

Dining also became imbued with symbols of polite society as table settings were adorned with various articles of female industry. Crocheted table cloths, doilies, and napkins provided a beautiful canvas for the meal to be served. Catherine Sedgwick illustrates this in her 1835 novel, *Home*: “The table was set with scrupulous neatness, ‘Mother sees every thing,’ was their maxim; and sure she was to see it, if the salt was not freshly stamped, the casters in order, and every napkin, glass, spoon, knife, and dish put on, as the girls said, by plummet and line. These are trifles in detail, but their effect on the comfort and habits of a large family of children can scarcely be magnified.” Meals were yet another opportunity for women to comfort their families while instilling values of refined living.

The comfort and refinement of the home became central to the existence of the American housewife as various technological advances allowed women increasing amounts of free time. Needlework offered a unique opportunity for women to fulfill familial expectations of home comfort and fashionable décor while providing a creative outlet for leisure hours. *The Ladies’ Work-Table Book*, published in 1845, professed that “Tender and affectionate, it is her highest bliss to minister to the wants, the convenience, or the pleasure of those she loves; and hence, her inventive powers have been, in all ages, called into early and active exercise, in the fabrication of those articles calculated to accomplish those desirable ends. Amongst these, useful and ornamental needlework, knitting, and netting, occupy a distinguished place.” The industrious and genteel nature of needlework made it one of the most attractive pastimes of the period. Crochet, knitting, and netting were considered very fashionable accents of nineteenth-century décor for both beauty and usefulness.

This section includes things commonly found in the nineteenth-century home, such as a brioche (cake-like pillow), music stool cover, bread plate doily, and a basket. The popularity and variety of these patterns is reflected in the large number of publications that printed and reprinted them between 1840 and 1850.