



Sampler, 1803
Anne Kimball (1791 - 1871)

Sampler, 1803

Ann Kimball (1791-1871)

Newburyport, MA

Silk and linen

Gift of Timothy A. Ingraham, 2000

13877



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1699, Cotton Mather wrote about the duty of parents to their children: "...there are many points of a Good Education, that we should bestow upon our Children; They should Read, and Write, and Cyphar [sic], and be put unto some Agreeable Callings; and not only our Sons, but our Daughters also should be taught such Things, as will afterwards make the Useful in their places."¹ Although the notion of educating girls remained strong throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the content of their schooling remained vastly different from that of boys. Rather than academic studies, girls' studies focused on "female accomplishments," such as music, manners, needlework, and other artistic and social skills.

Learning to sew was both a necessity and an opportunity to show off a young woman's disciplined, artistic accomplishments. Because women would sew clothes for their families, girls learned to sew samplers as part of their studies. Some basic samplers that younger girls completed taught them embroidery, the alphabet, and a set of numbers. More advanced, decorative samplers might include a poem, some scripture, or an artistic scene. These were proudly hung in family homes to demonstrate daughters' accomplishments and to attract the attention of potential suitors.

ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Textiles and Costumes Curator Paula Richter wrote of this piece, "the verse of the sampler expresses ideas about industry, religious devotion, and the effective employment of women's time in reading, sewing, and writing."² Such a message also suggests that the maker, Anne Kimball, embodies or adheres to these values.

In addition to the verse, the sampler features an alphabet repeated in different styles, an elaborate floral border, and a gentle pastoral scene below. The silk and linen materials are also fine and expensive, and attest to the Kimball family resources. In sum, the sampler declares Anne Kimball's patience, skill, fine character, and comfortable financial status; all things that would impress a potential suitor.

SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Look carefully at this object. What skill did this artist use to make this piece? How can you tell?
- Do you think a boy or a girl created this sampler in school? Why?
- Why do you think girls made samplers as part of their education? What do you think boys learned?
- If you were a boy or girl in the early 19th century, would you be happy knowing that boys and girls learned different things?
- Before free, compulsory public education, only children with parents who could afford to send them to school received an education. How do you think this affected their lives?
- How do you think girls' lives changed when they started learning the same subjects as boys?

SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- To understand the skill required to create a sampler, have students work on either an individual or a group embroidery project.
- Without telling students why, begin class by stating that boys and girls will from now on sit on separate sides of the room and study different subjects. Ask for class response to this new procedure.

2003 Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Frameworks: PreK-K.5, 3.12, USI.30

¹ Cotton Mather, *A family well-ordered. Or an essay to render parents and children happy in one another...* (Boston: B. Green & J. Allen, for Michael Perry... & Benjamin Eliot, 1699): 17-18.

² Paula Bradstreet Richter, *Painted with Thread: The Art of American Embroidery*. (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2000): 52.