

A Pinkeep to Embroider

DESIGNED BY ELISABETH SHURE



A pinkeep stitched in silk recalls the lot of the women who spent much of their time alone on Nantucket Island while the men were hunting whales.

Scissors and hand-forged pins and needle loaned by Loene McIntyre.

THE WOMEN OF eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Nantucket would seldom have been without a holder nearby for the pins and needles they used daily. Many pinkeeps like this one were stuffed with unscoured wool because the lanolin coated the precious pins and needles, keeping them dry and rust-free—a decided advantage on an island where salt-laden air is a hazard to all things made of iron or steel. Worked in silk thread on even-weave linen, Elisabeth Shure's pinkeep is stuffed with wool yarn and features the tree motif peculiar to Nantucket needlework samplers. The pinkeep uses only two basic stitches; a well-lit work area will make it easier to work with the fine-count linen. Handle the silk thread carefully because it has a tendency to snag on rough surfaces and edges.

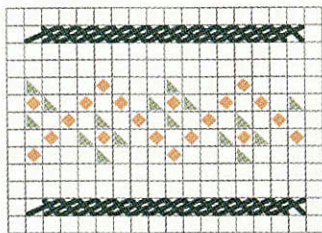
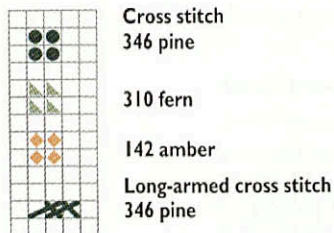
MATERIALS

- 40-count even-weave linen, 1 piece 7 inches (18 cm) square and 1 piece 12 × 3 inches (30 × 8 cm). Elisabeth used Wichelt linen in sandstone.
- Wool flannel, one piece 7 inches (18 cm) square to coordinate with the thread colors
- Cotton lawn or batiste, one piece 7 inches (18 cm) square in cream or off-white
- Kreinik Ping Ling silk floss, one 8-yard (7.3-m) spool each of the following colors: pine #346, fern #310, and amber #142
- Tapestry needle, size 26
- Scrap wool yarn in cream or off-white, 2 ounces (57 g)
- Compass fitted with an erasable marker
- Sewing thread to match the linen fabric
- Sewing pins
- Tape measure

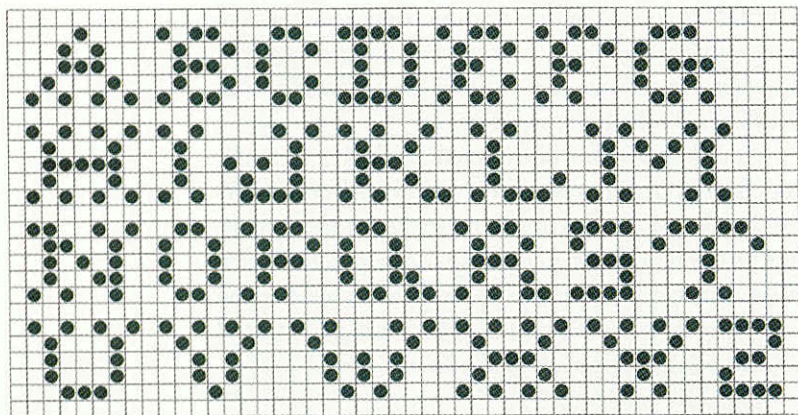
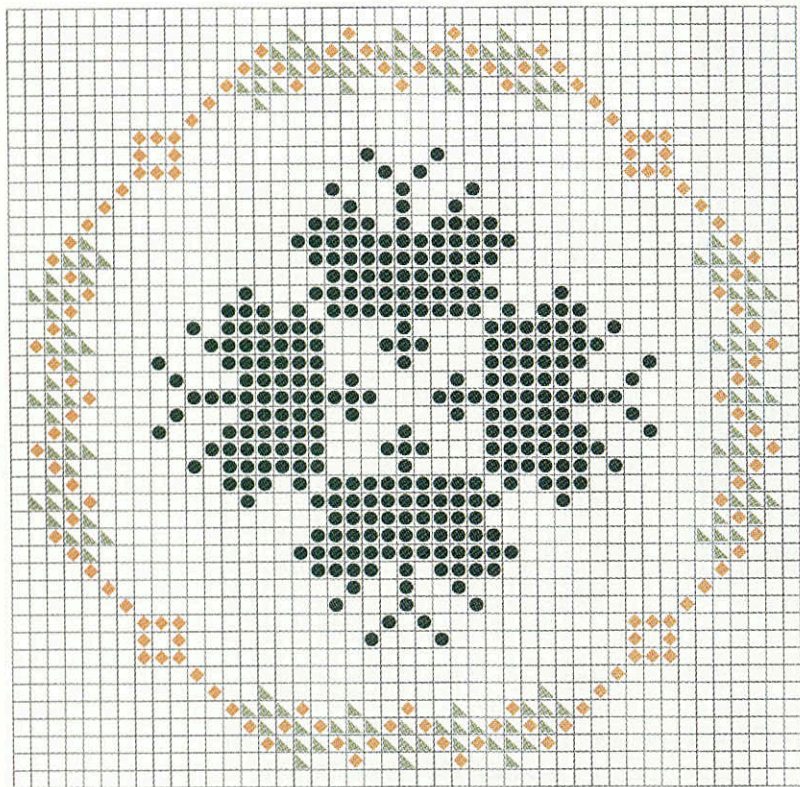
STITCHING THE PINKEEP TOP

Overcast the raw edges of both pieces of even-weave linen fabric with sewing thread. On the square piece of linen, work 2 inches (5 cm) of running stitch close to the edge of one of the sides. To ensure that all the cross stitches are crossed in the same direction, keep the running stitch at the top of your work. If you prefer to use an embroidery frame, use a scroll-type frame that won't crush the stitching or the fabric.

Fold the square of linen in half to form a rectangle and finger-press a crease into it. Fold in half again, perpendicular to the first fold, and make another crease. Stitch the tree design according to the pattern chart, aligning the center of the pattern with the intersection of the folds. Use two strands of Ping Ling silk thread stitched over two threads of the linen.



Pinkeep top pattern



When you have completed the pattern, place the stitched linen on top of the square of lawn or batiste, matching the grain of the fabrics. Center the compass on the tree design and draw a circle 5 inches (13 cm) in diameter with the marker. Stay-stitch around the circle through both layers of fabric with a row of machine stitching or a row of back stitches worked by hand. Trim the fabric to 1/4 inch (6 mm) outside the stitched circle. Using the fabric circle as a pattern, cut a matching circle from the flannel fabric. With a double strand of sewing thread, stitch a row of small running stitches just inside the stay stitching on the linen circle. When you reach the beginning, leave a 4-inch (10-cm) tail. Work a similar row of running stitch 1/4 inch (6 mm) inside the edge of the flannel fabric.

Wind the wool yarn firmly but not tightly into an even, round ball about 2 3/4 inches (7 cm) in diameter. Gather the circles of fabric slightly by pulling up the running-stitch threads and cup them over opposite sides of the ball of yarn. The two pieces of fabric should overlap by about 1/4 inch (6 mm) all the way around the ball. Add or remove yarn from the ball until it fits the circles of fabric.

Place the stitched linen on the ball. Pull the gathering thread tight, distributing the gathers evenly around the circle. Pull the fabric firmly over the ball and hold it in place with a few pins. When you are satisfied with the fit, baste the fabric onto the ball. Repeat the same procedure for the flannel fabric, lapping it over the linen.

STITCHING THE TRIM BAND

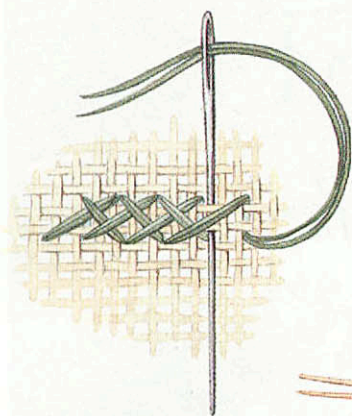
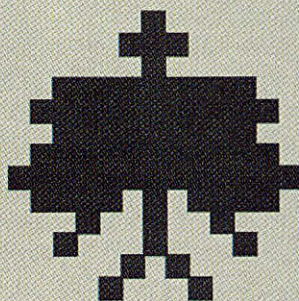
Measure around the middle of the ball where the two fabrics overlap. Fold the remaining piece of linen in half lengthwise and finger-press the crease. Open out the fabric and fold in half again at right angles to the first fold. From the center of the fabric, begin stitching the band pattern, extending it in both directions until the length of the embroidery equals the circumference of the ball. If you would like to add initials to the band, select the letters from the alphabet (left), calculate the midpoint of the initials, and align it with the center of the fabric. Work the initials in cross stitch and then work the band pattern on either side of the completed letters. Check the embroidered length by wrapping the fabric around the pinkeep.

THE NANTUCKET TREE

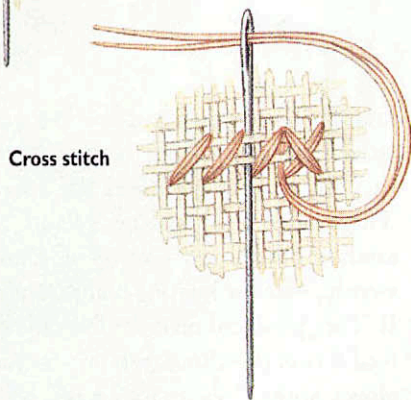
BY ELISABETH SHURE

SMALL, ROUNDED TREES, such as the one stitched on the pinkeep on page 45, are apparently unique to the needlework—particularly the samplers—of Nantucket, but recently I saw on the back of a magazine a photograph of a sampler, and its Nantucket tree caught my eye. As I looked more closely at the design, I realized the sampler was almost identical to one in the Nantucket Historical Association collection stitched by Sally Stubbs, age twelve, in 1799. My surprise at finding the Nantucket tree on a sampler that had been made elsewhere than Nantucket turned to pleasure when I discovered that this sampler had been stitched by Sally Stubbs, age fifteen, in 1802. The Nantucket girl had moved to the mainland.

Trees have been a precious natural resource in short supply on Nantucket Island for almost two hundred years, which may explain their frequent appearance in the needlework of the island. But throughout history, trees have been used as a symbol in many cultures. During the nineteenth century, for example, the weeping willow appears frequently on gravestones and mourning samplers as a symbol of sorrow. The religious and magical associations that man has given to the tree perhaps arise from its strength and ability to survive under the worst conditions—an apt symbol of Old Nantucket and its resilient men and women.



Long-armed cross stitch



Cross stitch

FINISHING THE PINKEEP

Trim the sides and ends of the band to 3/8 inch (1 cm) outside the stitching. Fold the edges to the wrong side along the outside of the long-armed cross stitch. Pin the band in place over the overlapped linen and flannel fabrics. Turn under the ends of the band where they meet. Slip-stitch the ends of the band together. Slip-stitch the sides of the band to the cover fabrics. ♦

SUPPLIERS

The following suppliers carry 40-count even-weave linen and Ping Ling silk in the colors needed for the project.

Friendstitch, Ltd., 4802 Rollingtop Rd., Ellicott City, MD 21043.
(410) 465-9645.

Lacis, 3163 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703. (510) 843-5018.

McIntosh Samplers, 64669 Orchard Dr., Goshen, IN 46526.
(219) 534-0455.

Shirley's Counting House, 81 First Ave., Atlantic Highlands, NJ
07716. (908) 291-8737.

Stitches of the Past, 68 Park St., Andover, MA 01810. (508) 475-
3968.

Threadneedle Street, 485 Front St., N, Suite B, Issaquah, WA
98027. Orders only, (800) 998-5945; inquiries, (206) 391-
0528.