

## HISTORIC ST. JOHN'S SAMPLER EAC-86-1



**Description:** From “pine-clad” hills to historic buildings and marine life, this beautiful framed sampler, worked primarily in cross stitch with back stitch trims and accents, aptly depicts St. John’s, Newfoundland. Stitched on Aida cloth, 14 threads to the inch, both the backstitch and cross-stitch are worked over one thread. The sampler measures 29.5 centimetres by 39.5 cm.

A two-toned blue border of two groups of cross-stitch, each comprised of four stitches, are reminiscent of the ocean that circles this island province. As sea

gulls keep watch over the hilltops, fashioned in curving back stitched lines and embellished with pines stitched in soft greens, a radiant sun worked in brilliant yellow floss with back stitch rays gradually rises in the East.

The second area begins immediately below and consists of several historic buildings, which, when identified, give a sense of St. John’s involved and evolving history. Beginning on the left, four relatively small buildings depict the four homes that the builder of the day erected for his sons, with the stones left over from his structure commemorating Marconi’s radio message to Signal Hill, St. John’s (from England) at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. These homes are located on what used to be known as Temperance Street. Immediately to the right is a grey building with two pillars that represents the Basilica of St. John the Baptist, a long-time landmark. In the centre with its red roof and six pillars stands Colonial House, where the provincial legislature sits, clearly exemplifying Newfoundland’s early days before

joining the Dominion in 1949. Next is a smaller red house that reflects the Salt Box House style of architecture that is fairly prevalent throughout St. John's. On the very right is St. Thomas' Church, another grand old structure. Colours vary from reds to shades of grey and quiet browns with five little trees adding a spark of green, also in different shades. Several small back stitched straight lines in single strands of grey floss are scattered around the above area providing a sense of depth and ground.

Below and centred are the words "St. John's" on the upper line with "Newfoundland" underneath. All are upper case letters, two threads high, and stitched in back stitch using single strands of brown floss.

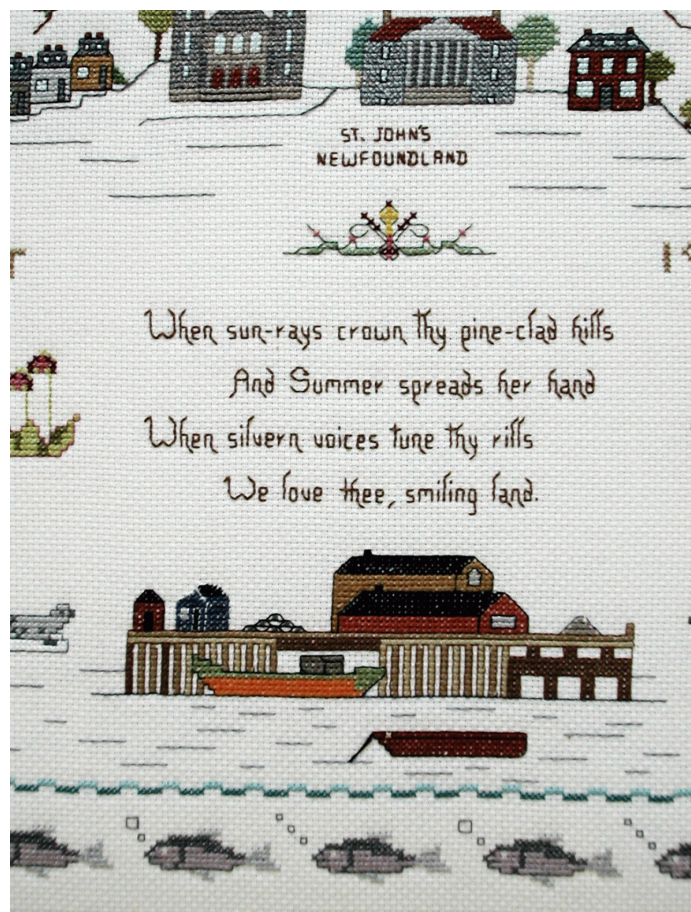
Centred below these words is a colourful little bit of design in both back stitch and cross stitch meant to depict the Gingerbread House fretwork that can be seen on various homes in the area. On the far left are the upper case letters "IT" cross stitched in light brown, five crosses high, that identify the embroiderer, Ingrid Tode. The year "1986" is worked in the same size and colour on the right, signifying Seminar '86 in St. John's.



The fifth area is close to the centre of this pictorial sampler and includes one of the many verses of the "Ode to Newfoundland". Back stitched in two strands of brown floss with upper case letters five threads high, the lyrics confirm the Newfoundlanders' love of their "smiling land." On either side of

the Ode, one a bit higher than the other, is a cross-stitch image of Newfoundland's provincial flower, the Pitcher plant. These somewhat rare, exotic plants are known for their long pitcher-shaped leaves, lush red/orange blooms and boggy locations.

In the lower portion, a quiet harbour scene shows two buildings that might well be boathouses, three other small buildings undoubtedly associated with marine work, a wharf with nearby boats and a seal on either side resting on ice floes. Below the ocean waves five codfish appear to be swimming across the sampler and out to sea. Stitched mostly in greys and browns with accents in deep red and orange tones, the motifs remind the viewer of St. John's cod fishing traditions.



**History:** Inspired by the theme of their seminar "By the Sea" Sherry Del Rizzo and Gaye Laaning, members of the St. John's Guild, designed this sampler as a fund raiser for Seminar '86, which was held in St. John's, Newfoundland. Another member of the guild, Ingrid Tode, who began her

stitching career at the age of 65, embroidered this picturesque sampler. In a conversation with St. John's Guild member Phyllis Reid, it was learned that Ingrid Tode was a European refugee, who fled three countries to escape the Germans during World War II before finally arriving in Canada. Ingrid, who in 2004 was in her mid 90s and seriously ill in a senior's home in Newfoundland, is known for her cross-stitch. One of her favourite tasks was to adapt the designs on china dinnerware that people would bring her so that she could embroider the motifs on their placemats. This sampler is an outstanding example of simple yet meaningful motifs and overall design that together identify the history of a place, in this case St. John's, and also the embroiderers who created this memorable work.

**Materials:** Aida cloth, 14 threads to the inch, embroidery floss in three shades of grey, four of brown, two of red, three of green and three of blue.

**Condition:** This framed historic sampler is in excellent condition.