



Woven table runner with a depiction of a quetzal. Chichicastenango, Guatemala. 1970s.

Textile Travels

PART 1

GWEN BLAKLEY KINSLER

In this first installment of a new series, the author describes the beginning of her textile collection with two treasures she bought in Honduras and Guatemala. All of the countries visited in the series continue to draw textile lovers; use the author's lists of current sources for information on museums, shopping, travel, and further study. In the next installment: Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

MY TWIN PASSIONS—crochet and collecting textiles—have their origin in Honduras, where my husband, Alan, and I were Peace Corps volunteers in the 1970s. As a registered nurse, I had charge of an outpatient clinic in the tiny village of Las Vegas de Santa Barbara, located in the mountains two hours by bus from the largest city, San Pedro Sula. I worked alongside Honduran nurse's aides, avid crocheters who used to crochet at the clinic during their free moments. They followed no patterns; instead, their designs were intuitive and traditional, passed down from family members. They created doilies, covers for drinking glasses, and skirts made with shell stitches and finished with a fabric lining. I was intrigued and asked them to teach me. One of the aides took me under her wing and taught me to crochet using Spanish terminology.

My textile collection began accidentally when I purchased an interesting-looking mat (*tapete*) made from pounded tree bark in a market in San Pedro Sula. The mat still adorns a bench in my home. My collection grew the next year. During a two-week break from Peace Corps duties, Alan and I began to explore Central America by bus. A highlight of our visit to Guatemala was the mar-

ket town of Chichicastenango, in the highlands near Lake Atitlán. The market was full of color, from the traditional costumes worn by many of the indigenous Mayan buyers and sellers to the amazing woven fabrics and textiles offered for sale. It was difficult to stay within our limited Peace Corps budget. The additions to my collection included a table runner woven on a backstrap loom and depicting a quetzal, a brilliantly plumed bird sacred to the Maya who considered it a symbol denoting freedom and wealth.

Needlework is an international language that transcends the vast differences in spoken language, culture, and lifestyle. Resources both for those planning a trip to Honduras and/or Guatemala and for armchair travelers interested in textiles from these two countries are listed below. ❖

ABOUT THE AUTHOR. *Gwen Blakley Kinsler, founder of the Crochet Guild of America, is an author, teacher, and designer; her article "Collecting Crochet" appeared in the November/December 2007 issue of PieceWork. She lives in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. Visit her website at www.crochetqueen.com.*

All objects from the collection of the author.
All photographs courtesy of the author.

Resources

General Travel Information

For general information on Honduras, including tips on currency exchange, telephone and fax availability, credit cards, and transportation, visit www.honduras.com. For general information on Guatemala, including a list of hotels, restaurants, and shops, visit www.travellog.com.

Museums

The Museum of Anthropology and History, San Pedro Sula, Honduras; www.globalnet.hn/museo/museum01.htm.
Ixchel Museum of Indigenous Textiles and Clothing, Guatemala City, Guatemala; 502-331-3622.

Places to See in Honduras

Tegucigalpa, capital of Honduras; www.honduras.com/hondurastips/english/tegucigalpa.htm.
Copan Ruins, in western Honduras; www.copanruins.com.

Places to See in Guatemala

The village of Panajachel, on Lake Atitlán, is a tourist center that can serve as a base for tourists wishing to visit towns and villages across the lake; www.atitlan.net.

Panajachel's Centro Cultural Los Encuentros is a small private cultural center, which promotes local Mayan culture; www.atitlan.com/losencuentros.htm; (347) 273-9596 (U.S. telephone number).

Antigua, founded in the early sixteenth century, is a well-preserved colonial town; www.aroundantigua.com.

Markets

In Honduras, visit the Guamilito market in San Pedro Sula for Honduran handcrafts, including objects made from bark cloth. In Guatemala, the market in Panajachel offers Mayan handcrafts, handwoven blankets, tapestries, and clothing seven days a week (www.panajachel.com); Chichicastenango's large market offers Mayan handcrafts, pottery, and textiles, particularly women's blouses (www.chichicastenango.org).

Virtual Shopping

If you would like to shop online, the following are fair-trade organizations selling handmade textiles and clothing made by indigenous peoples of Honduras and Guatemala:

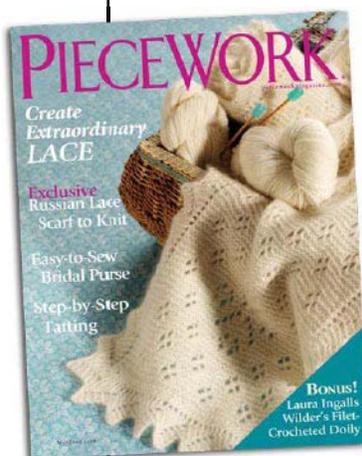
Colores del Pueblo, 12 Fairbanks, Houston, TX 77009; (713) 692-8423; www.coloresdelpueblo.org.

Mayan Hands, 9607 Dr. Perry Rd., Ste. 114, Ijamsville, MD 21754; (301) 515-5911; www.mayanhands.org.

Moonflower Enterprises, PO Box 1161, Airway Heights, WA 99001; (877) 892-3193; www.moonflowerenterprises.com.



Bark-cloth mat. San Pedro Sula, Honduras. 1970s.



RISK-FREE OFFER

Our readers say it best:

"Of all the needlework magazines I have read and subscribed to over the years, *PieceWork* is my all-time favorite. I love the depth and breadth of the articles encompassing, literally, the world of needlework and its considerable history."

Ardeana Hamlin, Bangor, ME

PieceWork brings you amazing examples of historical and modern needlework, beautiful photographs, heirloom-quality projects and the personal stories of needleworkers from around the world. And, if at any time you're not completely satisfied, we'll give you a full refund on all unmailed issues. Why wait—**order today!**

interweave.com/go/PWKD