



Connecticut Needlework: Women, Art, and Family, 1740-1840

Susan P. Schoelwer

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Connecticut women have long been noted for their creation of colorful and distinctive needlework, including samplers and family registers, bed rugs and memorial pictures, crewel-embroidered bed hangings and garments, silk-embroidered pictures of classical or religious scenes, quilted petticoats and bedcovers, and whitework dresses and linens. This volume offers the first regional study, encompassing the full range of needle arts produced prior to 1840. Seventy entries showcase more than one hundred fascinating examples--many never before published--from the Connecticut Historical Society's extensive collection of this early American art form. Produced almost exclusively by women and girls, the needle arts provide an illuminating vantage point for exploring early American women's history and education, including family-based traditions predating the establishment of formal academies after the American Revolution. Extensive genealogical research reveals unseen family connections linking various types of needlework, similar to the multi-generational male workshops documented for other artisan trades, such as woodworking or metalsmithing. Photographs of stitches, reverse sides, sketches, design sources, and related works enhance our understanding and appreciation of this fragile art form and the talented women who created it. An exhibition of needlework in this book will be held at the Connecticut Historical Society in late fall, 2010. Funding for this project has been provided by the Coby Foundation, Ltd., and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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