

# Finishing: Fancy Hemming and Needlelace Edgings in the 16th C

Fall Captaincy AS XL

Sabrina de la Bere

## Buttonhole Stitch and Other Fine Edgings --

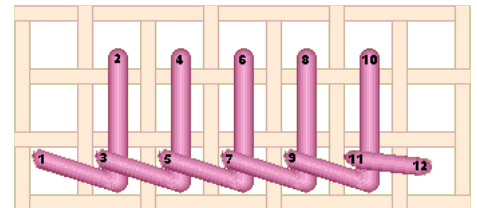
The Nils Sture (d. 1567) shirt in Uppsala Cathedral's Museum has what appears to be a Buttonhole Stitch edging in a colored silk thread. (<http://swein.campus.luth.se/gallery/Domkyrkan2004?page=1>). The description in the book *Textile Treasures of Uppsala Cathedral* by Agnes Geijer, published by Amqvist & Wiksell: Stockholm 1964, merely says that the edges are finished with "fine needlework" (pg. 69).



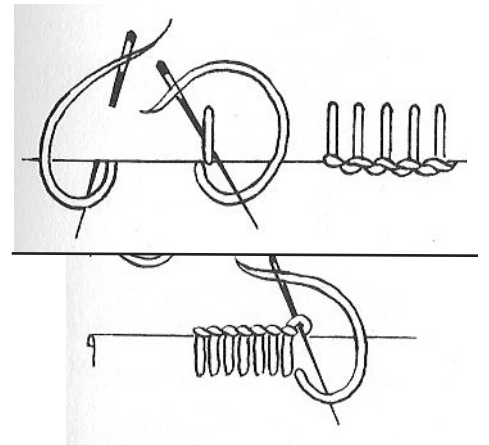
Bronzino Portrait of a Unknown Lady, 1530-2  
Bartolomeo Veneto Portrait of a Young Lady (1520-30)

The Bronzino and Veneto portraits, above, also seem to show Buttonhole Stitch as a form of edging.

Several other portraits show a fine line of color - black or gold running along the edge of the chemise. This could be a fine cord or another form of bound edging like plaited edge stitch or looped edging.



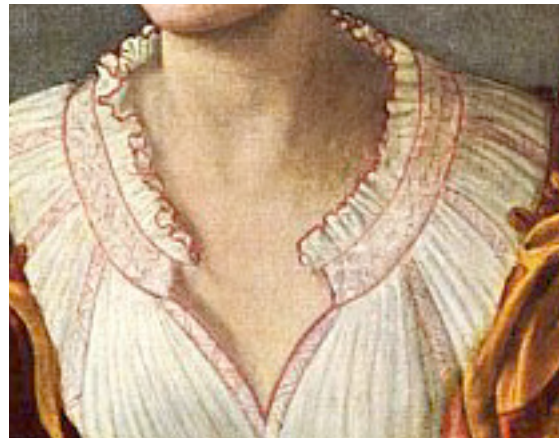
Edward IV by Hans Holbein 1541-2  
Venetian School, Portrait of a Lady 1525



On the next page see:  
Bartolomeo Veneto Portrait of a Lady 1520-30 and Paolo Cavazzola Portrait of a Lady

Plaited Edge Stitch and Looped Edging from Barbara Snook's *Embroidery Stitches*, Batsford: London 1963, page 109.

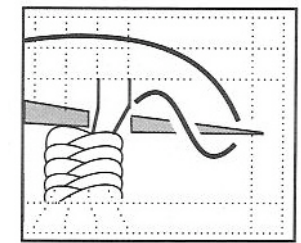
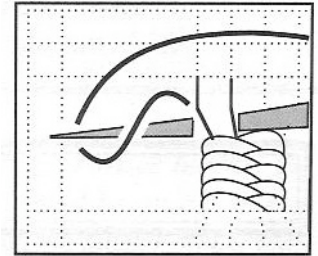
Buttonhole Stitch Diagram from Johanna Cormier ([http://webstitch.designwest.com/needle\\_stitch.html](http://webstitch.designwest.com/needle_stitch.html)). Hemstitch Diagram from Classic Stitches (<http://www.classicstitches.com>). Portraits unless otherwise noted from Olga's Gallery (<http://www.abcgallery.com>) or Web Gallery of Art (<http://www.wga.hu/>).



### Picots and Loops

In this Portrait of a Noblewoman by Batista Maroni (c. 1550) the top of the chemise has picots.

Diagrams on how to do Picots are from Janice Love's *Hardanger Basics and Beyond*, published by Love 'N Stitches: Athens, 1995. The top one is picots Left and the bottom one is picots Right pages. 23 & 24.



### Edging with Lace

According to Mrs. Bury Palliser in *History of Lace* (1911), published by Dover: Mineola, 1984, the earliest record of laced linen dates from 1519. Through out the 1500's, lace is noted in various records. It is the subject of sumptuary laws under Henry VIII and Queen Mary. Lace is made of linen and silk threads and metallic threads. Needlelace in the form of cutwork and reticella become popular as well as bobbin lace in the later part of the century. (Santina Levey, *Lace A History*, published by The Victoria and Albert Museum/ Maney: London, 1983. ISBN 0 901286 15 X.)

Janet Arnold in *Pattern of Fashion* shows the layout of a 1603-1615 chemise from the Museum of London. She notes that "the linen is hemmed neatly around the edges with a 1.58 mm wide hem and then the [needle] lace is whipped onto the edges." This same method is shown, but with bobbin lace in the pictures of the Shephard's Buss, the Layton Jacket and the embroidered handkerchief.

- V& A Access to Images
- [http://images.vam.ac.uk/:](http://images.vam.ac.uk/)
- Shephards Buss (1570-1600)
- T.219-1953
- Layton Jacket (1610)
- T.228-1994
- Handkerchief (1600-30)
- T.99-1954



## Hem Stitching and Italian Hem Stitching

Hem Stitching appears to be a later form of edging. However it does create a nicely finished edge suitable for adding needlelace or other applied lace. Hem stitching refers to the stitching pattern used to bind the folded edge to a withdrawn thread area of the item.

For example - fold edge under, fold under again. At this point withdraw 2-4 thread along the line of the fold. The basic stitch originates in the fold. Come out in the open area and take a stitch into the fold of a couple threads. Then take a 45° angle up to the open area, circle a couple threads, and then take a stitch into the fold of a couple threads. See picture below from Marion Scoular's Hemstitching, ASN Publishing: San Marcos, 1989, ISBN 0-88195-230-3. Continue across the fabric. Tack the areas in the corners with a blind stitch in the fold.

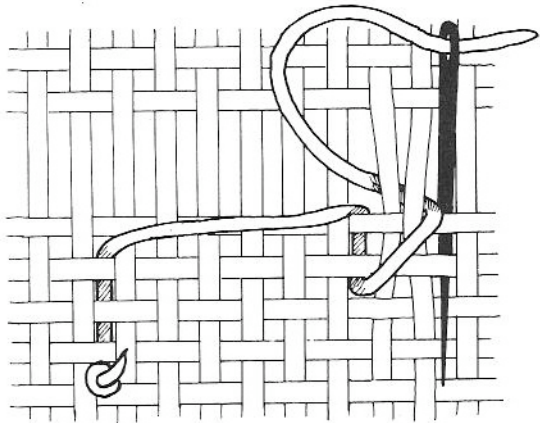
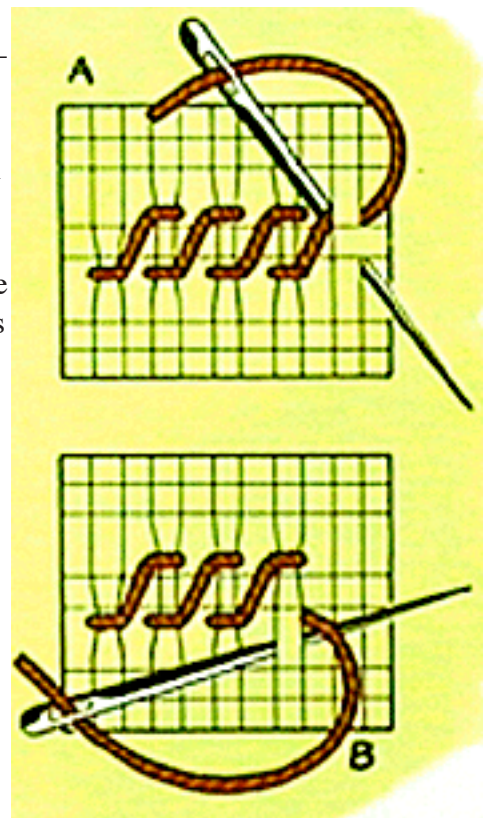


Diagram 22

Corners need to be mitered with this technique and the resulting folded corner areas need to be tacked with a blind stitch.

Italian Hemstitching differs slightly. The stitch loops around both the top and bottom of the open area in a "S"-like movement. When taking the stitch on the bottom, be sure to pickup a couple threads from the top of the fold.



Hem stitching is usually done

in a thread color that matches the fabric. The thread can be either the same type of thread as the fabric itself or a little bit smaller. Unless you want the stitching to be noticeable, keep the sheen of the thread close to the same as the thread of the fabric.

## Four-Sided Stitch



Four sided stitch is used in whitework samplers between the lines of work. There is one sampler, the Nebabri sampler in the Museum of London is believed to be late 16th C. We also see 4 sided stitch in the Bronzino Portrait of Isabel de Medici (plate 8 Levey) as a method for binding the collar to the body of the partlet.

The pulled version of Four sided stitch can be an effective method for binding off an edge. Fold the edge under and do the stitch along the folded edge. Once the stitching is finished you can go back and clip the unwanted fabric away. Be sure to pull your stitches tightly and evenly.

