

# MOST THE BRIDGE

News of the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library

NATIONAL  
CZECH &  
SLOVAK  
MUSEUM &  
LIBRARY

Volume 16, Number 1 -- Spring 2006

## A New Vision for NCSML Growth

Last year, the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its landmark building, which was so triumphantly dedicated in 1995 by three national presidents. Since then, the NCSML has undergone ten years of exuberant growth and today the museum provides a full complement of exhibits, programs, publications, events and services that attract a worldwide audience.

With growth comes change and on November 29, 2005, the NCSML Board of Directors unanimously approved a new strategic plan for the museum and library. The culmination of 18 months of work, the plan is expected to take the NCSML to the next level of national recognition and achievement.

We have dedicated significant space in

this newsletter to share with you this new strategic plan, which emphasizes two themes.

First, the strategic plan reinforces the vision of a *national* mission and expands interpretation to more purposefully tell the story of Czech and Slovak immigration and Czech- and Slovak-American stories. Most of the museum's current exhibits focus on historical and contemporary topics related to the Old World countries. This will continue. But we now want to expand the exhibit experience to address why, how, when and where the immigrants came, and the culture they developed in America. Building on the expanding archival and artifact collections, this focus will add to the full understanding of this rich and complex heritage of Czech- and Slovak-

Americans, as well as provide a window on the immigrant experience for all Americans.

Second, the strategic plan recognizes the dire need for more physical space. Most pressing are space needs for the library. The library has grown in recognition as a national depository for materials relating to Czech and Slovak history and culture. However, 75 percent of the library collection is housed in an off-site warehouse, making it an asset that is not readily accessible. To meet our responsibility for this important resource, we must place the library collection under one roof with sufficient areas for operation and access. Nearly all other parts of the museum operation have also outgrown their spaces, as well.

## Original Exhibition Presents Lavish Textiles



Embroidering and embellishing everyday textiles used in the home and creating elaborate ceremonial textiles and clothing have long been arts in the Czech and Slovak lands. An original exhibition at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library explores this rich heritage passed from generation to generation featuring over 100 examples of lushly adorned linens, ritual cloths, and clothing.

*Embellished Textiles - Absolutely Art!* opens Saturday, April 8 and closes October 1, 2006.

"This exhibition features many never-before-seen items from our extensive collection," says Edith Blanchard, curator. "The array of different embellishment techniques and objects is stunning. It shows how the most common items were transformed into extraordinary adornments for the home and family."

Highlights of the exhibition include magnificent appliqued sheepskin jackets, a dazzling gold and silver beaded christening cloth, elaborate embroidered and beaded wedding caps, shawls, bed linens, and elegant bobbin, knitted, and crocheted lace. Several items are on loan



This Slovak jacket has been heavily appliqued with small colored pieces of leather. Such applique work is difficult due to the thickness of the leather and is often done by men.

from the Helen Zemek Baine and Helene Baine Cincebeaux Collection, known for its Slovak and Czech folk dress and textiles.



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## FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Strategic planning is a step by step process. It's putting the horse before the cart, so to speak. It requires discussion of important questions. How strong is the mission? What are our challenges and our opportunities? What are our next initiatives to achieve that mission?

Our ten-year experience in the new facility tells us that the national mission is an inspired direction worthy of continued investment. The number of visitors and members tells us that interest remains constant. Increased donations to the artifact and library collections tell us that we are providing a valuable service as a depository. When we surveyed members, you resoundingly agreed that the number one reason to be a member is to support the preservation of the history and culture of the Czechs and Slovaks. We hear you!

The new vision statement is deceptively simple. Don't be fooled. It incorporates an expanded direction that will fuel our work over the next five years. We want to reach out in a much more deliberate way to work with Czechs and Slovaks in other parts of the country. Incorporating the stories of Czech- and Slovak-Americans, the reasons they came to America, how and where they settled, will take us to a new level in meeting our national mission.

It would have been easy to say that we need to expand because we've maximized use of our current space. We're literally busting at the seams! But we needed a strategic plan that envisions where we want to go and what we want to do before we can create a building plan. *After all, it's what happens inside the museum and library that makes it vibrant and alive, not the building itself.*



This is the team - the NCSML staff - that makes your dreams a reality every day. Front row, from left: Edith Blanchard, Rebecca Bartlett, Carmen Langel, Patty Hikiji, Tara Ayers. Back row, from left: Bill Shiffer, Gail Naughton, Stefanie Kohn, David Muhlena, Jan Stoffer, Shirley Rosencrans, Esther White.

So, the horse is curried and combed, now we are ready for the cart. We are entering a phase when we will gather expert opinions as to what it will take in space and dollars to achieve our vision and what it will require to sustain that expansion after the newness wears off. You will be informed every step of the way. You'll be asked to weigh in. Do you agree with our direction? Do you believe in the expansion of the exhibits and programming? Do you want to help? Don't hesitate to call or write to share your opinions on the new plan.

The pioneering phase of the NCSML has come to a triumphant conclusion, and the enthusiasm of that earlier stage can now be directed to attain another level of success. This plan builds on the extraordinary level of commitment and devotion among the board, staff, members, volunteers and the community, which is palpable to the visitor and accounts for the museum's superlatively high level of activity.

The museum must expand its ability to tell people's stories, bring people closer to their own history, enrich their lives, and serve our local, regional and national constituents. It's an exciting time. Thank you for being part of it.

**Gail Naughton, President/CEO**  
[gnaughton@NCSML.org](mailto:gnaughton@NCSML.org)



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2006 - 2010

**MISSION:** To be the United States' foremost institution preserving and interpreting Czech & Slovak history and culture.

**VISION:** The NCSML will engage local, regional and national audiences in opportunities to better understand the history and culture of the Czech and Slovak people utilizing the highest standards of museum and library operation. The immigrant experiences and culture of Czech- and Slovak-Americans will be more fully interpreted while traditional and contemporary Old World topics will continue to be explored.

## **GOAL ONE: FACILITIES PLANNING**

To establish a master facilities plan to maximize the utilization of the space in our current facility, add space for the library/archives, exhibits, and programming, and improve the working environment for the staff.

## **GOAL TWO: LIBRARY**

To adequately house the library and archival collections and focus on acquiring materials documenting the Czech- and Slovak-American experience.

## **GOAL THREE: EXHIBITIONS**

To create new exhibitions focusing on the Czech- and Slovak-American immigrant experience that will be a window on all immigrant experiences,

while maintaining exhibitions on Old World history and culture

## **GOAL FOUR: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

To focus on programs that most effectively expand the understanding of Czech and Slovak history and culture for local, regional and national audiences and provide an exceptional visitor experience

## **GOAL FIVE: ACCREDITATION AND OPERATIONS**

To achieve high professional operational standards

## **GOAL SIX: FINANCE**

To be financially stable and fund new initiatives

## **Values and Guiding Principles are Recorded**

In the process of writing the Strategic Plan, time was taken to discuss the museum's guiding principles and values. Many of these points have been assumed, but are now written to remind us of why we exist and the importance of our work.

## **VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library is dedicated to achieving its mission with the highest quality and integrity, guided by the following values and principles:



- We believe that engagement in history and culture informs and empowers people for a free global society.

- We recognize that ancestral heritage is important to people in defining their place in history and the world.

- We honor those who decided to immigrate to America and contribute their hard work, skill and vision to the formation of our nation.

- We respect the people of the Czech and Slovak Republics who struggled for national identity.

- We resolve to effectively use resources with integrity and accountability.

- We embrace life-long learning.

- We commit to the ethical interpretation and presentation of factually correct and well-balanced views in exhibits and programming

- We aspire to the highest museum and library standards in our care of collections and operations.

## **First CNCA Fellow Announced**

We are pleased to announce the first recipient of the CNCA Freedom Fellowship, PhDr. Slavomír Michálek, Historický ústav SAV, Bratislava. Dr. Michálek will research and write a story for *Slovo* on the history of the Czechoslovak National Council of America. He will be in Cedar Rapids March 21 - 30 and then in Washington DC.

The CNCA Freedom Fellowship was established by the Czechoslovak

National Council of America upon its dissolution November 1, 2004. The purpose of the CNCA Freedom Fellowship is to enhance and strengthen Czech, Slovak, and



PhDr. Slavomír Michálek is the first recipient of the CNCA Freedom Fellowship.

American connections. The Fellowship provides for a scholar, artisan, or distinguished individual to come to the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library to engage in artistic, cultural, economic or political study, and/or to share cultural and academic knowledge and experience with the American people.

The CNCA Web site is now online: [www.ncsml.org/cnca.htm](http://www.ncsml.org/cnca.htm)

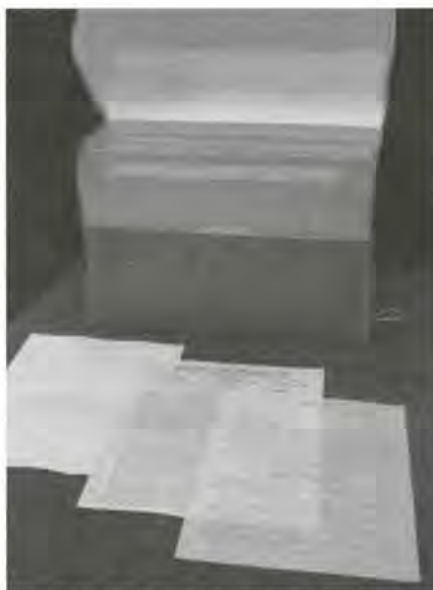


## Significant Cache of Holocaust Letters Donated to the NCSML

Just as *The Tragedy of Slovak Jews* exhibit was being installed last fall, we received an inquiry from Patricia Rozek Buglione, of Florida, asking whether we might be interested in an envelope full of letters and documents she inherited from her uncle.

"My uncle, Dr. Irvin Neufeld (who was Jewish) and my aunt, his wife Anicka (Slovak, from Nadas, now Trsten), were working at a hospital in Bratislava. He was informed by a German physician that his name was "on the list" to be taken, so they fled to the USA in 1938, with my grandmother, Pauline Hajek. My aunt and uncle ended up settling in New York City. My uncle lost his entire family in the Holocaust."

Were we interested? Of course! We knew we wanted to incorporate these items into the exhibit, but first we had to sort and arrange the letters to understand what we had actually received. Most of the personal correspondence to Dr. Neufeld (1938 - 1942) was from family members living in Vrable, Slovakia, and Mezobereny, Hungary. The official correspondence (1945 - 1947) about the status of Dr. Neufeld's family members and their personal property came from various American, Czechoslovak and Hungarian governmental entities. The majority of the letters were written in Hungarian, as well as Slovak, Czech and English. We



Donated archival letters tell the story of how the Holocaust affected one Slovak-Jewish family.

turned to Gyorgy Toth and Ivana Takacová, graduate students at the University of Iowa from Hungary and Slovakia, respectively, to help select and translate some of the most telling letters in the collection.

We incorporated the translated letters and documents into an activity that helped area middle school teachers fulfill *No Child Left Behind* curricular requirements. Students read and analyzed these primary resource materials to better understand how the Holocaust affected one Slovak-Jewish family.

Dr. Neufeld became a productive member of his newly adopted country. He served as a surgeon in the United States Marine Corps from 1944-1945, achieving the rank of Captain. He later served as Chief of the Orthopedic Clinic, Metropolitan Medical Center, New York; Medical Director of The Federation of the Handicapped; and Associate Professor of Orthopedic Surgery, New York Medical College. Upon his death in 1969, a eulogist described him as a "refreshing oasis of modesty and reserve" and "a truly warm, gentle human being." His ashes were interred with military honors at U.S. National Cemetery, Long Island, New York.

### Primary Resource Materials

The NCSML uses primary resource materials as a powerful means to better understand and educate about the lives of those of Slovak and Czech heritage. Please consider the NCSML as the repository for your personal letters and documents or papers that family members have passed down to you. Contact Dave Muhlena at 319-362-8500 or [dmuhlena@NCSML.org](mailto:dmuhlena@NCSML.org) for more information.

## Colorful Exhibits Open in the Vera and Andrew Laska Gallery

### Prague - Between History and Dreams

Since 1998, artist Barbara Froula has

created more than 100 paintings depicting Prague and the Czech Republic.



Ploskovice Castle by Barbara Froula

The watercolors in this exhibit were painted on location during the course of

eight trips to the Czech Republic and are published in the book *Prague - Between History and Dreams*. Barbara Froula's paintings reflect her background in architecture, her love of the urban landscape, and her reverence for her Czech heritage. (Now through July 15)

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century Czechoslovak Glass

On July 23 the NCSML will open "20<sup>th</sup> Century Czechoslovak Glass: Selections

from the Connell Collection." This exhibit features selections from the recent donation of more than 100 pieces of collectable glass by Jack and Gwen Connell. Longtime collectors, the Connell's collection includes a wonderful variety of 20<sup>th</sup> century Czech glass, including Jaroslav Brychta figurines, perfume bottles, and both functional and art glass pieces. (July 23 - Nov. 11, 2006)



# Workshops and Symposium Complement Exhibit

Many of us have heirloom textiles handed down from family members, but don't know what they are or how to care for them. Some of us want to create our own. Others just love beautiful textiles. If you fall into one of these categories, don't miss this special event!

June 8, 9 & 10, the museum presents *Living with Beauty: Creating and Caring for Embellished Textiles*.

The activities start on June 8<sup>th</sup> with a cross-stitch sampler workshop inspired by textiles in the exhibit by well-known embroiderer Judith Gulik. Or you may choose a lace-making workshop presented by author and designer Debbie Beaver who will teach beginning bobbin lace and an intermediate project based on our collection.



Mary B. Kelly

Friday, June 9 features presentations about the rich Czech and Slovak textiles and traditions, their original uses, and the meanings behind their symbols by noted experts Helene Cincebeaux and Mary B. Kelly. Renowned lace expert Elizabeth Kurella shares the long history and contemporary tradition of Czechoslovak lace. NCSML curator Edith Blanchard and collections manager Stefanie Kohn provide valuable information about the care and preservation of heirloom textiles and special tours of the textile exhibit and of the NCSML Collections

Center. Saturday, June 10 will be a care and identification clinic with presenters. Call Jan at 319-362-8500 for more information or to register.

We are grateful for the generous sponsorship of the workshops and symposium and all programs related to the exhibit by George J. Naxera, Victor F. and Janice L. Naxera, and Donald and Irene (Naxera) Hamous in memory of George J. and Alma M. Naxera.



Helene Cincebeaux

## Third Year for WFLA Festival Sponsorship

### *Dance Festival July 15<sup>th</sup>*

Western Fraternal Life Association has once again agreed to sponsor the National Bohemian, Moravian, and Slovak Folk Dance Festival. This year the event will be on one day, Saturday July 15 in response to feedback from dancers and attendees.

The day starts at 9:30 a.m. when the galleries and museum open. Folk artisans demonstrating lace, embroidery, egg decorating, corn husk dolls, and wood carving are in Hruska Grand Hall from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. along with a rag-rug making demonstration where you can make and take your own sample. Curator led tours of *Homelands: The Story of the Czech and Slovak People and Embellished Textiles - Absolutely Art!* are



WFLA representatives Jim Wolfe and Phil Torticill pose at the 2005 festival with Jamie Kessler and Elaine Benda of the Oklahoma Czech Folk Dancers and Gail Naughton.

offered in the morning and afternoon.

At 2 p.m. there is an UpBeat! Concert in the garden. The featured folk dance troupes perform starting at 4 p.m. in the Riverside Round House parking lot, followed by a polka dance with Barefoot Becky and the Ivanhoe Dutchmen in the Round House.

Traditional food, beer and beverages are served all day. In addition, on Sunday at 10:30 a.m. there is a Polka Mass at St.

Wenceslaus Church. Mark your calendar for a wonderful day! Watch for more information.



2004 Dance Festival.



# NCSML Develops Original Curriculum

Every year, hundreds of area third grade students visit the NCSML as an extension of their classroom studies. Students may experience a guided tour of the *Homelands* exhibition and the immigrant home, try a seasonal Czech or Slovak activity (such as garland for the Museum's Christmas tree, or a Mořena, Old Mother Winter, in the spring) and/or participate in a walking tour of local Czech Village to learn about traditional businesses still operating in the neighborhood. Students receive an interactive lesson on Czech and Slovak history and culture and learn about the impact Czech immigrants had on our local community. It's a popular study trip for students and teachers alike.

Missing from this experience is specific curriculum, including pre and post-visit activities to better prepare students for their study trip to the NCSML and to reinforce their museum experience.

To fulfill this need, the NCSML recently secured funding to prepare an

interpretive plan and original curriculum materials specifically for the third grade. Local elementary school teacher Cindy Terry was hired last year to research and prepare an interpretive plan and curriculum. The initial draft of the curriculum is now complete and this spring Grant Wood and Polk Elementary 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers and students will pilot the program and test the materials. Based on their input, the material will be revised this summer so the curriculum is available to all teachers beginning in fall 2006. The materials will also be accessible on the museum's web site for use by all educators.

In conjunction with this project, education kits were developed to provide hands-on learning to students in the classroom. The education kits are also nearly complete and will be available to be checked out starting next fall at the Cedar Rapids Community Schools administrative building or the NCSML.



This project was possible through the generous support of the State Historical Society of Iowa (Historic Resources Development Program), Czech Heritage Foundation, Rockwell Collins, Alliant Energy, and National Association for Interpretation Region V. The NCSML is grateful for their support of this project, which will benefit thousands of children over the next several years.

If you have a question about this project, or other educational programs at the NCSML, contact Jan Stoffer at 319 362-8500 or email [Jan@NCSML.org](mailto:Jan@NCSML.org).

## Legacy Luncheon May 25

NCSML Legacy Society members will soon receive their invitations to the annual Luncheon on Thursday, May 25, 2006. New members will be recognized and deceased members honored. The Legacy Society was established as a way to recognize, honor, and express appreciation to those dedicated individuals who have made provisions for the NCSML in their estate plans. Membership in the Legacy Society does not require a gift now, but a pledge for the future.

If you have included the NCSML in your estate plans, or if you would like a confidential conversation about the Legacy Society, please call Gail Naughton or Carmen Langel at 319 362-8500.

## Museum Loses Friend and Donor

Dr. Vera Laska, of Weston, Massachusetts died December 11, 2005 after a long illness. Dr. Laska is remembered as a Freedom Fighter who led countless individuals through the mountains to freedom during World War II and who survived three concentration camps. After the war, she came to the U.S. where she met and married Andrew Laska. Dr. Laska's passion was American History and she was recognized many times as an outstanding educator and historian. She was the author of seven books and over 350 articles and reviews in professional journals and newspapers.

Through Dr. Laska's generosity, the NCSML dedicated the Andrew and Vera Laska Gallery in 2003. She also sponsored a recent issue of *Slovo* and was a charter member of the NCSML Legacy Society. She was a remarkable

woman who will be greatly missed by her son, Paul, the museum, and everyone who knew her.

## Kubicek Named Board Chair

David Kubicek, attorney at Simmons, Perrine, Albright & Ellwood, P.L.C., assumed the chairmanship of the Board of Directors at the January meeting. Carey



Downs Gibson is first vice-chair, Gary Rozek is second vice-chair, Lu Barta Barron is secretary, and Bill Vernon is treasurer. New members of the board are James Bahensky, Nancy Divoky Becker, Diane Ramsey, and Paul Rhines.



Frequently Asked Questions

Does *national* mean the government funds the museum?

What sources of revenue do fund the museum?

It is a common misconception that the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library is supported by the federal government, perhaps because the word *national* is in the museum's name and mission. The NCSML is a private nonprofit institution that serves a national mission, but does not receive significant government funding. In fact, the museum received just 4% of its 2005 general operational income from government grants, primarily a local hotel/motel sales tax grant.

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library remains financially secure by relying on multiple sources of revenue as illustrated by this pie chart. In 2005, for example, the two greatest sources of operating income were public contributions and membership dues



General Operating Support

(19% and 18% respectively). Thus, over one third of the museum's operating budget came from local

and national supporters who sustained the NCSML through their membership contributions, memorial gifts, and by responding to the two annual appeals. Museum store net income and admission/event fees were the next most significant forms of support at 16% each. Endowment earnings provide a small but growing source of income at 4% in 2005.

The NCSML staff and board extend their appreciation to the generosity of the NCSML's many kind benefactors around the country. Each time you renew your membership or respond to our appeals, you make it possible for the museum to preserve our Czech and Slovak heritage, create innovative exhibitions, and offer exciting programs to thousands of visitors.

## NCSML Grants Update

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library is grateful to be the beneficiary of generous grants to support its mission-driven initiatives. Recent restricted grants include the following:

- **Gazette Communications** - \$22,050 in-kind advertising over the next three years
- Several significant grants to support the museum's Temporary Exhibit Fund:
  - **Momentum Fund of The Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation** (hereafter GCRCF) - \$25,000
  - **CRST International Fund of GCRCF** - \$15,000
  - **Rockwell Collins** - \$15,000
  - **Linn County Supervisors Witwer**

- **Trust** - \$10,000
- **Gazette Foundation Fund of GCRCF** - \$3,000
- **McGrath Automotive Fund of GCRCF** - \$1,000

- **Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs** - \$6,678 toward the History and Culture Conference
- **National Endowment for the Humanities** - \$5,000 for a "We the People" project to assess the museum's artifact collections
- **Merveaux Historic Preservation Fund of GCRCF** - \$4,400 for purchase of collection storage furniture
- **Humanities Iowa** - \$2,000 to support educational programs complementing *The Tragedy of Slovak Jews*

- **Iowa Community Cultural Grant program**, administered by the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs - \$14,000 to support a full-time cataloging position
- **Iowa Arts Council** - \$1,000 toward educational programming for *Embellished Textiles -- Absolutely Art!*
- **Community Enrichment Program**, administered by the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, - \$4,544 toward general operating

The National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library is grateful to these donors who make it possible for the museum to mount innovative exhibitions, present noteworthy public programs, and take care of its collections.



Mark your calendar now for the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual *BrewNost: An International Beer Tasting Along the Mighty Cedar River* on **Friday, September 22, 2006**. Enjoy two dozen varieties of beer from seven countries, great jazz, an international silent auction, and a raffle drawing for a trip for two to Prague. Special thanks to **Alliant Energy**, the lead sponsor for *BrewNost 2006*, and our event partner, **John's Grocery in Iowa City**.

## Textile Exhibit

With the opening of *Embellished Textiles - Absolutely Art!* the Museum Store has many new books and patterns for the beginner or seasoned crafter. Whether you enjoy embroidery, lace making, knitting, crocheting, netting, drawn work, white work, black work or bead making, the Museum Store has a book for you. Below is just a sample of the books available. For more titles or to order a book, please call the store at 319-362-8500.

- *The Care and Preservation of Textiles*, by Karen Finch & Greta Putnam \$35.00PB
- *The Illustrated Dictionary of Lace*, by Judith L. Gwynne \$30.00PB
- *Patterns: Book of Embroidery 1534*, Johan Schartzenberger \$14.00PB
- *The Secrets of Real Lace*, by Elizabeth M. Kurella \$17.00PB
- *Anyone Can Mend Lace & Linens*, by Elizabeth M. Kurella \$25.00PB

• *Smocking, Stitches & Tulle*, Butterick \$16.00PB

### Textile and Kroje Notecards

You've been asking! We now have beautiful color notecards featuring our own embellished textiles and Bohemian, Moravian & Slovak *kroje*. Each package of six notecards and envelopes with three different designs is only \$6.00.

### Embellished Textile Patterns

Create your own Czech and Slovak inspired textiles with five new embroidery and lace patterns. Each incorporates a unique technique found in items in the NCSML collection. Classes taught by the designers will make it easy for anyone to learn or expand their knowledge. To register for the classes, call Jan at 319-362-8500.

**Embroidered Lace Snowflake** - inspired by a Slovak scarf. Class May 6.

**Chain Stitch Embroidery Square Patch** - inspired by a doily from Detva,

Slovakia. Class June 24.

**Satin Stitch Embroidery Rose** - inspired by a headscarf from Domazlice in Bohemia. Class July 8.

**Bobbin Lace Pattern** - inspired by lace on a cuff. Class Aug. 19.

### Needle Weaving and Drawn Thread Work

**Bookmark** - inspired by a child's blouse. Class Sept. 16.



The technique to make this white lace snowflake (made by Robin Rossignol) will be taught on May 6.

### Embroidery Transfers

Have you been looking for the old-fashioned iron-on transfers to embroider on tea towels and other linens? Not only does the store have iron-on transfers, but we also have very nice quality 100% cotton tea towels. Hand-made Czech and Slovak tablecloths, table runners and doilies are also available. Please call for descriptions and pricing.



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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