

WINTERTHUR



WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

Historians have long recognized that family networks play a crucial role in the social, political, commercial, and religious activities of both men and women. This exhibition explores the importance of families with regard to samplers and needlework pictures; how needlework can serve as primary source material for historical and genealogical research; and how needlework served to strengthen family ties through gifts and inheritance by subsequent generations.

Support for this gallery guide provided by Mr. and Mrs. Hans G. Fleischner



*Families in Early
American Needlework*

WHO'S YOUR
DADDY?



Made by Lorenza Fisk
Concord, Massachusetts; 1811
1969.430 Gift of Mrs. Alfred C. Harrison

The mere survival of this group of objects documents the importance of family to successive generations of the Canby-Ferris family—covering more than 200 years, from Fanny Canby Ferris (1778–1833), to her great-granddaughter and namesake, Frances Canby Ferris (1886–1976). Having no children of her own, the second Frances Canby Ferris entrusted her heirlooms to her good friend and fellow Quaker Mary Hoxie Jones, a poet, biographer, and historian, who donated them to Winterthur in 1982. These two women shared a love of history, their families, their faith, and their communities.

Fanny's sampler, made when she was eight years old, illustrates her concept of family as one that includes her immediate and extended relatives. She stitched the names of her grandparents in the bottom left of her sampler, her parents in the center left, and her siblings in the center right. The remaining names are those of Fanny's aunts and uncles.

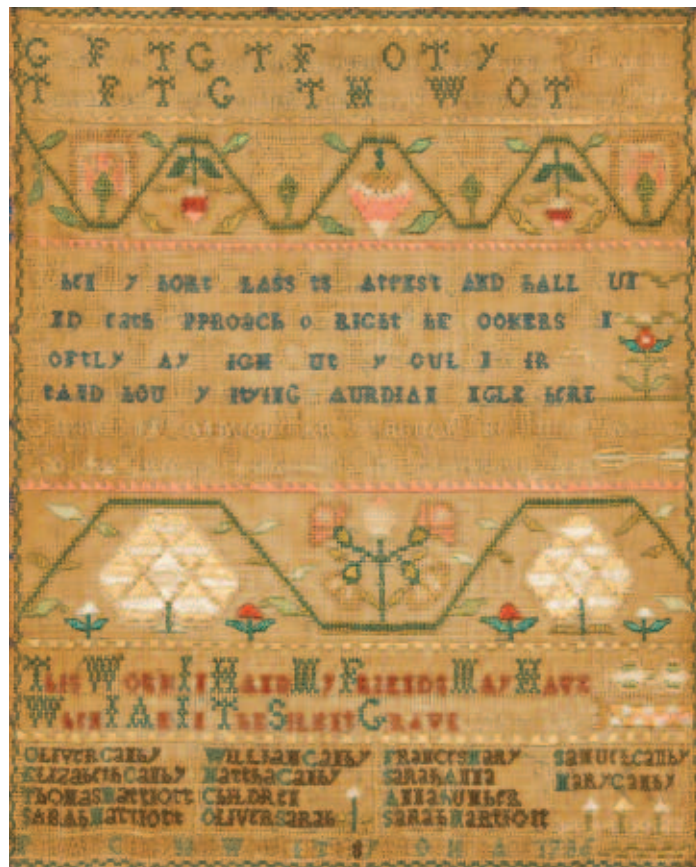
Sampler

Made by Frances (Fanny) Canby

Wilmington, Delaware; 1786

Silk embroidered on linen

1982.284 Gift of Mary Hoxie Jones in memory of Frances Canby Ferris





Decorative samplers were not the only needlework to be passed down through generations. In the Canby-Ferris family, pieces of clothing, accessories, and bedding also survived. These were personal, but commonplace, possessions, and their survival is indicative of the loving memory they preserve of their maker or recipient. Frances (Fanny) Canby Ferris (1778–1833) kept her mother’s cap and a hand-stitched napkin. Subsequent generations preserved Fanny’s memory by saving her kerchief and her bedsheet, possibly part of her wedding trousseau in 1804.

Cap

Made by Martha (Marriott) Canby
Wilmington, Delaware; 1774–
1826
Cotton
1982.64 Gift of Mary Hoxie
Jones in memory of Frances
Canby Ferris

Sleeve

Probably made by a member of
the Canby-Ferris family
Wilmington, Delaware; 1815–35
Cotton
1982.61.1, .2 Gift of Mary Hoxie
Jones in memory of Frances
Canby Ferris

Napkin

Made by Martha (Marriott) Canby
Wilmington, Delaware; 1774
Linen damask
1982.62 Gift of Mary Hoxie
Jones in memory of Frances
Canby Ferris

Sheet

Made by Frances (Fanny)
Canby Ferris
Wilmington, Delaware; 1804
Linen
1982.59 Gift of Mary Hoxie
Jones in memory of Frances
Canby Ferris

Handkerchief

Possibly made by Frances
(Fanny) Canby Ferris
Wilmington, Delaware; 1804–67
Silk
1982.63.2 Gift of Mary Hoxie
Jones in memory of Frances
Canby Ferris

The silhouettes seen here were made by Fanny Canby Ferris's husband, Benjamin (1780–1867), and represent three generations of the Canby-Ferris family.

The older man is William Canby, Fanny's father, who was a successful miller on the Brandywine River. The silhouette to his left is Fanny Canby Ferris, cut one year before her death in 1833. Fanny and Benjamin Ferris had five children, two of whom survived to adulthood. Their third child, Anna, died at the age of three. They named their fourth child Anna M. Ferris in honor of her deceased sister.



***Silhouette of Frances (Fanny)
Canby Ferris***

Made by Benjamin Ferris
Wilmington, Delaware; 1832
White wove paper with black construction
paper backing
1982.293 Gift of Mary Hoxie Jones in
memory of Frances Canby Ferris



Silhouette of William Canby

Made by Benjamin Ferris
Wilmington, Delaware; 1830
White wove paper with black construction
paper backing
1982.287 Gift of Mary Hoxie Jones in
memory of Frances Canby Ferris



Silhouette of Anna Ferris

Made by Benjamin Ferris
Wilmington, Delaware; 1814
White wove paper with black construction
paper backing
1982.290 Gift of Mary Hoxie Jones in
memory of Frances Canby Ferris



Silhouette of Anna M. Ferris

Made by Benjamin Ferris
Wilmington, Delaware; 1832
White wove paper with black construction
paper backing
1982.291 Gift of Mary Hoxie Jones in
memory of Frances Canby Ferris

The study of genealogy is one of the most popular hobbies in America today, with millions of people working to document their roots. Family relationships played a central role in determining an individual's status and respectability both before and after the American Revolution. Individual merit competed with family wealth and status to determine a person's position in society. The concept of family was even more important in the 1800s as it became enmeshed in the fashion for sentimentalism.



Coat of arms

Attributed to John Coles, Senior
Boston, Massachusetts; 1780–90
Watercolor on paper
1955.83.4 Museum purchase

Coats of arms, symbols representing high status, were originally associated with the British nobility. Although few American families were officially entitled to a coat of arms, heraldry was often used to decorate coaches, bookplates, and ceramics. Many young girls also embroidered their family coat of arms at school.

The designs of numerous family coats of arms have been attributed to John Coles, Senior, one of at least eleven heraldic artists working in New England in the early 1800s. His creations were often used as patterns for needlework.



Coat of arms

Made by Betsy Putnam
Essex County, Massachusetts;
1800–1805
Silk embroidered on linen
1955.83.3 Museum purchase

Betsy Putnam embroidered her family's coat of arms while in school in either Salem or Boston. Her sister Sally made an identical piece. Genealogical research has uncovered two pairs of Putnam sisters named Betsy and Sally, and we cannot be sure which Betsy worked this example. The Putnams were important early settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but their name was made famous by Revolutionary War hero General Israel Putnam. At the Battle of Bunker Hill, he is credited with giving the order "Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes."





In 1827 Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis painted a piece of white cotton velvet and used it to decorate a notebook as a gift for her son Lorenzo. Some young women learned this technique at school,

but Eleanor taught herself when she was forty-two years old. She told her friend Elizabeth Bordley it was for “variety.” Eleanor was the granddaughter of Martha Dandridge Washington through her first marriage to Daniel Parke Custis, and she grew up at Mount Vernon. Eleanor inherited many of her grandmother’s dresses and lined this notebook with fragments of the dress that Martha wore to celebrate George Washington’s sixty-fifth birthday.

Silk-lined notebook

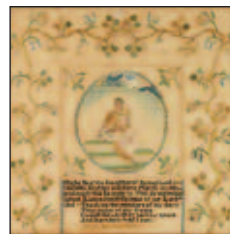
Made by Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis
Fairfax County, Virginia; 1827
Paper, velvet, silk, leather
1961.1247 Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont



Bratton Galligher, who was a controversial figure at the time. Married in 1791, Leah Galligher and her husband, Francis, opened a school in Lancaster in 1797. Clearly there were problems with their marriage, as Leah filed for divorce soon after this sampler was made. The reason cited for her divorce was her husband’s impotency, which made the couple a focus of both gossip and slander. Perhaps Leah’s family history, displayed so publicly in the Holsworth home, was intended to document her respectability.

Sampler

Made by Sarah Holsworth
Lancaster, Pennsylvania; 1799
Silk embroidered on linen
1957.671 Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont



and her husband, William, may have taught in the Galligher school. By 1805, however, they were operating their own school, after Leah and Francis Galligher had left town. This sampler was worked by Leah and Rachel’s niece Phebe when she was twenty-two years old. Since that is a fairly late age to be working a sampler, Phebe might have been teaching with her aunt or perhaps honing her skills to open a school of her own. Phebe Bratton’s sampler remained in the family until it was donated to Winterthur by her great-granddaughter.

Sampler

Made by Phebe Bratton
Lancaster, Pennsylvania; 1805
Silk on linen
1970.98 Gift of Miss Elizabeth Hudson in memory of
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Francis du Pont



Henry Francis du Pont acquired these objects to honor his mother's ancestors, the Ten Eyck family from upstate New York. The portrait depicts Harmanus Ten Eyck, Mary Pauline Foster du Pont's great-grandfather. Margaret Ten Eyck, who worked the silkwork picture, was Harmanus's youngest sister. The shoes seen here were said to have been worn by Harmanus's wife, Margarita Bleecker, on the occasion of their marriage in 1776. H. F. du Pont purchased the portrait and the needlework from a dealer, but how he acquired the shoes remains unknown.



Harmanus Ten Eyck
Painted by Ezra Ames
Albany, New York; 1810–15
Oil on canvas
1959.1393 Gift of Henry Francis du Pont

Mourning needlework
Made by Margaret Ten Eyck
Albany, New York; 1805
Silk on silk
1958.2877 Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont



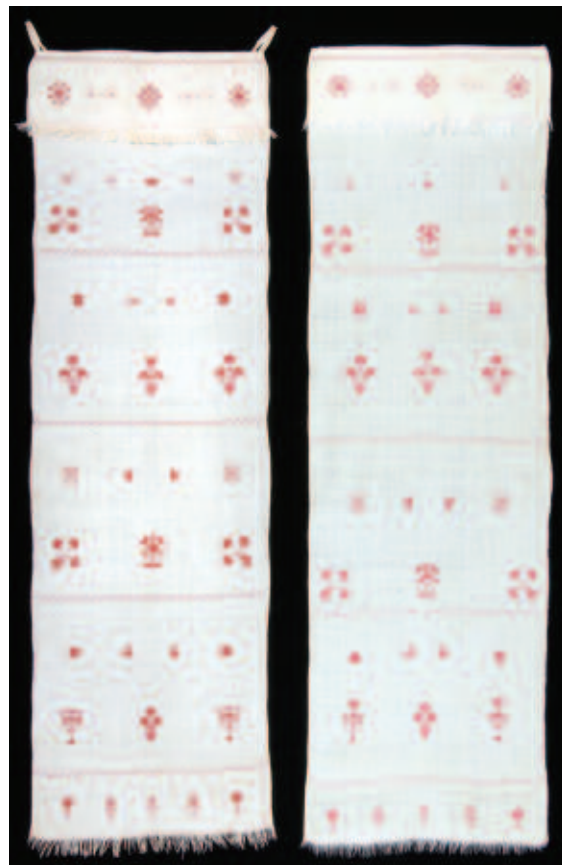
Wedding shoes
Made for Margarita Bleecker Ten Eyck; 1740–80
Silk, leather, wood
1958.2944 Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont



The primary family unit has always consisted of parents and their children. With high mortality rates for both infants and their mothers in the late 1700s and early 1800s and frequent remarriages of both widows and widowers, the individuals within the family unit were constantly changing. These births, deaths, and marriages were often commemorated in needlework. Sometimes needlework can provide clues to enhance the bare bones of family genealogies; sometimes it is the only evidence of these connections.

Although neither Catarin nor M Martin has been positively identified, we know that they were sisters because of the shared motifs on their decorated hand towels. Not only are most of the motifs the same, but the towels were made from two halves of the same linen, probably woven locally in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Embroidered hand towels were not used; they were hung from pegs on parlor doors as a decorative display of their maker's skill. The loops on Catarin's towel were cut off at some time in the past, but those on her sister's towel have survived.



Decorated hand towel

Worked by Catarin Martin (right)
Lancaster County, Pennsylvania; 1836
Silk on linen
1994.18 Museum purchase

Decorated hand towel

Worked by M Martin (left)
Lancaster County, Pennsylvania; 1836
Silk on linen
2000.47 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Herdeg
in memory of Louise Coolidge Carpenter



In her silkwork picture, Catherine Butler mourns the death of her eighteen-year-old brother Henry. He had reluctantly followed in his seafaring father and grandfather's footsteps. Shortly after setting sail, he wrote in his diary: "It is true that before I entered, I had thoroughly weighed every disagreeable thing which might happen, and contrasted it with the difficulties to which we are liable on shore. But it must be folly to suppose, that I could imagine every incident to which seamen are liable." Five months later Henry Butler Jr. died of yellow fever in Martinique.

Mourning needlework

Made by Catherine Butler

Hartford, Connecticut; 1804

Silk on silk, watercolor

1958.2876 Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont



Fanny Whitney's sampler documents her father's two marriages. We often think of the "blended" family as a modern phenomenon, but Fanny's sampler demonstrates that this is not the case. Fanny's mother, Sophia Fuller Whitney, died when Fanny was a teenager. Her father then married Deborah Patch, who gave birth to a son, George, four years later. Fanny's sampler lists the children of both marriages but does not distinguish between them.

Genealogy sampler

Made by Fanny Whitney

Portland, Cumberland County, Maine; 1822

Silk, chenille, pencil, and paint on linen

1960.327.3 Museum purchase with funds from Henry Francis du Pont



Fanny Whitney painted this mourning picture the same year that she worked her sampler. Both were made while she was at school, possibly the one operated by Mrs. Mayo in Portland, Maine. The obelisk contains a printed poem memorializing the death of five infants. We can identify three of them from Fanny's sampler, but the additional two remain unknown.

Mourning picture

Made by Fanny Whitney

Portland, Cumberland County, Maine; 1822

Wove paper, watercolors

1960.327.4 Museum purchase with funds from Henry Francis du Pont

Decorated pincushions were sometimes given as gifts to celebrate a baby's birth. In the early 1700s the words used to describe pregnancy and birth were associated with fruitfulness, but new phrases such as "Welcome Little Stranger" became popular as the birth rate declined between the 1760s and 1820s. Some scholars have associated this decline with the American Revolution's promise of greater intellectual and economic freedom for women.



Pincushion

Maker unknown; 1770
Stuffed silk, steel pins
1960.311 Museum purchase with funds from
Henry Francis du Pont



Pincushion

Maker unknown
Possibly New York, New York; 1794
Stuffed silk, steel pins
1959.732 Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont



Pincushion

Maker unknown; 1777
Stuffed silk, linen, silk fringe, steel pins
1952.87 Gift of Henry Francis du Pont



Until the early 1900s, pins were made by hand and were quite expensive. First the wire had to be drawn and straightened, cut to the appropriate length, the tip ground, and then the head applied.

Fastening a baby's diaper and clothes took an average of eight to ten straight pins. Safety pins were not available until the late 1840s.

Pinpaper

England; 1730–70

Wove paper, steel pins

1962.102 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Rockwell Gardiner

Sarah Talley listed the names and birth dates of her siblings on her sampler. The youngest, Lydia and Elihu, were twins born two days apart. Sarah's mother, Lydia Forwood Talley, died on the day the second twin was born.

Normally young girls worked samplers like this one when they were about ten years old, but Sarah was seventeen in 1798. Since that was the year her father remarried, we can assume that Sarah had taken over the care of her younger siblings on the death of her mother three years earlier. She would therefore have had neither the time nor the opportunity to attend Mary Sullivan's school, where she worked this sampler.

Sampler

Made by Sarah Talley

Talleyville, Delaware; 1798

Silk on linen

2000.67 Gift of Samuel A.

Goodley and Marian

Goodley Ebersole



Needlework and other textiles are usually passed down to subsequent generations through the female side of the family. They document bonds between women who are closely related but whose surnames are rarely the same. In a patrilineal society, documenting these connections is especially meaningful not only to the families but also to collectors, curators, and historians who search for clues that can inform us about women's roles in families.



Family attributions can sometimes be confusing. According to family tradition, this picture was worked by Dorothy Cotton (1656–1706), the daughter of Seaborn Cotton and Dorothy Bradstreet Cotton. Both parents descended from illustrious colonial families. Seaborn Cotton was the son of John Cotton, the famed Puritan minister. Dorothy Bradstreet Cotton was the daughter of Anne Bradstreet, the first American poetess who was both the daughter and wife of Massachusetts governors.

There is no evidence, however, that canvaswork pictures like this one were made in the Boston area until the 1730s. This example was therefore probably made by a granddaughter or great-granddaughter of Dorothy Cotton.

Canvaswork picture

Made by a member of the Cotton family
Massachusetts; 1730–60
Wool embroidered on linen
1958.2230 Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont

Sisters often attended the same school, and such was the case with Elizabeth and Martha Taylor. Their samplers, made two years apart, descended through Elizabeth's family and were donated to Winterthur by her great-great-granddaughter.



Sampler

Made by Martha Taylor
Lancaster, Pennsylvania; 1797
Silk embroidered on linen
1991.5 Gift of Elizabeth Oat Rockwell
in memory of Martha Elizabeth Taylor Oat



Sampler

Made by Elizabeth Taylor
Lancaster, Pennsylvania; 1799
Silk embroidered on linen
1991.6 Gift of Elizabeth Oat Rockwell
in memory of Martha Elizabeth Taylor Oat



Sarah Wistar's needlework pictures would be anonymous without the inscriptions on the back that reveal their story. Sarah embroidered these pictures when she was fourteen years old. Later in life, she gave them as remembrances to her two great-nieces, Rebecca and Catharine, when they were probably just learning to stitch. Sarah documented these gifts on the backboard of each picture, and a later family member added further information about both the maker and the recipients.

Silkwork picture

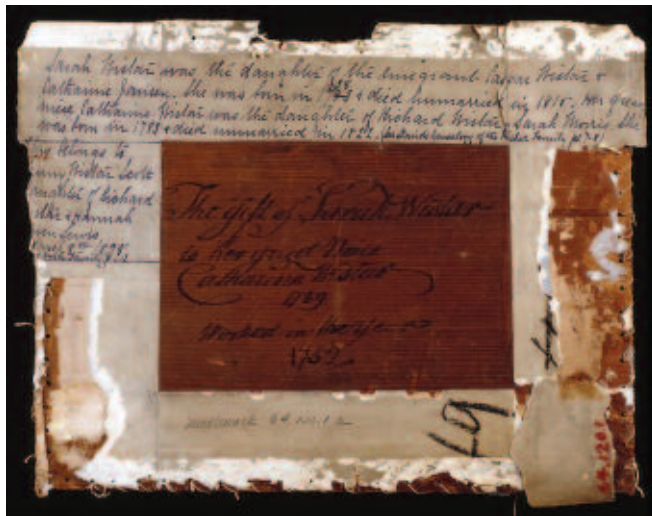
Made by Sarah Wistar
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 1752
Silk on silk
1964.120.2 Museum purchase

Transcription added later on back

Sarah Wistar [was] the daughter of emigrant Caspar Wistar & Catharine Jansen. She was [born] in 1738 & died unmarried in [1815]. Her great niece Rebecca Wistar w[as] the daughter of Richard Wistar & Sarah [Mor]ris (daughter of Captain [Samu]el Morris). She was [born] in 1784 & died [un]married in 1812. _____ Genealogy Wistar ps 7, 8. [_____] belongs to Fanny [Wist]ar Scott, youngest [dau]ghter of Richard [W]istar & Hannah Owen Lewis March 8th 1898 _____ David Gen Wistar family p 12. Given by her to her only daughter Hannah Lewis Scott March 14th 1898.

Inscription on back

The gift of Sarah Wistar
to her great Neice [sic]
Rebecca Wistar
1787
Worked in the year
1752



Inscription on back
The gift of Sarah Wistar
to her great Neice [sic]
Catharine Wistar
1789
Worked in the year
1752

Transcription added later on back
Sarah Wistar was the daughter of the emigrant Caspar Wistar & Catharine Wistar Jansen.
38
She was born in 1789 & died unmarried in 1815. Her great niece Catharine Wistar was the
daughter of Richard Wistar & Sarah Morris. She was born in 1783 & died unmarried in 1822.
(see Davids Genealogy of the Wistar Family ps 7-8). This belongs to Fanny Wistar Scott,
daughter of Richard Wistar & Hannah _____ Lewis March 8th 1898 __ Wistar Family p. 12.



Silkwork picture
Made by Sarah Wistar
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; 1752
Silk on silk
1964.120.1 Museum purchase



Mary Alsop was left a wealthy widow with a large family when her husband died in 1776. A skilled needlewoman, in later life she knit and embroidered pocketbooks and reticules (drawstring bags) as gifts for her children and grandchildren. On many she inscribed her name, her age at the time of making, and the name of the recipient. Clearly her grandchildren did not visit as often as she would have liked, as she wrote to one grandson: "I send you a Purse which I knit for you sometime ago, hoping to have the satisfaction of giving it to you myself. Receive it as a small testimony of my affection."

Purses and pocketbooks

Made by Mary Wright Alsop

Middletown, Connecticut; 1812–17

Silk

1955.3.3, .8, .10, .11

Gift of Henry Francis du Pont

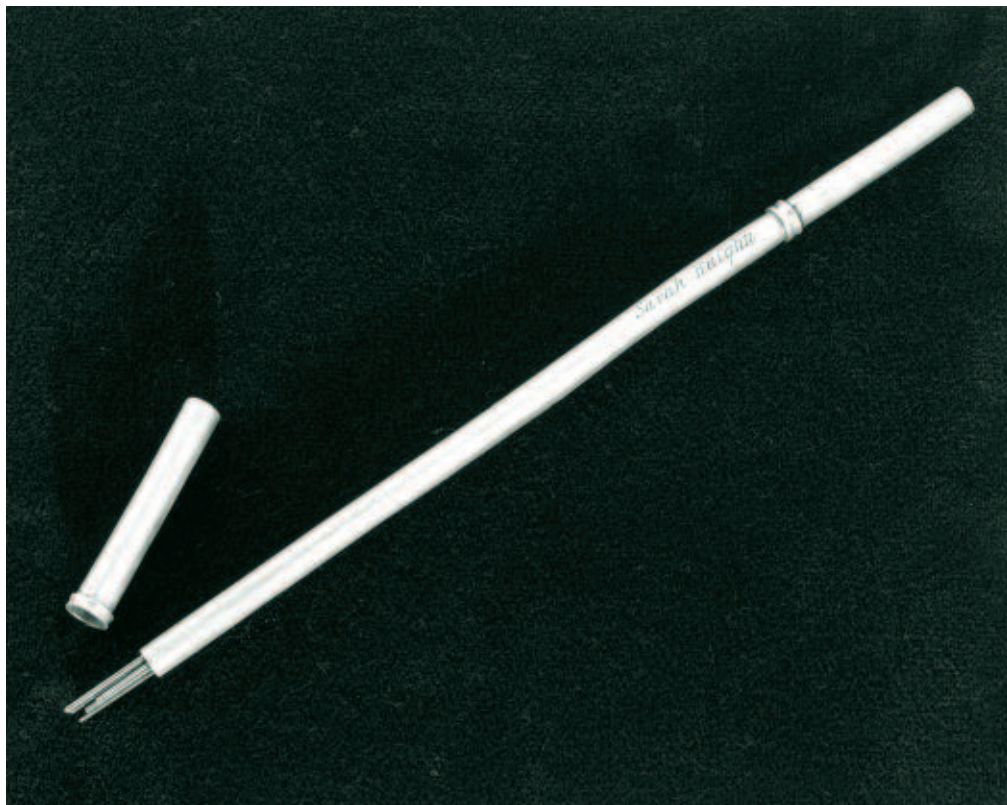
Today most knitters use large needles and thick yarns to make scarves and sweaters, but in the past most knitting was done on slender “pins” when making stockings from cotton, linen, or wool. Mary Wright Alsop used fine knitting needles and colorful silk yarn to make gifts for her family.

Case and needles

Maker unknown; 1780s–1820s

Silver

1977.204 Museum purchase





In 1824 ten-year-old Mary Evans embroidered her family record. By that time her father, two sisters, and one brother had died, but Mary embroidered "Departed this life" for the rest of her family, leaving the dates to be added later.

Look closely at the embroidery threads in this sampler; they are not all the same color or thickness. We believe that Mary might have added the date of her mother's death in 1864 and possibly that of her brother Albert in 1880. The remaining death dates were probably added by Mary's daughter, Laura B. Easton. Laura gave the sampler to her son Walter, whose daughter, Laura Easton Wells, donated it to Winterthur in 1988.

Family record sampler

Made by Mary Evans
Providence, Rhode Island; 1824–88
Silk on linen
1988.54 Donated by Laura E. Wells