# AnnTheGran? **Lettering** Class Notes

I love letters. Over the last 6 or 7 years, I've collected more than 100 alphabet sets, both purchased and downloaded free from the Internet. I have fonts that aren't included in any of the software packages I use as well as beautiful monograms and creative picture lettering. I found, though, that other than the occasional two, three or single letter monograms, I seldom wanted to take the trouble to individually import or merge the many letters needed to write out a phrase or saying. Although the purchased alphabets might be superior to or different from the keyboard lettering I already had, I often used the keyboard lettering just to avoid that hassle.

Then I hit upon a simple solution. When I have a set of alphabet letters that I use frequently to spell out words or phrases, I take the time to set up a "design" that includes ALL the letters, numbers and punctuation from that set by importing them one at a time. It takes fewer than 5 minutes. If the letters in a set are large, I may have to set up separate files for the capitals and lower case letters. I don't worry about having the letters overlap each other, as long as I can see them, or overlapping the edges of the hoop. I then save this file even though I may receive an error message telling me that I will not be able to stitch the design. After all, I have no intention of stitching the design! Some digitizing and editing programs lock all the objects together when you save a design. This tip won't work with those programs.
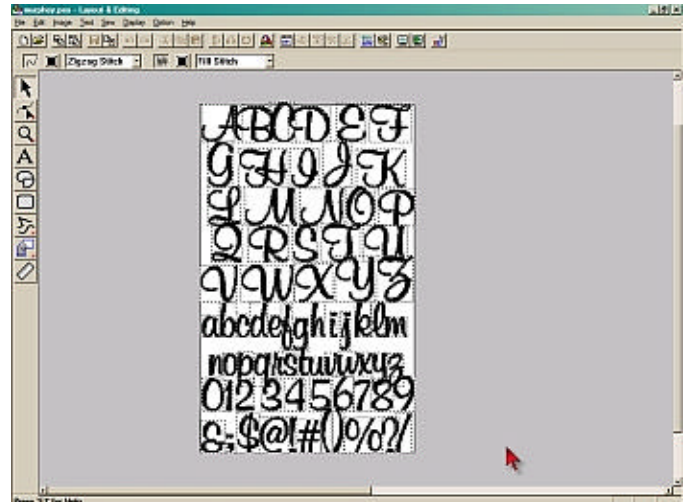
The next time I want to use some of those letters I start a new file, and reduce the view to 50%. I then import the file I had previously saved and immediately move it over to the side. From there it's a simple matter to drag the letters I want to use, duplicating as necessary, into the hoop and then delete the ones I won't be using this time. Another minute or two to align the letters and I'm nearly
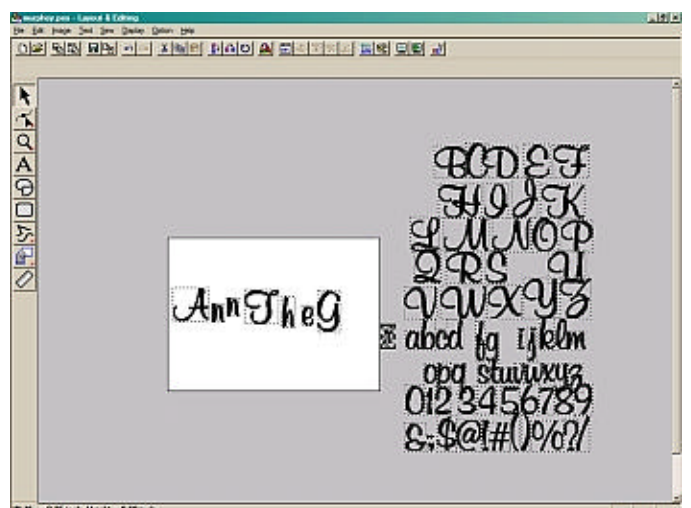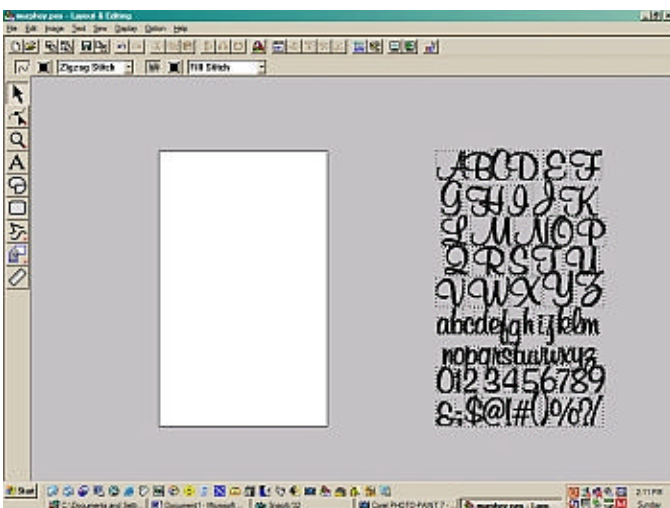
finished. The last step is to correct the stitching order so that the letters stitch from left to right It all sounds very complicated but I believe that when you try it you'll see how simple it is and just maybe you'll start to love letters, too!

A few more tips for working with lettering:

- If the letters have small jumps between them that may be difficult to clip, I assign different colors to the odd and even numbered letters, forcing the machine to stop and cut the thread after each letter. (This trick works with keyboard lettering, too.)
- Letters, even in the same set, are of varying sizes. If you change the size of the letters, increase or decrease by a percentage rather than to a size. This will insure that your letters maintain the same aspect ratio.
- Different letters stitch out in different ways. For example a letter "l" will increase at both ends while being stitched while a letter "o" will draw up. When you're aligning letters, align to the middle rather than to the bottom or top.
- If you're setting up a phrase of more than one line of text, have the second line stitch from right to left, the third line from left to right and so on. This will avoid that long jump thread between rows. A long jump thread can catch the foot of your machine and throw the design out of registration or become buried in the next row of stitches and be difficult or impossible to trim neatly
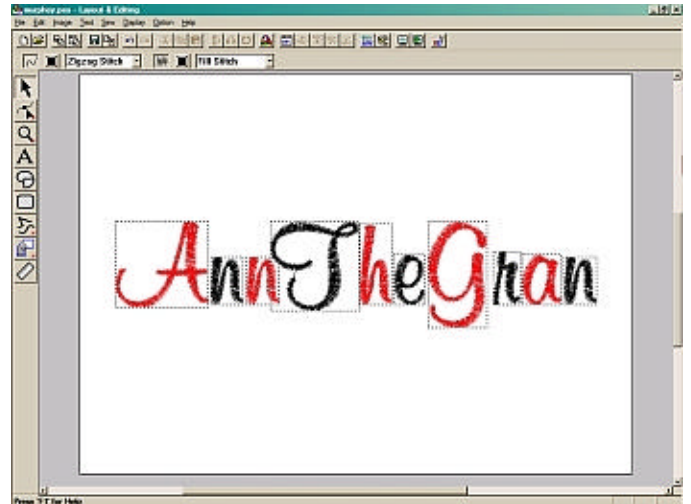
What else can you do with letters? It's easy to create borders, corners, monogram enhancements and garment embellishments using the letters built into your software or alphabet sets that you've purchased.

Start a new design. Import one of your pretty letters. Duplicate and flip that letter horizontally. Bring the two letters together until they "kiss." Now select both letters and flip them vertically. What a lovely neckline embellishment! Now flip the group vertically, swap the positions of the letters left to right and pull them in until they overlap attractively. Voila, another lovely neckline embellishment!
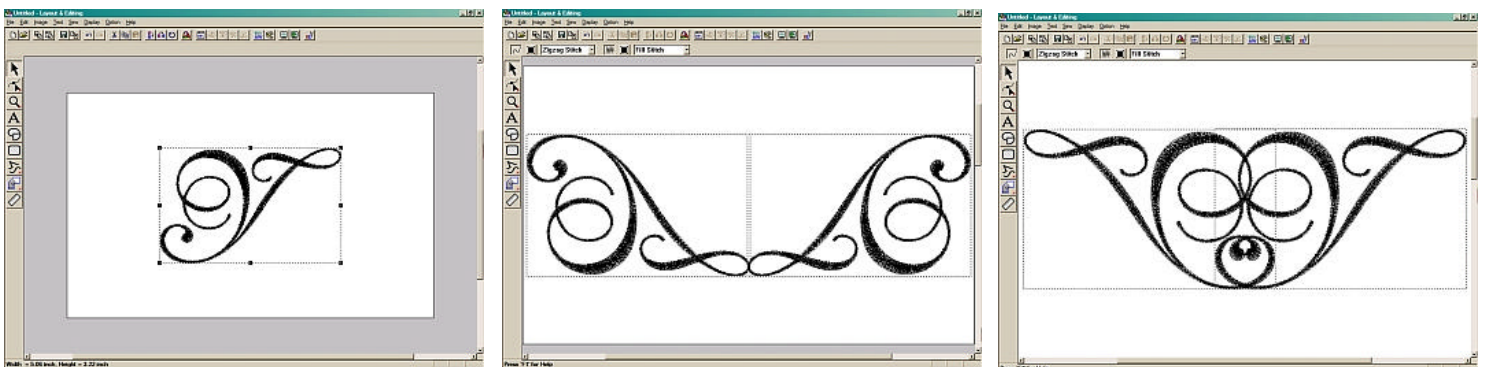
Now lets make a corner. Import another pretty letter. Duplicate and flip that letter horizontally. Bring the two letters together until you've created an attractive rectangular shape. Group those two letters so that they become one object. Now duplicate that object and rotate it 90 degrees. Bring the two objects together corner to corner. You'll want something to fill in the cornet. It can be as simple as an "O" or it can be created using two plain letters or numbers from the same or a different alphabet.

In my sample I've used the numeral "3" from the same set, duplicated flipped and brought together. Whatever you choose, you will need to rotate it 45 degrees so that it will sit nicely in the corner.
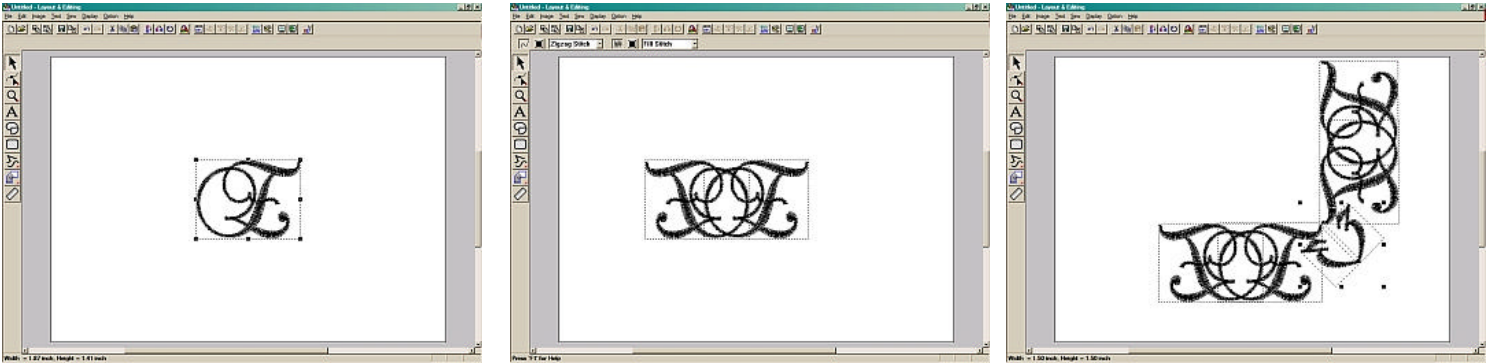
Here's the new design stitched on a napkin!
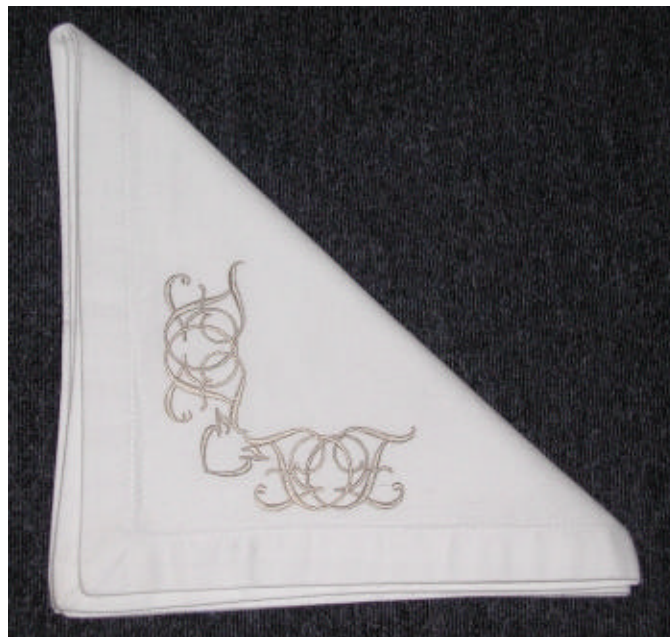
The more you play with your letters the more combinations you will invent. Before you know it, you'll have a new set of embellishments that you didn't have to purchase; they were already there on your computer waiting for you to find them!

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