

A Stitch in Time.....

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Fancy handwork and stitching has adorned fashion since the Scythian culture estimated to be from the 5th to 3rd centuries BC. The T'ang (618-967 AC) and the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1911 AC) displayed elaborately decorated on garments with embroidery.

During the Victorian era (1830-1890), beautiful stitching was a symbol of a person's class and wealth. Collars, sleeves, and those bell-shaped floor-length skirts were brought to life with a third dimension of stitching, applique', and stump work or raised work.

The Edwardian era of fashion (1900-1910) also showed fancy stitching as a sign of elegance and a strict social rule worn by only the wealthy.

The Industrial Revolution resulted in the development of commercial sewing and weaving machines. The mass production of textiles, fabric and yarns opened up the markets to a larger section of the population at a cheaper cost and in a faster time. The average person had access to more elaborate fabrics for showing off their handwork and stitching skills.

During the Great Depression of 1929, purchasing commercially produced garments was less likely due to cost, lack of employment, and/or the closing of garment manufacturers. Hand stitching skills, often passed down from one generation to another were put to use. Color, texture, and style could be added to a drab house dress or hat to transform it to a dress suitable for a public outing.

During the Model A Era, hand stitching was seen mostly on women's and children's clothes. Many household items were also decorated with hand stitching. Stitching designs were the result of creative artisans using thread made of cotton, silk, wool, and even linen. Model A Era stitchers used various stitching techniques to add charm, glamor, elegance, and an element of desirability to their garments.



Frederick Herrschner 1928



Pictorial Patterns June 1931



Delineator May 1931



Frederick Herrschner 1928

Embroidery is the use of thread to develop a design on fabric. A single color matching the fabric may be used or multiple colors to make the design come alive. Beads and sequins were incorporated with the embroidery to enhance the design, to add glamor, or to show off the stitching skill. Crystal beads were added to clothing and decorative items. Check out *The Book of Crystal Flowers, 1st Edition* by Hiawatha, Dritz-Traun Company, NY 1929

Stump work is a three-dimensional stitching. The technique uses various thicknesses of threads to give different height of the embroidery. Animals, birds, and plants were common subjects. Many hats were designed with felt stump work on crown and brim.

Trapunto is the art of creating raised designs of flowers, geometric designs and arches using batting under the flat fabric. Trapunto could be a smart stitching dimension on woman's suit lapels, necklines, hats and cuffs of a daytime dress.

Patchwork is the technique of joining pieces of fabric together with decorative embroidery stitches.



Sears Roebuck Catalogue 1930



Pictorial Patterns June 1930

Applique' is the process of layering a fabric design on a foundation fabric with raw edges covered by thread of the same color to finish it. This technique lends itself to children's clothes, a young woman's afternoon dress, sporting attire, and some lingerie. The photo to the left shows a child's cotton suit has a cute rabbit for summer fun.



Delineator December 1930

Silk ribbon embroidery results in an elegant spray of flowers, animals or an artistic design using silk ribbon instead of thread. Greater space is covered in a shorter time with this technique. Women's undergarments as well as wedding attire would have this fancy style of stitching.



Example of Silk Ribbon Embroidery



Sear's Catalogue 1930

Tatting is lace made with a small hand shuttle, thread, and skillful hands. This type of lace could be used on cuffs, collars, and afternoon dresses. Household items such as pillowcases and handkerchiefs were often treasured if they had tatting. In the photo to the left, the black dress with the white bertha collar has delicate tatting as lace around the collar and cuffs.



Delineator January 1931

Picot edging appeared on summer frocks of sheer fabric requiring a fine edging, as did many pieces of alluring lingerie. The hemlines of the summer frocks in the photo have a picot edging, done on a commercial machine.

When you are working on a new garment add your own creativity. Add some contrasting color with a design, be bold to make a statement of your skill, make your Era Image garment worthy,

References

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