

FIVE MINUTE ANTIQUE SCHOOL- SAMPLERS

Definition: A schoolgirl needlework originally used to practice stitches and stitch combinations or to store patterns for future use.

- Earliest known dated sampler is in the V & A Museum in London- the Jane Bostock sampler dated 1594.
- After 1860, the creativity and beauty of the needlework declined. Pre 1860 samplers are generally more desirable.
- The most common samplers are American, English, Scottish, Dutch, Welsh and German.
- Needlework was considered to be an important part of the female education. Wealthy young girls were sent off to boarding schools to be educated as young as the age of three.
- There were no patterns, so the girls were taught by the samplers stitched by their teachers.
- Samplers were often signed and dated and may include further information such as her town name, her parents or siblings names, or even her teacher or school names.
- Important issues in the valuation of samplers include: condition, age, provenance, rarity, complexity of design and workmanship.
- American samplers tend to be higher in price than English or European.
- Most samplers were stitched with silk on linen.
- Modern needlewomen frequently reproduce the antique pieces simply because they find the look and style of the antique pieces appealing. While this is not done in an attempt to produce a fraudulent antique, it can be very confusing to the beginning collector when these pieces find their way to the antique market.

References:

- Ring, Betty. (1993). Girlhood Embroidery. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Considered to be the bible on American samplers by the foremost expert. Out of print, but copies easily available on eBay.
- Swan, Susan Burrows. (1995). Plain & Fancy. Curious Works Press, Austin, TX. ISBN 0-9633331-3-5. A reprint of a 1977 publication written by a previous textile curator of Winterthur Museum.