



BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM

FUN AT HOME

LEARN TO SEW

When people think of sewing, they think of sewing machines. Sewing machines are wonderful but are still a fairly new invention. What were humans doing before machines? Sewing by hand!

Humans started sewing by hand as far back as 40,000 years ago. The original sewing needles, like all tools, were made from bone, antler, and ivory. At this time, humans were making cordage, or twined fibers, to use as thread.

The first record of an invention like the sewing machine dates to a man named Thomas Saint in 1790. The first successful machine came in 1830 from a Frenchman named Barthelemy Thimmonnier. On the American front, no one is as well known as Isaac Merrit Singer. Singer worked off the designs of other inventors, including Thimmonnier and American Walter Hunt, to create his Singer Sewing machine. Since its creation, it has allowed for easier and quicker creations. There's an example of a sewing machine in our 1890s Farm House.

There have been improvements since Singer's original designs. For example, Helen Blanchard has 22 patents for sewing machine related inventions! Even though machines make tasks easier, it's always a good idea to learn how to do things by hand. Learn two basic stitches to fix and sew some projects of your own!



Bone needles found at Historic Jamestown



A Singer Sewing Machine, Smithsonian Archives



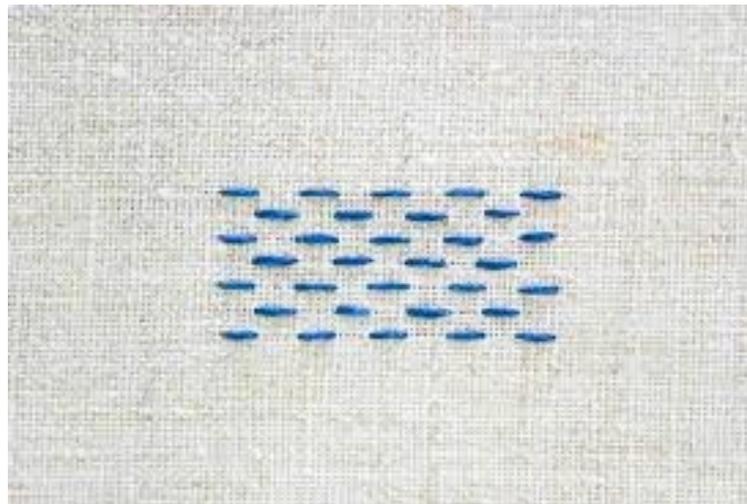
Helen Blanchard

CRAFT: STITCHES

Here is an outline for two basic stitches. All you need is a needle, thread, and some scrap pieces of fabric. Once you get the hang of these, search for more to master!

The Running Stitch

1. Cut a piece of string, about twice the length of the piece you want to sew.
2. Knot one end of the thread.
3. Thread the needle.
4. Bring the needle up through the fabric. The knot should be on the “inside” of your project.
5. Move forward in a straight line about a ½ inch. Then poke the needle down through the fabric.
6. Move ahead on the underside, still in a straight line, and bring the needle back up.
7. Continue steps 4-6 until you are finished with the edge of your project. It should look like a line of dashes.
8. Knot the thread on the underside of the fabric before cutting off any excess.



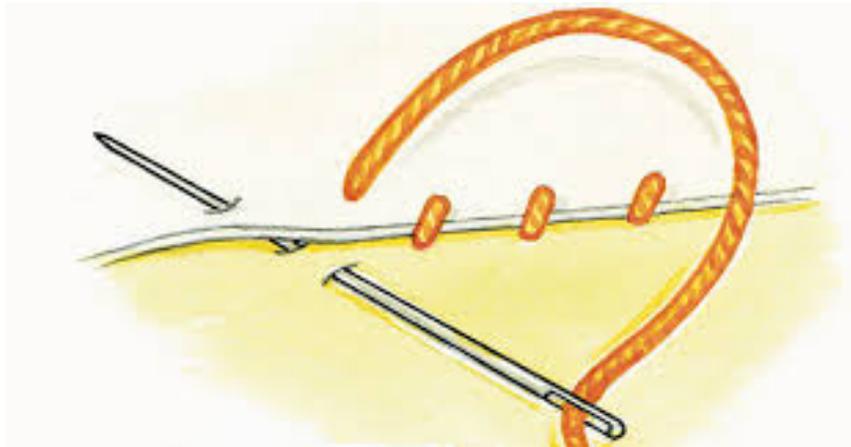
Running stitches are good for seams and assembling. It's not the strongest stitch out there but is a great one to learn when just starting out.

CRAFT: STITCHES

The Whip Stitch

This stitch requires two pieces of scrap fabric.

1. Cut a piece of string, about twice the length of the piece you want to sew.
2. Knot one end of the thread.
3. Thread the needle. Line up two pieces of fabric edge on top of edge.
4. Start by pulling your needle up through the top layer only. This is to keep your knot hidden between the two pieces of fabric.
5. Poke your needle through the bottom layer of fabric directly beneath the hole you just made. Pull up through that first hole in the top fabric. Make sure the stitch is snug.
6. Poke through the bottom hole again but this time angle the needle to come out in front of the hole in the top fabric. Pull through.
7. Go through the bottom hole of the second stitch and angle the needle to come out before the second hole on the top.
8. Repeat steps 6-8 until finished. When you make the final stitch, just make it straight up and down, not angled. Then come up through the bottom hole and knot the thread between layers.



Whip stitches are good for a stronger seam between fabrics.