

## FULL INSTRUCTIONS IN NEEDLE-WORK OF ALL KINDS: BEADS

*The material that follows appeared in Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book for 1858 (vol. 50, pp. 169-170) as part of a series of articles presenting "Full Instructions in Needle-Work of All Kinds." It is reprinted here in that it offers contemporary insight into the major categories of beads used in needle work during the mid-19th century in the United States.*

"O. P." We cannot at all discover the origin of this extraordinary name for the large beads. They were at first used principally for mats and table covers; for which, indeed, on account of their rough sharp edges, they were singularly unfit. They make beautiful pendent vases for flowers, decorations for chandeliers, and similar articles. They are sold in bunches of twelve strings. They are either clear or opaque. If the latter, it would appear that they are painted on the inside, with a color different from that of the glass itself. They are technically termed clear, and filled. The latter are always dearest. They are manufactured in Bohemia.

**Pound Beads.** – These are like seed beads, except in size. Those in most general use are distinguished as Nos. 1, 2, and 3. No. 1 is rarely used, except for grounding mats worked in wools and silks. No. 2 is used for tables, ottomans, table borders, and such things. No. 3 is fit for footstools, handscreens, and fine articles. The greatest variety of colors and shades is to be had in this size. It is next to seed beads in its dimensions. All these are sold by the ounce.

**Seed Beads.** – Very small beads, for crests, cigar-cases, and very delicate work generally. Can only be used with proper beading or jeweller's needles, and fine white silk. Sold in small hanks of ten strings each.

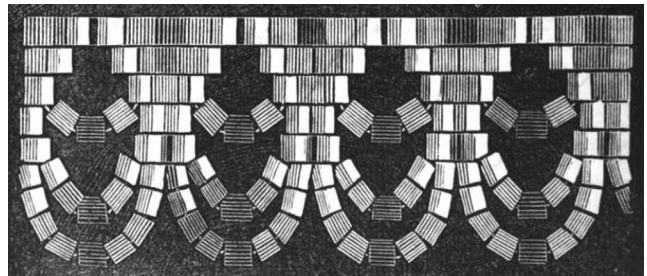
**Cut Beads.** – These, instead of having a round smooth surface, are cut in angles. They are more brilliant as well as more expensive than the ordinary kinds. Black, ruby, and garnet are the colors usually obtainable.

**Fancy Beads** are almost infinite in their variety of form, size, and color. Many are used in ornamenting mats and fancy baskets. Some, which are round, are of plain glass, silvered or gilt, to look like gold, silver, or steel beads. The flat-round ones, termed sequins, both gilt and of colored glass, are used much in trimming headdresses. All are sold by the string or bunch.

**Metal Beads** are gold, silver, steel, and blue steel. The two former may be had either cut or round, the last-named kind being considered the best. They are sold in small bunches, marked from 2 to 12. The sizes from 9 to 12, being very large, are not generally to be obtained.

**Bugles** are tubes of glass, varying both in length and thickness. The black and white are used for trimming articles of mourning. Colored bugles have lately been introduced. Green, purple, bronze, and blue. They are sold by the ounce or pound.

**Editor's Note:** The O. P. beads mentioned above are hexagonal tubes with thin walls and large perforations that are often coated with paint or silvering (Figures 1-2). In *Victorian Embroidery: An Authoritative Guide*, Barbara Morris (2003:28) states that they were first imported in 1853 or 1854.



**Figure 1.** Loop and vandyke border, in O. P. beads (*Godey's Lady's Book* 1859, vol. 59, p. 70).



**Figure 2.** O. P. bead tassels on a Mohawk souvenir cushion ca. 1890 (private collection).