

Letter of Los Angeles

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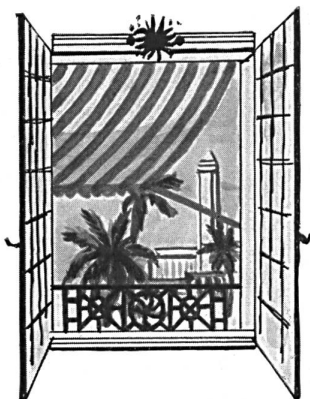
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Letter of Los Angeles

THE PLEASANT PEASANT GOES HIGH FASHION

When Nornie Weedon studied fine arts and design at the University of California, she never dreamed, that some day she would be creating "Lanz Originals". Yet, both music and romance are responsible for her doing this very thing and establishing her as one of the most successful young designers in America. But let us begin at the beginning...

The establishment of the famous Salzburg Festival after World War I resulted in the growth of a mecca for music-loving tourists and the mushroom-like springing

up of fascinating little shops to charm these same tourists. Among the best loved of these was the shop of Sepp Lanz who featured bright colored peasant costumes, which were an immediate hit with the American visitors. And in 1932 a "Lanz of Salzburg" shop opened in New York City where it made fashion news immediately. The peasant-style creations were perfectly suited to our increasingly informal way of living and were quickly adopted and adapted for use over here. The demand for these clothes grew and grew until Sepp Lanz found himself making large amounts of these "peasant clothes" for wholesale distribution.

In 1938, two young brothers from Bavaria landed in New York on their way to California where they planned to make their future homes. The sight of the Lanz shop in New York awoke in them a tremendous nostalgia and a sudden inspiration. One of them, Kurt Scharff, convinced Sepp Lanz that Los Angeles in southern California would be an ideal spot for a branch store and within the week, Sepp Lanz and the two brothers had opened "Lanz of California".

Soon society and cinema figures set up a demand for Lanz custom-made peasant-inspired clothes and this department of the business grew by leaps and bounds. When the Scharff brothers returned to California after having served in the armed forces during World War II, they found a thriving business but they learned that Sepp Lanz wanted to close the business and retire. This left them with the problem of busy shops and nothing to sell in them which they solved by buying all the rights to the Lanz name and looking for a designer.

They didn't have to look far and this is where Nornie Weedon comes into the picture. For Miss Weedon, who had been an ardent Lanz customer, met and married Werner Scharff, one of the brothers who convinced Sepp Lanz to open his shop in California. Her years of art training in California, in New York, in Paris and in other art capitals of Europe stood her in good stead when she began designing for the custom part of the business. When Sepp Lanz retired she merely annexed that part of the work and assumed the full designing role when the firm of "Lanz Originals" was created to turn out volume production on a large scale. Today the number of stores featuring "Lanz Originals" exceeds 1700, including shops in Canada, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Alaska, Guam, the Philippines, Japan, Bermuda, the Virgin Islands and even far-away Hong Kong.

Nornie Scharff has widely expanded the Lanz collection so that it is no longer a small group of peasant dresses

ERRATUM

The fabric of the model below, presented in « Textiles Suisses » No. 3/1956, page 70, is by UNION LTD., SAINT-GALL



but rather a group of fine clothes done in a simple yet sophisticated manner. Many of the fabrics are imported, especially a large group of Swiss cottons, which are used four seasons of the year by this house which does a large business in "transitional cottons"... cottons which span the seasons, are usually heavier and darker in color and can thus be worn in varying weathers, preserving chic and comfort at the same time. Of course, their summer and resort fashions rustle with organdies, piqués and the laces of St. Gall.

Mrs. Scharff who is a shy, modest person of elegantly simple tastes selects only the finest of fabrics as she

is a perfectionist in her work and a demon for detail. Both she and Mr. Scharff travel to Europe each year to select and design exclusive fabrics and to hunt out and gather the unusual and fascinating accessories for which they have become famous. It is this great fastidiousness, plus the unique needs of the firm, that has led Mrs. Scharff to a widespread use of Swiss fabrics in the varied aspects of her work. Thus the circle is closed... from Europe to America and back to Europe ... via music, romance and the artistry of European craftsmen.

Helene-F. Miller

STOFFEL & CO., SAINT-GALL

Blue and green cotton plaid embroidered with white pin dots.

Modell by Lanz Originals, Los Angeles

