



The Tottenville Historical Society was founded in 2005 to document and preserve the history of Tottenville and vicinity, including the neighborhoods of Charleston, Rossville, Richmond Valley, Greenridge, Pleasant Plains, Prince's Bay, Huguenot, Annadale, Eltingville, and Great Kills. The Society is a member-supported, nonprofit volunteer organization.

You can learn more about our mission, services, and programs through our website and by becoming a supporting member. As a member, you will receive our quarterly newsletter, invitations to all programs and events, and special announcements. To subscribe, visit our online Gift Shop where you can also browse the selection of books and other items we offer.

We are located in the historic H.H. Biddle House, 70 Satterlee St., in Conference House Park.



Join today!

*Needlework crafted by the following
are on display in this exhibition:*

*Helen Cutler
Madsen Family
Penny Parello
Nancy Anne Reinhart
Diane Armstrong Schaming
Margaret Toth
Susan Tufta Weldon*

*Check our website for upcoming
needlework programs.*

*We gratefully acknowledge
Councilman Joe Borelli for the funding to
support this exhibit and NYC Parks for the
partnership. We also thank
Stephanie Parello for her curatorial
assistance and especially the local artists
for sharing their work.*



NYC
Department of
Youth & Community
Development

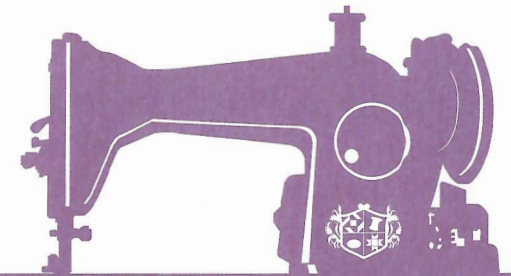
A Stitch in Time

the Cultural and Social Significance of
Women's Handiwork



Opening: June 5, 2021, 12-3pm
After June 5: Saturdays, 12-3pm
or by appointment

H.H. Biddle House
70 Satterlee Street



Tottenville Historical Society

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This exhibit showcases a variety of handmade items that help document women's contributions to the art of needlework and handicrafts. These include samples of cross-stitch, embroidery, knitting, crocheting, lace-making, sewing and other domestic arts.

For centuries it was commonly expected that young girls in their teens, and often younger, would take up handiwork as part of their domestic duties. They practiced sewing and needlework daily. In addition to sewing her dresses, she learned to spin yarn and knit socks. She worked with and learned from her sisters and cousins, as well as older female relatives. The idea of working together and socializing with other females while creating garments for oneself or small gifts for friends and relatives, was not only a valuable learning experience, but an enjoyable one.

EARLY NEEDLEWORK: SAMPLERS

The earliest samplers were created to record and show examples of different designs and stitches. Samplers often included the alphabet, figures, motifs, decorative borders and sometimes the name of the embroiderer and the date.

Beginning in the 18th century, samplers became mainly school exercises, almost entirely worked in cross stitch, and produced as a "specimen of achievement."

HAND AND MACHINE SEWING

Hand sewing is an art form that started some 20,000 years ago. The first needles were made from bones or animal horns and the thread made from animal sinew (tendon).

The first mechanical sewing machines were used in garment factory production lines. It was not until 1889 that a sewing machine for use in the home was designed and marketed.

During the 20th century, most American schools offered some level of hand and/or machine sewing. Children benefited by learning a lifelong skill, building patience and perseverance, and developing self-confidence and creativity.

CULTURAL NEEDLEWORK

The art of folk embroidery is thousands of years old. Beautifully and elaborately decorated textiles, clothing for men and women and home furnishings, are seen in a wide range of cultures, including

Hungarian, Ukrainian, Mexican, Russian, Roma, Greek, Caribbean, Chinese, and others, each making it their own through needlework and trimmings.

MODERN TIMES

Sewing cards were popular in the mid- to late-20th century. Sewing and threading are excellent activities for strengthening a child's motor skills. At P.S. 1, Tottenville, until the 1960s, seventh grade girls learned to sew Maypole dance skirts, developing skills intended to prepare them for making their eighth grade graduation dress. Today, most school district nationwide, including vocational schools, have dropped sewing programs.

Sewing circles, usually a group of women, still meet regularly to sew and socialize in communities across the country.



"Rising Sun" Quilt, Mary Betsy Totten, 1832-1835
Photo credit: Division of Cultural and Community Life,
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution