Needlework & Textiles

And of all the young girls of Ireland, Emer was the one Cuchulain thought worth courting... the best worker with her needle of the young girls of Ireland, for that would be the only one would be a fitting wife for him....

—From Cuchulain of Muirthemne. Translated from the ancient Irish by Lady Augusta Gregory

EMBROIDERY and drawthread work have been highly valued in Ireland since ancient times. Crocheted Irish lace gained popularity in the 1840s, when it was introduced as a cottage industry to provide extra income for households affected by the famine.

Some lace patterns, for example, Clones, Limerick, and Carrickmacross, take their names from particular locations but are produced throughout Ireland.

Computerized sewing machine programs have simplified the production of colorful Celtic embroidery, like that used on Irish dance dresses. However, some embroiderers continue to work by hand, adapting ideas from ancient sources to produce striking new designs.

HATS: Having the “proper topper” for weddings, garden parties, holidays, and other special events is an important part of Irish fashion. Milliners and “hat hire” stores are found throughout Northern Ireland.