

Betsey Ellis Hutchinson and her sampler, 1831 - "The Plymouth School of Needlework"



Betsey was a descendant of William Brewster of the *Mayflower*. Her mother was Elizabeth Ellis Brewster, born in 1799, who married a Scottish seaman, Robert Hutchinson. Betsey, born in 1822 and reared in Plymouth, married Thomas Rider, a carpenter and the couple lived on Sandwich Street. Thomas Rider and Rebecca Rider were first cousins (Plymouth was a VERY small town, its population did not exceed 5000 until 1840). Betsey and Thomas had two daughters: Albertina, born in 1846 and Sarah, born in 1847.

Betsey Hutchinson's sampler has

- an octagonal center panel bordered with roses and rosebud sprays.
- a square frame house in greenery.
- paint is used for the sky, paint is also used on top of the embroidery to highlight the trees and grass.

The sampler, which measures approximately 16 3/4" wide x 17 1/8" high, has 3 alphabets separated by bands and a meander band of 5-petalled flowers worked on 30/32 count linen. The verse reads "Jesus permit thy gracious name to stand."

Betsey Ellis Hutchinson's sampler has been identified as coming from a particular Plymouth "school." This school of needlework has been tentatively identified as the Turner School and may have had a connection with Marie deVerdier Turner.

Marie deVerdier met and married Captain Lothrop Turner of Plymouth while he was on a voyage to Copenhagen in 1812. They booked passage to the United States on the *George Watson*, a ship

under the command of Captain John Russell but, after winds delayed her sailing, the ship was interned at Goteborg Sweden during the War of 1812.

The Turners finally arrived in Plymouth, perhaps in 1815. Two of Lothrop Turner's sisters, Deborah and Sarah, were conducting classes for girls. Maria joined them, adding painting and embroidery to the curriculum. Lothrop Turner died in 1824 while on a voyage to Havana. Marie moved to Boston to teach, but it is unknown at what school or for how long. She died in 1838 and is buried in Plymouth's Oak Grove Cemetery.

Plymouth samplers done by Turner's school have several distinguishing characteristics :

- center octagonal panels, giving greater emphasis to the border corners. Borders are usually full-blossom roses.
- houses are used as a common motif, usually set in elaborate landscapes.
- artistry and sophistication of a very high caliber combining paint, stitches and ink.

The Hutchinson sampler is not the finest example of the "Turner school," the needlework is less than meticulous compared to other samplers in private collections. The question is raised – was Betsey home schooled, working without a teacher and using a "Turner school" sampler as her model?

Or is her less sophisticated stitching a reflection of her very young age – 9 years?