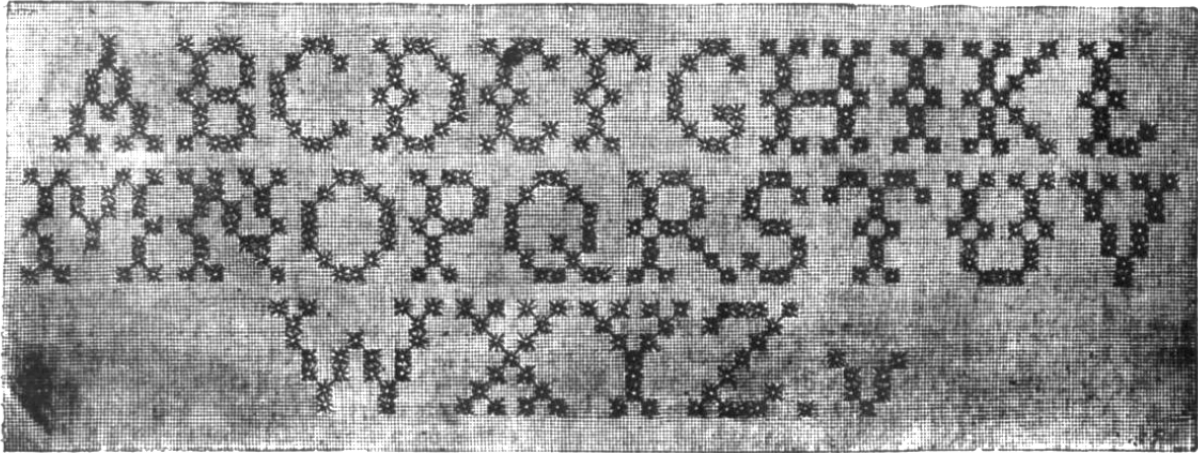


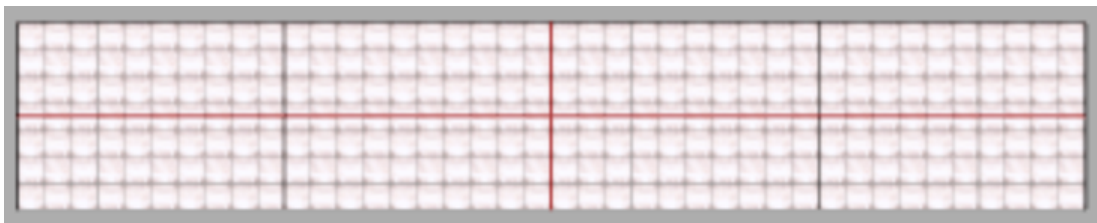
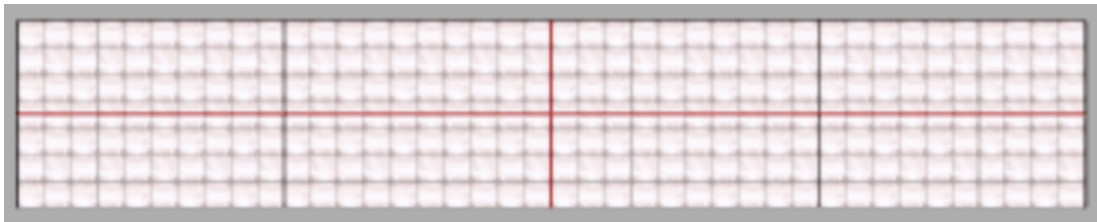
Alphabets and Monograms

Alphabet from the “Needlepoint Patterns” section of the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, [August 1871, page 108](#) (several more example alphabets of greater intricacy are on extra pages below.)



286.—ALPHABET FOR MARKING TABLE LINEN, &c.

Readers were encouraged to put their name or initials on an item to “mark” it as their own. Each letter is designed on a grid 7 blocks high. The width of letters differs between 3 blocks (Capital I) and 9 blocks (Capital M) but most are around 7 blocks wide, creating a square feeling to the letters. Using the grids below, practice making your own 1871 monogram from the letter designs below. Remember to leave a space between your letters.



Questions to consider:

What did it feel like creating your own name or initials from the 1871 stitch patterns? Did it take you longer or shorter than you imagined? Was it easy? Now imagine creating this with thread in cloth, where each “dot” would take two stitches rather than a pen mark.

Compare this alphabet with one of the more complex, ornate ones below. How do these alphabets differ? What are some ideas about culture at the time you can posit or infer from these craftwork items?

What about this object offers opportunity for women readers? With what restrictions?

How does this object demonstrate stereotypes of the ideal feminine notion of the time? How might it challenge them?

What does this leave you wanting to know more about? Do you have experience with any kind of craft similar to this, such as cross stitch, painting by number, plastic bead melting or stick-on diamond art? If so, what feels similar or different to you here?

Did you notice the missing letter? J (and also sometimes V) were often missing in letter sets because they were not part of the original Latin alphabet. Crafters could improvise by reversing the letter L or sometimes extending the letter I. By the late 1870s the magazine did include the letter J in some of its designs, but never whole alphabets! Old habits die hard.

Optional extension activity:

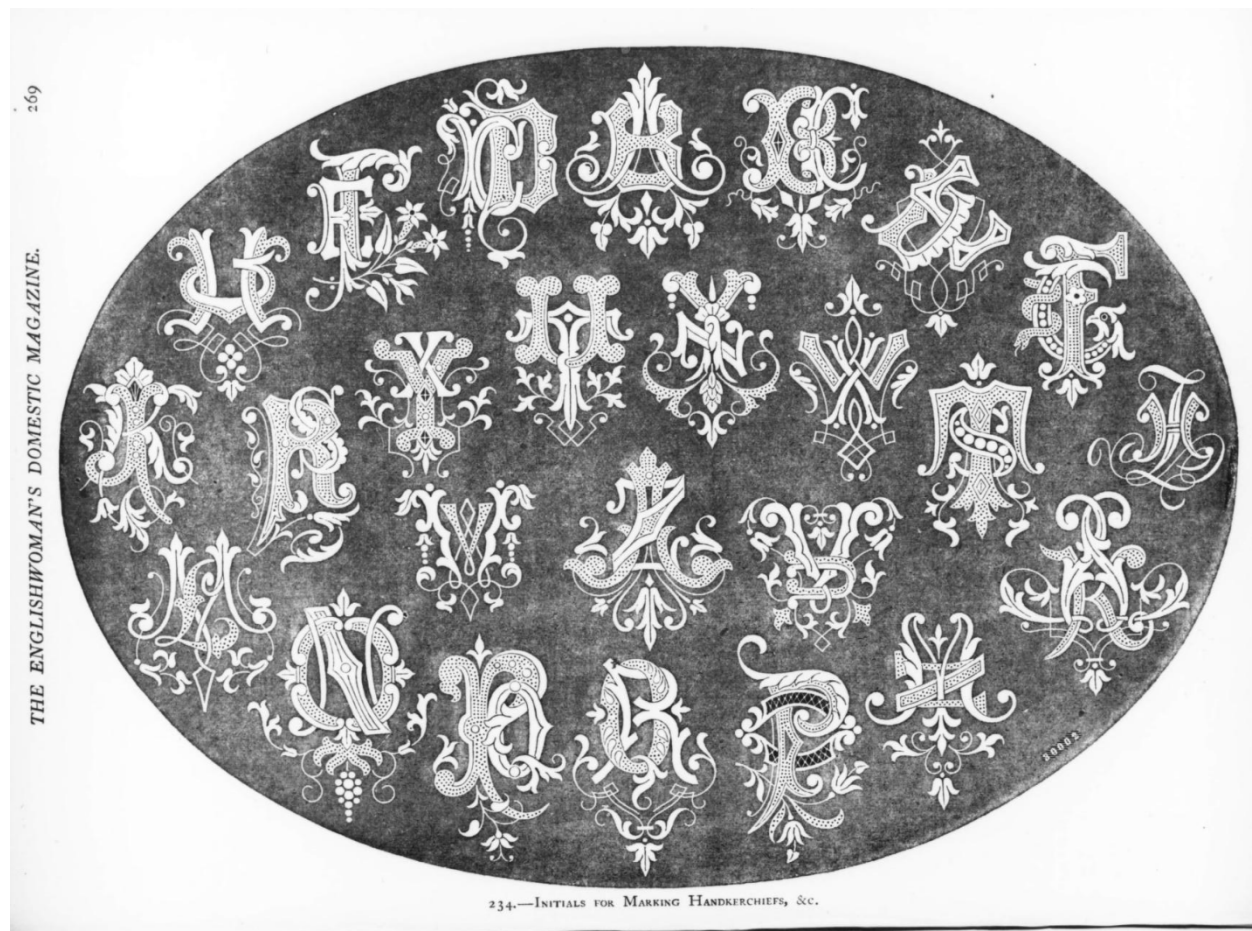
Create a bookmark with a word or monogram like this, using plastic canvas, yarn, and tapestry needles for a simpler task, or aida cloth, embroidery floss, and cross-stitch needles for a more realistic one. Finish the edges with a border and make a tassel for the top. See links below for help.

Paired Reading:

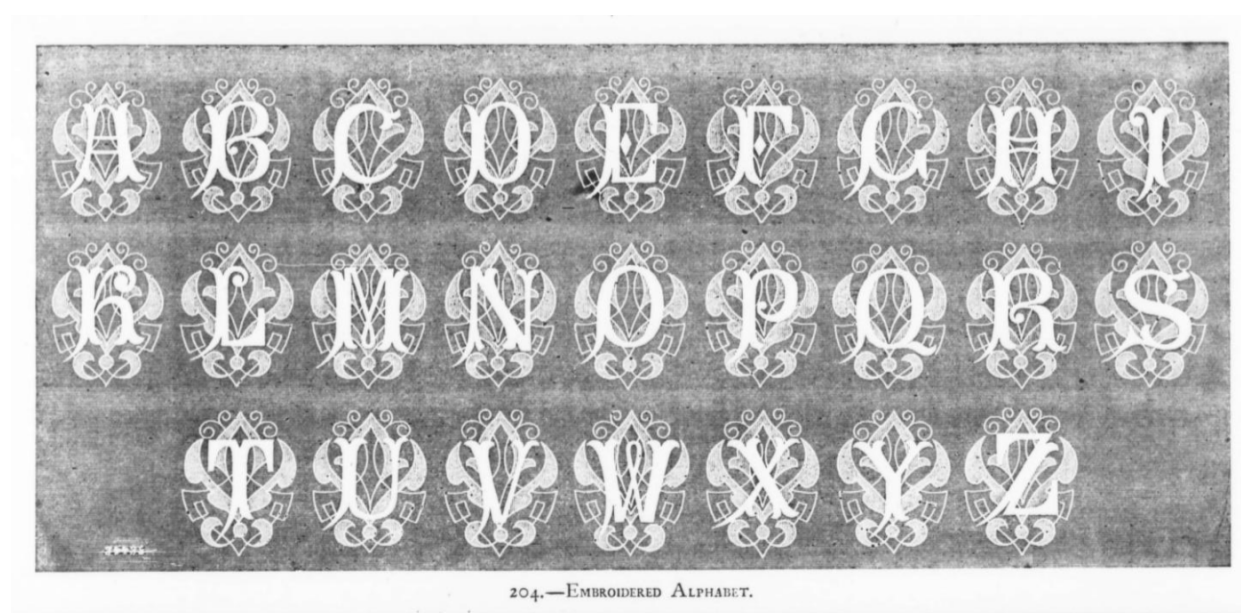
For helpful historical and cultural analysis of the role of such craftwork in female identity at the time, see Rozsika Parker's *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (Women's Press, 1984), specifically chapter 7.

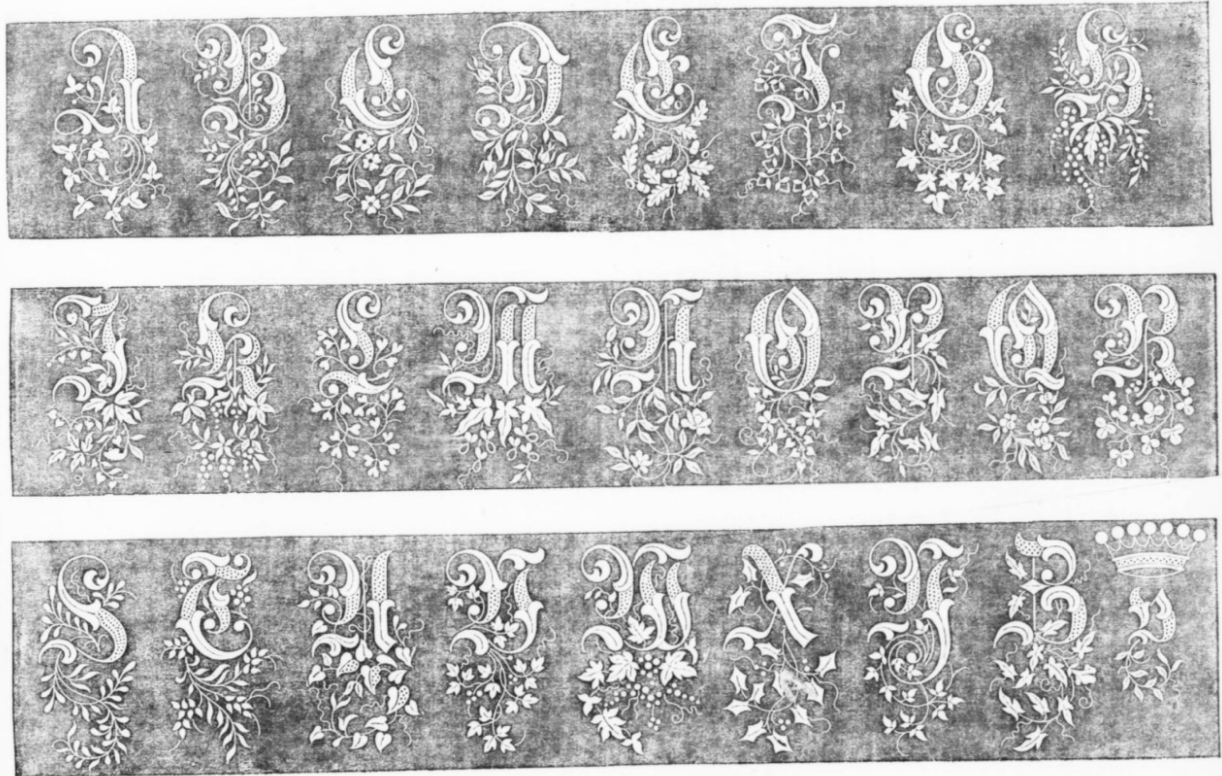
Additional Alphabets

Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine, May 1873, p. 269



This example includes two-letter designs intertwined as monograms. Can you decode them?





141.—EMBROIDERED ALPHABET FOR MARKING HANDKERCHIEFS.

141.—EMBROIDERED ALPHABET FOR MARKING HANDKERCHIEFS.

These letters are worked in satin stitch, overcast stitch, and point d'or, with fine French embroidery cotton.

Free Craftwork Alphabets for Adaptation

Each of the resources below allow for adapting and remixing to create patterns with messages of your choice.

[Yarn Tree Alphabets](#)

Six fairly simple contemporary needlepoint and cross-stitch alphabets ranging from 2 to 20 stitches high

[Lord Libidan's Alphabets](#)

Collection of 53 different craftwork alphabets ranging from 5 to 16 stitches high

[CyberStitcher's Free Graph Paper](#)

Printable Graph Paper for Making Charts – this option also allows you to upload an image for under the graph if desired.

[StitchPoint's Free Graph Paper](#)

This page includes free printable options that range from 5 to 20 stitches per inch – 14 is a common one for standard cross-stitch aida cloth

[StitchPoint's Free Cross Stitch Writer](#)

Generates a custom pattern from user-entered text in a range of six possible styles/fonts. Very helpful and customizable!

[StitchFiddle](#)

Converts uploaded images into a variety of different craftwork charts with StitchFiddle's free online pattern creator. This can be helpful for recreating large or complex letters and designs from historical pattern scans, as well as its use for regular images.

[Historic Tale Construction Kit](#)

Allows users to create digital designs in the style of the Bayeux Tapestry using an online interface