

EAC COLONIAL BAND SAMPLER EAC- 96-3



Description: This sampler exemplifies the beauty in simplicity that is well designed and executed. Eleven techniques are masterfully executed in different sizes, wools and silks. Colours range from soft pastels in pinks, greens, blues, mauve and golds to a slate blue and deep rose, all of which flow in perfect balance throughout the sampler. It is worked on white linen, 32 threads to the inch and measures 14 centimetres by 15.75 centimetres.

A fly stitch variation worked in five groups, each of which comprises three vertical rows of four fly stitches, one below the other, is embroidered in one strand of medium pink wool across the top of this decorative study piece (p. 111-112, Enthoven).

The next four rows feature an uppercase alphabet, all of which is stitched in cross stitch worked over two threads and two threads high. The letters are seven cross stitches or 14 threads high and are embroidered in the following colourful mix of wools and silks: The letters A, B, and C are worked in light green silk; D through H are slate blue wool; I, K, L, M, antique gold silk; N, O, P, light pink wool; R, S, T, V are light green silk; W, X and Y, antique gold silk and Z, slate blue wool (p. 60, Enthoven, p. 76, Wilson).

Each of the four lines of alphabet are underlined as follows: closed herringbone embroidered over two threads in light pink wool (p. 79, Enthoven); outline stitch in slate blue wool with

each stitch four threads long (p. 65, Enthoven); square or open chain stitched in medium pink wool over two threads (p. 62, Nichols, p. 134, Enthoven); and, the fourth row is herringbone worked in yellow wool over

three threads. The same yellow wool is used to fashion two sheaf stitches at the beginning of the third row of the alphabet and again to create the six sheaf stitches that follow the letter Z (p. 92, Enthoven; 190, Nichols).

The next two rows consist of a repeat step pattern with straight stitches covering two, three, four and five threads and then four, three and two at which point each new block shares the previous stitch covering two threads. Fashioned in light green silk, these rows face each other so that the peaks of the blocks are just two threads apart (p.57, Enthoven).

Three brilliant blooms in deep and medium rose silks are embroidered in cross stitches, each of which are over two threads. Each flower bears an antique gold and green cross-stitched base resting on an angular stem of four cross stitches, each over two threads and worked in light green silk. Four threads down from the stems of the flowers, a row of satin stitch over three threads is worked in light mauve silk (p.55, Enthoven).

The next band comprises of three relatively large scrolls worked in sheaf stitch in the same yellow wool as previously mentioned. Each sheaf stitch is four threads wide and four threads high. The base and top of each scroll consists of three sheaf stitches and the backs of the scrolls are designed with four sheaf stitches in step formation. All told, the scrolls are six sheaf stitches or 24 threads high.

Three threads below the scrolls is a tiny row of Montenegrin cross stitch in medium pink wool two threads high and two wide (p. 86, Christie). Interestingly, just as Mrs. Christie advises that the stitch may be viewed from either side, the embroiderer of this sampler has chosen to embroider this stitch so that the so-called wrong side of the Montenegrin stitch is what the viewer actually sees.

Four threads down from this narrow little band is a verse embroidered in cross stitch that is somewhat typical of what we might find in a Victorian sampler. "Friends are uncertain Riches unconstant but Industry fails not." And of course, "industry" implies the individual's dedication to work rather than leisure. The stitching also tends to imitate the work in early samplers in that the letter e in the word "are" at the end of the first line is stitched by itself at the beginning of the second line. Similarly, the word "uncertain" is not hyphenated at the end of a syllable, but instead the "n" drops to the following line with the hyphen preceding that letter. The hyphen consists of two sheaf stitches, each four threads high and four wide, worked in yellow wool. Again the word "unconstant" is broken after the a, with the hyphen comprising three yellow wool sheaf stitches ending the line. The letters n and t follow on the next line. However, when it comes to the word Industry,

it is broken at the end of the first syllable with the rest of the word being stitched on the following line but there is no hyphen. At the end of the word "not" there is no period but there are two sheaf stitches on the same line as the "cross" on the letter t. After a space of 10 threads there are 12 sheaf stitches in yellow wool that end that line. All of the upper case and the tall lower-case letters are seven cross stitches or 14 threads high. The lower case letters are five crosses or 10 threads high. All the letters are stitched in the following mix of wools and silks: The first two words, "friends are" plus the letter u in "uncertain" are all stitched in slate blue wool; the remaining letters of "uncertain" to the first t in "unconstant" are stitched in light blue silk; all letters from the a in "unconstant" through to the word "not" are embroidered in antique gold silk.

Directly below is a beautiful, tiny zigzag band fashioned in tent stitches, all of which are only one thread wide and one thread high. The zigzag pattern is formulated by blocks of tent stitches, each of which consist of four vertical rows with four stitches to each row. In the blocks moving upward, each row is one stitch ahead of the next and always worked in antique gold silk as it moves across the band. In the blocks moving downward, each row of tent stitch is one stitch lower than the previous and these blocks are all worked in yellow silk. Needless to say the shading adds to the sense of dimension and movement to the zigzag pattern (p. 89. Christie).

The zigzag row is underlined by a narrow band of stem stitch over three threads but just one thread high in a very light green silk (p. 65. Enthoven).

The last motif on this colourful sampler displays two slate blue, symmetrical peacocks standing on either side of a yellow vase containing two deep rose flowers with a green stem and leaves, all worked in silk. The entire motif is embroidered in cross stitch with all stitches two threads high and two threads wide. Standing 32 threads or 16 crosses high, the peacocks' tails, which are closed, consist of three rows of cross stitch. The vase is nine cross stitches high, designed with a curved base and lip rimmed top. The diamond-shaped red flowers are 12 threads across at the widest width where they attach to the central stem, which is one cross stitch or two threads wide. Interestingly, neither the eyes in the peacocks nor the centres of the flowers are stitched, although correct spaces have been left. Did the embroiderer forget to embroider the two cross stitches, one above the other for the peacocks' eyes and the two cross stitches, side by side in the centre of the flowers or were these spaces intentionally not meant to be stitched?

A band of Algerian eye, four threads across and four threads high, is worked in medium pink wool and follows the above motif (p.58, Enthoven).

Finally, at the very bottom, the embroiderer, Connie Wilks, has stitched her initials and date. Both letters are upper case; the C in slate blue wool, the number 93, indicates the date in gold silk and, a slate blue wool W. The capital letters and numbers are all seven stitches or 14 threads high.

History: This finely embroidered sampler with its traditional patterns is the study/embroidery project of EAC's *Colonial Band Sampler ca. 1759* Group Correspondence Course. It was designed and embroidered by Connie Wilks, a past president and *Embroidery Canada* editor. Before designing the sampler, Connie was able to spend two days looking at colonial Samplers in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. The stitches in the EAC sampler are those Connie found most prevalent on the museum's colonial samplers.

Materials: White linen fabric, 32 threads to the inch, slate blue, light pink and yellow wools, light green, deep rose and antique gold silks.

Condition: This sampler is in excellent condition. It is, however, laced over a somewhat flimsy board or cardboard which is showing signs of warping.