

Wren ★ Feathers

Heirloom Lace Dress

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I assume you have basic sewing knowledge and the explanation should suffice, but if you need help please email me!



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The heirloom sewing technique we'll be learning here is called lace insertion. This is a GREAT first project to practice it on, because it's all straight seams. More advanced lace insertion can have lace sewed to itself or shaped into curves. If you'd like to try that after this, check out these: <https://www.etsy.com/listing/171823381/edwardian-heirloom-sewing-pattern-set>. The basic steps here are zigzagging the lace to the fabric, then cutting the fabric away to reveal the lace. It's quite a different look than just layering on lace. When you sew lace to fabric, you wind up with a textured look, but when you cut the fabric away, it really lets the beauty of the lace shine through, as you'll see in the photos below.



Heirloom sewing is usually done with really high-quality materials like 100% cotton batiste and lace. Lace for insertion usually has more firmly woven sides, because it's intended to be zigzagged on. For this project, I used muslin and the lace shown above, which came from my stash and I think is probably cotton. You can see it has flimsy sides, and the lace below would have been an easier choice to work with. In a pinch, you could try out this technique with the scratchy synthetic lace sold as seam binding, but for all the effort it's going to take, you'll want to hunt down something nicer to make the actual dress.

****SUPER IMPORTANT****

Lace width makes a difference. Read the sleeve/cuff section BEFORE you cut out the sleeves!!



Let's start with the easiest part – the skirt. It's a rectangle 7.5" by 22" in case you missed that on the pattern piece. Measure 1.5" from the top of the skirt and place your lace against a ruler to make sure it's perfectly even. Pin in place. Because my lace had minimal edges, I made my zigzags a little wider than normal – 3.5mm wide and 1mm long. Experiment with your lace on scraps to find the right width to just cover the woven edge.



Zigzag the top edge, stop and press. Zigzag the bottom edge, press again, flip to the back side and cut the fabric away slowly and carefully. I like to use small sharp scissors to get as close as possible to the stitching. The next piece of lace was placed 2" from the bottom of the first piece, and then instead of a hem, the lace was zigzagged directly onto the raw edge of the bottom of the skirt. If that's too challenging for you, you can also place it a little higher, zigzag, and then cut away. Another pretty option for the hem would be using matching gathered lace.

IMPORTANT SLEEVE NOTE: 3/4" lace was used here for the cuffs. If your lace is narrower/wider, you will need to adjust the sleeve length before cutting!



Now that you've had some practice, we'll sew the lace to the gathered sleeve bottom. Cut a piece of lace to fit your doll's wrist (3.5" was used here), gather the sleeve bottom and zigzag to the edge of the lace.



If there are raw edges beyond the zigzagging underneath, cut them away as you did for the skirt. WS (L) and RS (R).



OK, the bodice lace is a challenge, but I'll walk you through it step by step. First, clip notches at all the angles in the neckline (e.g. where scissors are pointing) and press them under 1/4"



Zigzag lace to the TOP EDGES first as in (L) pic. Press, then zigzag bottom edges. Leave the lace open at the sides.



Sew a long strip of lace attaching at the neckline and curving down the bodice. In the center front, the pieces should be about 1" apart, and at the back about 1" from the back edge. ONLY sew the lace edge that touches the neckline right now. Pin the lace out of the way of the armholes, gather and sew in sleeves.



Pin or clip and trim sleeve seam and press toward bodice. Press the long piece of lace down flat, zigzag the outer edge, which might encase some of the sleeve seam in it, depending on the width. Cut away all of the bodice fabric under the lace as you did for the skirt.



Sew side seams from cuff to waist. If you're serging, you might want to use smaller stitches on the cuff lace for more stability. If you're not serging, zigzag it with a closely spaced stitch instead.

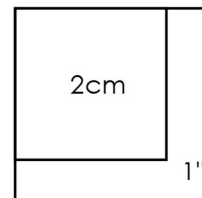
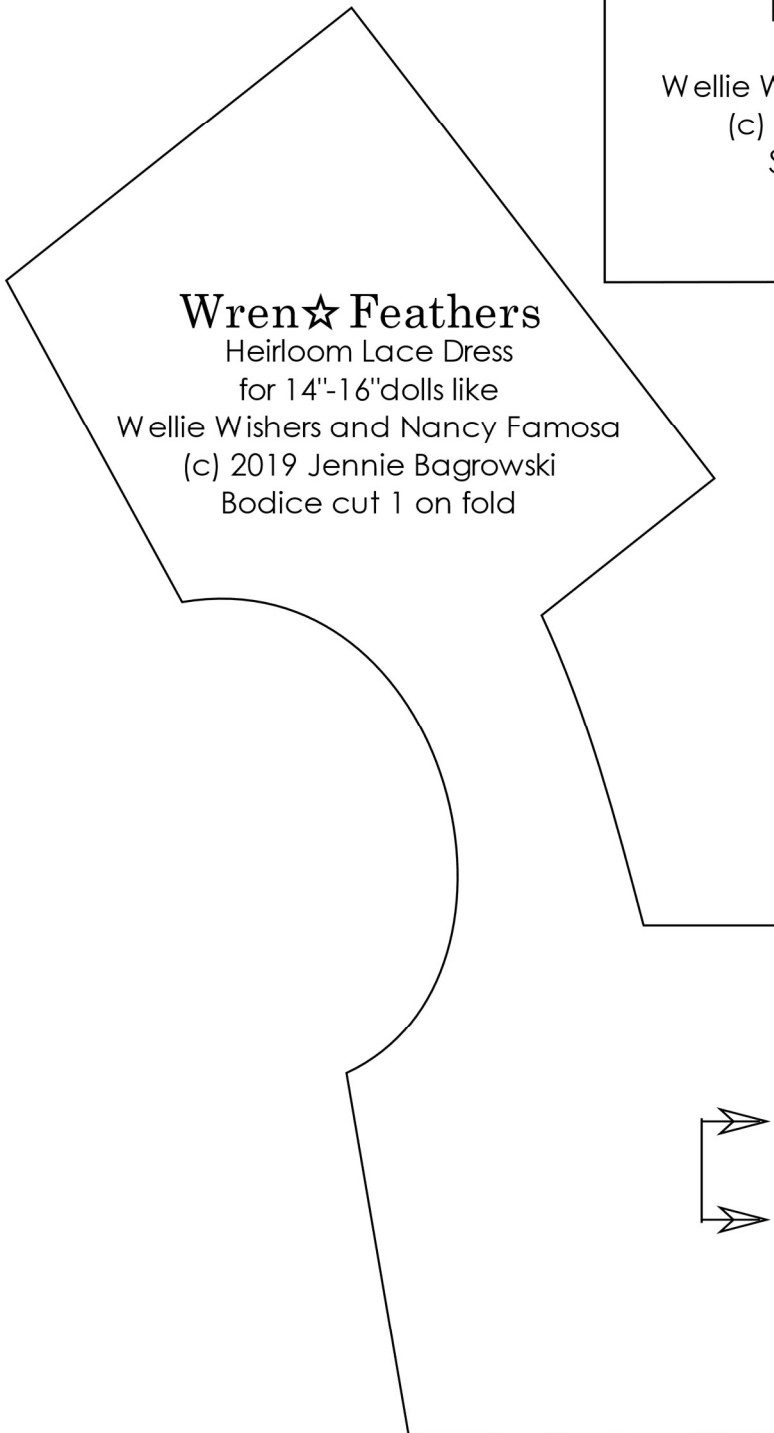
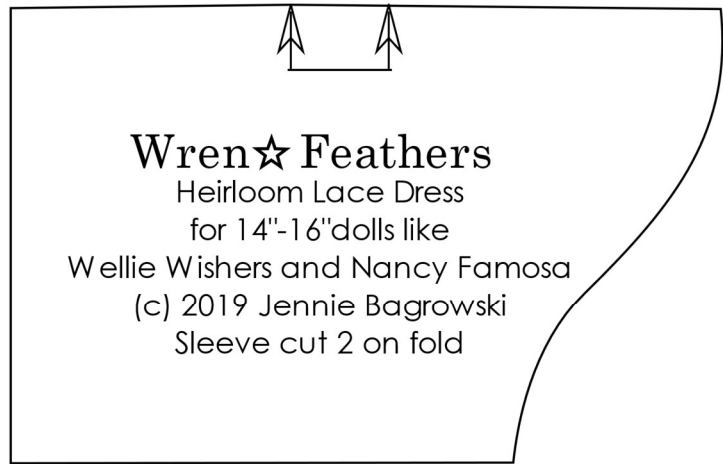


Gather the skirt and sew to the bodice. You can see I added a strip of lace as a waistband, which wasn't a great plan. This is quite a full skirt, even with muslin, and it was tricky to sew it down at the bottom where the bodice and skirt meet because of all the gathers. I then realized too late that if the fabric underneath were cut away, the delicate lace would have to support the whole weight of the skirt and would likely get pulled out of shape.

How to close? Like almost all my patterns, this closes flush in back, but velcro and delicate lace DO NOT mix well. Hooks and eyes or buttons with thread loops are both good options. If your lace is too delicate for that you could add button bands as described in this pattern: <https://jenwrenne.wordpress.com/2012/08/17/august-free-pattern-for-kidz-n-cats-and-sasha/>



Wellie Wisher Ashlynn available here: <https://www.americangirl.com/shop/>



skirt is a rectangle 7.5"x22"