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# The Laces Of Ipswich: The Art And Economics Of An Early American Industry, 1750-1840



## Synopsis

In its lace making heyday in the late eighteenth century, Ipswich, Massachusetts boasted 600 lace makers in a town of only 601 households. Marta Cotterell Raffel's study is the first to focus specifically on the Ipswich lace industry in the wider world of eighteenth-century work. She explores how lacemakers learned their skills and how they combined a traditional lace making education with attention to market-driven changes in style. She shows how the tools of lacemaking were intrinsic parts of the craft, and how the shawls, bonnets, and capes created by the lacemakers designated the social class, and sometimes even the political affiliation, of those that wore them. With extensive research based on hundreds of previously unseen artifacts and documents, Raffel shows how this preindustrial labor and craft - absolutely central to the economic health of Ipswich - created and sustained forms of early American culture such as fashion and political symbolism, and shaped an entire community for several generations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

While researching handmade laces of the eighteenth century for a grad-school project, I came across a small reference to Ipswich laces in an article from the early part of the twentieth century. I was totally intrigued by the idea of there being a handmade lace industry in New England. I had previously believed everyone was too puritanical to make lace (in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, there was a prohibition on the wearing of laces.) Further research led me to this fascinating little book. The author clearly has a passion for the subject, and she follows that up with

some very good research on multiple aspects of the industry, the society at large, the women who made the laces, the women who wore them, as well as the identification and characteristics of the various types of laces made there. She includes primary source documents (a report on the industry in Alexander Hamilton's papers, as well as original receipts and account books) , visual sources (portraits), and lots of original artifacts (pillows, prickings, bobbins, finished laces, and surviving garments on which they were used.) Definitely worth reading by anyone interested in American history, textile and fashion history, and lace and lace-making enthusiasts. Well done!

If you are interested in bobbin lace, history of textiles in America, early American industries or just history in general this is a wonderful book. Full of information and has great photos. The history of this style of lace is something that needs to be appreciated and not lost to us today. I only wish that lace such as this was still as valued and could support those who are still producing this beautiful style of laces.

My ancestors came from England to Ipswich, MA in the 1820s and 1830s, and helped revolutionize the lace and hosiery industries there, so I had a personal interest in this subject. This book explores both the cottage industry and the mills, and discusses the lace patterns in detail. I learned a lot from this book! Lace patterns denoted social standing; George Washington visited Ipswich when he heard about the industry; lace makers passed their skills down to their children, etc. Granted, it's a narrow topic, but if you're interested in Ipswich's contribution to the industrial age in America, you'll enjoy reading this book.

Spending a lot of summers with my cousin, Susan, who grew up in Ipswich, and because of my love for lace, fabric and textiles in general, I purchased this book and my own antique lace bobbin pillow. A lovely book full of history and lace making techniques. A must for anyone else that appreciates America's young past.

This is a wonderful book on the history of bobbin lace being made in America. It's well written with examples of the lace and even includes some patterns to try. A wonderful addition to any library on bobbin lace makers and making.

Very well researched and written book about America's first all woman industry.

I work bobbin lace and the book was extremely interesting to me.

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