

*Earning the Right to do Fancywork: An Informal Biography of Ida Eisenhower, 1957*

By Kunigunde Duncan

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“Only *after* all the mending, darning, and clothing manufacture were out of the way—and of course, daily cooking and weekly laundrying and cleaning—only then, by this steel-willed woman’s own magnificent definition, had she earned a right to do fancywork!

And a great deal of what she cataloged as ‘fancy’ seemed downright practical to me. Like tearing, sewing, and rolling into balls for the weaver, material enough for room-sized carpets, footstools; window-curtains. These, she admitted, also came *before* the hard-earned joy of embroidering pillow-cases, initialing handkerchiefs, crocheting doilies and lace edging, knitting wool mats and Christmas-gift scarfs. At hand sat a blue vase with a sprig of mint in it and two pansies-purple ones- and the vase sat upon an exquisite, circular linen piece, tiny, exact, with a minute edging of roll-point Irish crochet.

Followed a saga on quilts and comforts—‘the common kind, made from squares of wool from cast-off clothing, and fancy ones of cretonne and silkaline. With all the goods in one piece, you could tie a fancy comfort in an afternoon, and sometimes took weeks piecing out the other.’ Of course she had made her own clothing: ‘No fancy didoes; but a right nice crocheted collar sets off a dress enough’.”