

Preserving Women's History



The samplers on this wall are all made by local girls, most of whom knew the Bradford sisters, a representation of their community. Samplers within the context of early 19th century Duxbury were sometimes done as part of a girl's education in the home, or often, within an organized school. Evaluation of sampler motifs, borders, and verses can reveal which girls attended a specific school and are important documents of early American educational systems.

Maria Bradford, 1812

Charlotte Bradford, 1821

Lucia Alden Bradford, 1844

Louisa Esther Bradford, 1814

Jane Winsor, 1814

Alitheer Soule, 1804

Jane Russell Sever, 1810

Hannah Weston, 1831

The samplers taught the essential skill of needlework, as well as letters, numbers, aesthetic composition, verse, and were even exercises in a girl's name, place of residency, and birth date. They were proof of an institutionalized value system, evidencing that a girl had the education necessary to make a good home and marriage. Samplers could also document self-expression, as girls chose which verse or quotation to include in their work.

The difficulty in recapturing much of women's history is few details survive, and we must dig deeper to reconstruct women's lives. Samplers, preserved by the maker and her family are often objects filled with information on a woman's life, education, family, and her personal preferences.



Jennifer Knotts, Etsy

Today, cross-stitching has regained some of its popularity using subversive messages, feminist rhetoric, and pop culture references.



Janelle Pfeifer Designs