Growing Pains

Have you noticed that Needlepoint Now just keeps getting bigger and bigger? We have been growing at an incredibly fast rate. Not only have we increased the number of pages that appear in each issue, but also the number of advertisers and subscribers keeps going up and up. We have expanded our website to provide you with more information on how to improve your skills with needle and canvas. We will be featuring our first “Stitch-Along Project” in the July/August issue where we present a canvas with a stitch guide. Several of our staff and friends are sharing their stitching experience on Facebook. We invite you to stitch the piece with us and share your input too.

Our website has been going through changes so fast, it makes my head spin. We have the archive of back issues on the web, projects and articles are indexed so you can find what you are looking for quickly. A list of advertisers, a list of shops that carry the magazine, a list of needlepoint finishers and all have their contact information for your convenience. There are videos demonstrating stitches and techniques, and our newest feature is an online calendar with events listed in chronological order. Now you can quickly and easily find the details about an event you may have read about in the magazine. If you are holding a needlepoint event such as a class, a show or a trip, send us the information and we will add it to the list.

As you probably have noticed, our newsletter has also experienced a design change and it is no longer included in an email to you. Instead you get a link to the newsletter that you can print out and hopefully find it more usable.

With all of this growth I have had to make some adjustments to the staff and work responsibilities. I am outsourcing the website because there are companies out there who can do a much better job than we can do in house. Therefore, I have made a decision to hire a graphic designer with a publication background instead of web design. The new designer is Carol Finsand. I have had the privilege of working with Carol off and on over the past twenty years. Carol will be the “go-to” person for ads and she will also be able to help me with the magazine layouts.

D’Ann Marvel is our new Circulation Manager. D’Ann came highly recommended by Jaime, our Bookkeeper. D’Ann and Jaime have been friends since middle school and their sisterly banter is a constant source of amusement for the rest of us in the office. D’Ann will take care of you if you have a question about your account, need to change your address, want to renew or send a gift subscription.

What does this mean to you, our subscribers? You will continue to see our quality improve and benefit from some future tricks that we have up our sleeve.
Is there a difference between the stem stitch and outline stitch and how are they used?

In studying similar stitches, two that are often confused are the stem stitch and the outline stitch. Although almost all stitches have been around for centuries, these two are surely amongst the oldest and most common in almost all of the hand-embroidery techniques. I remember stitching them on the stamped tea towels my mother prepared for me when I was quite young, and they were probably the first stitches that I learned. At the time I did not have a clue why each was executed in the manner that it was. I just learned that one went up and one went down and I didn’t really know what that meant. As time passed and I immersed myself in my love for the needlearts, I found that these two stitches have as many different representations as there are resources referencing them. So, here is my understanding of these two stitches.

Both stitches share the important function of defining an area. They are line stitches. Both names are often used indiscriminately when we are instructed to outline an area in our work. When referenced in this manner, the author does not necessarily mean to use the outline stitch per se. Which of the two stitches to use is determined by the placement of the stitch and the desired results. Does the pattern area have an upward curve (mountain) or a downward curve (valley)? They both can be used to fill areas. Packed stem stitch is one of my favorite filling techniques. Both stitches are overlapping stitches, commonly stitched from left to right.

The stem stitch is a stitch that will create a downward curve, also referred to as the valley. Although originally referred to as the crewel stitch, the more familiar name is the stem stitch.

The curve is controlled by the placement of the thread. For the stem stitch, the thread needs to lie below the needle and line being stitched. The needle comes to the top of the fabric at 1 on the diagram and enters the fabric at the stitch length shown at 2. For the second and subsequent stitches, the needle comes to the top of the fabric at the middle of the previous stitch, as shown in the diagram at 3, and re-enters the fabric at 4. All stitches are the same length — 4 canvas threads in this diagram. Because the thread is lying on top of the previous stitch, it will hold the previous stitch in a downward curve.

Quite similar in appearance is the outline stitch. This stitch is executed in much the same way as the stem stitch, with one important difference. The outline stitch creates an upward curve, also referred to as the mountain.

For this stitch the thread needs to lie above the needle and line being stitched. Like the stem stitch, the length of the stitches is consistent and they overlap, with the needle coming to the top of the fabric at the center of the previous stitch. But, as the diagram illustrates, the holding thread is below the thread of the previous stitch, controlling the curve. This placement enables the stitch to pull the previous thread in an upward curved position.

When these stitches are worked correctly, a backstitch will occur on the back of the fabric. Also, the shorter the stitch — 4 threads, 6 threads, etc. — the fatter the line of stitching; the longer the stitch, the thinner the line of stitching. In fine embroidery, the stitches are extremely small. Although I have seen some references to working these stitches from right to left, I have not been able to achieve the same beautiful line results I achieve by stitching from left to right. Tip: Insert the needle at the 3 position before pulling the thread down tight. This allows better viewing of the canvas threads that are to be stitched through. One more thing, about the backstitch: if it is difficult to achieve the results desired for these stitches by traditional stitching, try turning the canvas over and, working from the backside, stitch a line of

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backstitches. Look at the front! Viola! A stem stitch.

What happens if there is a line of stitching that curves up, then down, etc., like a roller coaster? This is an excellent place to see how the “valley and mountain” techniques come into play. When stitching this type of line, remember to use stem stitch (the curve of the thread is downward) when you are stitching in the valley and switch to the outline stitch (the curve of the thread is upward) when stitching over the mountain. This switch is achieved by placing the thread above or below the needle.

These stitches add a beautiful line to any design when stitched in a consistent size and manner. Pull out that doodle cloth and play with the two and visually see the difference. With a little practice it will become automatic for you to follow the valleys and mountains of a design area. Until next time,

SANDRA ARTHUR

• Featured on the cover is The 4th of July March by Tapestry Tent with a stitch guide by Susan Portra. We invite you to Stitch-Along with us as we work through the canvas. Follow us on Facebook and share your questions, changes and tips with the group. All that you have to do is sign onto Facebook and friend Needlepoint Now to gain access to all of the posts.

• Julia Snyder is sharing some of her wisdom on backgrounds by featuring her Spirit design.

• Susan Jones is challenging us with compensation stitches on her Star Crossed ornament.

• If you like geometrics, you will enjoy Aurore Boréale by Brenda Kocher, a new designer for Needlepoint Now.

• Associated Talents is featuring Seaside Diagonal Pattern Starfish with a new beading technique—cross stitch beading in basketweave. Be sure to check it out.

• New designer Sally Baer of BB Needlepoint Designs is featured. Sally is a gardener and needlepoint artist. Her design Sunflowers & Dahlias combines both of her loves. She uses mostly silk ribbons to give the piece amazing dimension.

We are launching three new columns: Meredith Willett’s Let’s Talk Needlepoint, Suzanne Howren and Beth Robertson’s Thread Tales and Marnie Ritter’s Make A Change. I Dare You!

Meet D’Ann, Our New Circulation Manager

D’Ann grew up in Elmira, attending the same schools as Jaime. She escaped being murdered by Jaime’s brother Eric who was chasing her with a pitch fork and graduated from high school without having to spend too much time in detention. D’Ann married, had two wonderful children, Jakob and Jaylynn and is now married to the love of her life, Jeff. They all live together along with Precious the Scottie, Raven the black lab and four cats of questionable breeding.

D’Ann worked a Pharmacy Tech for ten years before she took a hiatus to raise her children. Her ability to multi-task and manage the barrage of information that I am constantly throwing at her has quickly made her a huge asset to the Needlepoint Now family. Plus it never hurts to have a Pharm. Tech on staff to answer questions about my meds.

Meet Carol, Our New Graphic Designer

Carol Finsand grew up near the foggy Olympic National Forest in Washington. When it was time for college, she and her sister transplanted themselves South to Eugene Oregon. Charmed by the open valley sky, lush countryside and SUN, she decided to stay.

With a solid background in trade magazines, Carol has also worked many years in advertising and product branding. Using her combined skills, she’ll be working as the new advertising contact and custom designer. She now lives a few miles South-east of Eugene in the tiny burg of Dexter with her husband Bob, Buddy-Dog, Black-Kitty and two horses.

Ad Reminder!

Reservations for ad space are due now with ad materials for custom designs due July 15. Camera-ready ads can be sent in as late as August 10th. Thank you!