

The Piedmont Lace Guild of Virginia

Preserving the fine art of lacemaking

www.piedmontlace.org

Volume 1 Issue 2

The Art of Lacemaking

- a very brief introduction
by Birgitte Tessier



May 2009

"The art of lace-making has from the earliest times been so interwoven with the art of needlework that it would be impossible to enter on the subject of the present work without giving some mention of the latter."

History of Lace by Mrs. Bury Palliser

Purists often state that there are only two types of "true lace": needle lace and bobbin lace. In that context, "true lace" is defined as a decorative openwork fabric in which the pattern, and any ground which links the various parts of the pattern, is built up gradually by the interworking of *free* threads. This definition excludes such techniques as embroidered net, drawn thread embroidery and cut-work embroidery, as all of these techniques begin with an existing fabric that is decorated and embellished. However, these particular techniques may be considered the forerunners from which the free thread laces evolved.

It is difficult to say in which country free thread lace developed. According to Mrs. Bury Palliser (author of *History of Lace*), Italy and Flanders dispute the invention of lace which seems to have happened at some point in the 15th century. Needle laces were predominantly developed in Italy and later in France, whereas bobbin lace developed in Northern Europe in the so-called Low Countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg), though both types of lace were later produced in both areas. Migration of skilled artisans spread the art of lacemaking further still throughout Europe, and in each place materials, techniques and patterns evolved again. There was a time when it was possible to determine the country or area of origin of a piece of lace, but as the art of lacemaking migrated, it also changed. Imitations—good or bad— and the dictates of fashion, local materials and design influences all made a difference, and it became much more difficult, if not impossible, to determine the origin of a piece of lace.

Looking at the two types of true lace, each has certain characteristics:

Needle Lace: As the name implies, a piece of needle lace is created with a needle and thread. There is no background fabric. Instead, a pattern is drawn on some form of paper or card background, which is then tacked on to fabric. The design outline is marked by the laying down and couching of outline threads. Various darning and embroidery stitches (fillings) connect the outlines and various parts of the pattern. When the piece is completed, background paper and fabric is removed and basting threads cut. All that remains is the lace fabric itself. The term *punto in aria* (stitches in the air) refers to needle lace created in this manner. Needle lace is also sometimes called Needlepoint Lace.

Bobbin Lace: In her book *The Art of Lacemaking*, Ann Collier calls bobbin lace "the other art form." As mentioned, it developed alongside needle lace, but its origins seem to be in weaving rather than embroidery. Bobbin lace is often called "pillow lace" as the lace is worked on some type of pillow, or "bone lace" because the bobbins were often made of bone. The lace pattern must be prepared and the bobbins wound. The pattern is called a "pricking" and is usually made of smooth, glazed cardstock. The design is marked by pinpricked holes, each hole pricked in advance by the lacemaker. The thread is wound on small, slender wooden bobbins, and the wound bobbin pairs are hung on pins at the start of the pricking. The lace is formed as the lacemaker works the pattern, "pinning up" in the pre-pricked holes to support the lace as the threads cross each other according to the pricking. This technique is more easily understood when watching a lacemaker at work.

Other types of lace: There are many other ways that lace fabric can be created. Besides embroidery techniques used to create lace-like fabrics, there is knitted lace, crocheted lace, tatted lace, tape lace, hairpin lace and many other forms. **The Piedmont Lace Guild of Virginia welcomes makers of all types of lace!** Membership is open to all lacemakers and anyone with an interest in lace and lacemaking, the history of costume and fashion, to collectors and to anyone wishing to learn how to make lace.

Upcoming Meetings & Events

Saturday, 6 June 2009
 Lacemaking demonstration at Mount Bleak House 2 - 4 p.m.
Sky Meadows State Park near Paris, VA

Thursday, 18 June 2009
 Lacemaking Demonstration at Chinn Park Library 11 a.m.–3 p.m.
Woodbridge, VA

July 2009
 No monthly meeting

August 2009
 Month-long display at Orange County Library in Orange, VA

Monthly Meeting at RUMC (Date to be decided)

Saturday, 12 September 2009
 Monthly meeting at RUMC

Saturday, 19 September 2009
 Lacemaking Demonstration in Marshall, VA
Episcopal Church grounds

Thanksgiving Weekend, November 2009
 A Country Christmas at Sky Meadows State Park
Visit the Piedmont Lace Guild stand for information about the Guild, lacemaking demonstration and handmade lace items for sale.

Saturday, 5 December 2009
 Annual Meeting and Christmas get-together for members and guests.

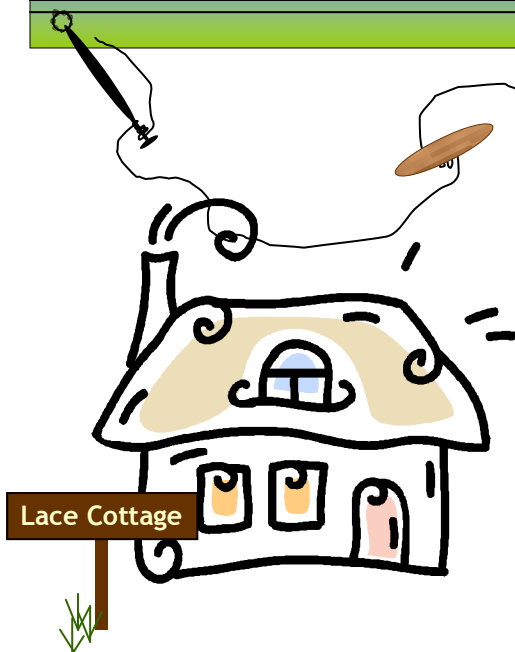
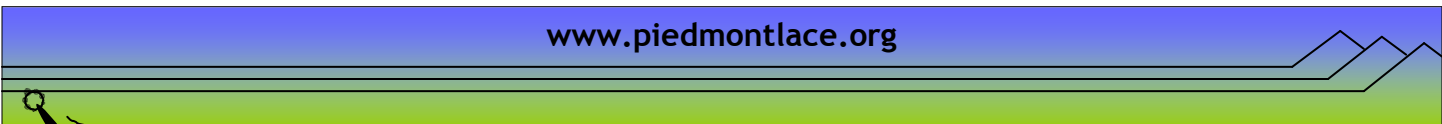
GUILD OFFICERS 2009

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Lace Cottage

The Lace Cottage is a small group that meets weekly, usually on Thursdays at 10 a.m.

Currently, locations for the Lace Cottage vary between Warrenton, Catlett, Remington and Fredericksburg.

If you would like to join the Lace Cottage and need information on meeting locations, please e-mail lace-cottage@piedmontlace.org.

Monthly meetings take place at the Remington United Methodist Church on the corner of Bowen and Center Streets in Remington, VA. For directions, please see the Guild website at www.piedmontlace.org or the church website at www.remingtonchurch.org.