

STITCHING BOOK CLUB



October 2023

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What's In the Hoop?

An oldie but a goodie! Poison Apples is the only Halloween design that I have released so far, and it has always been quite popular. I designed it while living next to Walt Disney World, so I was obviously heavily influenced by Evil Queen from Snow White.

Stitching bright colors on black fabric is always so much fun, but I was particularly proud of the cauldron which was a tricky element to get right given that the fabric itself plays an important part in that element's design.

Poison Apples is 35% off during the month of October!

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR HOST

The spooky season is upon us!

I will admit, as a kid growing up in rural Montana, I hated Halloween. For one, I have never liked scary things. I largely blame this on my dad for letting me see *House on Haunted Hill* at the theater at much too young of an age, but living deep in the woods didn't help either. My house was the perfect setting for a horror movie to play out, and once I knew that I don't think I got another good night's sleep until I was an adult. To this day I still won't watch most scary movies, though I do enjoy watching some of the old (less scary) classics.

But the main reason why I hated Halloween as a kid is because it was always such a miserable experience where I lived. It was freezing cold so we had to wear winter coats over our costumes, and we didn't have a neighborhood to trick or treat in, so we would drive to the nearest town and trick or treat in an unknown neighborhood where we rarely saw other kids out doing the same. One year, it was so cold that the city opened up the mall for trick or treating and I remember part of my haul was a toothbrush from the dentist. Needless to say, Halloween was not the fun event it was supposed to be, and, in fact, I stopped dressing up at a very young age and never thought much about it again. That is until I became an adult and moved to Florida.

I will never forget my first Halloween in an actual neighborhood. It was the first time that I ever got to hand out candy and it was a surprising amount of fun. My house was overwhelmed with kids, and I think I ran out of candy in less than an hour. That experience piqued my interest in the holiday and suddenly I was seeing Halloween in a whole new light. I also came to realize how much fun Halloween decorations are. How had I missed that all those years? It is now one of my favorite times of year and Halloween stitching is something that always has me stopping and staring on Instagram. That's why for the freebee this month I wanted to do something very bright and festive. I hope you enjoy stitching it!

I have also been quietly working on a lot of new things recently and I look forward to being able to share some of them with you soon. I am currently in the process of packing up to move back south for the winter, so I will be sharing more once I get settled back in Las Vegas. Until then, I hope you have a wonderful October!

Happy Halloween, everyone!



Mary Shelley inspired costume from 2020. Photo taken in Cades Cove, Great Smokey Mountain National Park.

Happy stitching! Love, Kristin Ashley

The perfect Halloween purple!

Although orange and black may be the most common Halloween colors, bright purple and green are a fun pop of color that are unmistakable staples of the spooky season.

Lavender-very dark is a vibrant purple that works in perfect combination with DMC 907 (parrot green-light). It gives a very cartoon-Frankenstein vibe, does it not?

Color of the Month

“Lavender-Very Dark”

DMC 208



GOTHIC CLASSICS

I'm not really one for reading modern horror-themed novels, so I thought we could look at some gothic classics that make for excellent Halloween reading. While not the type of reading that will keep you up at night worried about every bump in the night, these stories still have the ability to send a shiver down your spine.



- Frankenstein - Mary Shelley
- Dracula - Bram Stoker
- The Fall of the House of Usher - Edgar Allan Poe
- Jane Eyre - Charlotte Brontë
- Wuthering Heights - Emily Brontë
- The Castle of Otranto - Horace Walpole
- The Turn of the Screw - Henry James
- Rebecca - Daphne du Maurier
- The Phantom of the Opera - Gaston Leroux
- The Hunchback of Notre-Dame - Victor Hugo
- The Picture of Dorian Gray - Oscar Wilde
- Northanger Abbey - Jane Austen
- The Mysteries of Udolpho - Ann Radcliffe
- The Woman in White - Wilkie Collins
- The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde - Robert Louis Stevenson



AIDA vs EVENWEAVE vs LINEN

I have often been asked how I decide which sort of fabric to use for different designs. For many stitchers they are exclusively Aida stitchers or exclusively linen stitchers. Once you've found a favorite, why mess with it, right? But I tend to bounce around in my fabric usage, so I thought that I would share a bit about how to select a fabric for any given project.

Let's first go through a very quick rundown of the different kinds of cross stitch fabric for those readers who are new to the craft. If you have just started cross stitching, you are likely working on Aida fabric. Not only is this the easiest fabric to learn counted cross stitch on, it's also the most readily available (at least here in the US). It is a sturdy fabric consisting of a dense weave that already has a perfect grid laid out on it which makes knowing where to place your stitches much easier. The weave of the fabric is made up of four vertical and four horizontal fibers that are very thin but tightly clumped together in a way that creates a large, solid base for each stitching space.



Sense and Sensibility Aida and Evenweave fabric.

Evenweave is sort of a broad term. Technically, Aida is an evenweave fabric because the weave is “even” throughout. But in the cross stitch world when we refer to evenweave, we are speaking primarily of a class of fabrics that includes Lugana, Monaco, and Jobelan. These fabrics, unlike Aida, consist of single, thicker fibers that are weaved individually and evenly throughout the entire fabric. The weave of a single strand follows the basic one over, one under, one over, one under pattern and this is done with fibers both horizontal and vertical. The discussion for how to stitch on these fabrics is a whole other article in itself, so I will not go into detail on that now. But if you want to know how to work on evenweave fabrics, you can look for tutorials on 2 over 2 stitching or 1 over 1 stitching, if you are feeling particularly adventurous.

Finally, linen has the same structure as evenweave, in that it is made of single fibers weaved throughout the fabric. The difference between linen and evenweave comes in the consistency of

the fibers. Linen is a much coarser, rawer form of fiber. Due to this, there will be sections of the fabric where the fibers will be thinner or thicker than other places. It's also common to have slubs in the fabric which are bulky, clumped sections of the fiber that look like flaws in the fabric but are just part of the nature of linen. This means that your stitching on linen will not be as uniform as on evenweave and there will likely be some wonky stitches due to the wonkiness of the fabric. Some linens are more even than others, so it's nice to be able to shop for these fabrics in person. Obviously the other major difference with these fabrics is that linens are, in fact, made of linen and Aidas and evenweaves are usually 100% cotton or a cotton/synthetic blend.

Now, back to the main topic at hand, how to decide which fabric to use for different designs?

First of all, there really is no right or wrong answer to this question. For the majority of designs, certainly for all of my designs, there is no correct fabric to use. It is entirely dependent on each stitcher's preference. However, when I go to work on a piece there are definitely some things I think about.

The fabric I most enjoy stitching on is 14 count Aida, so I naturally gravitate toward this. The reason for this is the simplicity of stitching on Aida. The well-defined grid means that, while I must pay attention to where I'm putting my stitches in relation to each other, it is very difficult to mess up a stitch once you are in the proper place. If you are working a block of color on Aida, you can easily let your mind wander which is nice if you are like me and enjoy watching TV while

you stitch or are a little sleepy. I try to create a peaceful, relaxing environment when I am stitching, and part of that is making the stitching itself as enjoyable and stress-free as possible. Working on Aida is a surefire way to simplify any stitching project. I also like to stitch in hand, so long as the piece of fabric is not too large, stitching in hand is much easier, in my opinion, with a naturally stiff fabric like Aida. It is also the stiffness of this fabric that makes for plumper stitches that look more uniform throughout. My stitches never look as good on evenweave as they do on Aida, and this comes down to having a stronger base for them to sit on.



The Three Musketeers *stitched on Aida.*

As for stitching on evenweave, while I do not find stitching on evenweave to be necessarily difficult, it is much easier to make a stitching mistake and therefore requires much more focus and attention to detail. When stitching two over two there have been plenty of times when I have accidentally placed a stitch over one fiber instead of two, or over three instead of two, only to realize it much too late. I find that I frog much more frequently on evenweave, and everyone knows a visit from Mr. Frog is no fun. Of course, there is one huge perk to stitching on evenweave...it makes for the loveliest finishes! With its flat texture and less visible weave, evenweave is sure to give a more luxurious feel to any piece. It's also much softer. While I like stiff fabric while stitching in hand, there certainly is something about holding a particularly soft piece of fabric.

Finally, I will admit that I almost never stitch on linen. My extreme perfectionism simply does not enjoy working on a fabric that has the characteristics of linen. Of course, there are linens that are of much finer quality and have a more even and uniform weave, however, they tend to be quite expensive and, as I do not enjoy working on that fabric anyway, I do not find myself inclined to purchase them. So, unfortunately, I am not able to give much advice on this fabric choice, but I wanted to include it in this article for those who are just learning this craft and interested in all the different options. I will say, in favor of linen, it tends to be considered the highest quality fabric when we start talking about luxury fabrics and creating needlework heirlooms. Any linen piece is sure to stand the test of time and beauty. It also gives a bit of a historic quality to pieces if you are working on samplers, for example. One of the few pieces I have stitched on linen is *The Frog Prince*, which I wanted to give a bit of that historic quality to.



The Frog Prince stitched on tea-dyed Irish linen.

Now, some more detailed questions to think about when choosing a fabric.

How large is this design? For me, if a design is particularly large, I am Aida all the way. Large projects take a lot of time and energy and I like to make that process as easy as possible. I, personally, don't like to have WIPs that go on for years and years. That is certainly not a criticism of that practice, it's just not something that I want. I like to get projects finished so that I might enjoy them and can move on without the gnawing weight of an unfinished project in the back of my mind. But, again, that's just me and my anxious mind. Also, as mentioned above, due to the

natural stiffness of Aida, it will be easier to control as a large piece, rather than a softer evenweave that can become difficult to handle.

Are there many fractional stitches? If a design has a large number of fractional stitches, I will automatically lean toward an evenweave fabric because these stitches are much easier to complete on an evenweave fabric. Now, that being said, the two Book Club designs that I have created with the most fractional stitches, *The Great Gatsby* and *Anne of Green Gables*, were both stitched on Aida. However, there were other reasons for that fabric selection that trumped this one, and I went into them knowing that the fractional stitches were going to be a bit of a pain.

Are there any areas of full coverage? This one is completely personal preference for me, but if there is a large area of full coverage (an area of fabric with solid stitching and no empty spaces), I will gravitate toward Aida. I feel like the sturdiness of Aida holds the weight of full coverage areas better, meaning that your stitches are going to sit nicer than on an evenweave which may sag a bit.

Is the fabric going to be a dark color? Stitching on dark colors is a particular challenge that some stitchers try to avoid at all costs. I absolutely love stitching on black fabric, particularly with bright colors that really pop on the dark background. However, I don't think I would ever attempt to stitch on anything other than black Aida. Due to the nature of dark colored fabrics, it can be difficult to see exactly what your needle is doing, even in good lighting. Stitching on black evenweave or linen is going to make it even more difficult to get accurate needle placement. For this reason, *The Great Gatsby* was stitched on black Aida despite having a ridiculous amount of fractional stitches. I will say, for those who are looking to try black fabric for the first time, that having really excellent lighting all around your stitching spot helps immensely. I use an OttLite and couldn't stitch on dark fabric without it.

How do I plan to finish this piece? Another thing to consider is what the finishing process will be for your piece. If you are doing a complicated finish that requires a lot of tugging and pulling on the fabric, or if the piece will be subjected to any wear or tear such as on a pillow or purse, Aida will hold up better to this process. If you plan on doing frayed edges on your finishing, I recommend using an evenweave as the fraying of evenweave looks a bit nicer than the fraying of Aida.



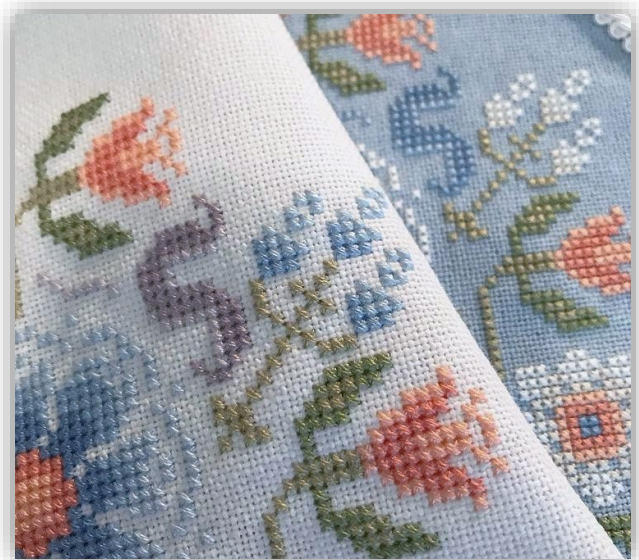
A Christmas Carol stitched on Monaco evenweave.



Jane Eyre stitched on hand-dyed Monaco evenweave.

evenweave for that design because the end result was really lovely, and the flat texture of the fabric lent really well to the overall look of the piece. As mentioned before when speaking of linen, samplers always look best, in my opinion, on a linen or evenweave fabric as it is more historically accurate, being that Aida was not created until the late 1890's.

When it comes down to it, fabric selection is all about what you enjoy stitching on. When I first started cross stitching, I fell into the trap of thinking that Aida is for beginners and evenweave is for those who have advanced in the craft. After I started stitching on evenweave, I felt like it would be a step back to return to Aida. But then I decided to work on an Aida piece and realized how silly I was being with this thought process. No fabric is more or less correct, special, or indicative of skill. I encourage you to try stitching on each type of fabric and use your own creative judgement when making selections for projects. Whatever you choose, it will be great!



Both colorways of Sense and Sensibility stitched on Monaco evenweave.

What is the aesthetic of the piece? At the end of the day, this is really what it all comes down to for me. Some pieces just yearn to be stitched on Aida and some for stitching on evenweave, and sometimes you can't even explain why. It just feels right. Any time I am working on a piece that has a bit of a country or folksy feel to it, I am definitely going to be stitching on Aida—hence why *Anne of Green Gables* was stitched on Aida despite all those fractional stitches.

Other pieces simply call out for a more refined, elegant approach, and therefore I will pick up evenweave. *Jane Eyre*, for example, is a very large piece which I immediately wanted to stitch on Aida due to the large size, but there was just something about it that kept telling me no, this must be an evenweave piece. And I'm happy that I went with

OCTOBER STITCHES

Available at sapphremthandcrafts.etsy.com



Poison Apples

35% OFF
DURING
OCTOBER



Frankenstein



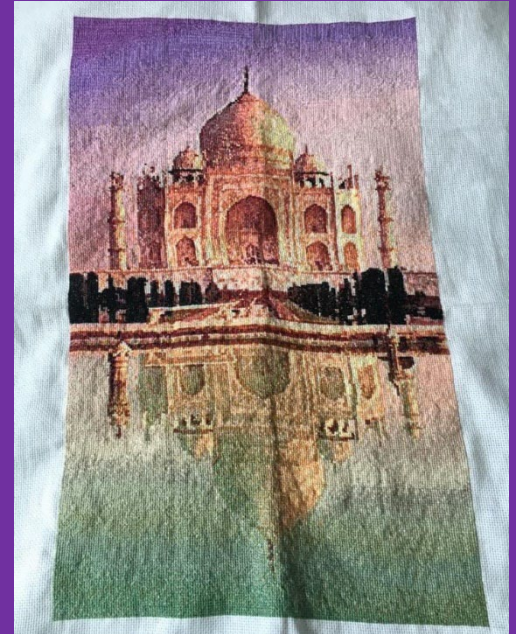
MEMBER OF THE MONTH

RABAAB

Switzerland

How long have you been stitching?

I have been cross stitching since I was about 12 years old. I learned a little in school in the United Kingdom, but my mom taught me the majority of my cross stitch techniques. I did not used to do it often due to school and college but in the last 20 years I have been cross stitching much more.



What is your most prized FFO?

My most prized cross stitch is my Taj Mahal that I finished. This was the last cross stitch project I was able to show to my grandmother who sadly passed away shortly after I finished.

Favorite floss color?

My favorite floss colour is any shade of pink.

Favorite fabric for cross stitch?

I like to stitch on Aida.

What's your favorite novel (classic or current)?

My favourite novel I have ever read is Anne of Green Gables. I was thrilled to find it as a stitch-a-long from the Stitching Book Club. I also love Little Women and Jane Eyre.



What are your must-haves when sitting down to stitch?

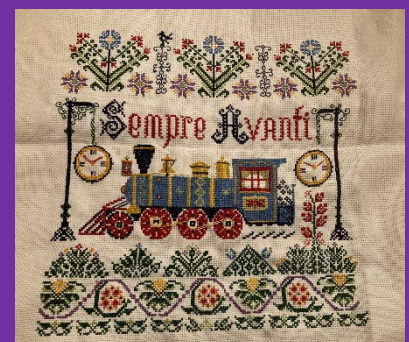
When I sit down to stitch, I must have my computer in front of me. I normally watch tv or Youtube while stitching. I must also have a snack to eat.

What is your favorite kind of design to stitch?

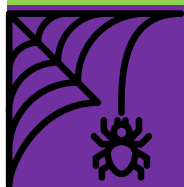
My favourite design subjects to stitch are flowers, landmarks, but I usually have to like the design to be highly motivated. I stitch some stitch-a-longs but normally I like to wait until a few parts are released before joining them.

Shoutout to your favorite designer or fabric/floss dyer!

My favourite designers are firstly you, Kristin, and The Frosted Pumpkin Stitcher and Tempted Tangles. Lakeside Needlecraft is where I buy my floss from, and they have a number of stitch-a-longs that I join. There are many more.



Trick or Treat



Materials:

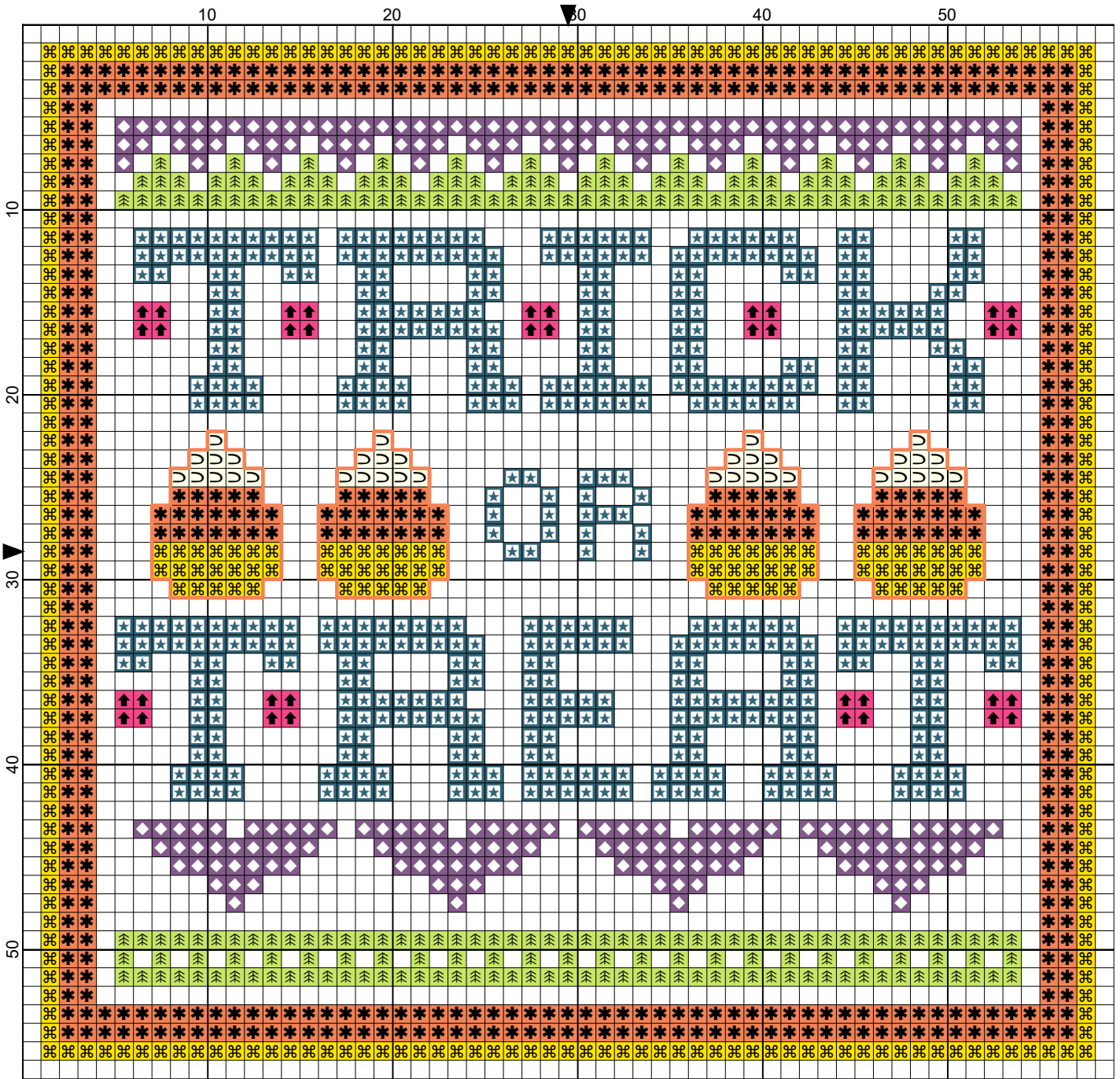
Fabric: 8 inch X 8 inch for 14 count or 28 count 2 over 2. Model is stitched on 14 count white Aida. The design area for this design is 57 X 59 stitches.

Legend (2 strands of floss):

✠	☐	DMC Cotton 930	antique blue - dk
✱	✱	DMC Cotton 721	orange spice - md
⌘	⌘	DMC Cotton 973	canary - br
⌣	⌣	DMC Cotton 746	off white
⌘	⌘	DMC Cotton 907	parrot green - lt
◆	◆	DMC Cotton 208	lavender - vy dk
↑	↑	DMC Cotton 3805	cyclamen pink

Please note that the model I stitched for this pattern and pictured above has an error in it. I made the “I” in “Trick” too small and therefore that area of stitching is a bit off. I was too far along before noticing the mistake and decided to leave it in. This is to let you know that the chart is correct and is how this design should be stitched.

Trick or Treat by Sapphire Mountain Handcrafts



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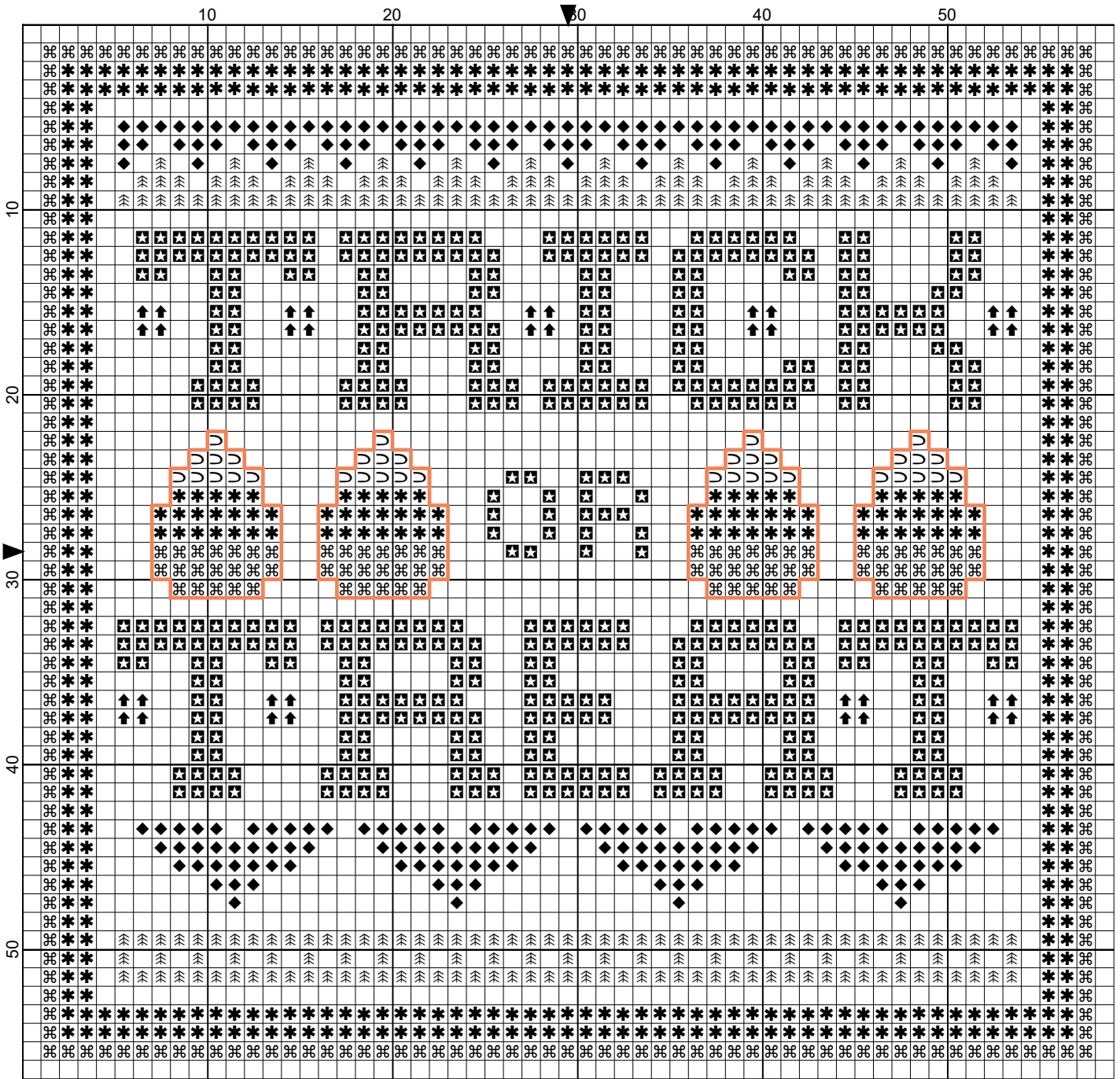
Legend:

- ★ DMC-930
- ✳ DMC-721
- ⊞ DMC-973
- ◁ DMC-746
- ⌒ DMC-907
- ◊ DMC-208
- ↑ DMC-3805

Backstitches:

- DMC-721

Trick or Treat by Sapphire Mountain Handcrafts



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Legend:

- DMC-930 DMC-721 DMC-973 DMC-746 DMC-907 DMC-208 DMC-3805

Backstitches:

- DMC-721