



SECTION 1: Embellishments

During the early nineteenth century lace production became mechanized in Europe, after centuries of the cottage industry system dominating the trade. Although the quality of machine-made lace could never surpass that of hand-made lace, the amount of time required to make even a single garment was extensive and the price so high that the market for hand-made lace soon dwindled. Lace-making by hand, using such tools as needles and bobbins, had either become a novel pastime or a prestigious activity practiced by daughters of wealthy families. These changes forced lace-makers into factories to provide for their families, and those who remained working in the cottage industries had to find new ways to earn a profit. Through piecework activities, such as mending and hemming factory laces, families replaced the income lost because of their dying trade. Crochet emerged from lace-making as an alternative that was more profitable as a business and more enjoyable and less tedious as a leisure activity.

Requiring only a hook and some thread, crochet was ideal in many ways. Edgings, insertions, and other lace embellishments could be made with a variety of materials, mistakes could be easily unraveled without jeopardizing work previously completed, and anyone at nearly any age could be taught how to do it. This was a way to hand-make lace faster and cheaper than ever before. During the early nineteenth century crochet's popularity spread across the European homes of poor and wealthy alike. It crossed the Atlantic in the skilled hands of immigrants and in the form of pattern books imported to the United States primarily from England. The American lace trade did not develop until well into the nineteenth century when the first manufacturing factories were established around 1840, strongly influenced by European manufacturers and the piecework trade. As a pastime, crochet flourished in America and provided a homemade alternative to manufactured laces.

As with many manufactures, lace-making in all its forms, in both Europe and the