

## Plain Sampler Workbook Extract - Late 19th Century US Origin - Belle Madden

Derived from the Latin 'exemplum' - an example, a **sampler** is a piece of embroidery or cross-stitching produced as a demonstration or a test of skill in needlework. They often included the alphabet, figures, motifs, decorative borders and sometimes the name of the person who embroidered it and the date. Their **purpose** was essentially to either instil religious values or worthy personal qualities such as perseverance & concentration in the young girls (usually) who worked them, but often also they invariably acted as a '**Curriculum Vitae**' - providing a practical example of their skills of embroidery when seeking employments as Lady's Maid or for a life in service. Today, they are much sought after both as highly decorative works of art in their own right - they **look especially great when presented in a group** - but also for the **fascinating social history** which can often be gleaned from them.

**Age.** Although undated the workbook is thought to date from the **late 1800s**.

**Condition.** '**Exceptional**' the colours & fabric are very well preserved indeed with negligible damage or staining/discoloration.

**Quality, content, constituent material & originality.** Here are **three blue and one white** samplers from a very rare & unique '**Work Book**' originally comprising **24 petite examples** of a '**plain sewing or garment**' samplers and produced by **Belle Madden** from '**Mrs Clark's Class**', Portland, Oregon, USA. Fascinating **detail about each sampler, written in her own hand** is provided by Belle for each example. One can imagine '**Belle**' practicing hemming, darning, patching & seaming at her school as a means of instilling in her the skills necessary for self-support & homemaking to produce the **beautiful pieces of social history** we see here today. In their workrooms **young girls would have had needlework lessons** where they would have been taught '**plain sewing**' in so doing acquiring the **skills necessary for making garments**.

**Provenance.** The Workbook was purchased from an **American dealer** who provided the **following provenance**. "*I acquired the Workbook in December 2017 from a non-profit (charity) shop in Portland, Oregon that takes donations of mostly craft and paper items, its initial purpose to help the teachers who couldn't afford to buy things for school projects. The shop has evolved and now and then they get antique and vintage items and sometimes very nice things like jewellery donated to them as well. The Workbook was part of a variety of items from the estate of an elderly lady whose family goes back for many generations. I would date the item from towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.*"

### **Other.**

These beautiful antiques have been recently **restored & re-presented in a stunning period ebonised and gilt frame**. The **individual pages** have been carefully **taken from the Work Book & the lovely little samplers detached**. The **surface dust** on the pieces have been carefully removed & then conserved by placing on an **acid free Conservation Pro mount board** with **fresh pure linen** laced over it. **A beautiful, poignant antique!**



