

Octagon House Museum – Hudson, Wisconsin Research Guide: Hair Work



Overview

In the 19th century, hairwork became a popular form of sentimental art and adornment in America and Europe. Women often crafted wreaths, brooches, and other ornaments from the hair of loved ones, preserving memory and kinship in tangible form. These objects carried deep emotional significance: they were tokens of mourning, symbols of familial bonds, and expressions of artistry within domestic life. Hairwork bridged the personal and the communal, appearing both in private parlors and in public exhibitions.

Featured Objects

- Hair Wreath (Object ID: 1990.3775)
Framed hair wreath made by Abigail Page Bailey from hair of her children and grandchildren.
- Hair Wreath (Object ID: 1947.0207)
Framed hair wreath made by Mrs. Emil Refke nee Hulda Jannusch, aunt of Mrs. Ida Kurrasch Lombard.
- Brooch (Object ID: 1983.3441)
Ornament fashioned of human hair. Probably worn as a pin on a dress.

Names, Individuals

- Abigail Page Bailey
- Emil Refke
- Ida Kurrasch Lombard

Further Resources

- Mark Campbell. *Self-Instructor in the Art of Hair Work*. St. Louis: Mark Campbell, 1867.
- Helen Sheumaker. *Love Entwined: The Curious History of Hairwork in America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.
- Deborah Lutz. *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

If you would like to make an appointment to view materials from our collections, please contact Octagon House Museum staff at 715-386-2654 or fill out an Inquiry Request on our website.