



Illini Needlers Lisle Library Project

Illini Needlers started searching for a project in 1985 as an appropriate community project which fit the guidelines of our local chapter and that of the National ANG Board. The Guild agreed a project could be developed for a new library. A design committee was formed to begin plans for the project.

Since the piece was to be housed in a library, the committee felt the piece should be a learning piece of needlework. The library is dependent on the written word as the stitcher is dependent on the stitched picture-hence it was important to correlate this word-picture association.

An Illinois Indian legend appeared appropriate. Indian folklore and culture are significant aspects of Illinois history. Even the state name is Indian in origin. The earliest known reference to the meaning of Illinois comes from Father Marquette's diary. Illinois is derived from ininiok, altered to illiniwek and finally to Illinois by the French. This term was the collective name of the confederacy of six woodland tribes which formerly occupied this state and surrounding regions. Illinois comes from Illini which, in the Language of that Nation, signifies A perfect and accomplish d Man.

In Marquette's diary he also made reference to a flying monster. In 1673 as he and Joliet made their way down the Mississippi river in a canoe, they saw an image of a monster painted on the side of the bluffs near what is now Alton, Illinois. The monster was as large as a calf, with horns like a deer, red eyes, a beard like a tiger s and a long tail ending like a fish's tail.

Long ago when Ouatoga was chief of the Illini tribe this flying monster would swoop down over the Indian village carrying **away** its victims in its large vice-like claws. Chief Ouatoga bravely stood on the bluff at dawn one day, and, as the bird captured him, braves hiding in ambush, shot their poisoned arrows. The Piasa Bird, mortally wounded, fell howling into the river. An image of the bird was painted on the bluff to remind the tribe of its' deliverance. Some of the old settlers remember seeing the painting on the bluff as late as 1845.

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Consequently, the Piasa Bird legend and a Woodland Indian loincloth done in beadwork embroidery appeared to be a perfect design match for our chapter's project. A segment of the design in the loincloth was reworked to fit our needs. The colors are gold, red, greens, and earthtones. The finished project consists of three panels. Two identical panels measure two feet wide by four feet tall. The center design of the "Piasa Bird" measures seven feet wide by four feet tall. The Piasa Bird was traced onto number 10 canvas from a black and white drawing created by artist Kathy Young. Textured stitches were used as well as surface embellishments of Indian origin. Dyed porcupine quills and glass beads were worked into the loincloth design panels.

We created wings, feathers and reptilian scales from wool and metallic yarns. Ultrasuede was applied to form his horns while an iridescent supple leather was used to form the talons. The piercing red eyes were crafted by a stain glass artist from faceted stained glass.

It was decided that one stitching location for the project would be best. The "studio" offered was that of Betty Baechle which soon became known to many as the Baechle family Indian Wing. The "Bird" occupied the thoughts and time of 35 women for a total of almost 3000 stitching hours. Its completion took twenty-five months.

Co-Chairpersons: Jean Van der Wiel Betty Baechle

Stitchers:

Sherri Abbott Betty Baechle Erma Beeson Robin Briggs
Linda Forsyth
Helen Ann Hagedorn Virginia Highstone Donna Holecsek Mary
Jirsa
Nancy Johnson Fran Joshel Yvonne Klein Karen Knight
Dolores Krotta Betty Chen Louis Barbara Lynch Marcia
Mackenbrock Dorothy Mackowak

Janet Matusiak Gloria Matuska Barbara McMahon Anne Melton Adele
Miesfeldt Lois Moss Francine Novy Joanne Peitzsch Ruth Rogers
Marty Schwab
Mary Ellen Searcy Nancy Sturgeon Jan Toolis
Jean Van der Wiel Jeanne Waterloo Phyllis Wheeler Debra Zaderaka

Artist for Piasa Bird- Kathy Young

Finishing- Shay Pendray

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