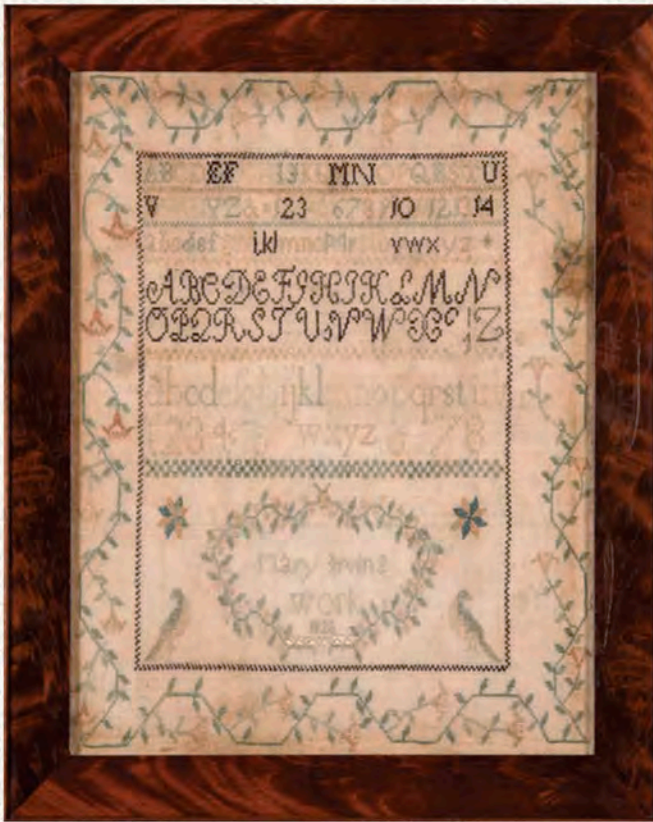


UNRAVELING THE THREADS OF HISTORY

NEEDLEWORK SAMPLERS FROM
19TH CENTURY CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA



Mary Irvin Thompson (1812-1890)
Linden Hall, Centre County, Pennsylvania

Needlework sampler, c. 1825, 13½" × 17¾"

Collection of the Centre County Historical Society, Gift of Anne Hamilton Henszey Pyle

Mary Irvin, daughter of John Irvin and Ann Nancy Agnes Watson, married Centre Furnace Ironmaster, Moses Thompson on January 4, 1838. They moved into to the Centre Furnace ironmasters mansion in 1842. Mary's sampler was worked when she was 13. Her sampler was handed



down through daughter, Elizabeth Thompson Hamilton, who in turn gave it to Mary Irvin Christ MacMillan, and then to granddaughter and donor, Anne Hamilton Henszey Pyle.

Note that the meandering border is the same as the border in the student samplers of teacher Sarah Tucker.



UNRAVELING THE THREADS OF HISTORY

NEEDLEWORK SAMPLERS FROM 19TH CENTURY CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

*Based on the exhibition by the
Centre County Historical Society at the Centre Furnace Mansion*

March 19–September 24, 2017



Cover sampler worked by needlework artist Ann Barton. Patterns created by Ann Barton and Lynda DeBrasky are for sale at the Centre Furnace Mansion.

Samplers and objects featured in this exhibition were generously lent by the Centre County Library Bellefonte Historical Museum along with local collectors.

Professional contributions include photography by Frederic Weber and graphic design by David Lembeck. Exhibition panels sponsored in part by Jaru Associates, Inc., and research contributed by Ruth Van Tassel of Van Tassel Baumann American Antiques, Barbara Hutson of Queenstown Sampler Designs, Patricia Herr of The Herr's Antiques, and Amy Finkel of M. Finkel & Daughter.

Funding for *Unraveling the Threads of History* is from the estate of Elizabeth Jean Smith Campbell and the Ruth Grier Robinson Fund for Heritage Education.

Note: Sampler dimensions are based on inside measurements.

Exhibition Contributors: Ann Barton, Lynda DeBrasky, Diane and James Farr, Cathy Horner, Ann Moellenbrock, Richard Pencek, Johanna Sedgwick, Mary Sorensen, Lewis Gail Biddle, and James Pass.

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CENTRE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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One constant in a young girl's education in early America was the instruction of needlework. Young girls could acquire these needlework skills by attending a school or through the tutelage of a family member.

These skills were taught by having the student complete a sampler, a piece of embroidery created to demonstrate skill in needlework. Samplers were usually made on linen and stitched in silk with various stitches.

Elements were carefully executed in the sampler, such as alphabets and motifs. "Marking samplers" provided patterns that could be copied for future projects including garments and household linens which were among the most valuable of items in the household inventory. These samplers were the predecessors of more ambitious specimens.

Within the stitching framework of the sampler, a young girl could show off talents that were a matter of pride to both her and her family.

Later samplers often included lofty verses as well as alphabets, which at least implied reading abilities and cultural aspirations, even piety. The inclusion of initials and dates pertinent to the family created a registry of, or memorial for, their loved ones. Decorative motifs such as stitched animals, commonly deer or dogs, flowers with or without baskets, crowns,



birds, hearts, and buildings could represent something important in the girl's life, or be decorative flourishes that she found attractive. And the inclusion of her name provided a rare opportunity to exhibit concrete evidence of her girlhood existence. After all, life could be short in the 1800s, especially for women.

The Fabric of Samplers

Before school girls could create samplers, they needed material with which to sew them. Pennsylvania farmers in the early nineteenth century grew their own flax to turn into linen fabric for clothing and other household goods. It was an operation taking almost a year from planting a flax seed to holding a piece of finished linen in your hand.

Linen fabric is made from the flax plant which is one of the oldest cultivated plants. It is the cloth on which samplers were made, as well as clothing for early settlers. The making of linen cloth from the flax plant has many steps from field to fabric and is a very labor intensive process.

Linen used for samplers had an even weave, i.e. the same number of warp threads to weft, vertical to horizontal. This even weave allowed for an undistorted reproduction of a pattern that was either being counted out, stitch by stitch, or traced onto the fabric. In the 1820s, a more open weave (24, 28 count) of linen became popular and it made stitching slightly easier, which the sampler teacher of young schoolgirls would have no doubt considered advantageous.

The thread or floss used for early 19th century samplers in America was made of silk, which was spun and dyed in England and the Far

East. It would have been dyed with natural organic materials such as plants, shells, and insects. Silk absorbed the dyes in a subtler way than did wool, which was dyed at home for domestic use. Turkey Red, a chemical dye originating in the Far East, was introduced into the U.S. in 1829. Aniline dyes arrived in the 1850s. Their stronger, deeper colors largely relegated natural dyes to the past.



E.B. 1357 *Linum usitatissimum*, Common Flax.

"About a half acre of flax and the wool of a half dozen sheep were required to clothe a pioneer family of seven."

— The Subsistence Farming Period In Pennsylvania Agriculture, 1640–1840, S. W. Fletcher, 1947 article in Pennsylvania History

Sampler Arrangements

Designs for samplers were arranged in four different ways: mirrored, centered, rowed and random. The samplers shown are examples of each arrangement.

1. Mary J. Aurands

Needlework sampler, c. 19th century, 17¾" × 17¾"

Arrangement: Centered

2. Cadarina Sower [Catharine Sauer] (1761–1823)

Needlework sampler, c. 19th century, 10¾" × 14½"

Arrangement: Random

She married Samuel Harley. Cadarina was the daughter of Christopher Sower Sr. (Sauer). Both Christopher Sower Sr. and Jr. were prominent publishers in Germantown. Their descendants moved to Chester and Montgomery counties. The sampler has Lancaster County influences.

3. Arvilla Stover Bethel (b. 1816)

Needlework sampler, c. 1829, 17½" × 15¾"
Purchased in Centre County, Pennsylvania

Arrangement: Rowed

The lines from the verse on the sampler are taken from a sacred drama written in 1808 called "The Search after Happiness" by Hannah More. The verse reads:

*"I sigh not for beauty, nor languish for wealth
But grant me kind providence, virtue and health
Then richer than queens and as happy as they
My days shall pass sweetly and swiftly away."*

4. Artist unknown

Needlework sampler, c. 1800s, 10¼" × 9"

Arrangement: Mirror Image

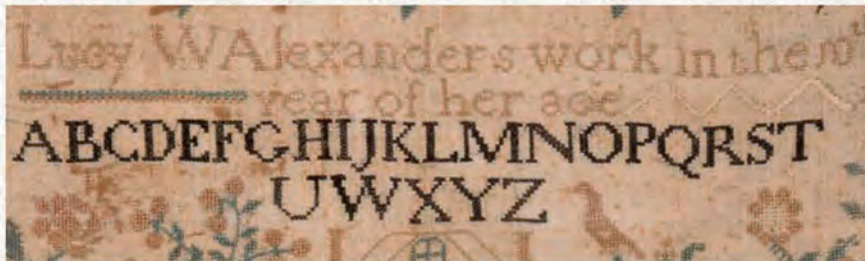


Quaker Influences

Miss Sarah Tucker, a Quaker, was a “subscription school” teacher in Bellefonte who by 1807 had already taught for some time and ended her career about 1825. The newspaper, “Centre Democrat” listed Miss Tucker’s death on May 20, 1836 at the age of 92 years. Sarah Tucker taught her needlework students commonly occurring Quaker designs such as a meandering vine border and asymmetrical floral sprays. Quaker samplers also used a slender version of the Roman alphabet minus the letter “V.” The cursive English alphabet (non-Quaker) included the letter “V,” but often did not have the letter “J.” See sampler images below.

Miss Tucker, as most needlework teachers, had a repertoire of preferred

designs. She combined her favored motifs with those associated with the Quakers to create a unique Centre County look. It is very exciting that we have located and exhibited six Bellefonte schoolgirl samplers that bear the Sarah Tucker signature motifs along with classic Quaker elements. The *Unraveling the Threads of History* exhibition of the Centre County Historical Society featured work from the following students of Sarah Tucker on display: Mary Huston, Lucy Winters Alexander (Humes), Mary Williams, Elizabeth Trczyulny, Sarah Trczyulny, and Susan S. Harris. These samplers are pictured on pages 6–11 of this booklet.



Alphabet without “V”



Alphabet without “J”

Motifs of the Barton Sampler

Miss Sarah Tucker’s students used the designs below in their samplers. Needlework teachers usually had a repertoire of preferred motifs that were not exclusive

to her, but were commonly seen in some combination in the work of her students. Barton combined these motifs to create a unique contemporary sampler.

Plant Motifs

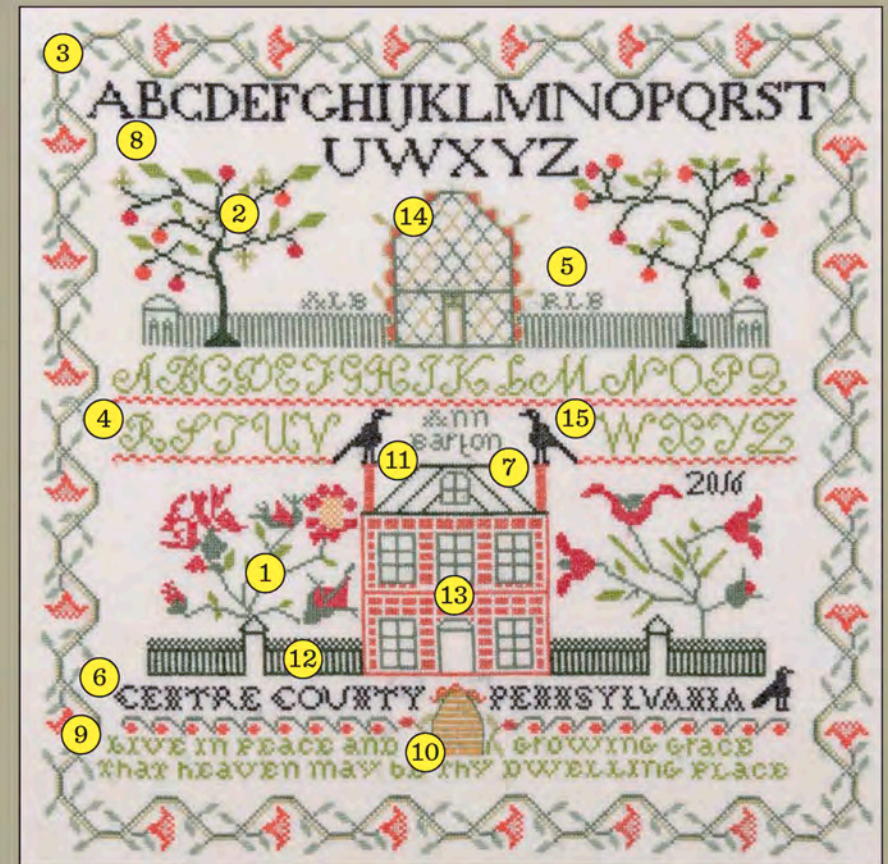
1. Asymmetrical floral sprays
2. Asymmetrical trees
3. Meandering border

Text Motifs

4. Cursive alphabet (no “J” – English)
5. Family registry
6. Generic alphabet
7. Name
8. Quaker alphabet (no “V”)
9. Verse

Other Motifs

10. Bee skep
11. Birds
12. Fences
13. House with double chimney
14. Trellis house



The Students of Miss Sarah Tucker



Mary Huston (1806–1826)
 Bellefonte, Centre County, Pennsylvania
 Needlework sampler, c. 1818, 20¾" × 17"

Mary was the daughter of Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Charles Huston (1771-1849) and Mary Winters (c. 1776-1845) of Bellefonte. Even though Mary was a Presbyterian, her Huston family register reflects Quaker instruc-

tion through the use of floral sprays and identifiable Quaker lettering according to the renowned researcher and author Betty Ring. Mary was an advanced needlework student even at the approximate age of twelve when she worked this piece.



Lucy Winters Alexander [Humes] (1811–1886)
 Bellefonte, Centre County, Pennsylvania
 Needlework sampler, c. 1821, 18¾" × 16¾"
 Collection of the Centre County Library — Pennsylvania Room

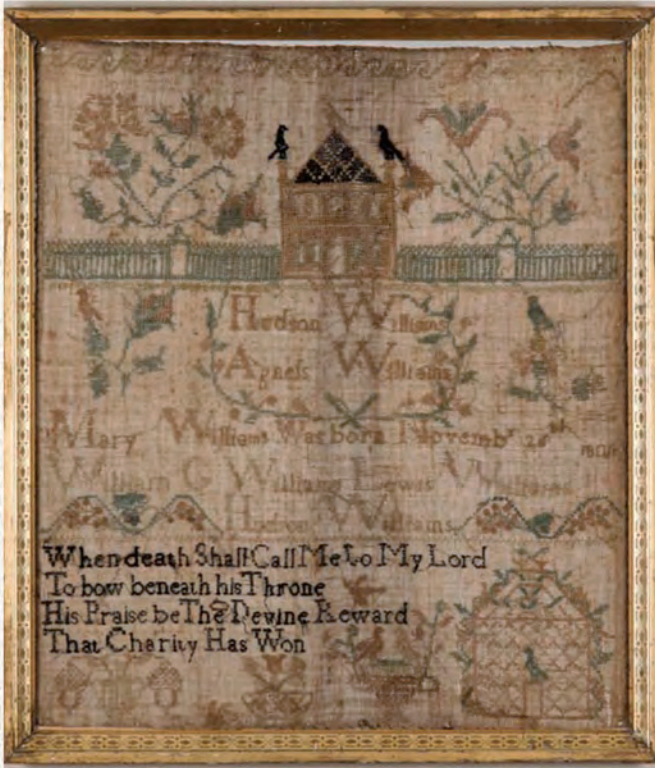
Lucy Winters Alexander (1811–1886), worked a sampler in 1821 that had the same house, bold Quaker style lettering, and absence of the letter "V," all evidence of Sarah Tucker's influence.

Lucy was born to Thomas Alexander (1783–1831) and Elizabeth Winters (b. 1781) and married a prominent Bellefonte banker named Edward Humes (1810–1895) in December 1843. They



had three children, William Potter Humes (1844–1920), Ann Elmira Humes (1845–1935) and Hamilton Humes (1848–1892). The Humes family lived with Edward's aunt-in-law, Lucy Potter until her death at age 85, at which time Edward inherited the house. This house is today known as the Miles-Humes House and is the present location of the Centre County Library and Historical Museum.

The Students of Miss Sarah Tucker



Mary Williams (b. 1801)

Bellefonte, Centre County, Pennsylvania

Needlework sampler, c. Early 19th Century, 18" x 20¾"

Collection of the Centre County Library, Bellefonte Historical Museum Pennsylvania Room

Mary's father, Hudson Williams, was a builder and stone mason in early Bellefonte. In 1830, he helped build the three adjoining houses (pictured) in the 400 block of High Street and his family lived in one of them. These buildings are listed as the most architecturally significant in the Bellefonte Historic District.

The names on Mary's sampler (besides her own) are of her parents, Hudson and Agnes and her three brothers, William, Lewis and Hudson. The 1810

census did not include the names of female family members, only their ages.



Elizabeth Treziulny (1812-1838)

Bellefonte, Centre County, Pennsylvania

Needlework sampler, c. 1820, 19" x 19¾"

This sampler was worked by Elizabeth Treziulny at age eight. She and Lucy Winter Alexander worked their samplers at around the same time and there are similar motifs in both. They incorporated identical borders, bee skep motif, and duplicate floral sprays evidence of instruction from the same teacher, Sarah Tucker.

Elizabeth's father, Baron Chas. Karl Wilhelm Stregner Treziulny (1767-1851) was from Wallasia, Ukraine while Elizabeth's mother, Katherine Dorsseynohmann (1778-1858) was born in

Philadelphia. Baron Treziulny initially settled in Philipsburg where he opened the first store. In 1805 he moved to Spring Township where he was a commissioner, a member of the Temperance Society, an engineer and one of the first canal commissioners in the state. They had two sons, Henry, a surveyor in Bellefonte and Hyacinth, Superintendent of Bellefonte Waterworks. Their daughter Elizabeth married Enoch Sullardin 1837, and died in 1838 at age 26.

The Students of Miss Sarah Tucker



Sarah Trczyulny (1806–1884)
 Bellefonte, Centre County, Pennsylvania
 Needlework sampler, c. 1821, 17¼" × 16½"

This sampler was just recently discovered and also has the unique elements associated with the teaching of Sarah Tucker. Sarah was Elizabeth Trczyulny's older sister and worked this sampler when she was about 18. Sarah and her

younger sister incorporated several identical and similar motifs. Sarah died when she was 78 and, according to her obituary, was the last of the Trczyulny family in the area.



Susan Harris (1822–1846)
 Bellefonte, Centre County, Pennsylvania
 Needlework sampler, c. 19th century, 20¼" × 19½"

Susan Harris created a family registry for her grandparents with her sampler. Her grandfather, William Petriken (1762–1821) and his wife Elizabeth McEwen (1761–1832) married in 1772. William Petriken was appointed the first Justice of the Peace for the new Centre County in 1800. He held other important county positions including trustee for the

Bellefonte Academy at its founding in 1805.

Their daughter Nancy married Samuel Harris and had two children, John and Susan. Susan was fourteen years old when Sarah Tucker died. It is not clear whether she was taught by Miss Tucker. There are elements in Susan's sampler that show Sarah Tucker's Quaker influence.

Other Samplers Attributed to Central Pennsylvania



Euphemia Gray (1822–1886)
Stormstown, Centre County, Pennsylvania
Needlework sampler, c. 1840, 18" × 17½"

Euphemia was the daughter of John L. Gray, one of Centre County's first settlers coming to Patton and Halfmoon townships in the late 1700s. The John Gray house in Patton township, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, is the house where Euphemia lived as a young girl and completed this sampler. The initials on the sampler match the initials of her family members. Euphemia later married J. M. Kepheart. She died in October of 1865 at the young



age of 35 and is buried in the Gray's Cemetery in Halfmoon Township along with her husband and parents.



Elizabeth R. Boger
New Berlin, Union County, Pennsylvania
Needlework sampler, 1840, 16½" × 17½"

This sampler depicts the Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Berlin. An original feature of the church was a weather vane, in the shape of the archangel Gabriel blowing his horn, which sat atop the steeple. Although hard to discern, this weather vane is depicted in the sampler. The original weather vane is now in safe keeping and has been replaced with a cross. The church still remains with an active congregation.



Other Samplers Attributed to Central Pennsylvania

1. Ruth R. Burk

Needlework sampler
1826, 19" x 18"

Acquired from the Judge Sharp Estate of Philipsburg, PA



2. Mary Hancock

Philipsburg, Pennsylvania

Needlework sampler, 20 3/4" x 17"

Below the alphabet the sampler reads:

*Mary Hancock
Phillipsburg
Centre County
July the 15 1832*

Note the spelling of the town "Phillipsburg" with a double "l."

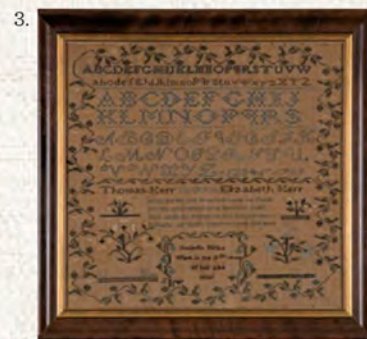


3. Isabella Kirks (b. 1823)

Mifflin County, Pennsylvania

Needlework sampler
1836, 18" x 17 1/4"

Isabella Kirks worked her sampler at age 11. Her mother died when Isabella was two and the letters "C. Kirk" memorialize her on the sampler. Elizabeth Kerr and her husband Thomas, Isabella's aunt and uncle, raised her and are also remembered on the sampler. Around 1850, Isabella became the second wife of Robert McClintic, a furniture dealer and funeral director. They had seven children before her death in Lewistown in 1895.



Sewing Boxes



Centre County sewing boxes
c. 1860-1880

Sewing box (left): 12 1/2" x 6 1/2" x 6 1/2"

Sewing box (right): 10 1/2" x 6 1/2" x 6 1/2"

The above hand-painted examples are made from poplar wood. The square base contains a single full-width nailed drawer fitted with a small

brass knob-shaped pull. Decorations on the base of the box include stars, double tulip-like motif, and an abstract design. The two rotating discs are outfitted with wire designed to hold wooden spools of thread. The wooden cup on top supports a pincushion. There are a half-dozen known examples.



Other types of sewing boxes

Pennsylvania German Influence

The 17th and 18th centuries brought many German immigrants to Pennsylvania and, with them, a number of religious groups. Among them were Anabaptist sects, Amish, Mennonites, Moravians, and Schwenkfelders.

German settlers brought needlework motifs from their homelands that they used in their Pennsylvania textiles. Young women stitched a sampler crowded with a variety of cross stitched motifs for the purpose of recording various designs to use in the future when marking their textiles. The samplers were stored in a

sewing basket. It wasn't until the 19th century that formal balanced Pennsylvania German samplers were created and intended for display.

The rural settings and agrarian lifestyle of most Pennsylvania German settlers resulted in few established schools. Therefore, "German girls in America learned their sewing skills at home from more experienced relatives." Pennsylvania German samplers maintained the German-style needlework into the 19th century because few assimilated with the English communities.



Anamaria
Pennsylvania
Needlework sampler
1820, 14½" × 15¾"

Annamaria's needlework is an example of a Pennsylvania German random motif cross stitch sampler.



Artist unknown
Pennsylvania
Kelleduch
c. 1820–1840, 22" × 25½"

This utensil cloth, called a "kelleduch" was used predominately by some of the conservative Amish of Kishacoquillas Valley (Big Valley) in Mifflin County. The kelleduch is typically wider and shorter than a show towel and hung behind a utensil rack to keep food and grease off the kitchen wall.

After the Pennsylvania German girl copied designs from her relative's sampler, several years later she would create a decorative show towel to display her

finest needlework skills. The show towel was hung over a plain hand towel on a door to decorate the home.



Sara Roth Spengler
Pennsylvania
Show towel
c. 1820–1840, 12" × 22½"

Artist unknown
Pennsylvania
Show towel
1828, 17" × 52"

This towel, made for David Landis, features stars and floral designs. The initials "ML" are likely those of the artist.

