



## Norwegian Embroidery (Hardanger) and Foodways

The New Orleans area is home to about 200 people of Norwegian descent, a small but active community that sponsors a number of activities throughout the year. The Norwegian Seamen's Church on Prytania Street serves as an informal community center and hosts many of these events. The largest is the church's annual Christmas bazaar, which draws large crowds to sample the traditional Norwegian cookies and sandwiches prepared by its members and to buy handcrafts made by local women and men or imported from Norway.

Among the most popular items each year are the *hardanger* tablecloths made by Anna Hansen Stauder for the bazaar's raffle. Hardanger, a form of counted thread work which takes its name from a Norwegian fjord, is worked on an even weave fabric. Its designs are based on geometric shapes: squares, rectangles, triangles, diamonds, diagonals, zigzags, and crosses. Traditionally in Norway only white material and thread were used, but many newer pieces are worked with colored thread and on colored material.

As Norwegians immigrated to the United States, they brought this traditional art with them. Anna Hansen Stauder of Metairie is now the only woman in the New Orleans area who is expert in *hardanger* embroidery. Mrs. Stauder was born in New Jersey in 1920 to Norwegian and Swedish parents, Arne Hansen and Karen Jensen. Her family moved to New Orleans in 1930, and she has lived in the area ever since. At the age of ten she learned hardanger from a Norwegian aunt in 1932 and has been practicing it since. She stitches without a pattern.

In addition to traditional tablecloths, runners, and scarves, Mrs. Stauder has begun making smaller, modern items like Christmas tree ornaments. She does not sell her work but donates it for sale at the Norwegian Seamen's Church Christmas bazaar each year. In addition to the tablecloth she usually makes about fifty smaller handwork pieces for sale at the bazaar. Mrs. Stauder teaches a class in *hardanger* embroidery at a local community center. She says that she finds the complex work relaxing. "My fingers itch if I have nothing to do with my hands," she says.