

Is there a tatting fairy? Does she reign over our garden of tatted flowers?

I think there must have been several over the centuries. Surely our fairy visited the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and inspired the ladies to wile away the hours amongst the flowers with the knotting of fringes and the forming of net bags.

And was it not she who stirred the waters of the lotus pool at Amarna into a lacy froth which the sisters of Nefertiti recreated in weaving collars of gold and turquoise and coral?

Did our tatting fairy fall in love with a sailor? Was it true that she captured the foam of the sea to make a cape to wear as she paced the beach waiting for one who never returned?

Or perhaps our tatting fairy settled once in a garden on the seven hills and whispered into the ear of Catherine de Medici inspiring her to spread the arts of needle and thread across Europe.

Or maybe our tatting fairy was a contemplative one who found delight in walled convent gardens and inspired the sisters to learn, preserve and teach the magic ways of the needle.

Or was it just an ordinary fisherman repairing his nets who found his shuttle could carry delicate threads, too?

In every garden that our tatting fairy visited , she left her mark in the delicate tracery of the veins of a leaf and in the subtle colors of the blossoms. And she left behind a caretaker, a constant gardener for the garden of tatting

To those guardians of the early years of true tatting I would offer a tatted pansy.

A pansy which symbolizes loving and kind thoughts for all tatters known to history just as anonymous. Without them the garden of tatting would not have been ready for the first visit of a young lady called Eleonore Riego de la Branchardiere.

Mlle. Riego published her first book, "Knitting, Crochet and Netting" at the age of 12 in 1846. She went on to publish 72 books on the needle arts of which 13 were tatting books. Mlle Riego began with borders and insertions in tatting and went on to create gold-medal award winning tatting featured at the world expositions 1851, 1855, 1862 and 1872.

In acknowledgment of her absolutely marvelous achievements in tatting, such as the use of picots to join the rings and the use of a central ring as the starting point for larger pieces, using both needle and shuttle to tat, to her I would offer a tatted rose of gold.

But there were lesser known tatters in our garden, too, such as Mrs. Mee who may have originated the true join which greatly improved the construction of tatting. To Mrs. Mee and the tatters known just as A. Lady, I would give a bouquet of tatted forget-me-nots, for they will never be forgotten.

Another tatter who kept our tatted garden flourishing was Therese de Dillmont. She went beyond edgings and insertions to create large-scale projects, added on second shuttle and two colors and is credited with inventing the Josephine "knot."

Her book the "Encyclopedia of Needlework" published by DMC 121 years ago is still being reprinted today. To her and DMC, I would offer tatted boughs of pine honoring their loyalty to tatting and needlework.

Tatters both humble and noble have worked long to cultivate tatting techniques and transplant them around the world.

One shining example is Lady Katherine Hoare whose book, "The Art of Tatting" (1910) was neither an instruction book nor a pattern book but rather a book of inspiration using photos of Lady Hoare's work and the tatting of Marie, Queen of Romania.

Queen Marie's work in tatting used real gold and precious gems and pearls (mostly religious items) in the pieces. Lady Hoare made popular the chain and she wrote: "with two shuttles and an imaginative brain there is no end to the designs that may be invented." Words still true today.

Their mutual affection and friendship and love of tatting added fresh stock to our tatted garden. To them I offer a tatted bouquet of daisies and marigolds.

The dawn of the 20th century saw tatting begin to spread like kudzu across the United States.

New stock lines of tatting hybridized by Frau Tina Frauberger and Emmy Liebert in the old world were transplanted into the gardens of the new world by tatters such as Anna Valeire, The Modern Priscilla tatters, Anna Wuerful Brown, Marie Antoinette Hees, and Virginia Snow.

And needlework articles published by Anne Orr in Southern Woman's Magazine, Good Housekeeping and Better Homes and Gardens made tatting patterns available to all.

Anne Champe Orr (1875-1946) was endlessly fascinated with needle work and designed and sold hundreds of thousands of patterns for cross stitch, quilting, crochet, filet crochet and tatting.

She also provided employment for women in the Appalachians making appliqued quilts and delicate tablecloths for sale.

Anne is thought to have developed the split ring technique. The tatting community is grateful for her many tatting patterns. For her optimism during hard economic times I offer a tatted bouquet of sunny chrysanthemums.

Tatting had many ups and downs during the second half of the 1900's and through those long years, I believe that Myrtle Hamilton was one of the constant gardeners of the art of tatting.

Myrtle produced wonderful designs of all kinds which were published in the Workbasket, Stitch n Sew, Popular Needlework, Old Time Crochet and many others. I firmly believe that Myrtle kept tatting alive in the US for decades.

Myrtle was born at a time that let her experience many great moments in history. From world wars to landing on the moon, from horses to autos, from news 6 weeks old to CNN live reports, she lived it all. The tatting world has been blessed with not only wonderful tatters throughout these decades, but also dedicated teachers and designers like Myrtle Hamilton who helped prevent tatting from becoming a lost art.

I will always remember Myrtle and her kindness to me. She encouraged me when I began to publish tatting patterns and gifted me with bits of her own tatting. After entering a nursing home, she tatted less but was tickled to learn that the online tatting class had named the classroom after her and she posted the first page from the "Tatting Online, the Official Tat-Chat Book 1999" with its dedication to her on her bulletin board. Myrtle tats with the angels now. For her many kindnesses I offer her a bouquet of lavender blue tatted hyacinths.

For the members of the Palmetto Tatters Guild I offer a tatted bouquet of sunflowers, iris, lavender, columbine, daisies and cherry blossoms.

Daisies to symbolize their friendship and graciousness to tatters,
Sunflowers for their sunny smiles,
Iris for their eloquent words of inspiration,
Columbine for never giving up on tatting,
Lavender for the happiness they bring to tatters,
And, cherry blossoms for the sweetness of character they show by their good works in sharing tatting.

Thank You.