

Elizabeth Gouch & her sampler, 1738

Elizabeth Gouch was a Boston girl. Her parents were Elizabeth Valentine and Joseph Gouch. Her birthdate is recorded on the sampler:

*Elizabeth Gouch was born the 29 day of
October 17 hundred & 27 on the day of the
great earthquake Finished 1738*



Elizabeth was born on Sunday, October 29th, 1727, the day of the "great earthquake." The quake, which was centered on the North shore, started at 10:00 p.m. at night and continued intermittently until dawn. The sampler was finished in 1738 when Elizabeth was 10 or 11 years old. Elizabeth died, unmarried, in 1747 at age 20.

Elizabeth Gouch's sampler has a verse from a 1715 book called "Divine Songs for Children" by Rev. Isaac Watts. Watts wrote lyrics for "Joy to the World" but few of his "divine songs" were as cheerful. Elizabeth's sampler verse reads

While monsters sporting on the flood
in scaly silver shine
Speak terribly their maker God
and lash the foaming brine.

The motifs used include hearts, diamonds, crowns, large ducks and small sheep (seen in this image). The motifs are more naturalistic than those seen in earlier samplers. The stitches are predominantly very fine cross stitch. On two sides, there are wide borders with leaves and carnations rising out of very small pots. The stitching on either side is surface stitching, while the center is counted. The sampler measures approximately 13 5/8" wide x 16 3/4" high.

