

A Stitch in Time

The Who's Your Daddy? exhibition and conference examine needlework's role in family relationships in the 18th and 19th centuries.

by Sheri Masters



The work of steady hands and generous hearts will be on display in Winterthur's *Who's Your Daddy? Families in Early American Needlework* exhibition this fall. This selection of lovingly crafted samplers, reticules, and other pieces of needlework from the museum's collection explores family relationships in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Because most of the pieces on display were made by women, "the exhibition is sure to intrigue those interested in women's history," says Linda Eaton, Winterthur's curator of textiles.

"By taking information from these pieces and researching it, you can find out what women's lives were really like."

Sarah Wistar embroidered this silk picture in 1752. Later, she gave it to her great-niece Rebecca, probably when she was learning to stitch.

In conjunction with the display of needlework, the *Who's Your Daddy?* conference will take place October 17–18, with optional pre-conference classes October 16. Sessions exploring family connections and histories revealed through the stitchery of American women will be led by outstanding researchers in material culture, including Dr. Marla Miller of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and Carol Humphrey, honorary keeper of textiles at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge,

England. Intensive needlework classes and field trips allow attendees to create high-quality reproductions of historic needlework pieces, delve into women's history, and visit stellar local collections. ❖



The *Who's Your Daddy?* exhibition runs October 4, 2008–January 9, 2009, in the Society of Winterthur Fellows Gallery. Register early for the conference, as space is limited. Call 800.448.3883 or visit winterthur.org.

An advertisement for a brass sconce. The sconce is ornate, with a central candle holder and decorative scrollwork. The background is a dark blue gradient. Text is written in a white, elegant serif font.

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