



The Plimoth Jacket

*The process of re-creating an embroidered jacket
of the 1620s*

The goal of the project was to reproduce an English woman's embroidered jacket from the 1620s.





Although surviving examples are rare, several were found and considered as models—including an [embroidered jacket](#) at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

This gold and silver jacket in the collection of the [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston](#) was also considered.

The Layton jacket at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London was ultimately chosen as the model for the cut and construction.



Photograph by permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London



The silver and gold lace trimming on the Layton jacket also served as a model.

Detail, by permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London



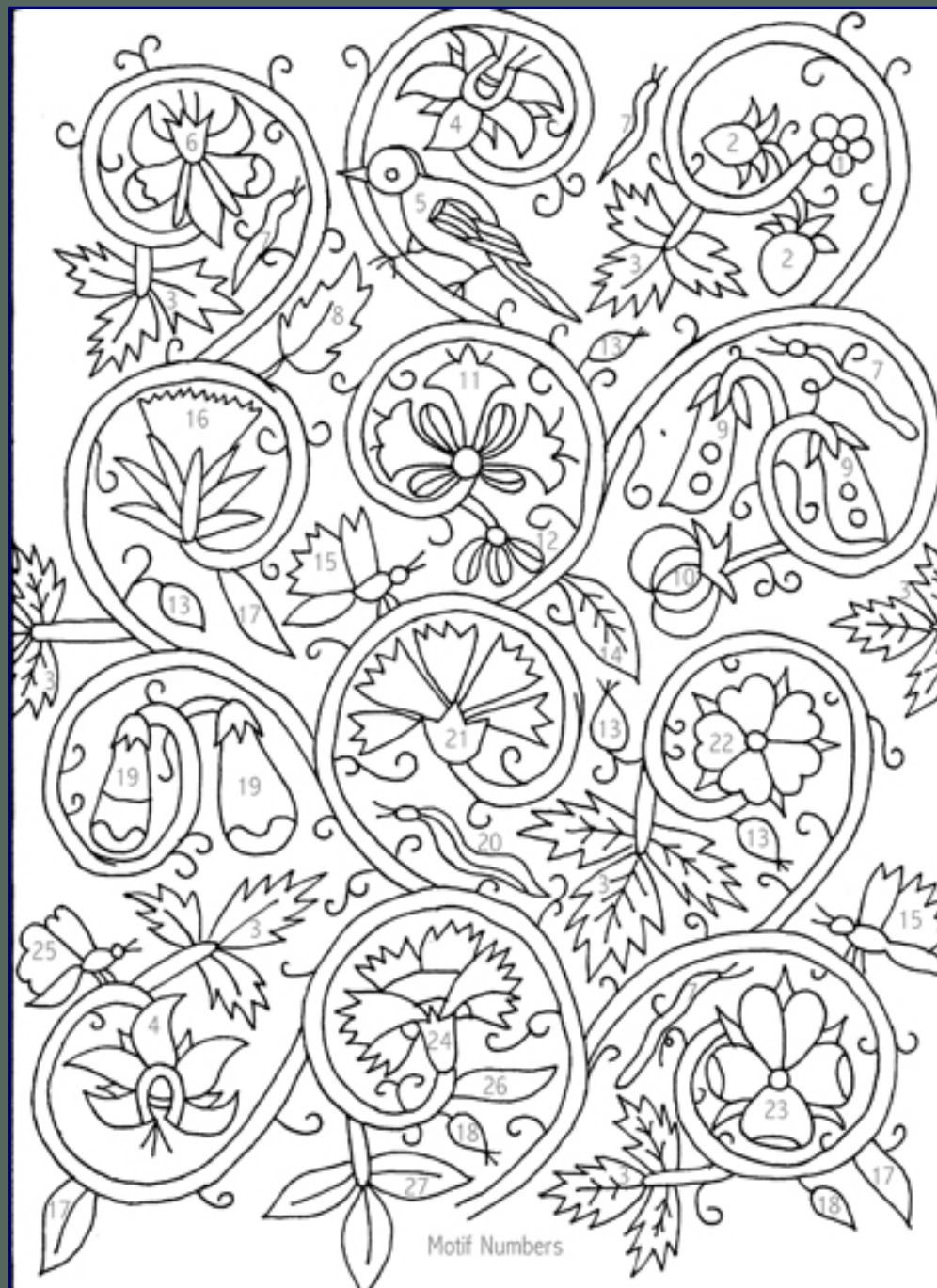
Because it is so beautiful, the pattern for the embroidery was taken from another [jacket](#) at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

A matching embroidered panel was discovered in the collection of the [Embroiderers' Guild](#) at Hampton Court Palace.



Using detailed photographs of both the jacket and matching panel, the original design of the embroidery was determined.

The final pattern
contained 27 motifs.





Members of the lead team for the project then traced the embroidery design.



The design was copied onto the paper pattern for the waistcoat.



Each piece was checked against the original for pattern deviations.

The pattern pieces were laid out on fine linen fabric.





The embroidery design was traced onto each piece of linen with a special pen.



Choosing and Making the Materials

Choosing appropriate colors was important. It took hours to find silk threads that would accurately reproduce the colors of the original embroidery.

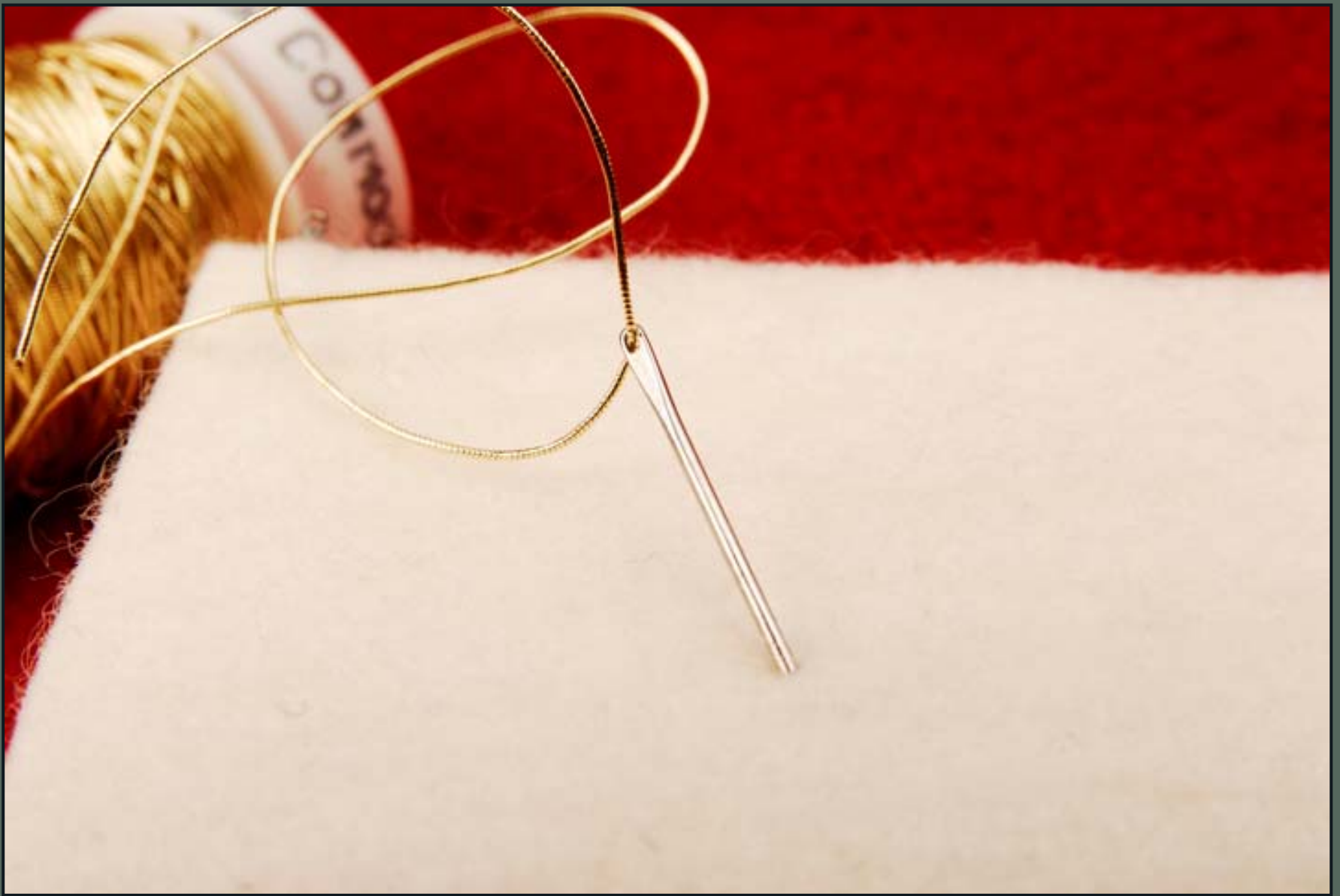




Some of the materials themselves had to be reproduced, as various types of thread used in the 1620s are no longer made. These are two prototypes developed for the gilt sylke twist thread.

Specialists created gold and silver thread just for the project.





Even the type of needle was important. This one was handmade in Japan.




Preparing to Embroider



As part of the planning stage, the head embroiderer conducted a time trial to estimate how long it would take to complete the jacket.

One of every type of design had to be stitched to create the instructions for the embroidery volunteers.





Use #22 to work small
backstitches around the head first.

Use #352 Soie Perlee
to work satin stitch
over the backstitched outline.
Work it from the the tip to the
body starting from the middle.



The Sample Kit



Thistle Threads created sample kits to practice the techniques and kits were sold to raise funds for the project.



Many talented volunteers worked on the jacket. This is the first crew, in July 2007.

The stitching begins.





The embroidery technique called for skill and concentration.



Progress after a few sessions!

Decisions about tiny details had to be made constantly.





Color choices needed to be checked against the original.



The silk embroidery was completed in June 2008.



Work then began on
the gold vines.

Many people helped sew on the “oes,” the 17th-century term for the round sequins.





Celebrating their wedding anniversary!

Most of the work on the jacket took place at [Plimoth Plantation](#), but occasionally the project traveled to other locations. In August 2009, both experienced stitchers and museum visitors worked on the jacket at Hancock Shaker Village.





Nuns at the Greek Orthodox Holy Nativity Convent also helped.

A convent visitor tried her hand and wrote a school report on the experience.





The jacket traveled to Holy Transfiguration Monastery.



People of all ages had the opportunity to work on the jacket.

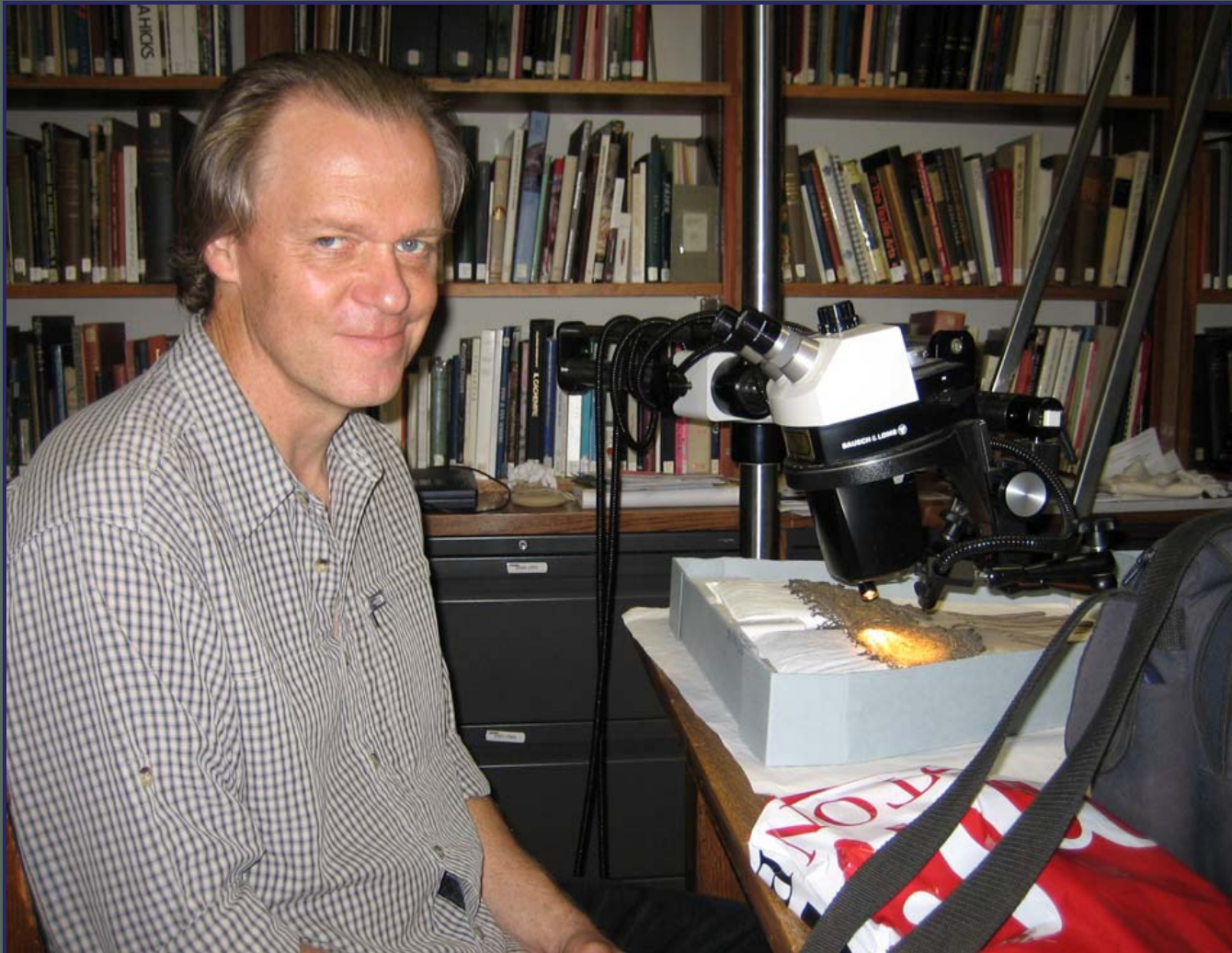


All the needlework was completed in August 2009.



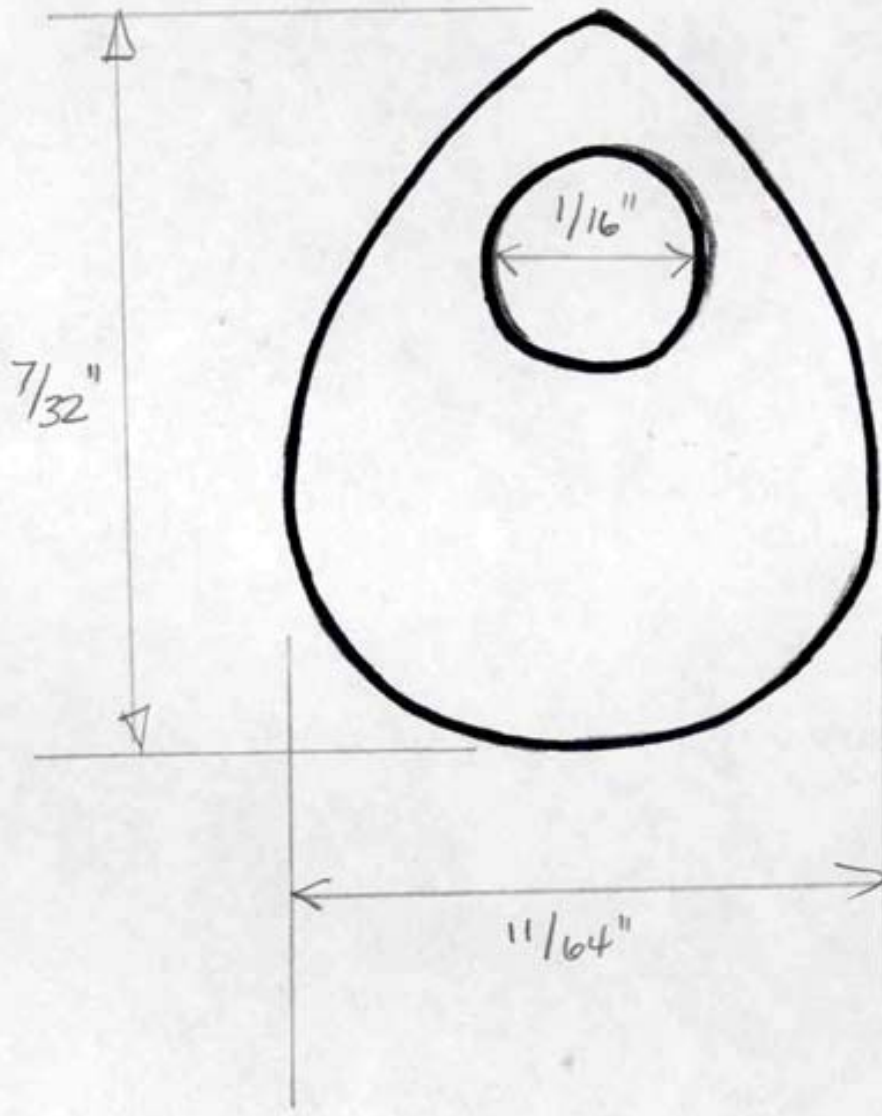
The Lace Spangles

The project blacksmith examined historic lace spangles under a microscope at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.





Historic lace spangles
as seen under the microscope.



Technical drawings
were made.

A blacksmith created the tools
to make the spangles.





Nearly 1,000 lace spangles were made by hand.



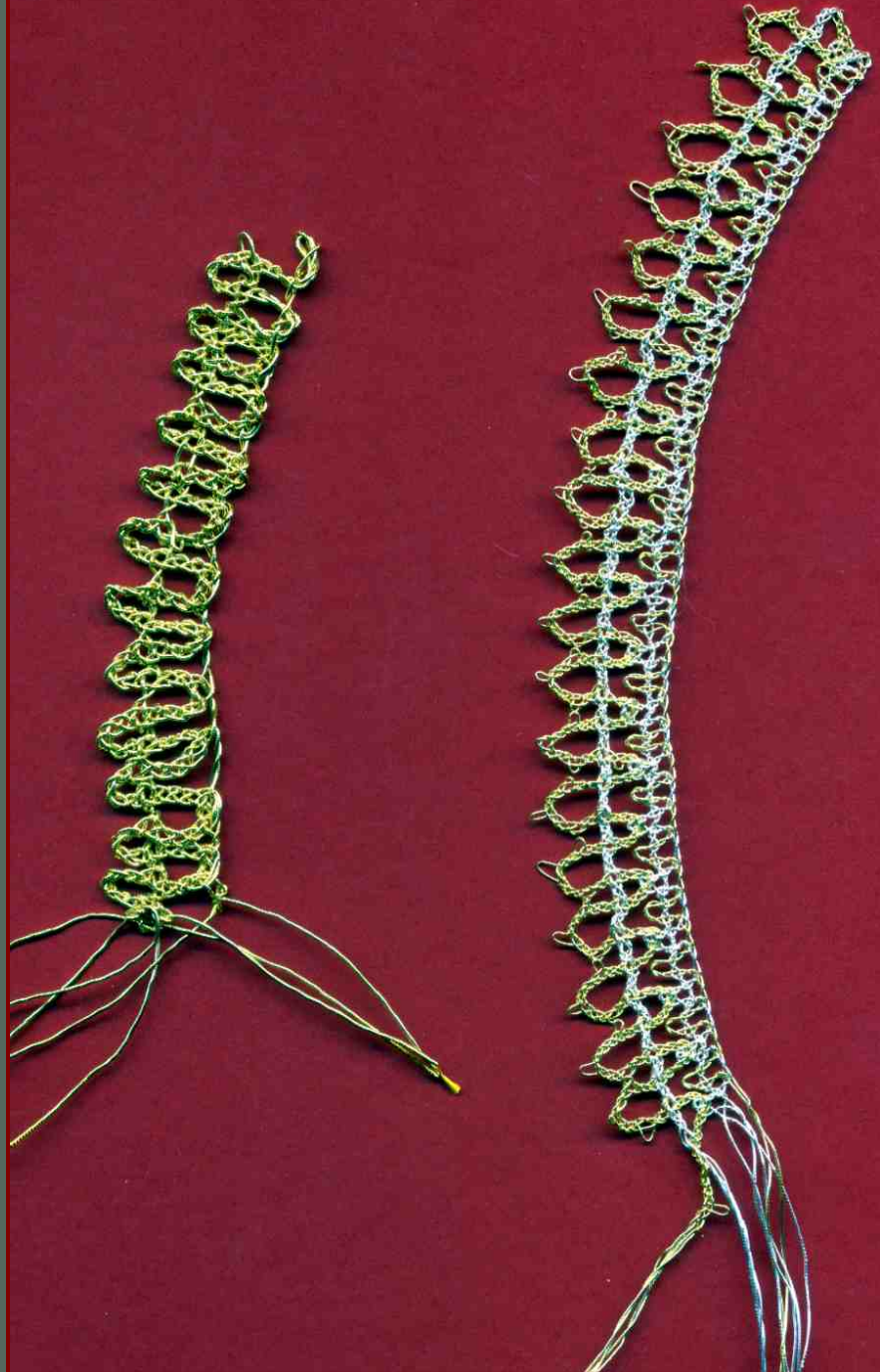


Making the Lace

Experienced lace makers had to find a way to re-create the lace on the Layton jacket.

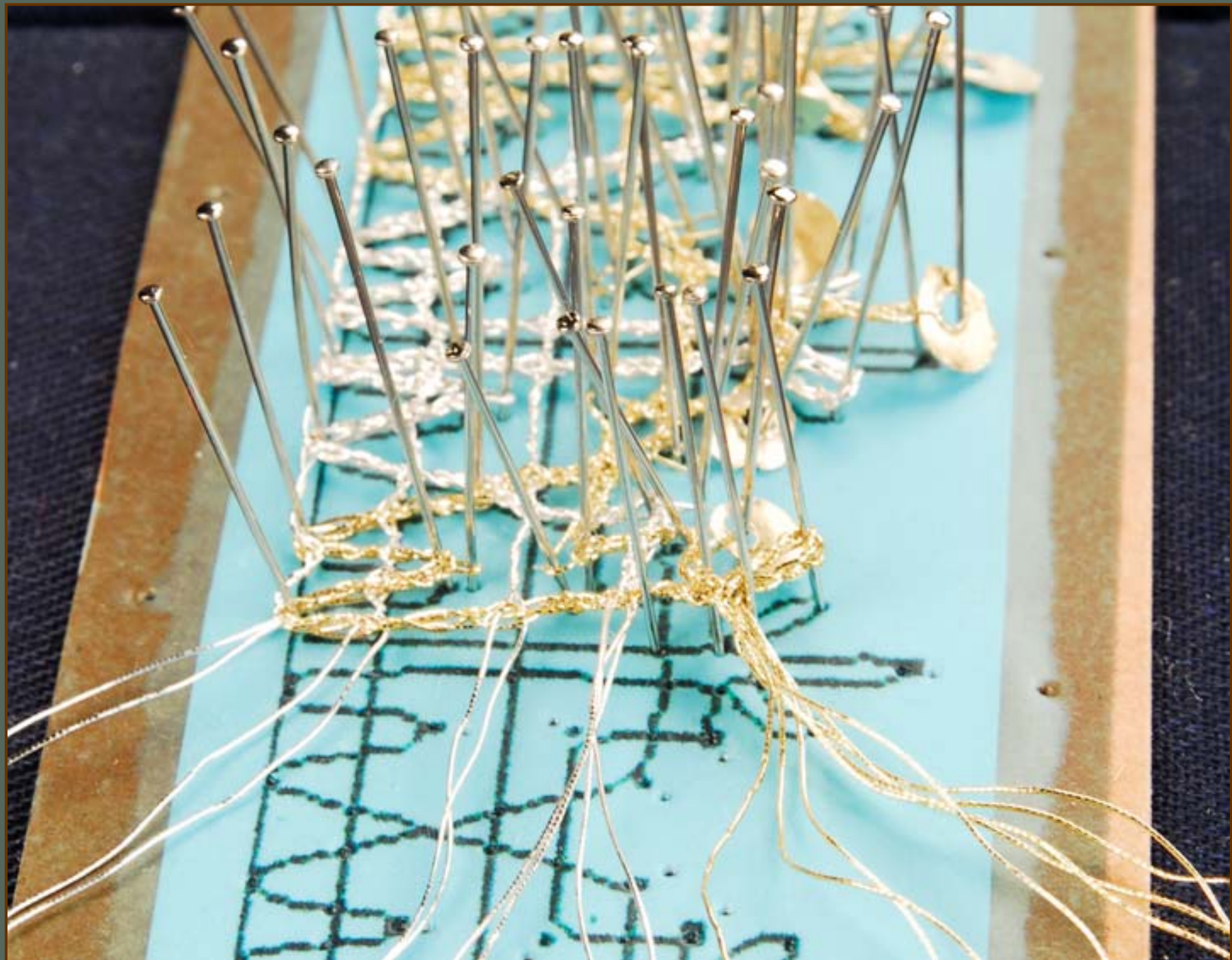


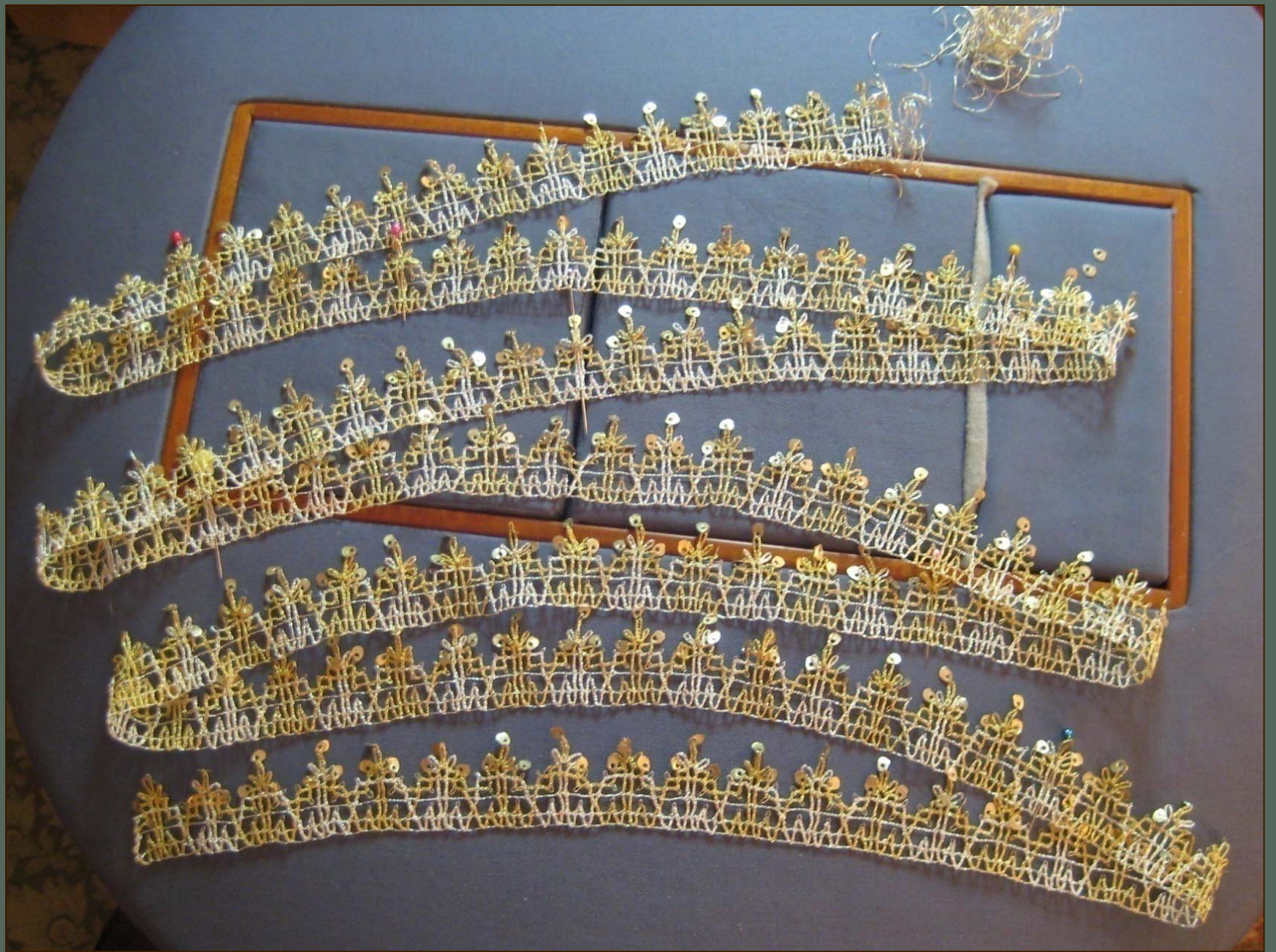
They went through many versions before coming up with the right design and technique.



A volunteer works the gold and silver bobbin lace.







The lace is finally finished!



Even the lining of the jacket was hand dyed and hand woven.



Constructing the Jacket



First, a full-size
model was made.



Each piece was cut off the embroidery frame.



The story of the jacket and how it came to be was written on the seam allowance.



The first seams are sewn.

All the seams were covered with plaited braid.





The lining is incorporated.





The completed jacket
made its debut at
[Plimoth Plantation](#) on
December 10, 2009.



Photo by Ed Nute

The project involved more than 3,700 hours of handwork and countless hours of research and preparation.

The Lead Team

Jill Hall

- *Co-Manager of Project and Jacket Construction*

Tricia Wilson Nguyen

- *Co-Manager of Project and Embroidery, Lace Spangles*

Wendy White

- *Workroom Manager, Embroidery, and Lace Spangles*

Carolyn Hastings

- *Lace*

Mark Atchison

- *Lace Spangles and Fastenings*

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- *Silk Lining*

Denise Lebica

- *Faith's Wardrobe*

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Bryce Wolf

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Robbin Douglas

Jill Hawkins

Norma Bucko

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Margo Ewers
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Sara Gene Posnett
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Jeanne Pelletier
Anne Cragan Connerton
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Ned Lazaro
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Kate McCarthy
Madeline McCarthy
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Photini, nun
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Mother Theodora
Mother Myrophora
Martha, nun
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Darice Waveham
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Denise Cadiero
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Laurie Morison
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Devon Thein

Joanna Hill

Final Thanks

*Elizabeth Rolando who made
the jacket come to life*

*The hundreds of stitchers who purchased
sample kits to fund the project*

Donations by countless individuals to the jacket project

*The readers of the blog who have made this project
a world-wide phenomena*

In the fall of 2011, the Plimoth Jacket will be featured in a Winterthur exhibition on the methods and materials used in historic needlework.



Photo by Ed Nute

Check out the blog “The Embroiderers’ Story” for more detailed information about the project:

www.thistle-threads.com/blog