

Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

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From The Editor –

We are just 2 days from leaving for Switzerland to finalize our 2012 offerings for you. We can tell you that, due to popular demand, the Bearissima will again be available in the lovely shade of Ecrú. It will be ready to ship to you January 1, so get your orders in soon. This is a lovely warm shade for all skin tones, and is particularly lovely for flower girl and ring bearer clothing.

We welcome this month, Patti Ulrich, who is sharing her love of doll dressing. Her enthusiasm will encourage you to join this growing number of ‘sewing sisters’.

I also have, for your perusal, information packets concerning my teaching projects for 2012-2013. There are a variety of projects that are sure to reach out to many student interests and ability levels. Please call 404-255-5083 to discuss the possibilities and request your packet.

I continue to be concerned about so much incorrect information that shop owners, and even teachers are sharing. The 3 Hour lecture is a MUST for shop owners and employees, as well as their customers. The enclosed brief article on Swiss Batiste is but a drop in the bucket of what information is to be gained from the lecture. I feel that I have the great advantage of having come from the teaching arena before I started Bear Threads, Ltd. AND the fact that I have firsthand knowledge of the manufacture of the Swiss and French products, as most are my designs and done to my specifications. I have witnessed all types of looms and machines in this industry and it is most interesting. This 3 hour lecture will answer all your mystery questions.

From all of us here at Bear Threads, we wish you a Wonderful Christmas. May the Joys, Laughter, and Gifts – both big and small –bring you Happiness and Peace.

Sheila

MEET THE DESIGNER

Patti Ulrich operates Old B Dolls from her home in Rainier, Oregon. She is a retired school teacher and a graduate of Oregon State University. See more of her work at OldBDolls.com or contact Patti directly at pulrich863@aol.com

For the Love of Dolls

Paris, 1860-1890, the golden age of dolls; a time when Parisian specialty dolly wardrobe shops supplied the daughters of wealthy families with everything on long lists of items required for a well-dressed lady doll: trunks, jewelry, parasols, gloves, scent bottles and on and on. The staple of these requirements was beautifully hand stitched garments of the latest Paris fashion. These elegant miniatures were confections of the finest laces, ribbons, silks, wools, linen and cottons and were always elaborately decorated and often highly embroidered.

Today, groups of creative American women use their love of these dolls as an excuse to get together and socialize and sew. Throughout the country, there are doll clubs where “sisters” meet together to make beautiful clothes for reproduction 12” French Fashion dolls. Recreating a historically correct ensemble from scratch, complete with embroidery and applied soutache can be a pains taking, month’s long process. But many truly enjoy every laborious moment of the process of using historically correct methods. Others don’t. That’s where I come in.

I create kits that turn the month’s long endeavor into a weekend project with authentic appearing results.

The methods I've developed for creating these kits are completely unorthodox and totally the result of trial and error. My goal is to allow seamstresses of average ability to enjoy the experience and be proud of the results. Copied from antique doll clothes, my kits are sold with much of the embellishment already completed. I use the most wonderful appropriate materials available, and I provide easy to follow, illustrated instructions.

The process begins by making a pattern that captures the old style. I scan that into the computer. I then add all needed embellishment. Sometimes, the original was for a larger doll, or rarely, for a person and I find that I must simplify some of the design elements to make the ensemble "work" on a 12" doll. When I am happy with the fit and design, I begin digitizing the designs for embroidery. Digitizing is the process of turning a graphic into a computer file that the embroidery machines can read. This can take many days of trial and error to get right. And then, it's time for my two six-needle, embroidery only machines, nicknamed Thready Mae and Thready Betty to do their magic.

The choice of fabric involves several variables. I want fabrics that are appropriate to the time period of the dolls. That, of course, means natural fabrics like cotton, wool, silk and linen. I avoid all synthetics, even in blends. The fabric weaves and colors should to be the same or similar to what would have been used at the time. Additionally, these small dolls require lightweight fabrics with small scale patterns.

Many of my counterparts pride themselves in using "antique" or "vintage" fabrics. This is one of my pet peeves. Seldom is a provenance provided. There are clues as to the age of fabric like testing for fiber content and checking width, but these are not conclusive. It is my opinion that a majority of fabric sold as "vintage" is not more than 30 years old. Further, I think that there are very few people that can truly distinguish between a 5 or 30 or 100 year old piece of fine Swiss lawn or other traditional fabric. I will continue to choose to use the finest of new fabrics made in traditional weaves, thus knowing always exactly what I have and that I can find it in sufficient quantities, in perfect condition and in a variety of colors. Silk taffeta, handkerchief linen, Swiss wool challis, cotton tulle and Bearissima batiste are some of my favorites. Also, fine cotton lined pique can look very like the historically correct cotton faille when used on the cross grain.

Everything said about fabric is true also for laces. Many of the antique lace patterns continue to be made by traditional methods and imported from France.

For sewing and embroidery I use 50 weight 100% cotton quilters' threads made by Aurifil or Precensia. I draw the line, however, and use pre-wound polyester bobbins. Using cotton thread for machine embroidery can be a challenge. It breaks easily and the excessive lint requires that the bobbin area be cleaned really often. But, I find the results well worth the trouble as it gives the appearance of hand stitching. The sheen of rayon thread can be lovely, but it just not appropriate for this application.

Aside the qualities already mentioned the fabrics must be stable enough to withstand being tightly hooped and embroidered without stabilizer. I take care to lay the fabric in the hoop without pulling or distortion, then tighten very tight, and add binder clips to the hoop to assure that the fabric does not shift during embroidery. The result is much superior to any method of stabilizing that I've tried.

Soutache braid was a favorite embellishment of the 1860's, applied to dresses and jackets in a maze of intricate curly cues and swirls. The meticulous application of yards and yards of soutache on a small doll dress can require a lot of bad words to complete. However, several passes of cotton thread machine embroidery can be built up to give a very nice "faux" soutache.



A commonly seen edging of the Victorian era was scallops. These are easy to stitch by machine, but beyond tedious to cut except with hard to find scalloping shears that fit the scallops. I've found it easier to digitize scallops to fit the shears than find shears to fit the scallops.



A bound or trimmed edge of a garment can be approximated with satin stitch or other dense stitching. A fray control product is applied before cutting so close to the stitching that no fabric shows. Again, this requires trial and error to determine if this will give the look wanted with the fabrics used.



The embroidery machines can do wonderful button holes that then must only be cut open. Single rows of stitching can serve as cutting lines. Appropriately placed lines of stitching can act as cheat marks to make double box pleats or cartridge pleats a breeze. Free standing lace methods can offer endless possibilities for doll items like shawls, snoods and gloves.





This age of computerized machines and the internet have allowed me to invent a cottage industry that incorporates all of my favorite things: Computers, sewing, wonderful fabrics, dolls, travel and working at home. I am able to use 21st century methods to recreate 19th century art.

'ECRU BATISTE BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND'

Many of you have asked for the original shade of light ecru to be re-manufactured in the Bearissima. We have listened to you and will have available for shipment to you January 1, the Bearissima in Ecru. This is a lovely color for all skin tones and perfect for Flower Girl and Ring Bearer clothing. Call now to reserve your order for shipment in January.



Meet Jean Louise

Jean Louise has been with Sheila since childhood. Jean Louise's dress was one of Sheila's first "French handsewn" projects. There is not one machine stitch in the entire outfit. The dress features a collar with Shadow Embroidery and a matching bonnet.

Sewing Doll Clothes Tip #1

Don't set in sleeves. Leave bodice side seams open. Sew sleeve to arm hole from side seam to side seam. Sew side seams from bottom of bodice to cuff of sleeve.

BATISTE

NELONA vs. BEARISSIMA

As we enter the biggest season of sewing for our industry, now is the time for some clarification of one of the most confusing issues to you, the shop owner, as well as your customers. The dilemma of which batiste do I buy? – Which is the best? – Why the difference in price and weight? So many are being offered today, fairly, Bearissima, Nelona, Bearissima II, and Giger, that you don't know what to do. Then of course there are the domestic batistes, which even though they may be 100% cotton, I will discount here without further ado! The more discerning of you may have even noticed that if you have worked on two or three 'Nelona' fabrics, you found they were different in feel and weave. Recently it has been revealed to us that some US suppliers of Nelona are having it woven in India! – obviously no longer Swiss Batiste!



Organdy, voile, lawn and batiste may begin as the same grey goods. Understand that they “COULD” begin as the same weave and weight. However most of us prefer a lighter weave for organdy and voile. They differ from one another in the way they are finished. But the BIGGEST difference in these fabrics is in the weaving of the grey goods and this difference determines the quality. Sheerness and Opaqueness can be achieved in two manners, and this manner determines the quality and price. For sheer batiste one might simply choose to use a lesser thread count. This results in usually the

impossibility of embroidering on it. Your embroidery thread simply falls down between the woven fabric threads. This is the least expensive way to achieve sheer batiste. The better sheer batiste is woven with a very high thread count, but with a SMALLER diameter thread. This results in a solid base for your embroidery. On the contrary, opaque batiste is woven with a fine thread, but an even higher thread count. Now that the fine fabric is woven, don't discount getting the finest finish you can for the look you desire.

You will find in the following comparison, the story of Nelona and Bearissima and “Giger” or what we also call ‘9223’ batiste.

BEARISSIMA & “GIGER” 9223 vs. NELONA

Nelona was a trade name of the JG Nef-Nelo Company of Switzerland for a batiste they manufactured. After Mr. Nef Sr.'s death, the family sold the company. It subsequently passed through 3 different ownerships before finally being liquidated in bankruptcy in late 1995. At that time the trade name Nelona passed into the public domain so that no longer does anyone control the name. This means that the name ‘nelona’ can be used for any fabric. The specifications for Nelona below are for the original Nelona as manufactured by the Nelo Company. The many variations today are all called Nelona.

In 1986 Bear Threads, Ltd. (who had previously sold Nelona) developed, in conjunction with the largest textile company in Switzerland, a batiste engineered to be superior to Nelona. This Swiss Batiste is marketed by Bear Threads under their trade name of **BEARISSIMA**. Due to customer demand, Bear Threads, Ltd. developed **BEARISSIMA II**, which is slightly heavier than Bearissima and also superior to Nelona.

H. W. Giger AG was a Swiss Textile manufacturer. In 1948 Hans Boeniger, of Switzerland, set up the H.W. Giger Co. of New York as a U. S. sales office. After H. W. Giger AG ceased operations in Switzerland, Hans Boeniger continued selling Swiss fabrics and trims until his death in 1987. Bear Threads, Ltd. acquired the inventory of H. W. Giger Co. of New York and has continued the manufacture of the 9223 Swiss Batiste. The 9223 is slightly sheerer than Bearissima, but still a tight weave high quality Batiste.

USA Specifications

| | Original Nelona | Bearissima | Bearissima II | 9223 |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|-----------|
| Width | 45"/112cm | 55"/140cm | 55"/140cm | 45"/112cm |
| Thread Count per Sq. Inch | 129 | 192 | 217 | 176 |
| Weight in Oz. per Sq. Inch | 1.506 | 1.533 | 1.749 | 1.372 |

Bearissima and Bearissima II have what Bear Threads, Ltd. calls a Super Silk finish. This is a permanent finish that gives a very soft hand and a nice sheen and as the Swiss say more "crease resistance".

The higher thread count of approximately 50% in Bearissima and 70% in Bearissima II and the superior finishing vs. Nelona, is self-evident to all the first time they use Bearissima & Bearissima II.

The 140cm (55.118") width gives 25% more fabric per lineal yd. than 112cm (44.094") width. In most cases where 2.5yds of 112cm would be needed 2yds of 140cm will do.



Use small scale laces for doll size clothing.



Bear Threads wishes you
the Merriest Christmas and
the Happiest New Year.

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