

Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

Volume 3 – Issue 11 November 2011

From The Editor –



As you read this issue, I am guessing the Halloween pumpkin is in the oven for your Thanksgiving pie. And while the pie plate is being washed, you will be wrapping Christmas presents!!! This is truly the craziest time of the year, as well as exciting. We at Bear Threads are excited for we have a lot of new and exciting things going on for you, our valued customers.

First of all, soon you will be seeing a new and updated website. The web address will NOT change so continue to use www.bearthreadsltd.com to search for all of your laces, embroideries and fabrics. Remember that buttons are also on the site, and soon all of the newsletters will, once again, be available for you to read – all in one location.

Second, in just a couple of weeks Jim and I will be making our annual trip to Switzerland to finalize new items for your Spring/Easter 2012 sewing. Never fear, you know we always come home with some special ‘goodies’. You will be able to see all that is new at the Creative Needlework Market in Birmingham, January 15-16.

Last – and certainly not the least, is that I have decided to go back on the lecture/teaching circuit. I have found that since I began teaching and founded Bear Threads, Ltd. in the very early 1980’s there have been many shops and teachers that have come and gone. What began as a really ‘pure’ industry has become diluted and there is much incorrect information in our midst. This is so unfair to you, my customers, and certainly to your customers who are beginning to discover the love of the needle arts. This winter I will offer a seminar in your shop that will cover fabric, lace and trimming identification, as well as Heirloom sewing terminology and care of heirloom garments and textiles. You will be surprised with what questions will be answered in this 3 hour seminar. In addition you may wish to combine this with an Heirloom Sewing project. For more information contact me at: bearthreadsltd@bellsouth.net or call: 404-255-5083.

We have two fabulous articles in this issue. Getting ready for the Spring/Easter sewing season, Paula Huggins will help you to better

organize and make the most of your sewing time. Who would not need this kind of help! And Cynthia Crane has created just the most adorable and perfect baby shower gift! Check it out and go to her website to buy the ‘teeny tiny’ things you will need to fill your creation – perhaps she will sell you one of her completed booties!

I leave you with the following poem with good wishes for a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Sheila

MEET THE DESIGNER

About Paula Huggins - - -

“I taught myself to sew at age 16 – I have nightmares at what some of those clothes looked like! I taught myself to smock from a McCall’s pattern at the age of 20. I continued to sew for myself, until my move to the South in 1978, and the birth of my daughter in 1980, got me really involved in smocking and French hand sewing.

A friend persuaded me to take a hand sewing class from a local store in Birmingham. It took me 3 years to complete the dress...I HATE that type of hand sewing! But I became a regular customer of the store. Julia Golson taught at the store and taught me smocking and embroidery (thanks for all those remedial classes in bullions!). Becky Summers also taught there, and taught me French sewing by machine. In 1985 I bought the store and renamed it The Magic Needle. I owned the store until 1998, when health issues forced me to sell it.

I continue to sew for customers, using local stores and the internet for purchasing fabric and laces. I love working with the beautiful materials and I think my forte is combining different lace patterns to come up with beautiful designs for a custom made look.

If you are interested in ordering a custom designed garment, contact me at pdhuggins@aol.com. ”

ORGANIZING FRENCH SEWING WHETHER BY HAND OR MACHINE! BY PAULA HUGGINS

After many years of planning heirloom dresses, I know the keys to a successful garment:

SEWING SKILLS AND ORGANIZATION!

I have found that apart from all the necessary sewing stuff, the keys to success, for me, are paper, scotch tape, and resealable plastic bags.

I start by doing a sketch of the garment, indicating on it, tucks, puffing, lace bands, sleeve details, etc. This is critical, especially for the more complicated projects, e.g. a Christening gown.

Then the fun begins – lace selection. This is my favorite part, and even if I use the same laces over and over, the combinations are never the same on any two garments. I firmly believe in mixing lace patterns, throwing in geometrics, flowers, fillers, and beading (although, honestly, I hate running all that ribbon!).

Once I have found a harmonious pattern for all my laces, I turn to paper and scotch tape as the next step. After all that planning I don't want to forget the layout that gave me the 'aha' moment! Sometimes, I don't get to the construction phase for a while and when I do all those yards of lace look so unfamiliar.

I cut out as many snips of each lace as needed to lay out my lace vision. I tape them together in the pattern I have chosen, labeling them Band A, Band B, Yoke, Sleeve, etc. With snips and tape I do a complete layout for each component. As a former shop owner, I did this for my customers when I planned their garment. I never knew when they would get to their construction. If they returned weeks later with yards of lace asking where it went, I'd never have remembered. It became a survival skill.

Now comes those plastic bags. I cut all the yardage required for each lace element, and separate them into individual bags, labeling them appropriately. For example, I might have 2 bags for the two Band A's, one for Band B, the Yoke, one for the sleeves, and one for the ruffle, etc. In each bag I include everything needed for that component...entredeux, ribbon etc. Once that is finished, I go back and trim one side of all the included entredeux. (I roll and whip in one step, no stitching in the ditch). Next I turn my attention to the fabric. I pull the threads for all the fabric strips I need – ruffles, tucks, puffing, etc. The puffing and tuck strips (threads pulled for the tucks) get

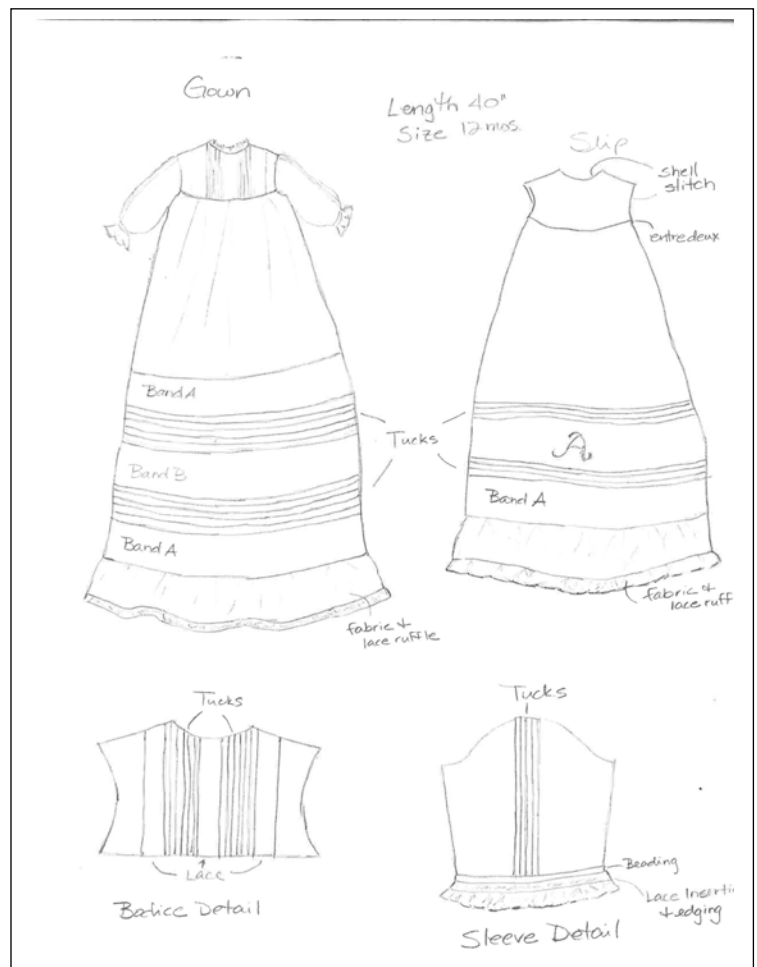
their own bag. The ruffle strips are included in the bag with the appropriate lace edging. I also cut out my sleeves and include them in the sleeve bag.

I am now ready to begin sewing, confident that I will remember my original plan. If the day only allows a short window in which to sew; I can just pull out 1 bag and complete that component. For the sketch shown, I needed 10 bags:

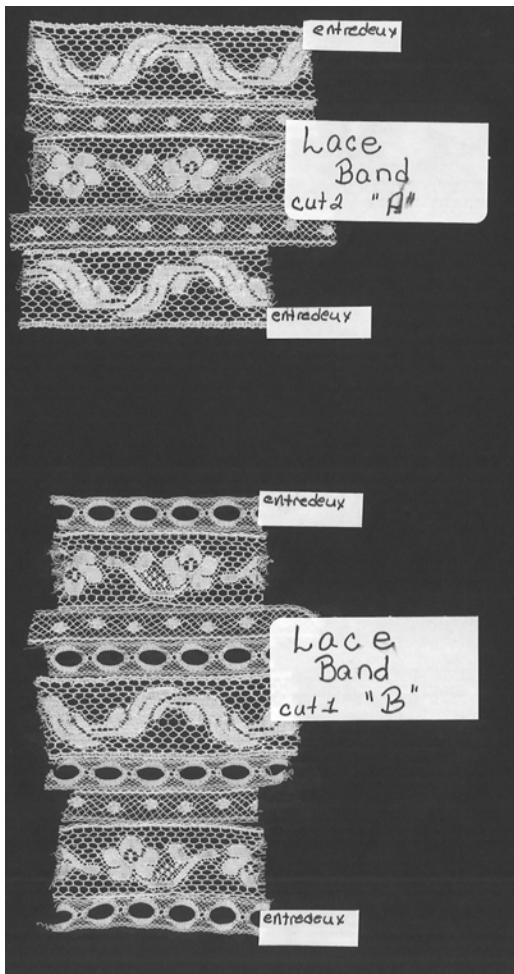
- 1) Neck lace edge plus Entredeux
- 2) Yoke lace plus entredeux for attaching skirt
- 3) Sleeves
- 4)
- 5) – 4 through 6 are Band A bags
- 6)
- 7) 1 Band B bag
- 8) 2 tuck bands
- 9) Dress ruffle (fabric and lace)
- 10) Slip ruffle plus entredeux for attaching to skirt
- 11)

Hoping this helps you in organizing your next sewing project –

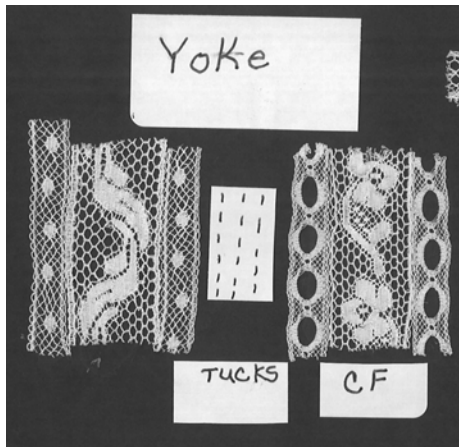
Paula Huggins



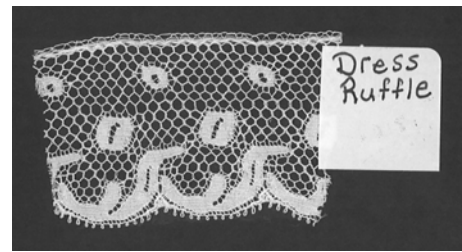
Sketch your design and note the details that you want to include.



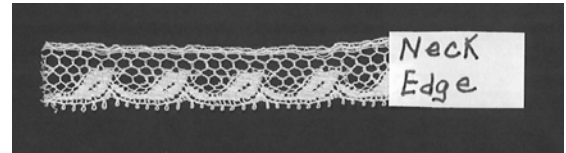
Layout your "Lace Vision"



Stay organized and always remember your harmonious design



Plan ahead and sew when you're ready



BEST THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is here, so our minds have turned
To what time has taught us, to what we've learned:

We often focus all our thought
On shiny things we've shopped and bought;
We take our pleasure in material things
Forgetting the pleasure that friendship brings.
If a lot of our stuff just vanished today,
We'd see the foundation of each happy day
Is special relationships, constant and true,
And that's when our thoughts go directly to you.
We wish you a Thanksgiving you'll never forget,
Full of love and joy – your best one yet!





Scraps to Scrumptious

By
Cynthia
Crane

I was so pleased when Sheila asked me to write this article to share my love of miniatures. I bought my first dollhouse in 1998 as a hobby, and here I am 13 years later with a business of my own! After my retirement from Delta Airlines in 2002, I had the opportunity to purchase a business that sold fabrics, ribbons, trims, and of course – laces in small scale. This allowed me to supply my fellow miniaturists with everything needed to dress small scale porcelain dolls. As well, they upholster furniture from beds to sofas, chairs and draperies for 1/12" scale.

Many of the dolls you will see in miniature (5 1/2" for an adult) are dressed in period costumes. At the moment, Victorian seems to be the most popular, although there are many artisans that do fantastic caricature dolls in modern and fantasy costumes. Many sculpt their own figures from Sculpey and Fimo.



When working in miniature, the detailing is just as important as it is in creating full size garments. Many hours of study go into creating gowns in miniature. It is an art form, in and of itself. For christening gowns, only the finest batiste will do. In miniature, only 100% cotton and silk will drape to create a realistic look. Bearissima is a wonderful choice for this. The lace must be 100% cotton as well, whether it is new or vintage. For ribbon trims, silk is the first choice for making ribbon roses as embellishments.

The scale is what is important. One of the very favorite laces from Bear threads is the "snowfall" series. (L-36). It easily forms the gathered skirt, and with the addition of a small yoke (L-30), makes an adorable dress. I have been experimenting with their newest fabric, Baby Dimity with squares, F-5961. It makes wonderful pinafores and dresses!



For this article I will be showing you some photos of small children's clothing that I have made from Bear Threads wonderful fabrics and laces as well as showing you what I think is an unusual use of all those beautiful bits and pieces that we all collect!

Miniaturists often put together small memory trunks laden with vintage laces and trims, memory albums, clothing, shoes and all other things in miniature. I wanted to do a new twist on this idea, so I have taken high top baby shoes and baby tennis shoes instead of miniature trunks to do the same thing.



I start with a baby shoe and remove the laces. Starting with the tongue, I carefully cut out either pretty ribbons or lace and glue them on to the shoe. I use FabriTac or Aleene's quick dry glue. Other fabric glues will work, but these dry quickly so you can keep on working.

From there, I take my scraps – or even pieces from appliqués and begin piecing them on to the surface of the shoe being careful to not overlap too much, but making sure that the entire surface is covered. I find too that if you use a Maline lace for instance, that the weight of the lace should be consistent throughout to create a nicer more unified look. Don't be afraid to use a pretty ribbon between the pieces of lace! A good use of ribbon would also be up the back or down the front center.



For the filling, I make a small dress, baby blanket and towels. Add some bits of lace and ribbon, a small toy or two and I place a little story book in the laces of the shoe to complete!

Even if miniatures aren't your thing, I have made several pairs of tennis shoes for my friends to wear to the miniature shows. Another idea would be to make a pair of baby shoes or little girl shoes to accompany some of the beautiful dresses by using some of the leftover lace and adding pretty coordinating colored ribbons as the laces.

I do many of the miniature shows around the country and have a website to provide my customers with the 'perfect' fabric and trim to bring their miniature settings and dolls to life. I invite you to visit us at:

www.Miniautreluxuries.com to see small scale fabrics, ribbons, laces and trims. We also offer small scale dress patterns and other supplies. We have over 1400 items from which to choose. Our website will also give you information on miniature shows. We ship anywhere and accept all major credit cards.

Cindy Crane cindy@miniautreluxuries.com

When the entire shoe has been covered, I finish it off by trimming around the sole with a pretty trim. One of my favorites is Bear Threads E-715 tassels or E-710. Other small beaded trim will also do nicely. Next, instead of shoelaces, use a small cording or ribbon to complete the shoe.



NEEDLES

Part IV

In our 4th and final series on needles we will trace the process, which the Spanish Moors brought to Redditch, of converting the wrought iron needles to iron, and the effect the invention of water power had on the needlemaking industry.

The great failing of wrought iron needles was in their lack of hardness. Steel needles had a much longer life, less prone to breakage and did not distort. Steel is very difficult to work into needles, so the ideal was to make the needles in wrought iron first and then convert them to steel. This Spanish method was known as *pieing*. In this process the wrought iron needles were basically buried in a hole in the floor in a white hot fire crucible, covered in clay for 24-48 hours. The cooling process lasted up to fourteen days leaving the crucible undisturbed.

When removed from the crucible, the needles were found to have absorbed a quantity of carbon from the charcoal, converting the iron to low carbon steel. Unfortunately the needles had become deformed by excrescences adhering to them and these were removed by a process of harsh scouring. They were then polished and made ready for sale.

Water power had been known and used since Roman times, and almost every reasonable head of water in Britain had already been harnessed to power grist mills, flax mills, and the like, but its application to the more laborious processes of the metalworking trades had to wait until the mid-sixteenth century.

The drawing of iron wire was the first of the processes affecting needlemaking to which water was applied. Previously all wire drawn in Britain had been drawn by hand. The continentals, using water-powered machinery, produced uniform wire much earlier, their more malleable products being preferred by English needlemakers to the rough and inconsistent local wire. Before the introduction of water power only four sizes of wire were produced, therefore only four sizes of needles, unless the local needlemakers himself could make any further reductions! The introduction of water power resulted in a much smoother and more uniform wire and the range of sizes was increased to twelve.

Next the London needlemakers developed a water-driven machine for pointing needles. These were very dangerous and eventually their use prohibited. But the most important advancement came with the application of water power to the heavy and laborious process of needle scouring by the Redditch needlemakers. This advancement culminated in the acceptance of the Redditch needles becoming known as the best in the world.

The last man to make needles by hand was William Bradbury, who, in his last years, lived with his daughter Ann and son-in-law Thomas Morrall in a cottage in Green Lane, Studley. He had a contract with a London house, which they honored, agreeing to take all the needles he made as long as he lived. William died in 1851 and his tools were sold to Michael T. Morrall. Abel Morrall and Company exhibited them at the Philadelphia Exhibition in 1876. Regrettably, although heavily insured, they were never returned to Britain.

Sheila Nicol



Visit us on the web at www.bearthreadsLtd.com

To place an order contact us at 404-255-5083 or 404-255-4001 fax

"Bear in Mind" articles are available on our website. Encourage your customers to check out our website for information and inspiration.