

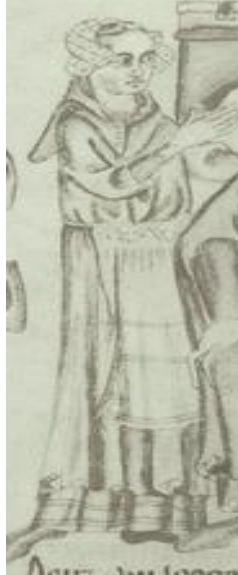
## The Pleatwork Apron Meisterin Felicity Flußmüllnerin

### When?

There is pictorial evidence for pleatwork aprons from the 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Lutrell Psalter  
14<sup>th</sup> c.



Holkham Bible  
15<sup>th</sup> c.



Trachtenbuch – Leipzische Frauen  
16<sup>th</sup> c.

### Who?

There are examples of pleatwork aprons being worn by women from all walks of life, from farmer's wives and household servants to mayor's wives and royalty. This would be a prized item, often mentioned specially in the lists of a family's belongings.

### What?

The pleatwork apron is a style that evolved in order to place a lot of fullness into a small space. Pleatwork can be also be decorated with embroidery to create a truly one-of-a-kind specialty item. The most commonly used fabrics would be linen or linsey-woolsey, although upper class women in the 16<sup>th</sup> c. could use linen-cotton or cotton. There are examples of many different colors being used for aprons, including white, natural, red, yellow, green, grey, and black.

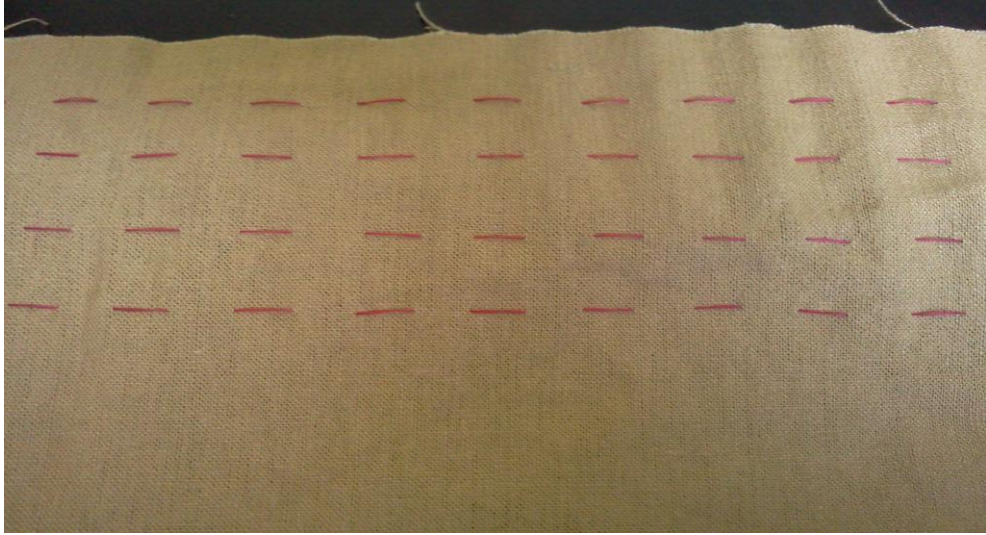
Oakes and Hill describe the fabrics being used as being made of coarse linen or helpen with "Seckcloth, Dowlas or Lockram," which are all types of fabric used for clothing during the period. They go on to say that the English apron had a uniqueness in style, that it was "honeycombed .that is gathered at the waist and overstitched with the basic stitch of smocking"

### Where?

The pleatwork apron was worn throughout Europe. There are plenty of examples in England, Germany, the Lowlands, France, and Italy. There are even a few Spanish examples. As good German ladies, my daughter and I should have this item in our clothing.

## How?

1. Prepare your fabric. You will start with a rectangle at the proper finished length. The starting width will be twice that of the finished width. If you need any seams, sew them now. Enclose any raw edges and modern selvages.
2. Put in your running stitch for gathering your fabric. This is done by “going in and out the windows” at regular intervals. I recommend using a contrasting thread so it is easy to see. These threads will be removed in the finished garment. The larger your interval, the deeper the pleats. You can use washable markers to make your dots, if you need a guideline.



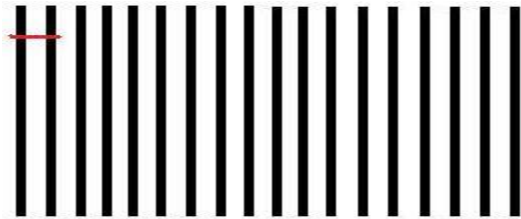
3. Pull the end threads to gather your fabric fairly tightly. Tie off the threads to maintain this level of tension while you work.



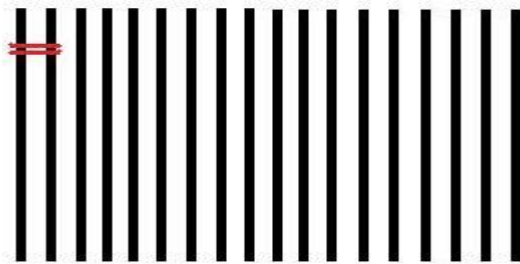
4. Work your honeycomb stitch from left to right, with your needle pointing to the left at all times. You can work this in a contrasting color or matching color thread. You will want to leave at least 5/8" at the top to attach the waistband.

## The Honeycomb Stitch

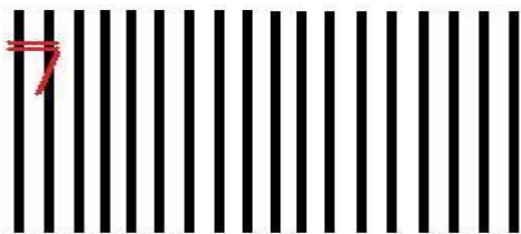
5. Coming up from the back on the left side of the first pleat, insert needle into right side of second pleat, coming out at left of first pleat. This is the tie stitch.



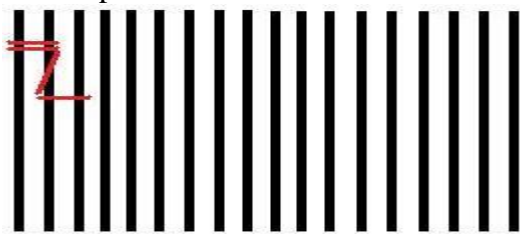
6. Repeat to strengthen the stitch.



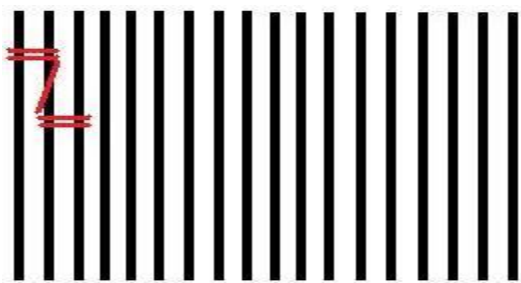
7. Insert needle in right side of second pleat, traveling under the fabric, to emerge on the left side of the second pleat. This is the travel stitch.



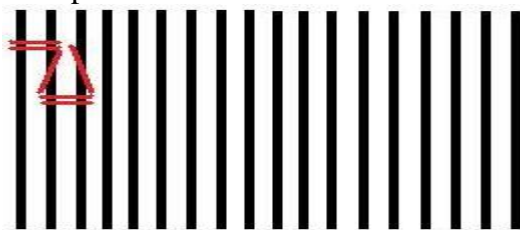
8. Pick up the next pleat with a tie stitch, going in on the right side of the third pleat and coming out on the left side of the second pleat.



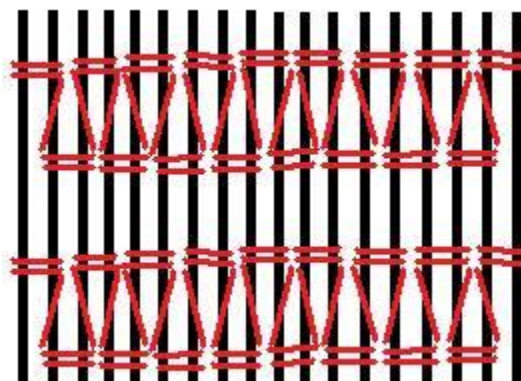
9. Repeat the tie stitch to strengthen.



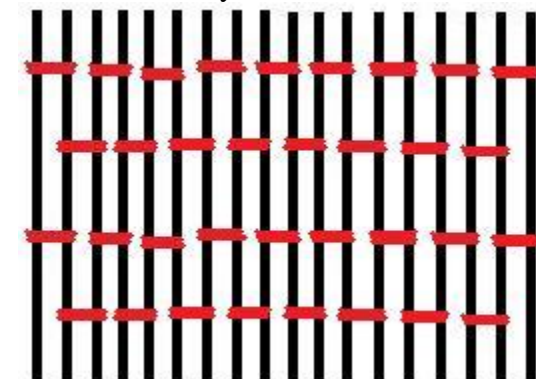
10. Move back to the top row using a travel stitch, going in on the right side of the third pleat and coming out on the left side of the third pleat.



11. Repeat process as necessary. Here's how the finished rows will be stitched:



But here is what you will SEE:



12. Remove the gathering threads, allowing the fabric to relax to a more open pattern. You should see the honeycomb pattern clearly at this point.

13. Attach the waistband by pushing the top of each pleat to the side. If you push them all the same way, you will have knife pleats. If you alternate first one way then the other, you will have box pleats. Either choice is correct.

### Our Aprons:

I made these two matching aprons for my daughter and I this summer. There are several examples of children dressing to match their parents, especially within the Landsknecht culture, in both style and status, so we try to do this as often as possible. Both aprons are made out of mustard linen with red wool thread for the embroidery. They are completely hand sewn. I choose the mustard color, since it was a common color in the rolls of aprons found in the chests of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century women and I did not want to have another white apron, as I already have several. The embroidery on the pleatwork was done in red, since it is heraldically correct for us and makes the apron a little dressier. I wanted the aprons to be on the same level as our clothing, which is an officer's wife and daughter rather than a soldier's family. We would have better items for receiving guests and attending church. I sewed the aprons by hand with wool thread so that they would lie correctly on the skirts when finished, as seen in the woodcuts and portrait of the time.

### Resources:

Arnold, Janet, Patterns of Fashion 4, Costume and Fashion Pr., 2008

Zander-Siedel, Jutta, Textiler Hausrat, Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1990

Schoen, Edward, Tailor as Lansquenet and Seamstress, German woodcut, 1535

Oakes, Alma and Hill, Margot Hamilton, Rural Costume: Its Origins and Development in Western Europe and the British Isles. Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1970

<http://pleatworkembroidery.com/>

<http://m-silkwork.blogspot.com/search/label/apron>

<http://larsdatter.com/aprons.htm>