

BUCILLA



In 1867 Bernhard Ulmann founded a company which he named Bernhard Ulman Company Incorporated (Lace, Linen, and Accessories). Later the name was shortened to Bucilla, an acronym of the longer name. Ulmann began by selling silk-screened embroidery designs from a push-cart on the streets of New York. He opened a retail store in 1870, but by 1875 he was selling his products to other retailers.

The company developed the Mellina brand of knitting yarn in the early 1900s. This yarn was of exceptionally high quality and, for a time, comprised 70% of the company's sales. Bucilla also published books and patterns and sold threads, yarns, needlepoint kits, embroidery, crochet and knitting items, and quilt kits. Goods stamped for embroidery often had areas that were tinted.

In 1922 Ulmann sold the company as an Employee Stock Option Purchase to his employees. During the 1920s and 1930s catalogs were printed. The 1932-33 catalog was 32 pages long and listed company branch offices in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.

Bucilla was a prominent advertiser in *McCall's Needlework & Crafts* magazine. Their advertisement was usually found on the inside front cover and was a full-page colored ad. One or more quilt kits can be found in most of the advertisements. In the early years most of the quilt kits were appliqué kits. Cross-stitch embroidery kits were introduced with the ad for Zeke the Scarecrow in *McCall's Needlework & Crafts* Fall-Winter 1956-57. In the years following, most of the Bucilla quilt kits were cross-stitch embroidery kits. Many of the crib and youth kits were done on pre-quilted fabric.

The company changed hands several times, being sold to Indian Head Corporation in 1962; to Hannson Trust (a Swedish company) in 1966; to Armour-Dial, a division of Greyhound Corporation in 1977; to private investors in 1983; and to Dyson-Kissner-Moran Corporation in 1996, where it was placed under the direction of Plaid Enterprises. This is where it continues to operate today.

In an industry where companies had relatively short lives, Bucilla has been in business for over 140 years. Its ability to adapt to the ever-changing demands of consumers made it a leader in the industry. As different types of needlework became popular and then waned, Bucilla was able to respond to what the customers desired.

Sources:

Bucilla Needlework Products; Fall-Winter 1932-33 catalog

Various Bucilla catalogs from 1927 through 1939

www.plaidonline.com, Plain Enterprises website, "Bucilla's History"

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Stories of Companies & Designers

BUCILLA
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