

NEW LAND, NEW LIFE!

Norwegian Immigration in Minnesota: 1825-1925



Folk Arts

Norwegians applied their creative talents to enhance practical, useful objects and to express cultural pride in their homes and churches through rosemaling (painting), wood carving, kolrosing (wood burning), chip carving, weaving, knitting, and needlework.

Immigrants brought decorative trunks, heirloom sølje jewelry, ale bowls, bentwood baskets, tine (covered) boxes, spinning wheels, and heddle (hand-held) looms. They also brought supplies and tools for carving, sewing, spinning, knitting, and painting.

Two broad pattern styles characterize Norwegian folk art.

1. The geometric pattern style was expressed in chip carving, weaving, kolrosing, knitting and Hardanger embroidery, a form of counted cross-stitch sewn in blocks, which are then cut open to form lacy openings. It often appeared on women's aprons, curtains or tablecloths.
2. The organic pattern was based on natural or living images, such as vines, flowers or animals. It varied by region, often expressed in carving, rosemaling, and floral embroidery on bunader, national attire distinctive to each Norwegian county.

Norwegian wool sweaters served not only as folk art and outer gear, but as betrothal, wedding or confirmation gifts. Two beloved patterns are from Setesdal, a decorative zigzagging; and Fana, a stripe, check and star pattern. Immigrant knitters incorporated symbols, such as anchors signifying hope, crowns for victory and distinction, the sun for energy, and the national deer emblem.

Acanthus carving, a swirling leaf and vine motif, first used on Norwegian church altars and pulpits, appeared in the 1730's decorating household cupboards, chairs, mangle boards, porridge containers, ale bowls, kubbestolen (chairs carved from a tree trunk), and sleds. Treasured acanthus artifacts were carried to Minnesota and then copied.



**Carved kubbestolen chair.
Photo by Ronald Stow**

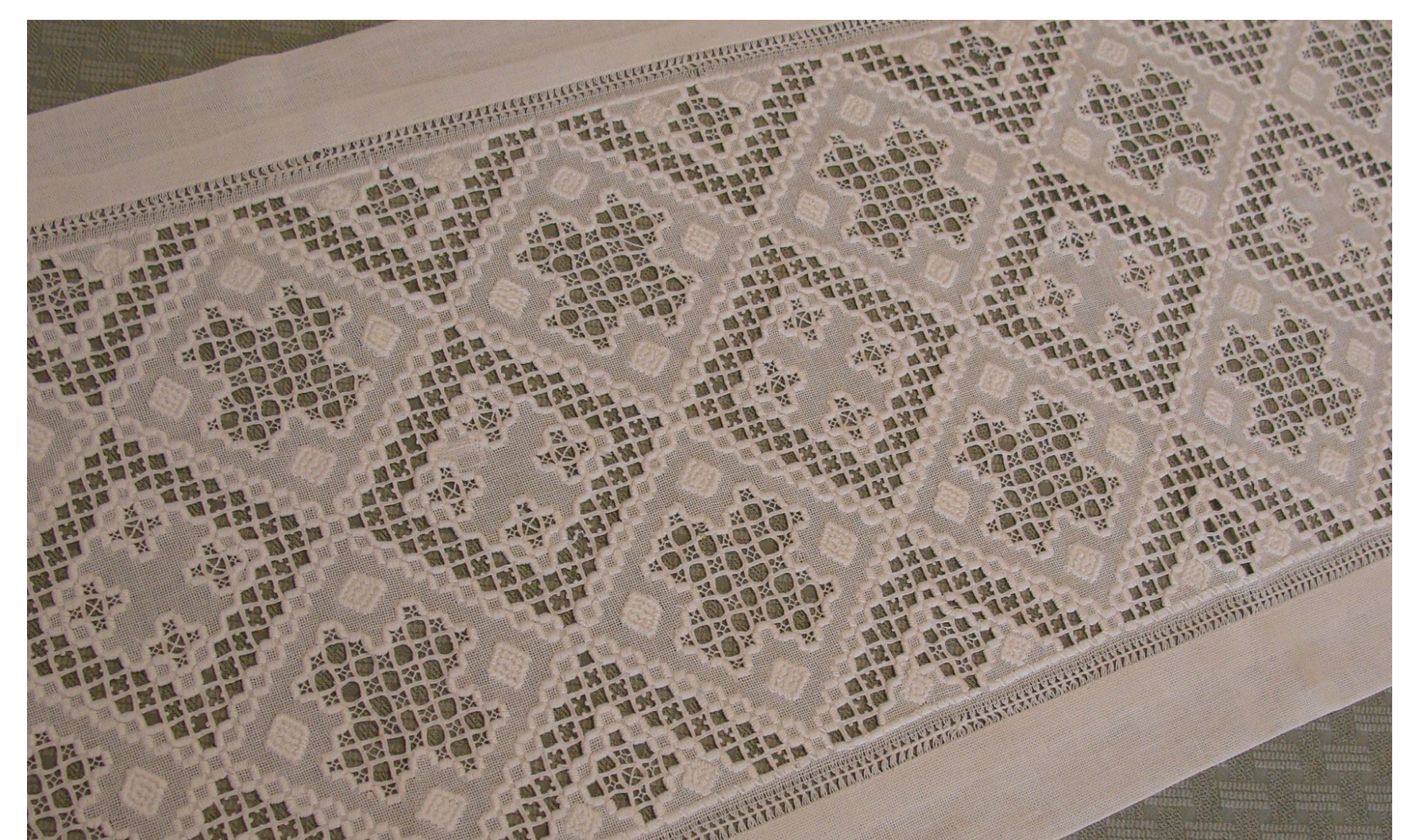
Rosemaling (decorative painting, often in bright colors), spread throughout Norway 1750 - 1800. Artists from the Telemark and Hallingdal counties developed distinctive floral and leaf designs, copied by immigrants.



**Rosemaled wood bowl by Marlys Hammer
(Vesterheim Gold Medalist), with child's
prayer on rim. Photo by Ronald Stow**



**Carved wood wedding spoons from one
piece of wood, used by couple to share
porridge . Photo by Ronald Stow**



**Hardanger needlework and cutwork from
woven cloth. Photo by Ronald Stow**



**Acanthus carved mangletrær,
used to iron linens.
Photo by Ronald Stow**

The national jewelry of Norway was the sølje, a lacy filigree brooch made of sterling silver with spoon dangles. Sølje patterns matched the style of each Norwegian county bunad. This exquisite jewelry linked the immigrants to their heritage in the old country. A sølje brooch, the most prized possession of an immigrant woman, was often left to younger generations.



**Silver slje filigree brooches, worn on special occasions.
Photo by Ronald Stow**

