



# THE SCARLET LETTER

## FEBRUARY 2017 NEWSLETTER



### *Poetry of the Needle*

Needlework is no less an art that painting and poetry.  
And the needle can awaken the pen.  
This month I celebrate poetry so inspired,  
by Dave Russo and Karyl Beavers.

**SARAH GARBOT HER WORK 1789**



*It's one thing to see them in books, these old samplers;  
to see borders in carpets from the Islamic parts of Spain  
come through an English schoolgirl's needle  
a hundred years later---*

*but it's another to have one in hand, like this marvelous  
ruin: the blackened gauze rotting from the bands  
and figures, the silk threads faded to blacks, browns,  
and dirty golds.*

*Dabbing the silk with soap and water, colors emerge  
from coal soot and dust. There is a vine of faded  
tulip-like flowers over two pious verses, both quite  
grim, though stitched in gold silk. **Life is short and miserable**, says  
one, and the other, **Live to die.***

*But she didn't die before she made this wide,  
arcaded band of flowers over a grove of fruiting  
trees and architectural vases. Under each tree, a pair  
of tiny black and gold birds; in each vase, a branch  
with four kinds of blooms- mixing nature and design.*

*She made a magic garden, it seems, under a dense  
band of diamonds, all eyelets- gold, green and mauve.  
A ship in full sail is flanked by mauve geese, golden  
butterflies, flower baskets, then trees from which  
huge acorns depend- a bird on each acorn, black  
sheep with gold legs beside each tree, squirrels  
leaping over the sheep.*

*To finish, she made a chaste band of strawberries  
over a rampant gold lion. He's attended by cherubs  
whose pink eyes have blackened, like a skull's. The lion  
and his angels drift above the cartouche where Sarah  
stitched her name- **in the ninth year of her age.**  
Two heraldic leopards lie down beside her name.  
their dog-like faces copied from old stumpwork.*

*There is more, of course: sooty peacocks in the lower  
corners; tableaux of little trees and turquoise birds; two  
leaping brown creatures- not sure what she wanted them  
to be. We're often guessing, anyway, and naming it all  
wouldn't save us or the crumbling work of her hands.*

## STITCHING THE HANNAH BREED SAMPLER

A towhead bends over a scrap of cloth  
*Hannah Breed is my name*  
She wiggles on the damp stone step  
*New England is my station*  
A flash of wing blurs into the elm  
*Lynn is my dwelling place*  
The Baltimore oriole weaves her cradle  
*And Christ is my Salvation*  
Impatient and restless she draw her thread,  
Alert for voices on the empty path.

*Across the weft of unbleached linen  
Between the fibers spun from flax  
The needle glides and guides the thread  
Stitching letters, cross by cross.  
Who pulls the stitch into an eyelet?  
Who ties and snips the black silk floss?  
Who draws my needle through the sampler?  
Who knots your thread and mine?  
How can your breath be on my neck?  
And can your hand feel mine?*



Hannah Breed



### COMING SOON



Here follows a treat of designs soon to be released. Click on each picture for a larger image.



Rose Shenamon Mitchell Screen  
Shot



Rose Shenamon Mitchell  
stitched model



*The Camel and the Lion*



*Saxon Alphabet  
Original Sampler*



*Esther Charlton*



*Esther Charlton*



*Moses in the Bulrushes*



*Moses in the Bulrushes*



*The tiger from an early plantation  
sampler, made in either India or  
Africa, should be available in late  
summer*

## Sale on Band Samplers

Until February 28th, ALL band sampler charts will be discounted 15%. The discount will not show up on your order. It will be taken when your order is processed.

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## Where to Buy Scarlet Letter Designs

The Scarlet Letter does not sell designs at any needlework markets. My designs are available at a few select shops around the world. A [list of retail shops](#) is available on the website.



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