

Stitchers Hidzaway!

2005 Sturbridge Fun Report

with
Ellen Chester of [With My Needle](#)

With 40 stitchers, Sturbridge 2005 was the biggest retreat yet, and WOW, these stitchers arrived ready for a good time!! They traveled from CT, DE, FL, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY and PA to Old Sturbridge Village, a recreated 1850's-era community. The retreat was held right in the Village in a large conference hall with wonderful wide-plank wooden floors and appropriate décor for the location. And the star of the retreat? Ellen Chester of [With My Needle](#)!

Ellen and her husband Tom traveled from Ohio to spend some time in New England prior to the retreat, and I met them that evening for a delicious dinner at The Publick House in Sturbridge. It was great to finally meet Ellen in person after more than 2 years of email! (It took me over a year to convince her to teach!!) She's an itty-bitsy thing – just look at her here next to me (I'm 5'6"). WOW. I felt like a giant!!



Ellen may be little, but she sure wasn't short on wonderful instructions, tips, stories, and giggles! Class time just flew by!! But, as usual, I'm getting ahead of myself!!

First, those wonderful stitchers were just models of patience <grin> as they waited for 9 a.m. and the start of the retreat. Of course, I had the doors shut so that helped! They gathered in a large hallway and helped themselves to coffee and pastries as the minutes ticked by. *Finally*, the moment arrived and I opened the door and in they poured! The once quiet room was filled with chatter and laughter and excitement! Everyone picked out a seat, where Fun Packs were already waiting for them.



Some dove right into those Fun Packs, while others went right for Stash Enhancement, courtesy of Chris from Chris's Collection and Pam from Olde Colonial Designs. There was so much to see! The shops brought in a fantastic assortment of charts, accessories, baskets, and the wonderful wood products made by Pam's husband.



Pam from Olde Colonial Designs



Chris from Chris's Collection



The Fun Packs were great! Items were donated by Brightneedle, Brittercup Designs, Chris's Collection, Elizabeth's Designs, Glory Bee, Jeannette Douglas Designs, monsterbubbles, Olde Colonial Designs, Rosewood Manor, Stichey Kitty, Sue Hillis Designs, The Prairie Schooler, The Victoria Sampler, Udder Cream, and With My Needle! Thank you SO much, DONORS!

A stitcher found something unusual in her Fun Pack, which meant she received a special door prize. And the stitcher who traveled the farthest, Dawn from Florida, received a "Hop into Bed" nightshirt with frogs in colorful jammies jumping around on a bed! Yes, a nightshirt for a stitcher covered with FROGS!!! For those not in the know, when stitchers say they have been visited by the FROG, what they mean is that they have made some mistakes and must now remove those stitches (RIPPIT...RIPPIT....RIPPIT!). There was a lot of laughter over that nightshirt and many suffered from stitcher's envy and wanted one of their own. So much so, that I looked into it and am happy to tell you that Stitcher's Hideaway is now selling them! I say, Embrace your Inner Frog!!



After some more door prizes, eventually we settled down a bit to begin our classtime with Ellen. We eagerly opened up our *Call of the Sea* kits, fondling our linen and threads as any sane stitcher would do. It wasn't long before we were able to begin stitching as Ellen instructed.

Ellen's *Call of the Sea* is a wonderful needlecase with really cool optional accessories. To the left is a picture of the needlebook closed, to the right the accessories, and below are inside and outside views.



The time just flew and suddenly it was time for lunch! Our dining room was directly across a hall from our classroom and so we were able to just leave everything behind during our meals. And oh, what meals! The food was prepared by Bidwell Tavern, the main restaurant for Old Sturbridge Village. Many of the items they serve are traditional New England fare, such as Indian pudding, fancy relishes, pot roast, etc. The meals were generous and delicious. I found myself eating half portions just to get through the meals and still try everything -- oh, except for my chicken pot pie -- oh, man. I ate every last morsel!



During all our meal times there were door prizes and more door prizes. We were all able to see what each person received and that was so much fun! Door prizes were donated by Brightneedle, Calico Crossroads, Chris's Collection, Earth Threads, Finger Work, PieceWork Magazine (Interweave Press, Inc.), Jeannette

Douglas Designs, Kreinek, Glory Bee, M-Designs, Nordic Needle, Rosewood Manor, Stitcher's Hideaway, Stitchy Kitty, The MonkeyWorks, and The Victoria Sampler.



Door prize from Kreinek



Door prize from Finger Work

After lunch, Aimee Newell, Old Sturbridge Village Curator of Textiles and Fine Arts, presented a “Curator's Choice Show and Tell” from the OSV collection. The Village collection includes 60,000+ artifacts including about 120 samplers, as well as needlework pictures, embroidered quilts and whitework purses, collars and cuffs. Oh, it was FANTASTIC!!! We saw samplers and other embroidered items (including wallets, pocketbooks and reticules) from rural New England stitched during the late 1700s and early 1800s. Many of the artifacts had never been on public exhibit! In some cases, we were able to learn a little about the individuals who stitched the items. It was just fascinating.





After our lecture we had time to explore the OSV Gift Shop, stash enhance, and stitch to our heart's content before dinner.



At dinner there were more door prizes and fun, and then next up was a surprise for them all from me! They each received a Lavender in Lacis kit, a design I created for the Minnetonka 2005 retreat but with a few changes to reflect "Old Sturbridge Village." *Gorgeous* threads were donated by Weeks Dye Works for the project -- Periwinkle, Ultraviolet, Sugar Plum, and Cadet. It was stitched on 28 count Cashel Lavender Bliss. The kits alone looked so pretty with all those colors together. (Thanks Deb, Lauren, and Shirley for helping to assemble all those kits!)

In the process of teaching the project, I gave them all a demonstration of needleweaving and stab-method stitching that I don't suppose any of them will forget for some time to come! I was so excited to see that by Saturday evening some of the stitchers had made incredible progress on the piece and were all set to do their needleweaving! About a month after the retreat, Cynthia emailed me a scan of her completed Lavender in Lacis! I was absolutely tickled to see that she had completed it!

The next morning, we gathered for a delicious breakfast and more door prizes before heading to class. We spent most of our time working on the sailboat portion of the *Call of the Sea* because it called for several different stitches. The sails especially are a very creative use of stitchery.



That evening I had yet another surprise for everyone! I created a Sturbridge 2005 design just for them. We were so fortunate to have Olde Willow Stitchery donate their beautiful threads for this project! I turned mine into a little pillow (here it is deflated for scanning).



Next we had our own Show 'n Tell time. It was GREAT!! We are SO talented!!! I'm not kidding!! I see something new and fascinating at each Show 'n Tell. At this one there was a book one stitcher had made for her granddaughter. It was absolutely sweet and adorable, with stitching done on many pages. It was one of those things that just makes everyone say, "Aw....." There were so many masterpieces. One person brought in some bead work. Oh, I love Show 'n Tell! Ellen said, "I have never seen such a group of creative stitchers all in one group." I have to agree. It was just fabulous.



During the retreat Ellen told us that Jackie du Plessis of It's Fine-ally Finished! has done some of her finishing for her, and what amazing work she does! What's really great is that Jackie will be teaching at Sturbridge 2006!

What a wonderful group of stitchers! What a blast we had! There were many hugs and teary eyes when we finally had to part, but there are so many opportunities for us to meet again in the future. Until next time, everybody!

Love from Sue





"I wanted to say thank you so very much for such a wonderful weekend in Sturbridge. Thanks too for the wonderful door prize from Sudberry. I really appreciate your thoughtfulness in making my birthday special and one I won't soon forget! I'm looking forward to Sturbridge next year." Barbara

"I really must reiterate what a wonderful weekend I had with you and all the 40 other stitchers at the Sturbridge retreat. Ellen's design is beautiful and her teaching style is informed and entertaining. She is lovely. Thank you for all of your efforts and gifts and for the creation and management of Stitcher's Hideaway. I don't

know how you do all that you do! And I especially thank you for the opportunity to meet some very talented stitchers who know how to have fun! I enjoyed every moment and am looking forward to next year." Bev

"What a wonderful weekend we had!! This was my first Stitcher's Hideaway weekend and I had a ball. The project by Ellen Chester is absolutely beautiful. I can't wait to get back to stitching it again. Everyone was so nice; the food was fantastic and you took care of each and every detail. It is very obvious that you put a lot of time and thought into the entire weekend. You are a pleasure to be with, always upbeat and happy. The door prizes were wonderful and even though I was almost the last one to win (as is usual for me!!) I got a magnificent prize..WOW!! Thanks so much for the beautiful Sudberry box. I am thrilled to death with it and it was worth the wait. I thoroughly enjoyed the talk and display of antique samplers by Aimee Newell and also loved the "show and tell" portion of the last evening. What inspiration I got from all the beautiful items that were shown...all in all it was a wonderful weekend. Please keep me on your mailing list as I do not want to miss the next wonderful event. Hugs and "goodbye" from me to you!!" ~ Carol

"I thought everything went great - but seeing the antique samplers was the best!" ~ Joanne

"Thanks so very much for the opportunity to attend my first retreat. Everyone couldn't have been nicer, the food was perfect, and I enjoyed Ellen so much. Kudos to you for the time and energy you have to have put in to make it a dream weekend for us all. ;>) The door prizes were so cool!" God Bless, Colleen

"To say "thank you" just doesn't seem like enough. This was my first retreat and I cannot begin to tell you the experience I had. Magnificent, wonderful, astounding. You are one first class woman. This past weekend will be an experience I will never forget. I met lots of new stitchers, learned a lot from Ellen, shopped for new stash (which was all so beautiful) and ate like no tomorrow. Last night I told my family all about it and showed them everything that I received while there. I couldn't stop talking. I am soooooo looking forward to the next one. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!!!" ~ Cynthia



"Once again, you outdid yourself this weekend. I had an absolutely wonderful time! I am so glad I got the opportunity to meet Ellen as I'm a fan of her work. Everyone is always so friendly at these events. The atmosphere

was so laid back and comfortable. Great choice of shop owners too! My only fear is that word of mouth will spread the news of this fabulous hideaway, making it difficult to get into in the future.” ~Deb

“I just want to thank you for all the work and effort you put into Stitcher’s Hideaway. I had such a wonderful time at Sturbridge. The projects and surprises were spectacular. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.” ~Barbara

“What an AWESOME weekend it was at Sturbridge! Gosh, where do I start? It was only my second Hideaway, but as usual, kudos to you for putting it all together and making Stitcher's Hideaway what it is! I also LOVE my new shirt...that melon color is yummy and I love the 3/4 length sleeves. A stitcher's "Must-have"!!! :)

Ellen Chester is a fun teacher, isn't she? The vendors were great, too. I picked up several new tools for the stitch bag, as well as STASH! I went through it all yesterday and now I just want to start about 5 new projects! I belong to a "Monday-Night" group; we meet each week, and tonight I'm bringing the "Fun Pack" to show them, plus Ellen's piece for "Show-and-tell". WICKED!!!!

I know I shouldn't wish the time away, but I'm already looking so forward to Mystic, and meeting Thea Dueck! And I really can't wait to start stitching "Gingerbread Garden"...what's not to love? Even the name is so cool!” ~ Karin



“Once again, you have made this retreat so special for everyone. You are totally spoiling us with the wonderful bag of goodies and door prizes. It never ceases to amaze me how much fun stuff you get for us and that everyone wins a door prize!! Aimee was very interesting and the vintage needlework she showed us was awesome. The food was outstanding and delicious! Loved Ellen and her project...I can't wait to finish it!! Both vendors had really nice stuff for all of us. And last but not least, thank you Sue for all of the work you put into these retreats...it is truly appreciated!!” ~ Linda



“You did a wonderful job!...so organized and thoughtful! Sturbridge was my first visit with Stitcher's Hideaway...but it won't be my last! I'm hoping to make it at least an annual trip!” Nancy

“Another wonderful experience at a Stitcher's Hideaway. It was great so see old friends and meet all the first timers. Ellen is a wonderful teacher and a delightful person--soooo creative! I truly had a great time even if I had NO will power and blew my diet to smithereens! OH well, as Scarlett said "I'll think about that tomorrow". Thank you, Sue, and all your helpers, too. Sue - what a fabulous, fun weekend! Many thanks - you're doing a terrific job!” ~ Sali

“What a great weekend, we sure had a good time. Everything was wonderful, Ellen Chester, Aimee Newell, Olde Sturbridge Village, the food, and all the participants made it just delightful - but it never would have happened without all the hard work and planning you put into it. Thanks again for everything, and I hope to be able to attend another one of your retreats sometime.” ~ Martha



Thank you again for one of the nicest Stitching Memories ever! I had a wonderful time at Stitcher's Hideaway! You did such an outstanding job organizing the event, and were out-of-control-generous with giveaways and surprises and extra-special kits! Every part of those 2 days had your special touch – your thoughtfulness, your enthusiasm over sharing all your surprises with us, all the lovely little touches (right down to putting together OSV as a site with Ellen, Chris, Old Colonial, and Aimee – what an in-sync choice of participant/presenters!). Thanks again for everything – God bless you – and enjoy the pics!” ~ Ann Marie







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