

## **1797 Sampler**

### **Germany**

Samplermaking in Germany began as early as in the 16th century. These samplers' long rectangular shape reflected their practical purpose as a way of displaying design variations for embroiderers before publications of such designs were available. Later, in the 17th century, samplers were worked in neat rows, representing the shift from their former practical purpose, to that of a demonstration of the worker's talent. The 'band' sampler was fairly widespread in Europe and consisted mainly of bands or rows of repeating border designs. These samplers were worked by children who were learning both design borders for linen embellishment and the alphabet for marking household linens.

**This counted silk thread on linen sampler reflects the transition from band samplers to decorative motif samplers as the pictorial wreath, animal and human figures are prominent over the bands of alphabet and border designs.**

**Fran Alley donor**

**EGA collection 00523**

## **Dona Maria de Las Anggrasida**

### **1817 Sampler**

#### **Spain**

Spanish samplers of the 19th century are closer in style to English 16th and 17th century samplers because of their fanciful border designs, which were still worked on garments and linens in Spain. This type of sampler remained in vogue in Spain after it had disappeared in England where samplers were designed to draw attention to the skill of the samplermaker.

**This Spanish sampler embroidered in the early 19th century in colored silks is worked with narrow half bands of flowers, geometric patterns, and stags in the upper right; each in fishbone embroidery stitch, variations of satin stitch and cross stitch. Yet, even in this sampler the transition to a bordered sampler seems to exist as 7 year old Maria's name and date are worked across the entire width at the top and at the base are three long embroidered rows.**

**Mrs. William T. Golden donor**

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## **Elizabeth Muir**

### **1831 Sampler**

#### **Scotland**

Motifs including birds, baskets, flowers, a wide variety of animals, particularly dogs and stags became increasingly popular in 19th century schools. Samplers at this point were beginning to become an embroidered picture. With the exception of teaching orphans embroidery so that they could find employment, by the late 18th and early 19th centuries samplers for the most part were done to reflect the skill of the embroideress and her teacher, and to hang as an attractive piece of art in the home.

**Young Elizabeth's skill is demonstrated in not one but two alphabets framed by decorative rows of back stitch and double running stitch; depicting her exquisite dog tied to a tree, two peacocks with 7 tail feathers, and lovely baskets filled with flowers. Elizabeth's pride in her family and her country are recognizable in her extensive use of initials which read: WM father, MS mother, RM, AM, JM, brothers and/or sisters, RS the maternal Grandfather, EN the maternal Grandmother and TS an uncle or aunt of Elizabeth Muir; the flags at the bow and stern of the ship are of the Scottish flag, used since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and were changed about 10 years after the date on this sampler.**

**Yvonne Meena donor**

**EGA collection 00268**

## American Schoolgirl Embroidery

In pre-revolutionary America women's education and for that matter participation in worldly affairs usually arose from necessity—management of household affairs, family shops, or estates. For years a girl's education rested on the need of her learning to sew and count to maintain family goods—an education achieved through sampler-making.

The mechanization of textiles in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, especially the printing and finishing of cottons, might have been the end of sampler-making had it not been so fashionable. By this time however, samplers were hung in the parlor for guests to praise, reinforcing the maker's piety, obedience, virtue, and skill.

Although 18<sup>th</sup> century America was filled with women of remarkable ability and intelligence, education for women was still a debated issue. The most respected schools were carefully administered to prepare a girl to be content and skilled for her "proper place". Schoolmistresses taught reading and writing, but their reputation and ability to teach girls was measured by their excellence in needlework—the most fashionable female "accomplishment".

The 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of an era of extreme complexity and contradiction for women. While both women and liberal educators advocated for advanced education for women, schoolgirl needle art was at its height. It is a paradox, that a young lady would be admired for her pictorial embroidery, and her intelligence, chastity and care for the home and at the same time respected for entering the work force, or campaigning for reform.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the "ornamental accomplishments" of schoolgirls achieved importance of another sort: they became of interest to historians and collectors.

## **Margaret Ramsey**

### **1798 Sampler**

#### **USA**

Political defiance against the British in the mid and late 18<sup>th</sup> century was echoed by many New England schoolmistresses. The discard of typical British forms and traditions with a new found spirit and energy were reflected on the Adam and Eve samplers, a highly desirable design for Colonial America. Schoolmistresses imported the fashionable design of Adam, Eve, the serpent and the Tree of Knowledge and embellished the design with regional characteristics of colonial landscape and architecture.

**This sampler of linen with marking silk embroidery worked in cross, tent, stem, chain, split, satin, buttonhole and lace stitches, with windows worked in needlelace depicts Adam and Eve, the serpent, and the Tree of Knowledge (below); (above) a fence with flowers and a cottage are the expression of the schoolmistress' echo of Albany's landscape. The inscription reads:**

**Marga/ret/ Ramp[sey]/ work/ aged/  
eight/ years**

**Albany/ one tho/usand/ seven/  
hun/dred/ eighty/ nine**

**EGA Collection 00009**

## 1870's Mourning Motif Sampler

### USA

The death of George Washington in 1799 is thought to have popularized mourning embroideries with the wealth of memorial prints that were distributed. Urns, monuments, willows, and weeping figures are considered more a record of fashion than of expression, yet we must consider that within these designs, they had a highly personal meaning for the needleworker, as they are individual to each work. In ours there is perhaps some sentimental attribute surrounding the musical instruments, which may depict the death of a father or husband, the man in the boat.

**This mourning motif sampler is worked on linen with silk in cross stitch, and is more typical of the 1870s when samplers were simplified to one or two types of stitch. Under the branch of a willow tree, the young woman to the left wears the fashionable empire waist dress and plays a harp before a monument, presumably for whom this sampler is made, which holds an urn. The woman in the center inscribes *pensez*, French for "to know" into a tree. About the sampler are additional musical instruments and flowers. Above and upside down, a man appears in a boat in water before a house in the background.**

EGA collection 00017

## **Florilla Partello**

### **1869 Sample Notebook**

#### **USA**

By the end of the 1820s the popularity of schoolgirl needlework was giving way to painting. In the mid 1800s needlework and domestic embellishments ceased to be of importance in women's education. Improved education for women was a result of the Industrial Revolution, when ink replaced stitched markings, and when females were needed as teachers or secretaries, than internal movements to improve education.

**Flora Parletti's needlework sample notebook of 1869 contains daily accounts of food and drink, presumably stocked in the month of March, followed by pages of crochet edging instructions and examples. What is perhaps most fascinating in regards to women's education is the page on which Flora records her weekly account of education. We find no mention of needlework or time-honored "accomplishments".**

**EGA Collection 00377**