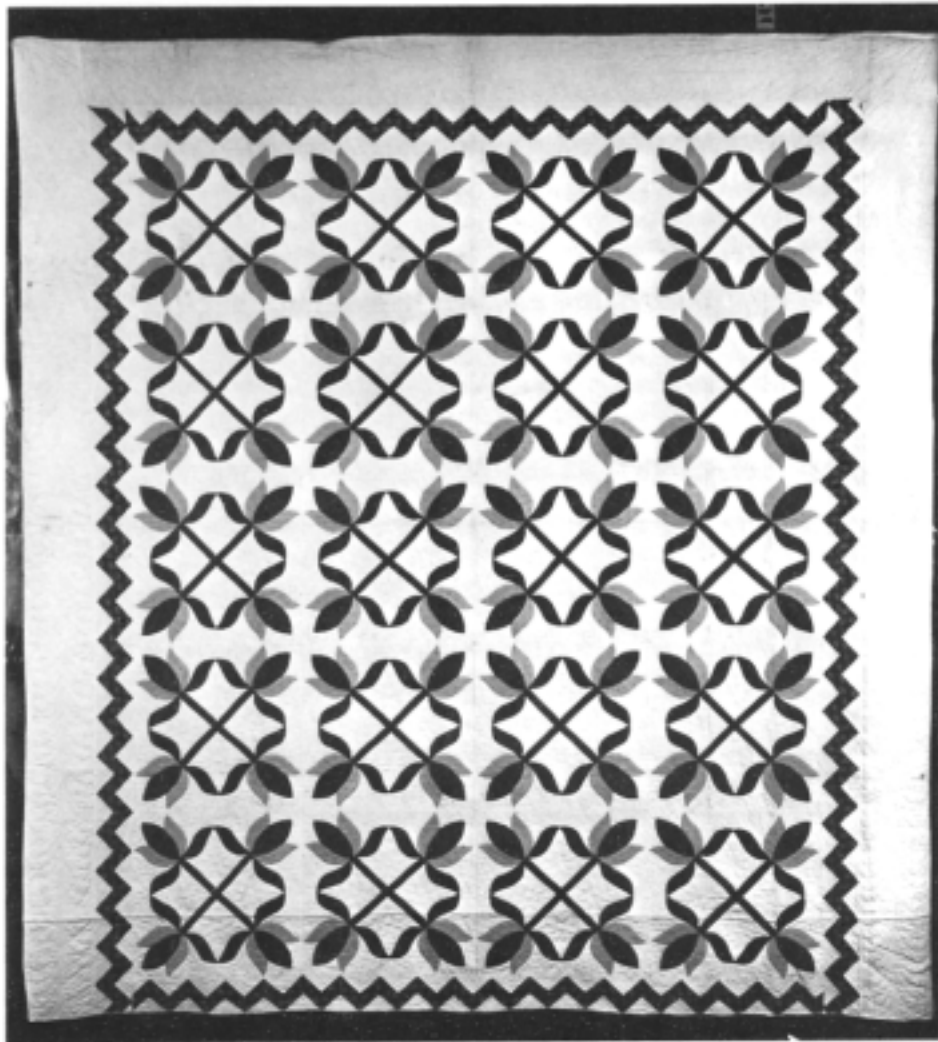
4. Feather quilt. Red and green appliqué feathers on white ground. Intricate quilting.  
American. 19th C.  
American Museum in Britain.



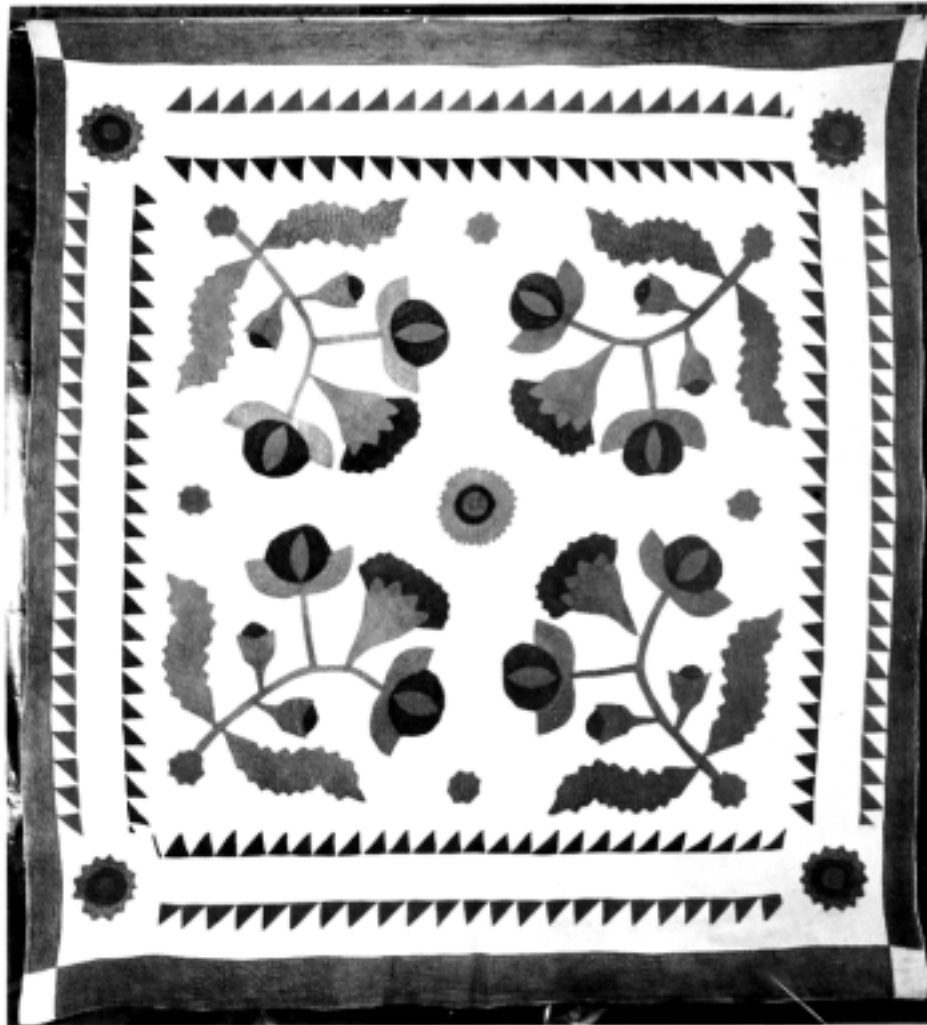
5. Feather quilt. Pink and green appliqué feathers and Tree Everlasting borders in white. Borders quilted in wineglass and rose patterns; Outer border feather quilted.  
English. c1860. Made by the owner's great-grandmother in the Woodburn area of Northumberland, Mrs. J. Jackson.



6. Pineapple quilt. Orange pineapples and green foliage applied to white cotton. Green swags and orange bows. Cotton filling with seeds left in. American c1850. Made by Leila Adams Weston, possibly in Pennsylvania. American Museum in Britain.



7. Tulips and Ribbons quilt. Yellow and red tulips with green ribbons applied to white cotton. The vivid colours are typical of those used for Pennsylvania German quilts.  
American 1840/50. Pennsylvania.  
American Museum in Britain.



8. Tulip quilt. Red and orange tulips of a more flamboyant type decorate the top of the quilt made by Phoebe Watson of Ireshopeburn, Co. Durham, about 1840.  
English  
Mrs. F. Milburn.

Miss Watson was a tenant of the owner's grandparents and was so poor that at times she was unable to pay her very modest rent. On one occasion she asked if this quilt could be taken in lieu of money. It was made by the light of a tallow candle. Phoebe Watson's sister Phyllis had emigrated to America and from time to time sent back patterns to her sister.

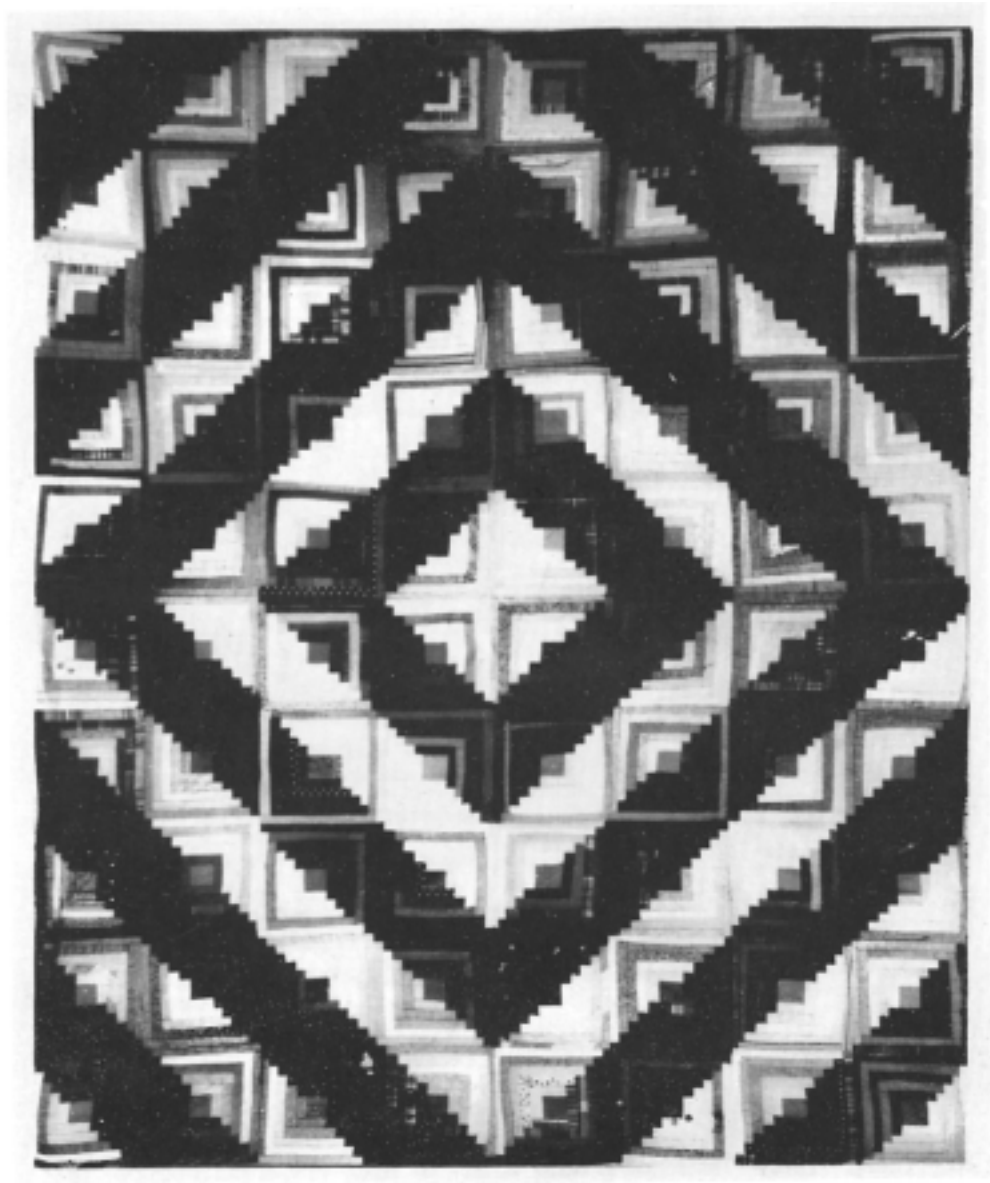


9. Yorkshire Star quilt. Pieced of red and white cottons. Cable quilted.  
English. ca.1860.  
Mrs. I. Keighley.  
Made by great grandmother of owner's husband in Keighley, Yorkshire.



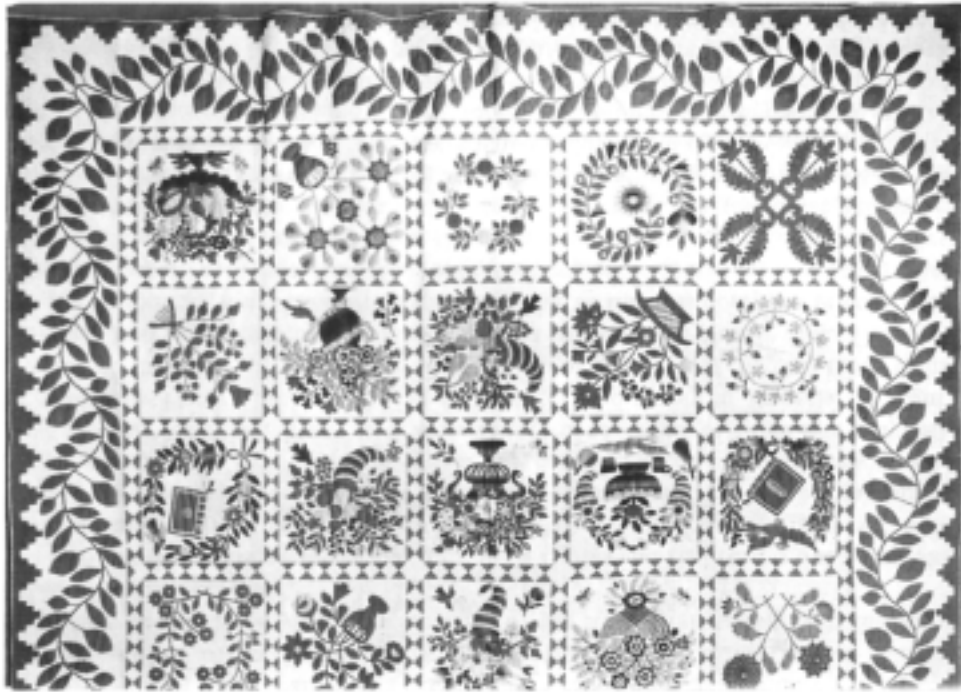
10. Crazy "Throw" Made of a wide variety of silks, velvets and brocades. The border is pale grey silk and plum velvet. American. Last quarter 19th C. American Museum in Britain.

The donor's grandfather was a Federal Judge at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. On his business trips to Baltimore he would buy silks and other dress fabrics for his wife and daughters and this throw was made from the scraps left over.



11. Log Cabin quilt.  
Dutch. ca.1860  
Het Nederlands Openluchtmuseum, Arnheim.





12. Baltimore Bride's quilt.

A very large quilt (122 inches square) of a type which was especially popular in the Baltimore area between 1842 and 1852. The hearts are geometric. A number of the blocks have been signed and one bears the signature "Alice A. Ryder, April 1st, 1847, Baltimore, Md."

American Museum in Britain.

## BOOK NOTES

Rotraud Bauer with contribution by Jan Karel Steppe, *TAPISSERIEN DER RENAISSANCE nach Entworfen von Pieter Coecke van Aelst: Exhibition catalogue*, Schloss Halbturn, May-October 1981.

The two greatest collection of tapestries are those of Madrid and Vienna, one royal, the other imperial, in origin. Tapestries from the Spanish collection have been shown for some years at the castle of La Granja, but, apart from a few pieces in the galleries of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, only the exhibitions at Schloss Halbturn have enabled visitors to see some of the stupendous treasures of the Austrian National Collection.

What distinguished the exhibitions at La Granja and Halbturn is that complete sets of tapestries can be shown, instead of isolated pieces from several series, as is usual in almost all permanent or temporary exhibitions. This is how tapestries were meant to be seen and only in this way can their qualities be properly appreciated. The 1981 exhibition at Schloss Halbturn consisted of three sets only, all designed by Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550) and woven in Brussels: all eight pieces of the *Story of Joshua*; six out of nine of the *Life of St. Paul* (four from Vienna, two from Munich); and a complete set of the *Seven Deadly Sins*. The catalogue reproduces four *Joshua* tapestries and five of the *Sins* complete in color (on fold-out pages) with two from *St. Paul*; there are color details (always more satisfactory) from all the sets and from the delightful borders. All the other tapestries are shown in complete black-and-white reproductions (some fold-outs) and there are many details. The weaver's marks and related drawings, prints and tapestries are also reproduced. All in all, it is an exemplary catalogue and a joy to read or consult.

For the specialist and particularly for scholars interested in Renaissance secular iconography, the most interesting section is the transcription of a manuscript in the National Library of Madrid, that begins: "Signifiante de sept tappis des sept pechez mortelz pour guillaume pannemakere desquelz a fait le patrons et ordonnances maistre pierre van aelst peintre d'anuers [Antwerp]." There are few documents connected with tapestries that provide, as this does, the names of the weaver and designer and a detailed, though not absolutely complete, description of each scene. Professor Steppe published his discovery of this document twenty years ago and he has contributed a section based on it, "Quellen zur Ikonographie der 'Todsunden'," to the catalogue.

The *Seven Deadly Sins* series should be of special interest to New Yorkers. The Metropolitan Museum owns an example of *Gluttony*, but it is not now on exhibition. However, if a visitor to the Morgan Library goes to the most easterly room on the ground floor, he will see over the huge fire-place a version of *Avarice*. Perhaps appropriately, it is in appalling condition. Midas with his ass's ears is conspicuous, but as the Library is open to the public, the visitor may prefer to raise his eyes to the angelic figure depicted in the sky, which is the virtue most opposed to avarice, Generosity.

— Edith Appleton Standen

Thomasina Beck, *EMBROIDERED GARDENS*, A Studio Book, The Viking Press, New York 1979

It is the thesis of this delightful book that gardens and embroidery followed a parallel course in the history of England. A lovely illustration of this thesis is quoted from "The Retir'd Gardener" written by George London, one of the foremost nurserymen and garden designers during the time of William and Mary, and published in 1710:

"Before I proceed to speak further of Parterres it will be requisite for the information of the Reader to explain what I mean by Imbroidery, cut-work and turfs, or green plots. Imbroidery is those Draughts which represent in Effect those we have on our Cloaths, and that look like foliage, and these Sorts of Figures in Gardener's language we call Branchwork. Below this certain Flowers seem to be drawn which is that part of the Imbroidery which we call Flourishings."

Does George London speak of gardens or embroidery?

One is unable in a short review to convey the intimate relationship between gardens and embroidery so carefully drawn by the author. From Elizabethan embroidery which duplicated the coiling stems on which grew roses, honeysuckle and pinks with parrots, butterflies and snails, the lace ruffs which mirrored the shimmering water from fountain jets, through the canvaswork which pictured the gardens and "carpenter's work" (trellises and arbors to provide privacy), through the centuries of change we follow the author to today's embroidered gardens which grow in a freer fashion, as in the gardens of Gertrude Jekyll who both embroidered and gardened. In the middle of this history is the lovely discussion of raised work and the "cabinets of curiosity" and the vogue for verdant sculpture in topiary and needlework.

This beautifully illustrated book full of fascinating parallels and garden lore can serve only to increase our appreciation of the ordering of flowering plants and their replication in skilled embroidery.

— Frieda Halpern

George Wingfield Digby assisted by Wendy Hefford, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, THE TAPESTRY COLLECTION. London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1980.

If Charles I had defeated Cromwell, the national collection of tapestries in Great Britain would have been as substantial as those in Vienna and Madrid. A few pieces from Henry VIII's accumulation of over 2000 tapestries can still be seen at Hampton Court; the rest were sold under the Commonwealth. But when the Victoria and Albert Museum was founded in the mid-nineteenth century it was still possible to buy medieval pieces for prices that, even taking inflation into account, seem ludicrous today.

One of the interesting features, in fact, of this new catalogue is the listing of the price paid for every piece that was bought rather than given or bequeathed; the fifteenth-century Alsatian *Labors of the Months* cost £6 in 1867; *La Main Chaude* and *Rustic Sports*, two large early sixteenth-century Flemish scenes of country life, cost £25 in 1859. Even more recent purchases such as the Florentine sixteenth-century panel from the *Life of Man* series after Vasari and Stradanus (here brilliantly identified and explained by Miss Hefford) cost only £4,500 in 1975. The most spectacular set in the catalogue, the *Devonshire Hunting Tapestries* of the mid-fifteenth century, came in 1957 from the Devonshire Estates after the death of the 10th Duke; it is hard to imagine what they would bring at auction today.

The last catalogue of tapestries in the Victoria Albert Museum was published in 1924; since then some thirty pieces from the centuries here covered have been added, making a total of nearly a hundred. The introduction to this entirely new catalogue gives the history of the collection, but does not describe the technique of tapestry-weaving. The "Renaissance" of the title is taken to include the sixteenth century and the early years of the seventeenth. Beside illustrations and detailed descriptions of each piece, with the full accounts of condition, iconology, provenance, previous publications and other pertinent facts customary in catalogues, there are what amounts to separate essays on *War of Troy* tapestries, mille-fleurs, *Triumphs*, large-leaf verdure, landscapes with gardens, parks and sports, the *Giocchi di Putti* and, especially valuable, the work of William Sheldon.

Everyone interested in tapestries will need this book. A sequel, covering the remaining centuries of tapestry-weaving, will be eagerly awaited.

— Edith Appleton Standen

Daniel Meyer, L'HISTOIRE DU ROY, Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris, 1980.

The Réunion des Musées Nationaux is performing a valuable service by publishing monographs on outstanding sets of tapestries in French museums. *La Dame à la Licorne* has already been reviewed in these pages and it has been quickly followed by *L'Histoire du Roy*, the Gobelins set showing incidents in the life of Louis XIV and the Brussels set once in the Cluny Museum, shown at the Metropolitan Museum and other American museums in 1974-76, *David et Bethsabée*, which has found a permanent home in the chateau of Ecouen.

These volumes are magnificently illustrated, with a wealth of the detail photographs that are so essential when huge wall-hangings are reduced to book size. In the *Histoire du Roy* each of the fourteen pieces is reproduced in color, somewhat too hot, but attractive, and the color details are excellent. Unfortunately, the set chosen (mostly at Versailles, where the author is *Conservateur*) is not in very good condition and some of the black-and-white details, such as that including the duc d' Harcourt (with his hat on, which shocked Saint-Simon), show sad areas of bare or cobbled-up warps and obtrusive sewing-together of slits.

Each tapestry is considered separately, this part of the book taking up 124 pages; there is then another section of sixteen pages called "Historique". The author would probably be the first to allow that this is nowhere near enough space to discuss a series that deserves a substantial book, like that by Frances Yates on the Valois tapestries, or Alan Wace on the *Art of War*. His approach is primarily historical; he identifies the chief actors in each scene and quotes contemporary writers. Thus in the *Entrevue des deux Rois* (Louis XIV meeting his future father-in-law) he notices the difference between what is underfoot for each king; the tapestry follows closely a description by the Grande Mademoiselle: "Les Espagnols avaient par terre de leur côté des tapis de Perse à fond d'or et d'argent," whereas "Les nôtres étaient d'un velours cramoisi, chamarrés d'un gros salon d'or et d'argent." But the costumes of the two groups, from the hair-dos to the heels, are equally divergent and comment would have been welcome.

Similarly, throughout the book, unanswered questions arise. Does the picture above the altar in the *Mariage* exist and are the armchairs entirely covered with fabric customary at this period? The liveries worn by servants in the *Entrée à Dunkerque* and other scenes have red, white and blue ribbons; was this standard for the royal household? In the *Audience du Comte de Fuentès*, which took place in the Louvre in 1662, the king stands on a Persian rug, in the *Audience du Nonce Chigi*, at Versailles in 1664, his chair rests on a Savonnerie. Is this probable? And what is the huge chest in this tapestry, standing at the foot of the bed and, like it, covered with embroidered *gros de Naples*? The appropriate quotation from the royal inventory is given, but no more. The *David and Bethsabée* volume has not been obtainable in New York at the time of writing but it should be and equally desirable volume.

— Edith Appleton Standen

NEEDLEWORK: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY. Edited by Harriet Bridgeman and Elizabeth Drury, Paddington Press, New York and London, 1978.

Histories of embroidery are hard to come by. A welcome and most interesting and useful one is *Needlework*, covering the field from the United States and across Europe to Russia. The work of each country is described by a specialist in the field and there are many illustrations to supplement the text. Unfortunately, they are sometimes set out in an oddly random fashion which makes it not very easy to coordinate them with the discussion. Nevertheless, this is an important reference book.

The text is full of information concerning history, styles, techniques, and all the interrelation between embroiderers and artists. This is particularly useful as it

allows the reader to fit embroidery into the frame of art history in each country. Another welcome addition to one's knowledge is the discussion of embroidery as a social and civil entity through a description of guild organization and professional requirements. The further information on government sponsorship and the organization of national movements to sponsor study of historical heritage and techniques is most welcome.

There is a glossary of stitches, of techniques and of miscellaneous information concerning fabrics, clothing both secular and religious, weaving patterns and embroidered household articles. In addition, there are bibliographies of the selected authors of the various national sections. The editors of the book are Harriet Bridgeman with an M.A. from Trinity College, Dublin, and Elizabeth Drury who is a graduate of the Courtauld Institute, London University. They edit and produce publications on the arts and antiques. This book fills a void on today's shelves.

— Frieda Halpern

M. Risselin-Steenebrugen, *TROIS SIECLES DE DENTELLES*, Brussels, Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, 1981.

An adequate view of this important work must be postponed until a later issue of this *Bulletin*, but members of the Needle and Bobbin Club will be interested to know of its availability. Mme Risselin's name is known to all lovers of lace, and the collection in the Brussels museum of which she was in charge for many years is, of course, one of the greatest in the world. The book has 600 pages with 413 illustrations and can be ordered from the Patrimoine des Musées Royaux d' Art et d' Histoire, Parc du Cinquenaire 10, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium, for a price of 2700 Belgian francs, postage paid.

— Edith Appleton Standen

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The Needle and Bobbin Club cherishes the memory of members who have died during the year.

Alice Baldwin Beer

Irene Emery

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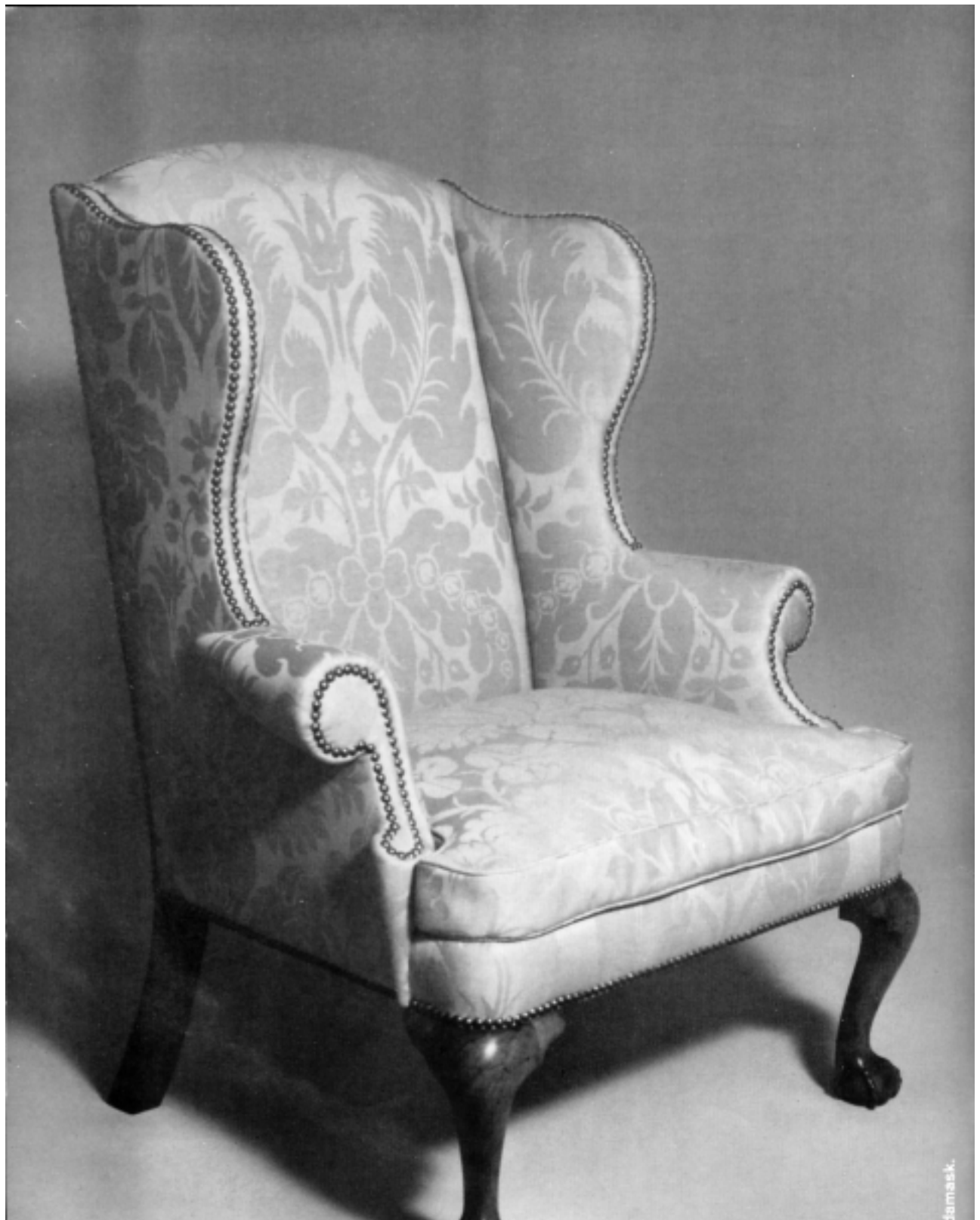
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