

Many-talented Fingers Work At 'Unique Crafts'

With magic fingers, she puts autumn on leather. And with the same hands, she builds fences and plays the violin.

Miss Evelyn Burgess, of R.R. 2, Hamilton, who pronounces her name Ee-velyn, in the British manner, has leaped from pinnacle to pinnacle in her life, but she says it has always entailed constant hard work.

HER LATEST venture is a little shop tucked below her cottage just west of Clappison's Corners on Highway 5. Called 'Unique Crafts', it features Miss Burgess' former hobby — leathercraft.

Imaginative

The tiny shop with her comfortably cluttered workshop behind it offers every conceivable leather object imaginable.

There are handbags with matching wallets, baby booties, coffee tables, stools, belts, dog leashes, and wastepaper-baskets.

ALL ARE hand crafted by the owner herself and none of them is run-of-the-mill.

Many of these articles have floral and bird designs stained and modelled on the leather. Others are tooled while still more combine both modelled and tooling and colored designs.

Only One

"I think I'm the only person in Canada who does this," Miss Burgess said, referring to the stained and modelled motif on handbags, coffee tables and telephone-book covers.

SHE USES both Canadian and English colors in her work and has at least a hundred bottles of the different shades on a shelf beside a worktable nestled under stairs leading down from her kitchen.

The Canadian colors which are painted on rest on top of the leather. English tones are made to penetrate the hides, and since she learned to use these in her native England, she tends to favor these.

She uses only top quality calfskin for her stained and modelled work. More durable cowhide she uses for tooling.

The difference between the two methods Miss Burgess explained.

The calfskin is "moulded like putty." Once a design has been traced on the conditioned leather, the background is pressed down with a smooth, curved modelling tool.

"NO KNIVES are used," she stressed. Knives are used to cut sturdy cowhide and tools are used to hammer the background of tooled designs.

Most items are finished with lacing after having been stained. Prices range from

change purse or baby moccasins to about \$45 for a stained and modelled handbag or coffee table.

Miss Burgess learned her craft in art classes in a high school in Dover, England, during the First World War. Until last April, when she opened her shop after leaving the Ontario Humane Society for which she had worked for three years, leathercraft had been a hobby.

"I BEGAN last year when the society had to reduce me to three days a week (The department she was with eventually shut down completely.) "Then I used those other days to build up this stock," she said.

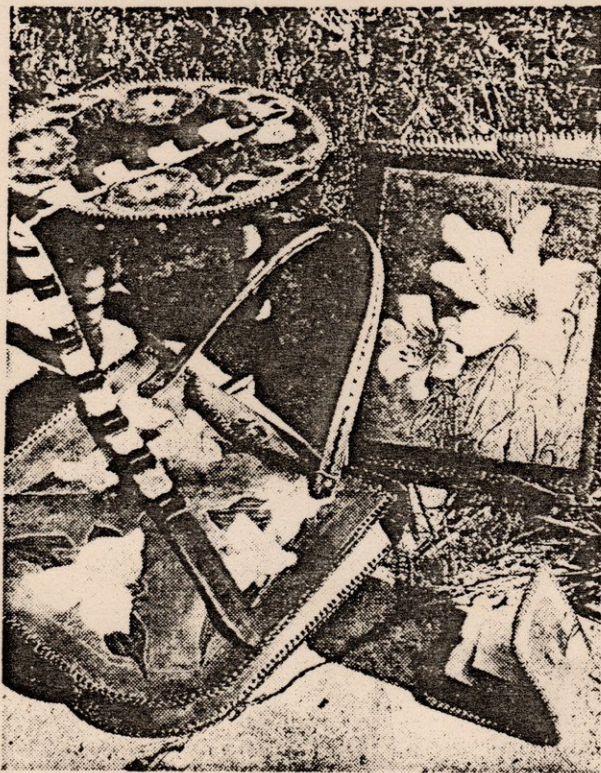
Background

Miss Burgess worked for about 12 years with the Hamilton Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, lecturing to groups of children and adults in the Hamilton area.

BEFORE she came to Hamilton from England in 1951, she had taught voice production and violin. During the Second World War she travelled throughout southern England lecturing on food production for the British Department of Agriculture.



Miss Evelyn Burgess of R.R. No. 2, Hamilton, holds a piece of leather she is preparing to work with. In the foreground are bottles of the many colored stains she uses.



A wide variety of the type of leather goods Miss Burgess makes is displayed.