

# Bear in Mind

An electronic newsletter from Bear Threads Ltd.

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## From The Editor –

Welcome to fall, finally! Those here in the south are relieved by some cooler mornings, and less humidity. It is even difficult to enjoy football (or stitching!) when the humidity and temperatures are so oppressive! Now we can really begin to concentrate on Holiday sewing and gift making! Next month I will have several quick gift ideas, so stay tuned!!! Most can be made from scrapes, so they are money saving as well!

If you were amongst those in attendance at the Birmingham Creative Sewing Market September 8, you know what a great market it was! Not many vendors, but the buyers were there and ready to shop! The atmosphere was like days of old. I suggest that you begin now to encourage your favorite pattern company, favorite fabric representative, and other suppliers to attend next September. It is the only show for our industry and it takes all to make it great! Although a date has not been finalized for the September 2020 event, plans are already underway. So plan now to attend, and Bear Threads, Ltd. promises not to disappoint!

In this issue of Bear in Mind, we will visit the northern part of France which once was a major textile center, primarily of fabrics. Today the fabric production of the better fine European fabrics has moved to Switzerland and Italy, and the laces have remained in France. I think you will find this geographical and historical article very interesting.

Now I leave you to enjoy this issue of Bear in Mind with this quote:

“Winter is an etching; spring a water color, summer an oil painting, and autumn a mosaic of them all.” Stanley Harowitz

Happy Stitching,

*Sheila*



## **AND NOW YOU KNOW CAMBRIC AND LAWN**

In this month's article, we will be traveling through northern France, an area that once was a major textile center. Most of you have come across the term Cambric at some time or another. Cambrai is a town in northern France which in days of old was one of these textile centers. The town name comes from the Flemish name of Kameryk or Kamerijk. Cambric is a fine, plain weave cloth originally made of linen near Cambrai. Also known as batiste, it is one of the finest and at the same time most dense kinds of cloth. Originally made of linen today it is primarily made of cotton.

Batiste is named for its' inventor Jean-Baptiste Cambray (sometimes spelled Chambray) and was produced in a village near Cambrai. The fabric we know as chambray also originated in this area by the same man. It is a cotton plain weave fabric with a colored warp and a white weft.

As technology developed cambric and batiste no longer were considered synonymous as batiste was now produced with a finer a thread and a higher thread count. Today, while a rare find, white linen cambric is more often referred to as handkerchief linen or linen batiste.

While we are traveling in northern France, let's visit Laon, another former textile center. They were famous for their linen lawn. We all know that the term lawn is

used in the textile industry to refer to a type of 'starched' crisp finish given to the final batiste product, which today is made of 100% cotton. (Please don't be confused with inferior cotton fabrics without this finish, that correctly should be called muslin.) While lawn was a fabric used in the Victorian Era for English ladies white dresses that were worn to traditional 'lawn' parties, in actuality the name comes from the name of the city of Laon.

Finally, and before saying goodbye to northern France, let me remind you that Valenciennes laces originally were manufactured in Valenciennes, another former textile center in northern France. Today we call them Val or 'round thread' laces and they are now primarily made in the coastal city of Calais.

'And Now You Know' all about the former textile centers of France and the names their heritage has left us in the world of fabrics.

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"I think it would be great to be a cat! You come and go as you please. People always feed and pet you. They don't expect much of you. You can play with them, and when you've had enough, you go away. You can pick and choose who you want to be around. You can't ask for more than that."

----Patricia McPherson



## History of Day of the Dead Día de los Muertos

Day of the Dead is an interesting holiday celebrated in central and southern Mexico during the chilly days of November 1 & 2. Even though this coincides with the Catholic holiday called All Soul's & All Saint's Day, the indigenous people have combined this with their own ancient beliefs of honoring their deceased loved ones.

They believe that the gates of heaven are opened at midnight on October 31, and the spirits of all deceased children (*angelitos*) are allowed to reunite with their families for 24 hours. On November 2, the spirits of the adults come down to enjoy the festivities that are prepared for them.

In most Indian villages, beautiful altars (*ofrendas*) are made in each home. They are decorated with candles, buckets of flowers (wild marigolds called *cempasuchil* & bright red cock's combs) mounds of fruit, peanuts, plates of turkey mole, stacks of *tortillas* and big Day of the Dead breads called *pan demuerto*. The altar needs to have lots of food, bottles of soda, hot cocoa and water for the weary spirits. Toys and candies are left for the *angelitos*, and on Nov. 2, cigarettes and shots of *mezcal* are offered to the adult spirits. Little folk art skeletons and sugar skulls, purchased at open-air markets, provide the final touches.

Day of the Dead is a very expensive holiday for these self-sufficient, rural based, indigenous families. Many spend over two month's income to honor their dead relatives. They believe that happy spirits will provide protection, good luck and wisdom to their families. *Ofrenda* building keeps the family close.

On the afternoon of Nov. 2, the festivities are taken to the cemetery. People clean tombs, play cards, listen to the village band and reminisce about their loved ones. Tradition keeps the village close. Day of the Dead is becoming very popular in the U.S. ~ perhaps because we don't have a way to celebrate and honor our dead, or maybe it's because of our fascination with it's mysticism.

## Fun Facts about the Day of the Dead

It's not the same as Halloween. While Halloween is celebrated Oct. 31, Día de los Muertos is celebrated right after, on Nov. 2. Many communities that celebrate Día de los Muertos also celebrate Halloween.

Día de los Muertos is an opportunity to remember and celebrate the lives of departed loved ones. Like any other celebration, Día de los Muertos is filled with music and dancing.



Monarch butterflies play a role in Día de los Muertos because they are believed to hold the spirits of the departed. This belief stems from the fact that the first monarchs arrive in Mexico for the winter each fall on Nov. 1, which coincides with Día de los Muertos.



Calaveritas de azucar, or sugar skulls, along with toys, are left on the altars for children who have passed. The skull is used not as morbid symbol but rather as a whimsical reminder of the cyclicity of life, which is why they are brightly decorated.

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