

Cross-stitch proves "fun" for this needleworker

BY SALLY BAIR
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For needleworkers, the Pennsylvania Farm Show which opens tomorrow in Harrisburg, offers an endless variety of original work sure to inspire new ambitions of perfection.

This year Mary Alice Fyock, 905 Orchard Road, Lititz, is entering something in the needlework category for the first time since she sent 4-H projects there as a child. Her creation is a counted thread wreath, with 22 threads per inch on hardanger cloth, which she designed from a line drawing.

Mary Alice related that she created the wreath as a project of the Red Rose Embroiderers Guild which gave out the line drawing and had a contest among members to translate the drawing whatever kind of needlework they chose.

Obviously eager to accept a challenge, Mary Alice says casually, "I charted it."

By charting it, she means she spent about 25 hours working out the wreath on graph paper to make sure she got proper light variations on the objects. She recalls, "I had to ask 'Will it look rounded? How much dark and light should it have? How can I do diagonal strips on the candy cane?'" At one point she got out her father's art books to study lighting so her shadings would be accurate.

If spending 25 hours on a chart boggles your mind, consider that she then spent nearly 40 hours actually working the wreath in the cross-stitch. Mary Alice says simply, "I really like that kind of thing. Once the chart is complete it's cake."

Mary Alice's painstaking attention to detail paid off, and in the Embroiderers' Guild contest she won first place with her four-inch wreath. She won't know until later in the week how she'll do at Farm Show, but it meets the qualification which states that work must be completely the design of the exhibitor.

She was the only one in the Guild to do the wreath in counted cross stitch although others created the design in other forms. After winning the popular vote, Mary Alice was awarded a silver thimble in a red velvet case.

Mary Alice's cross-stitch is obviously fine, but she enjoys other kinds of needlework as well. She says, "I like any kind of stitchery - the finer the better."

Mary Alice joined the Embroiderers' Guild in 1976, one year after it formed, and is enthusiastic about what she has gained from it. She says, "I'm really interested in old art forms - the kind we don't have time to do anymore. I like the luxury kind of embroidery - the cut work and the white work." she said the Guild has certified speakers and workshops which are very valuable in learning to do needlework.

She says she can't remember when she first started doing needlework, but adds, "Since I was a child I was always interested in creative things and hand work."

Her eight years as a 4-H member spurred on Mary Alice's interest in fine work. She and her husband David were both Lancaster County 4-H'ers.

She said her start in counted thread work came after taking a trip with her husband to North Carolina where he



Mary Alice Fyock works with her daughter Amy on a project she has started. Amy, 7, seems to have

inherited her mother's interest and ability.

had served in the Army. "I sniffed out needlework shops, and found material in a shop in Wilmington, N.C."

Mary Alice says, "Counted thread work is an old art which has been revived. A lot of design comes from the South. The revival starts there and moves north. I've been doing counted cross-stitch ever since. I have given more away than I have here."

In fact, as we began to look for things to photograph, Mary Alice lamented that she had very few things to display in her own home.

One of her favorite cross-stitch pieces are Kate Greenaway figures to which she adds birth information and gives away as baby gifts. But she adds, "None of my children has one."

Mary Alice says that counted cross-stitch is her favorite at the moment, but adds, "I wish I liked crewel more. It is a real art when you do that. It's an heirloom." But she notes, anything created becomes a "heritage type piece."

In her basket are examples of many beautifully created

pieces in forms that are not well known. She has some Russian punch work, which she learned in a "Mini-workshop." She also has some white work which she described as "very fine," and black work which when done properly is reversible.

She also has a cathedral window patch quilt, and can do needlepoint, crocheting and knitting. Her work basket is filled with many kinds of needlework in varying stages of completion.

Asked how she feels when she completes a piece which has taken many hours and months of time, she says, "I'm very glad when it's finished because I get very tired of it. That's why I do so many different things at one time. If it has any kind of repetition I get tired of it."

She is quick to agree that there seems to be a lot of interest in needlework and what she describes as the "old arts" - like the kind you find in drawers. It is beautiful, handwork and often we don't know what it is.

She adds, "There is a lot more interest in history and heritage. I think perhaps it is a way women can stand out if they can revive a craft."

Mary Alice admits that she is never without ideas about what she'd like to do next. "I have a dozen things I want to do. Most things are not for myself - various friends have much of what I've done."

One of her future projects includes designing a sampler of the Fyock farm, including information about the family. "It will take time," Mary Alice states, but adds that she has a piece of handwoven linen given to her by a friend on which she will work the sampler.

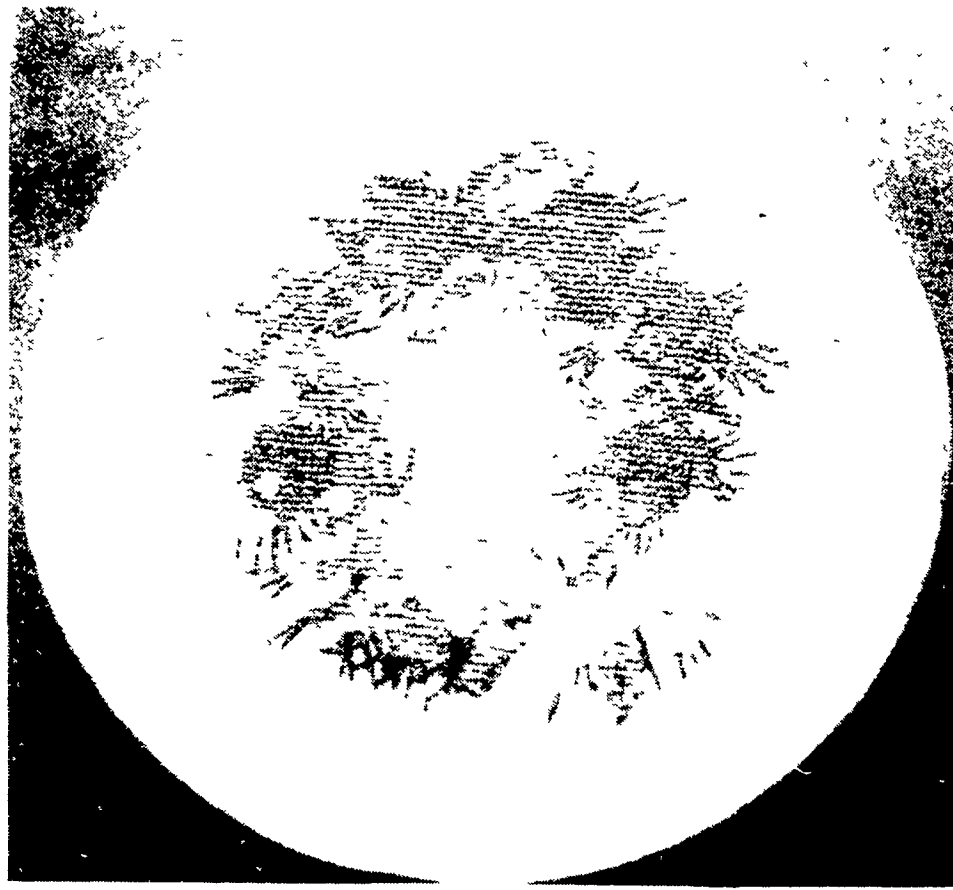
Although she has already mastered many needlework forms, she has a dream of an art she would like to learn -

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Mary Alice concentrates on the stitches on one of the many pieces of needlework which she has underway in her work basket. Although counted cross-stitch is her favorite, her abilities include needlepoint, crewel and lesser known needlework forms.



Mary created this version of a Della Robbia wreath in counted cross-stitch for a contest sponsored by the Red Rose Embroiders Guild. It was voted a winner, and she is entering it in competition at the Pennsylvania Farm Show this week. There are 22 threads per inch, worked on hardanger cloth.