

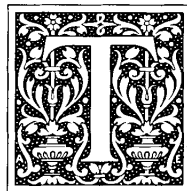


BOHEMIAN EMBROIDERY ¹

THE GUILD OF THE NEEDLE AND BOBBIN CRAFTS

BY B. E. MERRILL

Guild Director of Technique and Design



HE Needle and Bobbin Club's first child has reached its majority and the Guild is now an independent youth, full of vigor and activity. For convenience in doing business expeditiously, it seemed best to have a separate organization, and so the Guild's request for independence was granted by the Club in the middle of March. But though there has been a separation in form, the spirit of the Club still lives in the new organization. As stated in the new by-laws, "the motive of the Guild is humanitarian and artistic." The high artistic ideals of the Club are assured by the pledge of the Guild to place on its Design Committee a majority of Club members, one to be an officer of the Club.

The Guild is especially fortunate in the carrying out of its dual purpose from the fact that not only the Club continues to help further its artistic achievements, but the People's Institute, which is so well prepared to offer assistance in all humanitarian ways, has pledged its continued support. This help has already been most significant in the giving of Miss Cora McDowell's services as Organizing Director. She, together with Mrs. Howard Mansfield, former chairman of the Executive Committee, laid the foundation deep for

1. Courtesy of the Lenox Hill Settlement.

RUSSIAN NEEDLEWORK¹

a work whose results in the future it taxes the imagination to conceive.

It is therefore with deep regret on the part of the Guild that Mrs. Mansfield's recent illness has compelled her to give up the chairmanship. In this emergency, the Club's President, Miss Gertrude Whiting, has consented to take over the leadership so that the work goes on without interruption, Miss McDowell continuing as formerly.

During the winter the activity of the different groups of foreign women producing needlework was so great that the question of marketing the products of their labors demanded serious attention

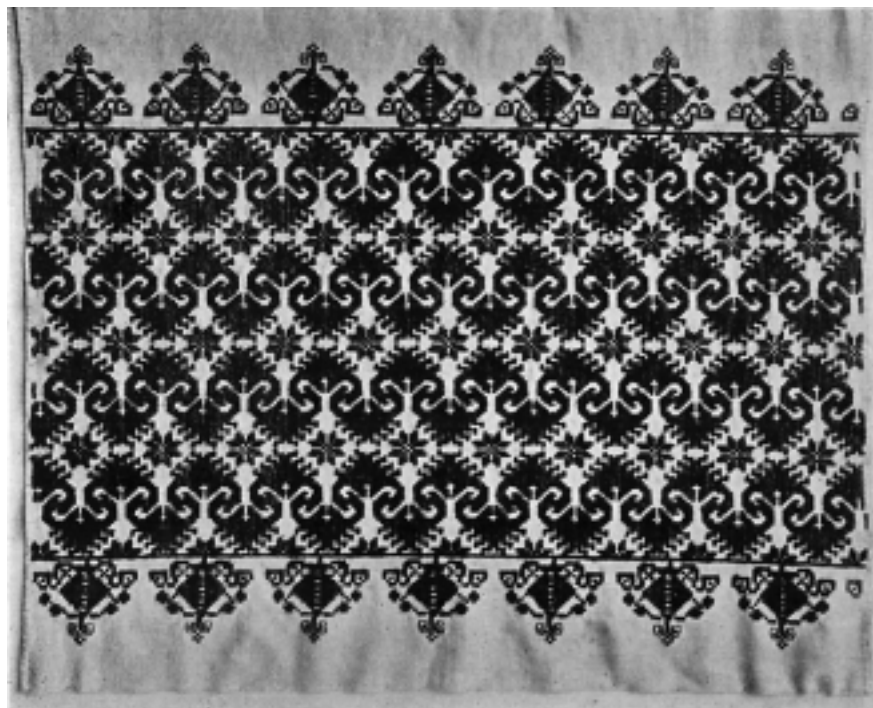
1. Courtesy of Madame Golokhasroff.

on the part of the Guild. After a good deal of investigation and some experimenting, an unusual opportunity for selling came to light. It then seemed advisable to employ a technical director to see that the work produced be of a high standard as to technique and design. To this end Miss B. E. Merrill, formerly head of the Arts and Crafts Department of Carnegie Institute of Technology, was called to New York the first of February. Since then the Design Committee and Miss Merrill have met frequently, and if the readers of the Bulletin could listen to the discussions at these meetings, they would realize how earnest and active is the effort to conserve the best of the old world's art in needle and bobbin work and to put on the market only those things which will develop a better appreciation of beautiful textiles in America.

This enterprise has demanded much research in order to secure just the right linens and threads for reproducing the old pieces. It has necessitated the dyeing of unusual materials and for this purpose one of the settlement houses is developing a dyeing department to meet the common need of all the groups.

Already there have come into the new Guild organization four groups of foreign workers—the Scuola d'Industrie Italiane, the Ukrainian Needlecraft Guild, the Bohemians of Lenox Hill, the Italians of Hamilton House, and also the Aquidneck Cottage Industries (office in New York), which gives employment to both foreign and native born in Newport, R. I. In this banding together there cannot help but be mutual benefit as is already proven by the spirit of the helpfulness shown by the older groups toward those more recently formed.

The material assistance to the producers is becoming daily more and more manifest, as for instance, the eager entreaty on the part of a group of Russian refugees to be given work by the Guild. In response to this appeal they are for the present being mothered and given work by the Ukrainian ("little Russian") unit, and a fund has been supplied by a member of the committee with which to buy the necessary materials for future work. Before long it is probable that with the assistance of the Guild regarding color, design and

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use in the application of their own beautiful technique, they will be organized into a separate group. At their first meeting these women brought pieces they had saved in their flight from Russia, representing eight different kinds of embroidery and lace. What a wealth of material from which to draw in producing beautiful textiles for America!

Another example of meeting the present need is the case of a man out of work from the Ukrainian settlement, who brought in a guest-towel made according to the Design Committee's adaptation from an old piece. It has cross-stitch borders in old blue and red, and on the edge a tiny fringe with these two colors alternating in true Ukrainian fashion, for, as far as possible, the work is being kept true to type in each group.

1. Courtesy of the Peoples Institute.

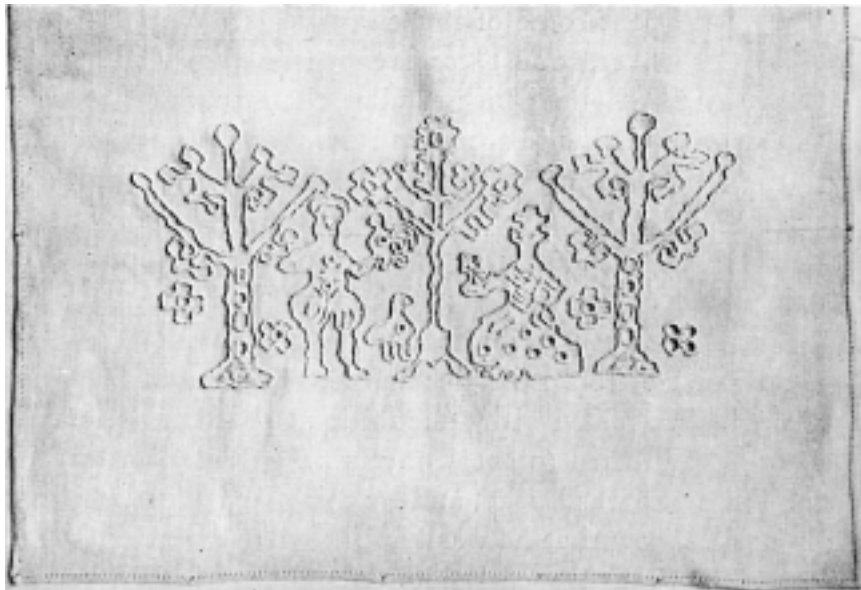
The workers in charge of the Shinnecock Indians' needlework at North Hampton, Long Island, have just applied for membership in the Guild, not because they need any particular assistance, but because of the inspiration and general helpfulness that the cooperation will give.

It is expected that little by little other groups, not only in New York but all over the country, will come in, so that there may be a nation-wide organization for the producing of different kinds of beautiful textiles that will have lasting merit.

Though the responses to the request for funds for carrying on this work have been encouraging, there is still need for further financial support until the enterprise is sufficiently developed to be self-supporting. There is need for a room which can be used not only as an office but also as a meeting-place for committees and a deposit for reference material, etc. At present the People's Institute are giving what little space they have to spare, but this is not adequate. Just now there is urgent need for a loan fund which can be used for the purchasing of materials wholesale. For instance, linens of the right quality at the present time are very scarce and when they are to be found the individual groups are not able to lay in a stock that will insure the fulfilling of future orders.

One of the most interesting activities of the Guild was the delightful exhibition, "THE NEW WORLD'S DEBT TO THE OLD WORLD'S NEEDLEWORK" held in the Arden Gallery, through the courtesy of Mrs. John W. Alexander. The gathering together of this wealth of embroideries was the work of Mrs. Robert Coleman Taylor, who for weeks was indefatigable in her search for textiles which would worthily represent each nationality, sometimes interviewing the consuls from foreign countries and sometimes drawing from the occupants of East Side tenements. Who shall measure the help in Americanization through these contacts and these common interests so near to the hearthstone of every foreign-born?

The Guild is to have a part also in the still larger Americanization effort, "America's Making," a festival and exhibit to be given this coming October.



SHINNECOCK INDIAN EMBROIDERY
COURTESY OF MISS DORA FRANCKLYN