

Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

Volume 4 – Issue October 2012

From The Editor –

As I write this, tomorrow – September 21 – is the official first day of Fall. Already I have seen many pumpkins and Halloween decorations around the neighborhood. They say that now Halloween is second only to Christmas in consumer spending on decorations.

Fittingly, we feature nightgowns this month. Mary Flemming has brought us an absolutely stunning nightgown that you will each wish to have for YOURSELF! You might find a loose fitting blouse sleeve pattern to convert a sleeveless nightie into a luxurious comfortable winter gown. Our fabulous Swiss Flannel is the ticket to a warm version. Even after 40 or so washings, Anne Marie Phelps (*Peanut Butter & Jelly Kids*) attests to it not pilling. She has a day gown that her 7 month old grandson has worn and worn, and guess whatno pilling!

I hope you enjoy this issue. And I also hope you have been saving your pennies and dollars, so that you can splurge on some wonderful vintage laces, trims and ribbons at the SAGA market. See you there – and meantime,

Happy Stitching,

Sheila



About the Artist

Mary Fleming attributes her love of sewing and needlework to her grandmother, who taught her to sew on a treadle machine while making doll clothes. However, it was not until her two daughters were born that she discovered smocking and heirloom sewing and became “hooked”. With over 50 years of sewing experience, she has attended numerous national and regional seminars including School of Needle Arts, School of Art Fashion, SAGA conventions, Sewing in the Mountains, Sewing at the Beach, etc. A licensed Heirloom I and II educator, she established her first needle arts related business in 1983, carrying smocking and heirloom sewing supplies and making custom garments. In recent years, The Sewing Basket Inc. has transitioned from a brick and mortar store to the internet. Besides teaching smocking and heirloom sewing and providing design consultation, she sews for 7 grandchildren—6 girls and 1 boy. She may be contacted at <http://www.sewingbasket.com> or mary@sewingbasketinc.com.

Scallops and Swirls—In Search of a UFO

Under the bed in our guest room are Rubbermaid boxes filled with UFOs. These are my “unfinished objects”—projects that I plan to complete whenever time permits. Each UFO is stored in a carefully labeled plastic bag with fabric, floss, notes about the pattern to be used, smocking plates, threads, etc. Most of my patterns and instruction sheets are filed in pattern drawers; others, especially those from seminars and classes are stored in notebooks. Recently, while sorting through and storing the class kits from my latest heirloom sewing certification classes, I rediscovered an intriguing UFO. What follows is an account of the journey to complete it.

Over 15 years ago I attended a class in which the project was a Swiss batiste ladies' nightgown with lace shaping on the yoke. I am no longer certain who taught the class, perhaps Lynne Holyoake, Patricia Holden, or Lyn Weeks. The unfinished project found its way to the UFO box. However, the bag labeled “Lace Shaped Nightgown” held only 2 items—a copy of the Margaret Pierce Ladies Gown pattern and a hastily executed yoke with lace shaping and three embroidered daisies. There was no note card with further information. In fact, there were no instructions for completing the garment in the UFO box, my pattern files, or my notebooks. Neither was there a picture of the finished project. Intrigued and challenged by this “doodle cloth”, I decided to use it as the starting point for a nightgown project.



The Materials

Margaret Pierce Ladies Gown Pattern
3 ½ yds. Swiss Batiste
7 yds. Lace Insertion 0.5-0.75 in width
2 yds. 5/8"-3/4" Lace edging
8 yds. Wider lace edging
1 clear snap
Silk Satin Ribbon

The fabric from the UFO box was white. However I selected blue Bearissima for the gown. Either Bearissima I or II would be appropriate. The laces used were Malines L-277, L-272, and L-274.

The Bodice/Yoke Pattern

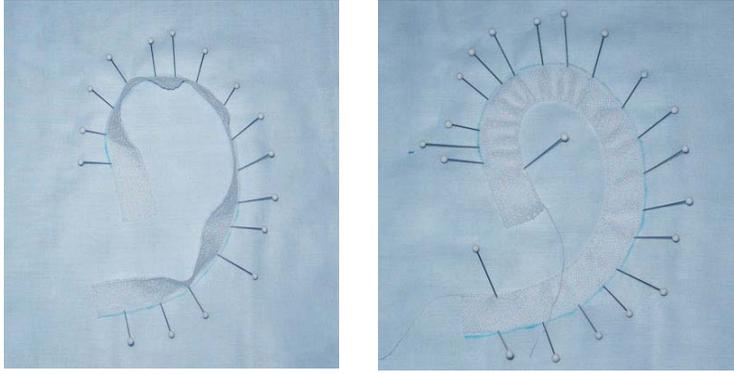
Using the front and back yokes from the Margaret Pierce pattern View 1, I overlapped the pieces, eliminating the shoulder seam, and traced. Next I added the outside line for the swirls and scalloped lace shapes based on the lace shaping from the UFO. Because I wanted the inner edge of the lace insertion to match the original border of the pattern the overall size of the yoke was extended by .5" -1". The integrity of the original yoke design was retained but this minimal extension enabled smoother curving and shaping of the lace. Still using the UFO as a guide, the front neckline was lowered and curved.

Faint brown marks on the UFO indicated several areas where embroidery might have been placed. Other than 3 small daisies, there was no clue to actual design. By combining snippets of embroidery designs in Sarah Howard Stone's French handsewing books, *Belles and Beaus "Embroidery Motifs 1920"*, and *A-Z of Bullions*, I devised a stem, leaf, and bullion rose embroidery design for the gown bodice.

Constructing the Bodice/Yoke

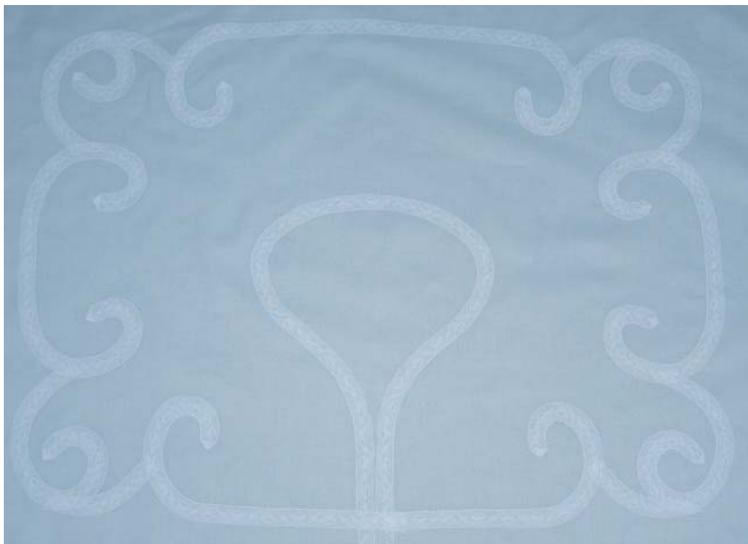
I cut a fabric block for the yoke 2-3 inches larger on each side than the adjusted pattern, then starched and pressed. I traced the outline of the lace shaping and the adjusted neckline onto the fabric with a washout marker. To create the lace swirls, the fabric block was pinned to a lace-shaping board. Next I

pinned the header of one side of the insertion along the drawn curve. After the outer edge was pinned in place, the very top thread of the opposite header was pulled, causing the lace to curve and the inner edge to lie flat. The ends of the insertion were left long enough to turn under and miter, forming a point. Where swirl and scallop lines overlapped, the larger swirl was placed on top. When the lace had been shaped and the ends mitered, the lace was starched and pressed dry using a Clover mini-iron. This step removed any "spokes or ripples in the curves.



Once the shaping was complete, I stitched through the header on each side and around the point with a short, straight machine stitch (length 1.5-2) and very fine thread (Cotona 80 or Mettler 60). Very fine thread was used for lacework throughout the project. Although the lace on the UFO was zigzagged into place, I used a stabilizer beneath the fabric and machine pin-stitched it (length 2.5, width 2-2.5). Stitching complete, the block was rinsed in cold water to remove all traces of the blue marker and any remaining Solvy. The fabric/lace block was starched and pressed again.

After completing the embroidery, I marked the location of the points where the skirt would attach to the bodice. I trimmed fabric away from behind the shaped insertion and from the lace at the edge of the yoke, leaving a seam allowance of fabric for attaching the skirt at front and back. This seam allowance is not present on the UFO block. I don't know whether I made a mistake and failed to include it on the original or if there was a different method of attaching the skirt. Could this be the reason that the gown was never completed?



Where laces overlapped, they were stitched with a machine "lightning stitch" (length 1.0-1.5, width 1.0-1.5) with the excess trimmed away. Lace at the lower front edge was mitered and finished using the "lightning stitch" as well. Small pieces of lace insertion were added to the back of the lower front, forming a lace placket and adding stability for a snap to be applied later. The block was rinsed to remove all blue marker and ironed embroidery side down on a towel.

I traced the embroidery design onto the yoke with a fine-line washout marker. The design was worked with a single strand of floss in Anchor #1042, #48, and #49, using a #10 crewel needle for stems and leaves and a #10 milliner for the bullion roses.



The last step in bodice/yoke construction involved adding a lace edging. The piece seemed unfinished and incomplete without it. A piece of narrow edging 1.5-2 times the length of the neckline was cut and gathered by pulling the top thread in the header. It was then attached to the neckline using an edgestitch foot and a short, narrow zigzag stitch (length 1.0, width 2.0-3.0). A piece of wider lace twice the length of the perimeter was gathered and applied to the outside of the border lace in the same manner. Cut ends of the lace were rolled and whipped to produce a finished edge. This outer lace ruffle along the outside of the yoke could also have been added as the final step to complete the gown rather than at this point.

Skirt

Minor adaptations were made to the skirt from the Margaret Pierce pattern. The skirt was cut the same width at the top as at the bottom (rather than in an A-line) to compensate for the sheerness of the Bearissima. A very short (1.5-2") faced slash opening was made at the center front. This opening is imperceptible amid the gathers and lace edging of the finished gown. Except for these adaptations, the skirt construction follows the pattern exactly.

Attaching Skirt to Bodice

Two rows of lengthened machine stitching (3.0-3.5) were run $\frac{1}{2}$ " and $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the top edge of the skirt fronts and back. The skirts were pulled up to match the length of the seam allowances underneath the border lace, pinned, and stitched in place. (Hand basting was helpful in establishing the seam line without catching the lace.) After stitching, the seam allowance was graded so that the gathered portion was approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ " and the flat portion approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ ". I encased the seam by rolling and whipping the flat portion of the seam allowance over the gathers (stitch zigzag, length 1.0-1.5; width 2.5).

Finishing Touches

The hemline was leveled and an edge of wide flat lace pinstitched to the bottom of the gown using the same techniques used to secure and pinstitch the lace insertion. A tiny clear snap closure was sewn at the base of the bodice. Finally, a silk satin ribbon bow was pinned in place for a dainty finish.

And here it is!



A close-up of the bodice, although the embroidery doesn't show well in this photo.



Does it look like the class project? I'll never know, but I'm pleased with it.

NIGHTGOWNS

Negligees, Chemises, Peignoirs, Nightdresses – all these words conjure images of lace, fine, soft fabrics and the ultimate feminine article of clothing, the nightgown. Or so it was in the old days. It truly is difficult to find, today, a lovely, feminine sleeping garment. Nightshirt better describes what most of us wear snuggled under the covers.

When Mary told me what her article was going to feature I reminisced about my days as a bride-to-be. I took great pains to have several lovely nightgowns in my trousseau. I still have one that a shop on King Street in Charleston, SC custom made for me with my new monogram embroidered into the lace inset on the bodice. Of course I can't fit into it today, but someday, I hope to make a pattern from it. Two names come to mind when I think of lovely nightgowns: Olga and Dior.

Vintage Olga gowns are among the most loved and collected gowns, because they are the most glamorous and universally flattering. (Yes! I said collected, as I have learned that most all things are collected by someone!) All had gorgeous lace bodices and empire styling that flattered everyone. Olga Erteszek migrated from Poland in 1941 via Japan. She began in California, what would become one of the most successful and famous lingerie companies. The company was sold in 1986 to Warners, and in 1989 Olga died of breast cancer. Today, under the direction of her daughter, Christina, they still manufacture lingerie, but unfortunately not nightgowns.

For the ultimate in vintage luxury sleepwear, you can't ask for anything more glamorous than a Christian Dior nightgown. Some are so beautiful and made of such exquisite fabrics that, if you're daring, you can wear them as a dress!

During World War II, there were such severe restrictions on clothing, British women felt unpatriotic for having clothes only to wear while sleeping. Everything was simple and no adornments were allowed because all energies were focused on the war effort. Immediately following the war, there was no money for new clothes. However, by 1947, economies and outlooks were starting to improve, and designer Christian Dior

introduced his famous New Look, which brought back the hourglass figure and an extravagant amount of fabric.

Dior said his mission was to make every woman look and feel like a duchess, no matter where she was in society. It was only fitting, therefore, that she be as elegant when she went to bed as when she went on the town. Most Christian Dior nightgowns were very long, made of silk or satin, trimmed with lace and delicately embroidered. For women who had spent several years wearing threadbare pajamas to bed, this was an unheard of opulence, and happily embraced.

Margaret Pierce's *Ladies Nightgown* pattern is a lovely rendition of these Dior gowns of long ago. It is easily adapted to your particular lace or embellishment.

And what a cherished gift...I miss the days of the bride-to-be having lingerie showers. I can't remember the last time I was invited to one! Why not offer a nightgown class in your shop. This is one item ladies would make for THEMSELVES!

Sheila Nicol

SWISS TULLE

Part I

In 2008 the Swiss Tulle industry celebrated the 200th anniversary of the invention of the bobbinet machine. In 1808 the Englishman, John Heathcoat, made an ingenious mechanical discovery in his machine to produce tulle. Today, there are over 50 machines; nearly identical to those first produced 200 years ago, that are used in production. In the next few issues, I will attempt to take you on a 'bobbinet tour' to acquaint you with this lovely fabric. From ballet stage to haute couture, from wigs to high – tech, this truly is a fabric of multi purposes.

Referring to articles of the past 2 issues of *Bear In Mind*, the forerunner of bobbinet tulle was lace. Remember I told you that in the production of lace the ground and design are woven at the same time. As popular as lace had become in the 1500's, it was very strenuous work to intertwine and knot the thin threads by hand. By the 1700's a machine had been invented to produce lace, but the demand grew and the process, even by machine, was slow.

Technically the fabric we know today is called bobbinet. The name 'tulle' came from the French town in the department of Correze, where lace was first produced that was NOT knotted. Instead, first of all a net ground was produced in time-consuming manual work. Then it was embroidered. This ground fabric came to be known as 'tulle'.

There were many attempts to produce this tulle ground mechanically, but none succeeded until 1808 when John Heathcoat from Nottingham, England built and patented his bobbinet machine. The smooth, unpatterned tulle produced on this machine was on par with real lace net. The inventor called the meshes produced on his machine "bobbin net".

Next month we will talk about the technical aspects, and the many uses of tulle.

Sheila Nicol

These are examples of "footing". Footing is simply French leavers lace woven plain with no design. Today it is commonly used in lace/textile conservation and repair.



Our '300' series of embroideries are Swiss tulle fabric that has been embroidered on the Schifflli machine.



Dear Reader:

As much as we edit, edit and then edit again, typos do occur.

Please correct the September issue in the article: FYI Embroidery or Lace or???
Second paragraph to read:

"To review, guipures are stitched on a base fabric in a design that is continuous. After the ground fabric is chemically burned away you have remaining only the embroidery. Hence the reason for having a continuous design."

**SMOCKING ARTS
GUILD OF AMERICA
OCTOBER 12, 2012
Retail Only
Westin Peachtree
Hotel Downtown
Atlanta, GA**

Call us for details.



Enjoy the crisp fall weather.

Just 84 days til Christmas.

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.