



Textiles Sale (39TX)

24th October 2015 GMT/BST

Lot 2210

Estimate: £8000 - £12000 + Fees

An Important Late 17th Century Quaker Band Sampler of Exceptional Quality, worked in coloured...

An Important Late 17th Century Quaker Band Sampler of Exceptional Quality, worked in coloured silk with decorative floral motifs, religious verse, white linen drawn thread work detailing to the centre, 22cm by 67cm (sampler only)

Provenance; the vendor has done numerous hours of research, and has managed to link this fabulous sampler to three similar examples.

This extraordinary example of embroidery clearly relates to a known group of three distinctive band samplers produced by Quaker girls in late 17th century London. Each of these three samplers are signed and dated; the earliest was made by Hannah Cullcup in 1687, and the other two were made by Alice and Margrett Jennings, and are dated 1692 and 1695 respectively. It is believed by the vendor that our sampler was executed by Mary Jennings, sister to Alice and Margrett.

Research amongst the meticulously kept records of the Quakers has shed light on the lives of the Jennings and Cullcup families. Gideon Cullcup (c.1640-1724) and his wife Elizabeth (d.1689) had five children, John (1671-1724) and Hannah (1677-1706) being the only two to survive infancy. Isaac Jennings (1647-1710) and his wife Mary (nee Bucknall) produced five daughters, only three of whom survived; Mary (b.1680), Margrett (b.1681), and Alice (b.1683).

Both families belonged to 'the Quakers in and about the Cities of London and Westminster'. The Quaker movement, initially called the Society of Friends, or Religious Society of Friends was founded by George Fox in the mid-seventeenth century during a period of religious dissent. By 1680 there were some 60,000 followers in England. The Quakers gathered in meeting houses, believing there is something of God in everyone and that they could have a direct relationship with God without priests and rituals. Each individual was valued equally, and central to their faith was the desire for social justice, peace, human rights and the importance of community life.

Families gathered together in meeting houses, and it was in these centres of community that children were educated, and may have been taught skills such embroidery and sewing. The Cullcup and Jennings families attended the same meetings at Devonshire House in Houndsditch, and their children likely knew each other.

All four samplers have the same overall design and style, and are executed using the same techniques; indeed some of the border design bands are near identical. All the samplers are headed by a wide band of decorative floral motifs executed in coloured silk interspersed with religious verse, and below are horizontal bands of white linen drawn thread work, with each

sampler showing largely the same patterns which only vary in position. Below the thread work our sampler has a longer passage of text, whereas the two Jennings' samplers have further decorative borders, one with text below. Whilst the Cullcup sampler is wider, the other three are the same width. Each sampler varies in length. However, our sampler is the shortest, possibly suggesting it was never finished which explains the absence of a signature and date.

When comparing all four samplers as a group, ours is more closely related to the Jennings' samplers than to the Cullcup sampler; although a shared source of pattern book or teacher for all four must have existed. Both the decorative border bands on our sampler replicate almost exactly those found on the Jennings' works, with only minor alterations of colour. All three also contain the same verse, 'Love Thee The Lord and He Will Be a Tender Father to Thee'. Such close similarities support the speculation that our sampler is the work of Mary Jennings. A common source of design for all three girls is likely, and indeed a fragment of a sampler dated 1661, which contains the same verse and decorative bands, may have been worked by the Jennings sisters' mother or governess. Further supporting the attribution to Mary is the inclusion of a second religious verse on our sampler which mentions 'Young Isaac', perhaps a choice made in honour of her father, Isaac Jennings.

Despite the uncertainty in attributing the piece to a specific hand, our sampler is clearly closely related to the three signed works and remains an extraordinary object of exceptional quality and condition.

Bibliography:

The Goodhart Samplers, D Bromiley Phelan, E-L Hansson, J Holdsworth, 2008

The Point of the Needle: Five Centuries of Samplers and Embroideries, D Bromiley Phelan, 2001

Hannah Culleup or Cullcup, 1687, linen plain weave embroidered with silk and linen, 83 x 42.5cm

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Accession No. 43.276)

Alice Jennings, 1692, linen plain weave embroidered with silk and linen, 81 x 21.5cm

National Trust: Dr Douglas Goodhart Collection at Montacute House, Somerset (NT 597712)

Margrett Jennings, 1695, linen plain weave embroidered with silk and linen, 73.5 x 21.5cm

National Trust: Dr Douglas Goodhart Collection at Montacute House, Somerset (NT 597713)

Margrett was noted as being called Mary in the birth listings, a misreading of 'Margt' by the scribe.

The vendor has collated birth, marriage, death and tax records for the Jennings and Cullcup families, which can be made available on request.

See Bromiley-Phelan, Hansson & Holdsworth, 2008 p.133