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publications, as well as other writings from the period, quilt making is seen primarily as a domestic art. It was not until the 1970s that quilts were recognized by the art establishment and seen as worthy of collection and display. The result of the 1971 landmark exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York was that quilts were "elevated" to the status of art.

The Whitney exhibit was organized by Jonathan Holstein and Gail von der Hoof. In his book *The Pieced Quilt: an American Design Tradition,* Holstein states, "The women who made pieced quilts were not 'artists,' that is, they did not intend to make art, had no sense of the place of their work in a continuous stream of art history, did not, in short, intellectualize the production of handcraft any more than did the makers of objects in the vernacular tradition the world over." However, he also says, "Pieced quilts were meant to be beautiful. Like paintings, pieced quilts have marked stylistic periods, a history of aesthetic development, which can be traced and described."[3]

To call quilts art, whether it be domestic, vernacular, popular, or elite, is to presuppose an aesthetic judgement. There is, however, very little formalized discussion of the aesthetics of quilt making in the literature to date. This is surprising since the concept of aesthetics is crucial to the study of art and material culture.

Franz Boas, in the introduction to his important work *Primitive Art,* states, "In one way or another esthetic pleasure is felt by all members of mankind. . . . All human activities may assume forms that give them esthetic values."[4] Boas believes that to be human is to have a feeling for form that involves the desire to perfect form and an appreciation of formal excellence. In this sense a farmer planting his fields, a quilt maker, and an academic painter all express a feeling for form. Even lines of wheat, a "Grandmother's Flower Garden" quilt, and a landscape painting all reflect the maker's desire to perfect form and to adhere to either stated or unstated rules of formal excellence.

Folk art scholar Michael Owen Jones distinguishes between the terms "the aesthetic," as used in the literature of aesthetics, and "aesthetic judgement." He suggests that "the aesthetic" represents "a system of philosophical discourse and articulated principles regarding form." In other words, the rules of artistic expression are intellectualized and stated. An "aesthetic judgement" is "an evaluation of form based on [an aesthetic] response and expressed through physical acts or (usually) limited rather than elaborate verbalization." An "aesthetic judgement" is based on the viewer's likes and dislikes; it is what we call taste.[5]

Jones and Holstein express similar ideas. Neither scholar sees folk art or "objects made in the vernacular tradition" as adhering to a formalized stated set of rules that form "the aesthetic." However, both scholars champion the idea that an activity like traditional quilt making does involve "aesthetic judgements." Standards of excellence do exist and are understood by the quilt maker and her audience. The principles of these standards, however, may only be stated situationally. In other words, a quilt maker may express a preference for particular color combinations or methods of construction when planning her own work or viewing the work of others.

It is most often assumed that quilt making falls into the category of folk or vernacular art. If this is so, then according to the principles discussed by Jones and Holstein quilt making should have no formalized and articulated set of aesthetic principles. If it can be proven that stated principles do exist, then is it possible that quilt making no longer can be considered folk art? Is it possible that the above stated principles are too narrow in their scope? In order to explore these questions it must first be asked who defines the aesthetics of quilt making.

On the rare occasion when aesthetics are discussed in the quilt literature, it is assumed that the taste and/or the ability of the quilt maker are the major factors that determine the successful execution of an aesthetically pleasing quilt. There is little or no mention that what makes an aesthetically pleasing quilt is based on principles determined by the audience for whom that quilt was intended. Both in the past and in the present the available audiences for quilts have been diverse and varied. There has never been only one audience; therefore there has never been one set of standards for what constitutes a beautiful or an ugly quilt.

It is assumed that at one time quilt making did exist as folk art in

the purest sense. Principles of quilt making were passed on through time and space, from mother to daughter or neighbor to neighbor, and aesthetics were community based. It was the local community, whether geographic, ethnic, or religious, within which the quilt maker lived that determined the standard of excellence. Principles were not intellectualized or formally articulated, but were simply understood and stated situationally. Everyone in the community could identify the best quilt makers.

If quilt making ever existed for any extended period of time in America as a true folk art, it has yet to be determined. Instead quilt historians have written about the existence of published patterns, quilt kits, and quilt contests in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, all of which established formalized and stated principles of aesthetics. It is, however, in some cases unclear if the formalized principles were the standardization of a true folk aesthetic or were simply determined by the decorative trends of the era. In any case, once a quilt maker enters a contest or uses a pattern published in a popular women's magazine the aesthetic by which her work is evaluated changes.

In Kansas, quilt making must be viewed in this context. By the time quilts were being produced in Kansas, women had access to popular literature on the subject. Nineteenth-century sources included such popular women's magazines as *Godey's Lady's Magazine, Peterson's Magazine,* and *The Delineator.* By the twentieth century Kansans were playing a role in creating that literature. *Capper's Weekly* was an influential publication in the earlier part of this century. In the publication *Quilting: A New, Old Art* a set of aesthetic criteria is specifically stated: "The beauty of the quilt depends largely upon the accurate cutting and arrangement of the pieces, the skillful harmonizing of color and the neatness and precision of the needlework."[6] Hall and Kretsinger in *The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt in America* echo similar principles but go so far to advise, "When you have finished your 'top' turn it over to an experienced quilter, for a beautiful quilt may be made or marred by the quilting."[7]

Most quilt makers in Kansas were and are familiar with the

Kansas City Star patterns. Between 1928 and 1961 the metropolitan paper ran a series on quilt patterns. Patterns for pieced and appliqued blocks, as well as patterns for other types of needlework ran weekly until 1937 and then intermittently until the series ended in 1961. The patterns were drafted by many individuals. Some blocks were original in design, while a great many came from tradition. Aesthetic principles were often articulated with the pattern. For instance in 1930 the paper published a pattern called "The Rainbow Tile Quilt."

This is one of the oldest quilt patterns known and probably had its origin in the beautiful designs of Venetian tile, which are famous throughout the world. It has many possibilities and is quite pretty when made of many pieces without regard to color or piecing. However, a succession of borders around the center hexagon, as shown above, is more effective. A lovely modern development of this pattern is to use several shades of the pastel colors, blue, green, yellow, lavender and rose shading outwards from light to dark. This gives a rainbow effect. A beautiful cover for a day bed can be made by using all silk pieces.[8]

Mrs. Scioto Imhoff Danner of El Dorado, Kansas, sold quilt patterns as she traveled throughout the country displaying her quilts and passing out quilt making advice. This advice included guidelines for making aesthetic judgements. In later years she sold patterns from her home and continued to provide advice through both her publications and by personal correspondence. For instance, in *Mrs. Danner's Third Quilt Book* (1954) she reminded the quilt maker that quilts are heirlooms "which will give pleasure to the makers and then to their descendents for many years."[9] With this in mind, her advice included the use of good materials, good cotton batting, small needles, and soft colors.

It can be argued that the artists for *Capper's Weekly* and the *Kansas City Star,* as well as Carrie Hall, Mrs. Danner and others, borrowed, perhaps at times heavily, from tradition. However, once a quilt maker uses a commercial pattern and follows such advice as that listed above, she begins to ascribe to a set of formalized aesthetic principles. As the author of the popular article or the artist who drafts the commercial pattern will almost certainly not be a member of the quilt maker's own community, the traditions or influences upon which the principles are based may not be similar to those of the maker. The dissemination of this


Mercedes B. "Sadie" Waller is known for her quilt pattern designs and marking skills.

artistic standard through the popular press, however, endows it with a legitimacy and creates a national audience which may use it in the evaluation of quilts. In other words, the quilt maker finds herself confronting a different and much larger audience and quilt making takes on the shape of popular art. Although the quilt maker might continue to make quilts only for herself and her family, who constitute her immediate audience, she is influenced by a secondary audience who subscribe to the standards put forth in the popular press.

Quilt competitions develop this notion one step further. When quilts are judged against one another a definite set of aesthetic principles are articulated. According to quilt historian Cuesta Benberry, quilt competitions date back to the nineteenth century. The contests were often part of local or regional fairs. For example, the Kansas State Fair has influenced the aesthetic of quilt making in the state. Since quilts must be entered in a specific class, the class designations alone influence the types of quilts that might be made. For instance in 1916 there was a category for quilts quilted by machine, but by 1921 this category was gone, only to return again by 1935. In 1943 there were competition classes for novelty quilts and quilts made from sacks. In 1978 quilts made from double knit fabrics were eligible and in 1987 there was a class for miniature quilts. In 1988 a new category was created for professional quilters.[10] The classes at the state fair in many ways reflect the quilt making trends of the era but they also have a direct influence on them.

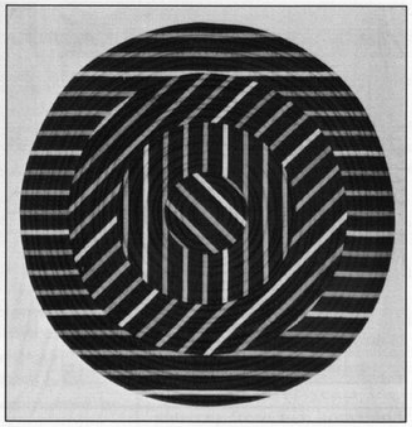
The concept of a national quilt contest is basically a twentieth-century idea. Although many popular magazines held quilt block contests in which blocks from all over the country were eligible, Benberry gives credit to the 1932 Eastern States Exposition at Storrowton in Springfield, Massachusetts, as the first national quilt contest.[11] However, in the last two decades national competitions have flourished. Certainly once a quilt maker enters a contest she is working outside her traditional community for an entirely different audience.

Many Kansas quilt makers have done very well at regional and national contests and even more Kansans look to such contests to set the standards for excellence in quilt making. From 1986 to 1987 the popular magazine *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* ran a series called "You Be the Quilt Judge."[12] To help readers evaluate their quilts by the standards used to judge national competitions they stated such aesthetic principles as follows.

Is there fairly uniform amounts of quilting over the entire quilt top?—In other words, is there a similar amount of quilting in blocks, sashes, and borders?

Do the binding color and fabric match or enhance the colors/fabric in the quilt?

Are the corners of the binding carefully made with a smooth diagonal miter or sharp perpendicular abutment?



Jane Kerns Priesner's quilt designs reflect her varied interests, from science to ancient cultures.

Have you stitched the blocks together with the least noticeable color of thread?
Are all the blocks the same size?
Are there rhythm and movement across the quilt's surface?
Is there an emphasis or focal point to the design?

A major influence on contemporary Kansas quilt makers is the growing number of guilds in the state. A guild is somewhat different from a quilting club in that clubs get together to actually work on quilting projects, whereas guilds are set up as educational organizations. Kansas was on the forefront of a national movement to establish guilds in the 1970s. The Quilters Guild of Greater Kansas City, founded in 1975, and Kaw Valley Quilters Guild in Lawrence, founded in 1977, were two of the earliest guilds in the country. In Kansas today there are over thirty-five guilds with memberships ranging from under ten to over four hundred. In a survey conducted by the Kansas Quilt Project the majority of the guilds said that their purpose was to promote quilting by sharing ideas, tips, and patterns, as well as promoting workshops and other educational programs.[13]

These guilds play an important role in defining the quilt making aesthetic. It is interesting to note that seventy-four percent of the guild members questioned knew how to make quilts before joining the guild and thirty-nine percent of them learned how to do so from a relative. However, when asked who or what influences their work today, the majority cited magazines and books, as well as other guild members. In many ways the guilds reenforce the aesthetics articulated in the popular press and rewarded in quilt competitions. Many guilds draw heavily on ideas found in the popular press for programs and the larger guilds often bring in national speakers or teachers who continue to reenforce these views.

Another organization that has taken a lead in the state in providing guidance for quilt makers is the Kansas Quilter's Organization. Founded in 1986 the group is the model after which other states have built their own statewide organizations. The Kansas group meets twice a year and provides a quarterly newsletter for its membership. Although the organization draws its members from all areas of the state, one of its goals is to provide the type of support a

guild might offer to quilt makers who do not have easy access to guilds. The Kansas Quilter's Organization brings in nationally known figures to the state. They also offer a variety of workshops. Like guilds they too are reenforcing the aesthetics found in the popular literature of the era.

The popular press, commercial patterns, quilt contests, and guilds have had a powerful affect on the aesthetics of quilt making, particularly in the twentieth century, although evidence suggests that similar influences were present in the nineteenth century as well. The concept of aesthetics in quilt making is a difficult one to discuss in either historical or contemporary terms. It is difficult to totally understand the origin of a quilt maker's aesthetics, as well as to comprehend her audience, if the quilt maker is no longer living, but by exploring the work of contemporary quilt makers a better understanding of the issues can be derived.

Although Kansas has a great many outstanding quilt makers working in the field today, perhaps it would be helpful to look at the work of four very different quilt makers, two of whom work as a team. Each woman is working for a different audience and is therefore working under a different set of aesthetic principles. Mercedes B. "Sadie" Waller, Jane Priesner, Sandra Heyman, and Linda Nonken have all found success among their respective audiences.

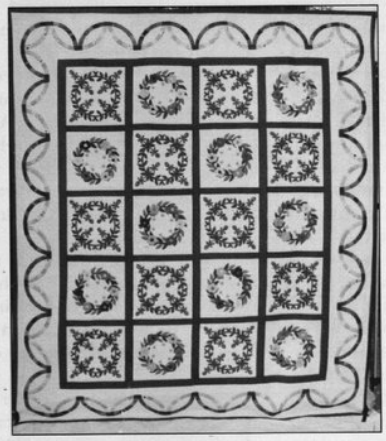
Mercedes B. "Sadie" Waller[14]

Mercedes B. "Sadie" Waller was one of three children born to Joseph B. Kramer and Helen Gress Kramer. The family settled near Seneca, Kansas. Helen passed away in 1918 shortly after the birth of her third child when Sadie was only three years old. During her second grade year Sadie's father married Frances J. Fangman. Frances had one son, and she and Joseph had four more boys. Sadie's younger sister had been sent to live with an aunt and uncle shortly after their mother passed away. This made Sadie and her stepmother the only females in a household of seven men. The family worked together on the farm and all the children attended St. Peter and Paul's School through the eighth grade. In 1935, Sadie married John P. Waller, a native of Seneca. Today Sadie is a widow with seven children, twenty-two grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. She belongs to St. Ann's Altar Society at Saint Peter and Paul's Church, the Nemaha Valley Hospital Guild, the Nemaha County Historical Society, two bridge clubs, the Kansas Quilter's Organization, and the Show-N-Tell Quilt Club.

When Sadie was a girl of thirteen or fourteen she learned how to make quilts from her stepmother. As she recalls, "We just made quilts to use them." If she remembers right, the first quilt she ever made was a nine patch. One of the reasons she learned to make quilts was so that she would have fine bedcoverings for her hope chest. Before she was married she made a quilt called "General Burgoyne Surrounded," as well as a "Grandmother's Flower Garden." Quilt making has always been a big part of her life. She remembers, "Even raising my family I always had a quilt in the making, whether we specifically needed the quilt for bedcovers or to relax—quiet my nerves. When I am tired I can still sit down and quilt."

After her children were in school she joined other women from her church in the Saint Ann's Circle. This group meets three afternoons a week to quilt and always has two quilts in the frame. Today the women earn approximately $6,000 a year for the church by making quilts for auction and by quilting for others. When Sadie's husband became ill she took on a specific role in the Circle. "I always marked by own [quilts]," says Sadie, "After my husband became a semi-invalid I couldn't go with the ladies so I told them if they got any in that needed marking I could do that in my home. . . . It started as a hobby but it almost turned into a business." Sadie has become quite well known for her marking skills. Individuals, who have heard of her through friends or are familiar with her work with the Saint Ann's Circle, contact Sadie to design the quilting patterns for their quilts and mark that design so that it can be quilted by others.

Sadie has marked over two thousand quilts to date. She first learned this skill from her stepmother. "I helped my mother with quilting," she remembers, "We would pin the quilt in the frame, then take the narrow stick from the window shade to use as a guide for the lines. As we ran the pencil along the stick, the quilt would sag and we would have some crooked lines." Her advice today is that a quilt should always be marked before it is put in the frame to prevent such sagging. Sadie works at



Sandra Heyman and Linda Nonken do at least one quilt a year together.

least a forty-hour week marking quilts for others. Although her designs use many traditional motifs, like feathers, her work is her own. "Even if I get my idea [from somewhere else], I still incorporate it into my own, my own ideas, and my own patterns," she explains. "I'll fold newspapers in quarters and halves—remember how when we were little we made snowflakes," Sadie continues, "That's how I get those designs." She calls herself an unorthodox quilt marker explaining, "You hear of grids and graphs. I do not use these, but rather, I use a ruler or yardstick and my eye. I have three different width yardsticks, and once in a while I still use the stick from the window shade."

Besides the quilts she has marked for others, Sadie has made seventy-five to one hundred quilts of her own. Sunday is the day she devotes to her own projects explaining, "On Sundays, I just enjoy doing something for myself." She has made a wedding quilt for each of her children, a graduation comforter for each grandchild, and each new great-grandchild receives a marked baby quilt top.

Sadie cautions that "Some ladies make quilts, but they aren't quilt makers," implying a certain standard for quilt making. For Sadie quilt making has always been a part of her community. "You just pick it up," she says, "We've always had quilts around Seneca. It's not something that was just started here the last years." When she first began to make quilts she recalls, "We just used what we had mostly, we didn't think too much about color and design." Although today, Sadie thinks the color of a quilt has a lot to do with its beauty. She is also conscious of the type of fabric used explaining, "I like the blends. A lot of them [quilt makers] want to go back to the old cottons and I don't think its right. . . . This is our era, we have the polyester blends . . . this is our time, and I think they are so much prettier." Much of what makes a quilt for Sadie is the quilting. "There are no ugly quilts, after they are quilted," she says, "They come in you know, oh gosh, even though you can't stretch them flat, they're puckered, but after they're quilted you can't see it." Sadie feels strongly that certain standards of quilt making should be upheld. She points to the "four sins of quilt making" as tearing the material, untrimmed salvage, seams that vary from a quarter inch, and seams that are not pressed to one side.

When asked if she considers quilts to be art, Sadie replies, "Quilts are a work of art anymore. They used to make just a nine patch or some patterns and that was it. . . . I used to think ladies around Seneca had beautiful quilts but I get out a lot to shows and meetings. . . . But now—Oh, some of them! I get to some of the shows and they are really something to

look at." When asked if she considers herself to be an artist she replies, "Oh, I don't want to say that. I get letters from some of the ladies that I mark for and some of them are so nice, and they say I am. But I don't want to say that myself."

Jane Kerns Priesner[15]

Jane Kerns Priesner was born in 1936 in Nebraska, where her father did a variety of things including teaching industrial arts and history and owning a hardware and furniture store. Her mother was also a teacher. Jane received a bachelor's degree from Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln and a master's degree from Boston University, both in music. She also obtained certification to teach math. In 1960, Jane married Dennis Priesner, a chemist. They have two children. Jane currently works at the Paleontological Institute at the University of Kansas where she does typesetting, illustrations editing, and bibliography work. She and her family live in Williamstown, Kansas, an unincorporated area near Perry.

Jane taught herself to make quilts. As she recalls, "I just did it!" One of Jane's grandmothers had made a few quilts. When Jane was in high school they were cleaning out her grandmother's garage and found a quilting frame. When she found it Jane thought, "I'll try that." She recalls, "I made this absolutely awful red and grey quilt—it was real ghastly, you wouldn't believe it. I was doing some traditional feather stuff on it—it was just very ugly. I finished it and my mother's still got it." It was not until 1972 or 1973 that she began again to make quilts. "I suddenly got this idea for a quilt and I had to do it," she recalls, "I made a lot of mistakes on it, general type mistakes." At this time Jane and her husband were living on the Navajo reservation in Arizona. "I was just interested in doing the quilting," explains Jane, "Still am." A few years later while Jane was living in northern California she made several commissioned bed-sized quilts.

In 1979, Jane and her family moved to Kansas. It was at this time that she began making smaller quilts. She explains her interest in quilt making, "I sew and knit and do all those things, of course. I was needlepointing for a while but that didn't seem to go anywhere and that's when I started quilting. It's got a lot more possibilities." Jane's quilts are not traditional in any sense of the word. She works in some degree of isolation and she makes quilts with herself as the audience. "I'm not a joiner," she points out. Even when she collaborates on a quilt, she still works alone. She has a friend that will send her quilt blocks and then Jane will work alone using the blocks as she wishes. "It's a very private affair," says Jane, "It's something I do all by myself. . . . It's like the music. I enjoy playing for other people if they enjoy listening, but I also enjoy playing for myself." She has finished thirty-nine quilts to date but currently has up to ten quilts in the works.

Jane has taken a few art courses at the University of Kansas and feels she is influenced by other artists in other mediums, rather than by quilt makers. Her work is influenced by all aspects of her life. Her designs reflect her interests in science, math, nature, ancient cultures, and other needlework forms. Her methods and techniques have been developed to solve the problem at hand. She has recently joined the quilter's guild in Topeka. "At this point I need to be in contact with other quilters," she explains, "As far as it influencing what I do, not at all." Although she designs her own quilts she does not do much piecing. She recently took a design to a guild meeting looking for someone to piece it but the other members expressed the feeling that the design was too contemporary.

Jane, like other quilt makers, feels a compulsion to make quilts. "I have these ideas," she says, "They just have to go somewhere and that seems to be the medium I'm happiest with at the moment." For Jane the process of making a quilt is far more important than the end product. She explains, "The quilts are a funny thing. The only reason they are hanging here is because someone else doesn't have them. Once I'm done with one it's sort of like its not mine anymore. I'm on to the next thing. The only thing that concerns me is the stuff I'm working on."

For Jane, quilts are art. Whether or not a quilt is pretty is not important to her. She replies, "I never think of them in terms of pretty. . . . It's exciting, but not pretty." "I have seen some ugly quilts," continues Jane, "I think one that speaks ugly to me before anything else is one that is sloppily put together." When asked if she considers herself an artist, Jane replies, "For a long time I think I

just considered myself a good craftsman, but now in the last maybe couple of years I think I may eventually consider myself an artist. I don't think I'm quite there in my own mind yet."

Sandra Heyman and Linda Nonken[16]

Sandra Heyman of Burns, Kansas, and Linda Nonken of El Dorado have worked together as a quilt making team for the last seven years. Their families have been friends for many years, and when Sandy expressed an interest in making a special quilt for an antique bed her husband would inherit Linda volunteered to help. Since that first quilt the two women have made five more quilts and all of them have been prize winners. They work on each quilt from beginning to end as a team, with both women involved in all phases of the process.

Sandy was born in Kansas and remembers that practically everyone she knew as a child made quilts. "We did all of our own sewing," she says. "When I was a little girl we went to a club that was mainly quilting and they put in a quilt every time that they met and they all worked at it. The kids would be around the edge or maybe underneath and thread the needles. They nearly quilted a quilt in one day." Sandy's great-grandmother had a business making quilts for others. Her grandmother was also a quilt maker. There was also a 4-H leader that influenced Sandy's work by expecting everything to be perfect.

On the other hand, Linda was born in Tennessee but moved to Kansas when she was in the second grade. Although there were no quilt makers in her family, there were many fine seamstresses. Her grandmother ran an alterations business and she insisted that the work look as good on the inside as it did on the outside. Linda's mother is also a fine seamstress. Her mother remembers Linda's grandmother making a string quilt on which she had to iron the scraps and hating it. Linda recalls that in her family there was absolutely no romance with making do. Linda was first exposed to quilt making by her mother-in-law and her Ladies Aid Society at their church near Burns. When Linda first attended a meeting of the society she knew nothing about rural churches. She was surprised that the women would quilt all day. Linda always had been interested in the craft section of popular women's magazines. In the late 1960s she found an article on the English piecing method, or paper piecing. She tried it and found that she liked it. "It was so much fun," remembers Linda, "I just really took to it, I worked so hard." She recalls that it was not long after that she went to a lecture by noted Kansas quilt maker Chris Wolf Edmonds. "I think that's when the bug got me," says Linda. However, she did nothing big in quilt making she explains until she began working with Sandy.

The first quilt the women made was a whitework quilt called "Cabin Fever." They tatted seventeen and a half yards of lace for the quilt. Sandy and Linda spent many hours perfecting their tatting and their quilting stitches. They measured the length of their stitches, as well as the number of stitches per inch. They worked at making their stitches identical so it would be impossible to distinguish between their work. They entered "Cabin Fever" in the Kansas State Fair and won a blue ribbon, thereby becoming intrigued with quilt competitions.

Sandy and Linda work on their quilts everyday, in fact they treat it like a business. They do at least one quilt a year together. Whoever gets to keep the quilt, pays for the fabric. They have agreed, however, to share all prize money, no matter who owns the quilt. Linda explains, "It's almost like when you're working together you leave that ego outside the door." For Sandy the most exciting part of the process is designing the quilt although she admits it is really fun to see it all come together. "The most exciting part of the whole thing," according to Linda, "is when we put the two halves—we work on quilts, we have the design, one of us takes the one half and the other takes the other and each of us share all the steps equally—to me the most exciting part is when we put those two halves together."

Both women admit that there are parts of the process that are boring. However, they set goals and then work to accomplish them. Sandy explains, "When the quilting will get really dull . . . when you get to the middle of the quilt and its just really boring and Linda would say 'well, I did that in thirty minutes, I quilted that little star' and I'll say, 'no you didn't'—so I'd do it and we'd look at the clock and I'd say, 'I did it in twenty-five,' so then its a race all day long . . . and it really made it

go fast and was fun too." They also talk about their next quilt while they are quilting the current one. Much of the design of a quilt is planned during this time resulting in one quilt running into the next.

Sandy and Linda are members of six or seven guilds because they think it is important to share their interest with others. They have taken classes in quilt judging and serve as judges at fairs and shows, including the Kansas State Fair. They have led workshops in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri where they encourage others to become quilt makers. Sandy says, "We are not trying to keep secret anything, we want to share what we've learned and we've learned a lot all the way along." Their quilts have won prizes at most of the major shows. "We have been fortunate," remarks Sandy, "We have won so many honors and it's not something many people get to accomplish." Sandy and Linda's quilts have appeared in many popular magazines including *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine, Lady's Circle Patchwork, Quilt World,* and the *American Quilter's Society Magazine.* They also have been honored by having their quilts appear in two calendars.

The artistic nature of the quilt is equally as important as fine workmanship to Sandy and Linda. They feel it is important to have originality in the design. The women are always looking for ways to improve their work but they are proud of the quilts they have created. "We always know what we have accomplished in that particular quilt," says Sandy, "It might not always be something that is recognizable to everybody but we know what we've done in that quilt that is an accomplishment so it really doesn't bother [us] that much [if we do not win]." However, their goal is to work towards success in major national competitions. According to Linda, "Recognition is important to everyone. The strokes that you get from winning are marvelous because it validates what you are doing."

Conclusion

By reviewing the work of these four outstanding Kansas quilt makers, it can be concluded that there is not one correct aesthetic for quilt making. Sadie Waller, Jane Priesner, and Sandy Heyman and Linda Nonken all make quilts for a different primary audience. It must be pointed out, however, that all of these quilt makers are influenced by more than one audience, none of them working in a completely isolated environment. This illustrates the complexity of the issue of determining the aesthetic principles of quilt making. Most quilt makers, like those mentioned here, work for varying audiences.

The question still remains, however, is there an intellectualized, articulated set of aesthetic principles in quilt making. There is evidence that such principles do exist. Sadie Waller, Sandy Heymen, and Linda Nonken began making quilts in what can be described as a traditional manner. All three women, however, are influenced to varying degrees by the stated aesthetic principles found within the popular literature. Jane Priesner may be working in what appears to be isolation, but she too is ascribing to a specific set of aesthetic ideals that are present in the academic world of art.

If there were no stated aesthetic principles in quilt making then there would be no reason to speak out against them. In a recent issue of *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine,* quilt maker Cindy V. Davis wrote an editorial expressing her concern that the current quilt making aesthetic has become too restrictive.

I believe that over the past 20 years an over-standardization of quilt "rules" has developed. Lately, the vast majority of quilts winning the major competitions and appearing on the covers of popular quilt publications have a similar look that follows the judges' rules precisely. The colors are usually decorator-coordinated and follow current trends minutely. All bindings are meticulously alike. Quilting lines and patterns fall within accepted ranges and types. We read all the rules over and over and strive to make quilts that are "good enough" to be accepted at major competitions.[17]

Evidence suggests that even in the nineteenth century, popular literature, commercial patterns, and quilt competitions played a role in dictating aesthetic principles in quilt making. Whether quilt making is folk, popular, or elite art cannot be answered easily for the answer is dependent upon a complex series of factors. But perhaps that should not be the issue at hand. Instead, it should be recognized that quilt making reflects the need of human beings to perfect form and appreciate formal excellence. It can be stated further that quilt making does generate a variety of aesthetic principles depending upon the audience for which it is performed.

NOTES

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1. Cuesta Benberry, "Storrowton Village—Home of the First National Quilt Show," *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* 195 (September 1987):36-37; Margaret Whittemore, ed., Florence G. Wells, comp., *Quilting: A New, Old Art* (Topeka: Capper Publication, n.d.).
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3. Jonathan Holstein, *The Pieced Quilt: an American Design Tradition* (New York: Galahad Books, 1973), 115-16.
4. Franz Boas, *Primitive Art* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955), 9.
5. Michael Owen Jones, *Exploring Folk Art: Twenty Years of Thought on Craft, Work, and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research Press, 1987), 170.
6. Whittemore and Wells, *Quilting: A New, Old Art*, 13.
7. Hall and Kretsinger, *The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt in America*, 46.
8. *Kansas City Star*, August 10, 1930.
9. *Mrs. Danner's Third Quilt Book* (privately published, 1954), 6.
10. State Fair Premium Lists, 1916-1988, Library, Kansas State Historical Society [KSHS].
11. Cuesta Benberry, "A Record of National Quilt Contests," *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* 213 (June 1989):28-30, 54; Benberry, "Storrowton Village—Home of the First National Quilt Show," 36-37.
12. *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* 185-196 (September 1986-October 1987): *passim.*
13. "Quilt Guild Information," 207, Kansas Quilt Project, KSHS.
14. This portrait is based on an interview with Mercedes Waller on May 23, 1988, and on a paper delivered at a symposium held July 9, 1988, in Topeka. The interview was conducted by Barbara Bruce, who is also the author of the paper.
15. This portrait is based on an interview with Jane Priesner on May 28, 1988, and on a paper delivered at a symposium held July 9, 1988, in Topeka. The interview was conducted by Nancy Hornback, who is also the author of the paper.
16. This portrait is based on an interview with Sandra Heyman and Linda Nonken on June 18, 1988, and on a paper delivered at a symposium held July 9, 1988, in Topeka. The interview was conducted by Helen Storbeck, who is also the author of the paper.
17. Cindy V. Davis, "Breaking the Rules," *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* 215 (September 1989):15.

Crazy Quilt, 1905
By Maggie Bear • Plano, Iowa • Collection of Marie Tovrea

The meaning of some quilts can be read in the way they look. However, most quilts can only be understood if the story is known. A "Crazy Quilt" was made in Plano, Iowa, in 1905. It is a diary of neighborhood activities during the years 1903 to 1905.

TEXTILE DIARIES:

Kansas Quilt Memories

by Mary W. Madden

In 1884, John Turner decided to leave Weldon, Illinois, for a new home in Kansas. The prospect of such a move undoubtedly was met with mixed emotions by his wife, Sarah, since she would be leaving friends and family. To provide a tangible remembrance of their friendship, Sarah's friends presented her with a stack of calico quilt blocks, each with the signature of the maker. This cherished gift was carefully packed for transport to Mayfield, Kansas. Once Sarah, John, and their two children reached their new Kansas home, Sarah set the blocks together and completed the quilting. Finished in 1885, her new quilt not only provided warmth and beauty but treasured memories of special friends, many of whom she would never see again.[1]

The practice of making quilts for significant events was not unique to Sarah Turner and her circle of friends. Of the 13,107 quilts recorded during the Kansas Quilt Project, over one-fourth were made as markers of events or experiences. Quilts made between 1925 and 1988 account for ninety percent of the data on these quilts, with forty-one percent made after 1976.

These special quilts are important records of personal and community events and as such are valuable resources as cultural documents. As historian Rachel Maines observes, textiles "inform us about the substance of ordinary life. . . ."[2] Quilts made specifically as personal statements about experiences hold special meaning to the maker and recipient, and can provide insight into the way women respond to their world. The motivation for making quilts as markers may stem from the desire to create a permanent record. Much like a diary, a quilt can freeze an event in time and can evoke memories for its maker or recipient.[3]

[In Progress] Kansas history: a journal of the central plains

Although some quilt historians argue that women used quilts "to help create for themselves a new, more public role," others argue that quilting did not create this new role as much as it reflected women's increased involvement in current affairs.[4] Some women used their sewing skills like others used a pen. Unlike books, quilts are made primarily to be shared with a limited audience; usually a small circle of friends and family. It has only been in recent years that quilts have hung as banners to proclaim a public cause.

Commemorating special passages, particularly in the lives of family members, can be viewed as an outgrowth of the traditional women's role of family nurturer. In many cultures women have been responsible for the overall maintenance of the home. A value structure elevating, while at the same time confining, women to this role developed among the middle class in Europe and America in the early 1800s. Women had primary responsibility for preservation of the family unit and protection of the moral and cultural well-being of the community. Caring for her children, creating an attractive and comfortable home, being the prime mover in establishing schools, churches, and libraries were parts of her socially acceptable role.[5] This model of behavior was promoted in the church, in social attitudes, and literature of the day.

In addition to literature expounding upon the proper roles for women in society, the print media influenced the use of quilts to mark special events. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the community sharing of patchwork patterns was supplemented by published information from pattern mail-order companies and "household hint" columns in newspapers and magazines. Thus, an individual pattern and its possible symbolism influenced a far wider audience. In 1912, Mrs. H.N.S. of Missouri told fellow readers in *Good Housekeeping*:

I saved a piece of each wash suit my little son had until he was ten years old, and then made him a wonderful quilt of the scraps. Each one told a story. For instance, the blue line scrap was from the suit he wore the first day at school; the white one was from the suit he had on when his picture was taken; and so on. He never tires of the quilt, especially if he is ill. We can entertain him by the hour, telling him of the different scraps. I mean to keep it until he is a man and then give it to his little boy.[6]

The number of symbolic quilts has increased during the twentieth century. This rise may be related to contemporary women's role in the workforce.[7] With increasingly limited time to devote to handwork, many women have chosen to use their time for quilts that are special in some way. On another level, quilts may be viewed by the contemporary quilt maker as a means to preserve old values of home and family in an era when women divide their time among at-home and outside roles.

Although quilts serve as symbolic records, they seldom directly reveal the maker's intention. Very few quilts are inscribed with the reason for their making. Those that are inscribed are generally quilts made after 1975, paralleling the emergence of a self-conscious interest in making commemorative quilts.

The patterns themselves rarely provide concrete evidence of the event for which the quilt was constructed. For example, even when the provenance is unknown, "Wedding Ring" quilts are often assumed to have been made for that occasion. This assumption stems from the promotion of this pattern for that use. In the late 1920s, Ruby Short McKim operated a pattern studio in Independence, Missouri, and her catalog, *101 Quilt Patterns*, advocated the "Wedding Ring" pattern as an ideal wedding quilt.[8] Of the "Wedding Ring" quilts seen in Kansas, only one-third were said to to have been made for a special occasion and less than half of those were made for a wedding. Others were made for graduations, birthdays, and to honor the birth of a child.

The events women select to commemorate with their quilts can be divided into three general categories: those that celebrate rites of passage; those that mark private or personal memories; and those that commemorate community events. The first two categories reflect the primary motivation for creating marker quilts, both in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Over half of the marker quilts recorded gave notice to a rite of passage,[9] a ritual that marks the point in someone's life where he or she undergoes a change in status. The ritual can be as elaborate as a church confirmation or as simple as a baby shower. What is important is that those who participate in the ritual recognize that at its end the guest of honor will assume a new social role and enter another phase of life. A rite of passage, therefore, marks a change in status and causes the members of a community to recognize this change and the individual's new role. The giving of a quilt can function as part of the rite of passage ceremony.

The number of quilts made to mark a rite of passage appears to have increased in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Whereas family histories note weddings and births as being almost exclusively the events that inspired special quilts in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, interviews with more recent makers and recipients added many other passages.

This change is partly a result of an increase in the number and range of ceremonies celebrated by society. High school graduations and fiftieth wedding anniversaries have grown more common because of a better-educated and longer-lived population. With social changes have come altered forms of celebration. The nineteenth-century adolescent might mark her coming of age with a quilt made for a hope chest; today's woman, with more options, might also celebrate a university degree and a choice of career with a quilt. The passages recorded most often in quilts are those that are recognized most commonly by American society in general; birth, birthdays, graduation, weddings, anniversaries, and death.

With the birth of a child a new life begins and a woman assumes a new role as a mother. Friends and relatives often acknowledge this change of status by the presentation of a quilt. The new baby is often the recipient of the gift, but some quilts mark the new mother's change in status. Nancy Lovette Miller homesteaded in Kiowa County, Kansas, in the 1880s. A widow with four children, she remarried and gave birth to four more. She drew on these experiences when making a special quilt for her seven-year-old granddaughter, Fern Fromme, in 1923. Fern recalled Grandmother Miller's explanation of the quilt as she worked on it, "Every women needs an ugly old quilt when she has her babies."[10] Fern did not use the quilt during childbirth but as a pallet on the floor for her babies.

In Kansas there is not a significant number of nineteenth-century birth-related quilts. Some historians propose that the high infant mortality rate of the nineteenth century discouraged parents from investing emotion and affection in newborns and toddlers, but the unprecedented nineteenth-century interest in children and childrearing practices, despite an infant mortality rate that did not decrease significantly until 1920, works to dispell this notion.[11] It can be speculated, however, that the lack of mid-nineteenth-century quilts is more closely related to the attitude of some childbearing women. Women were likely to bear large families; many died in childbirth or at an early age from compounded effects of numerous pregancies. For many nineteenth-century women, birth was viewed with anxiety and apprehension. Perhaps this accounts for the limited number of quilts made during this period as symbolic markers of birth.

The developing emphasis in the nineteenth century on childhood as a separate and important phase in life influenced society's attitude toward children. Beginning in the 1800s, middle class America adopted Jean Jacques Rousseau's argument that children were beings in their own right, not miniature adults. Advice and childrearing books spread the increasingly emphatic message that it was primarily the mother's responsibility to care for and provide instruction to the child.

The burgeoning quilt pattern industry responded to these changes by producing juvenile theme patterns specifically for children. *Dorcus Magazine of Woman's Handiwork*, which published one of the first juvenile patterns in 1886, advocated embroidered pictorial designs, such as toys, nursery rhymes, or pets.[12] Today, juvenile patterns continue to be offered, encouraging the creation of special baby quilts.

The practice of making birthday quilts is also far more popular in the twentieth than in the nineteenth century. While birthday quilts have been made for both children and adults alike, one possible explanation for the lack of earlier quilts is that the celebration of children's birthdays only became popular in the nineteenth century.[13] Like many trends, this one increased and spread over time.

It does not appear that quilts are made for one birthday over another. The lone exception are quilts made for a man's twenty-first birthday. These quilts have been called freedom or coming-of-age quilts. Thomas Herbert Jeter was only eight years old when his parents moved from Bedford County, Virginia, to Alden, Kansas, in 1888. He had a great fondness for his eastern relatives and corresponded with them all of his life. In honor of his twenty-first birthday he received a sampler quilt from these relatives. This practice was more common in the nineteenth century, but the tradition is still recognized by some. When Lawrence quilt maker Jean Mitchell's son Cotter was eight years old, he offered to make a quilt design for her. It was a geometric pattern rendered in orange, yellow-green, rust, and brown crayon. In 1977,

for Cotter's twenty-first birthday, Jean made him a quilt inspired by that drawing.

In Kansas, education has been at the forefront of community services. Before 1900 it was standard for pupils to attend school through the eighth grade.[14] In the early twentieth century, a high school education was promoted by social reformers, and high schools were built and accredited across the state. By the 1920s, a majority of Kansas children continued on to high school. The use of quilts specifically to celebrate graduation parallels this development. The subsequent emphasis on acquiring a college education has given rise to quilts made for graduation from college as well.

Marriage is considered an important life experience, and the wedding ceremony, as the rite of passage, traditionally has been a time for gift giving. There is substantial evidence that quilts have been viewed as an appropriate gift in both the nineteenth and twentieth century. At one time it was the custom for the bride to make her own wedding quilt. Ruby Stein of Sedgwick, Kansas, recalled that her grandmother, Elizabeth White Horst, needed seven quilts for her dowry. An Old Order Mennonite from western Maryland, Elizabeth Horst came to Kansas in the 1880s settling near Hesston. The tradition of seven quilts as a dowry was continued in Kansas by several of her daughters.[15] This is, however, a rare story.

In oral histories and in fiction one finds mention of marriage quilts. In 1849, T. A. Arthur wrote nostalgically in "The Quilting Party," of "our younger days" when a half-dozen patchwork quilts were a woman's dowry. Harriett Beecher Stowe, also writing of an earlier era, ca. 1800, explained the role of the quilting bee as preparation for marriage. About the same time, George Washington Harris wrote of Mrs. Yardley who made twenty quilts for the dowry of her unattractive daughter Sal; obviously this was an excessive amount and possibly intended as incentive for potential suitors.[16]

Nearly all fictional accounts are nostalgic and may romanticize the use of quilts to mark marriages and engagements. However, the consistency of the stories indicates that quilts and quilting bees were an important part of a wedding preparation. The volume of quilts documented as wedding quilts also lends credence to this belief.

Unlike wedding quilts, anniversary commemoratives appear to be almost exclusively a twentieth-century tradition. The frequent appearance of anniversary quilts in this century may be attributed to people living longer to celebrate the advanced anniversaries for which most of these quilts are made. The majority of anniversary quilts appear to commemorate fortieth, fiftieth, and sixtieth anniversaries. Recent anniversary quilts are often of original design with embroidered family histories marking events in the lives of the couple and their extended family. A sampler of symbolic and pictorial blocks is frequently the format for these quilts. Stylistically similar to quilts made for the nation's bicentennial, anniversary quilts made after 1976 have adopted this design format and the heavy use of symbolism.

Needlework has long been an accepted medium for mourning. Literature makes references to late eighteenth and nineteenth-century quilts that carried mourning symbolism, such as "The Death of General Washington," and the "Kentucky Coffin Quilt."[17] This style of quilt is rare in Kansas, as are "Memory Quilts," made from the clothing of the dead.[18] Elaborate mourning rituals, which fostered the production of these quilts, passed quickly out of fashion by the end of the Victorian era. By the early 1900s the nineteenth-century implications of the word "memory" in a quilt pattern were considered unpleasant, and quilts made of clothing from the deceased "were not popular because of the depressing effect upon the remaining members of the household."[19] Some twentieth-century quilt makers have continued to use quilts as a devise for mourning, however. In the 1940s, Grace Acres of WaKeeney made a "Grandmother's Flower Garden" quilt from the dresses of her deceased daughter, and Rosemary Holthaus of Seneca made a quilt after the sudden death of her husband in 1978.

Quilts that celebrate rites of passage are only one type of marker quilt. Other quilts are used as "memory prompts," bringing back memories of a particular time, place, or event. Some of these quilts become important symbols because of the conditions under which they were made and used. In this way quilts serve as very personal diaries.

In Mirra Bank's *Anonymous Was A Woman*, Marguerite Ickis quoted her grandmother as saying, "My whole life is in that quilt. It scares me sometimes when I look at it...my hopes and fears, my joys and sorrows, my love and hates. I tremble sometimes when I remember what that quilt knows about me."[20] This feeling of having stitched your life into a quilt is shared by many quilters and is one

taken literally by some. The last fifteen years has seen a rise in the number of pictorial quilts which tell a story quite literally through appliqued or pieced pictures. Most memory quilts are not so literal. Usually the meaning behind the quilt is revealed through oral history. Yet the textile stands as a permanent marker to the maker or owner.

One of the most frequently marked experiences in a woman's life is her relationship with her family.[21] While some quilts are made for husbands, parents, or other relatives, children and grandchildren are honored most often with a gift of a quilt. Sometimes quilts are given at a special time, but the important consideration for many quilt makers is that each child or grandchild own one of her quilts. For the maker, quilts illuminate the importance of their relationship and ensure a degree of immortality. For the receiver, they provide a tangible memory of the maker.

Friendship quilts are a popular way to commemorate a special relationahip and oftentimes mark specific events. The friendship or album quilt tradition began around 1840 in the mid-Atlantic states and soon spread. Following the custom of preparing and presenting bound autograph albums, people signed blocks to be included in quilts to be given to a friend, an esteemed person, or to be kept by the quilt's organizer as a tangible record of her friends. Many mid-nineteenth-century quilts were given to people emigrating west, and it was in fact during these peak years of national mobility that friendship quilts became a fad.[22]

Although some friendship quilts contain only names, others are graced with inscriptions expressing sentiments of love, friendship, and religious salvation. An 1844 album quilt was inscribed heavily with heartrending verses for Ann Root whose departure for the West was linked with her wedding vows, a frequent experience during the nineteenth century: "Hope this square of 'odds and ends,' A simple gift dear Ann, 'tis true. Let it remind you of your friends, Who part from - yet can ne're forget you. Mary Stevens."[23]

Some women use their sewing talents to commemorate events outside their home. Historically, community events marked with a quilt were an extension of women's private-sphere role as preserver of cultural traditions and as moral reformer. For example, a signature quilt made in 1910 preserved the names of community members and businesses in Atlanta, Kansas, while at the same time raised funds for a church building project. Politically inspired quilts tended to relate to moral causes like temperance or to patriotic themes such as victory during wartime. In the past fifteen years, a trend has developed for community anniversary quilts.

Quilts made to commemorate community events constituted the smallest group of special occasion quilts recorded by the quilt project. Community-event quilts provide a unique insight, however, into women's involvement in the community and, on another level, their role in society. Efforts that focused on the community were most frequently manifested in fundraising, anniversary, patriotic, and political quilts. It is interesting to note that while fundraising, and more recently, community anniversary quilts were made primarily to be shared with the community, most patriotic and political quilts tended to be made as personal expressions for a limited audience. These symbolic textiles functioned as a creative means for articulating and recording the maker's interests and concerns.

The fundraising quilt is the most common type of community-oriented quilt. Charitable works are an area in which women have been encouraged to participate, and quilt makers have applied their skills to raise money for causes, most in support of church affiliated projects. Ladies aid societies developed in many Kansas churches as a means to organize women's efforts while providing a social network of friends.[24] Their labor had many benefits. The money raised for the church helped support missionary work, fostered community work, assisted with financing new church buildings, and even paid the minister's salary. An article in the Holton, Kansas, *Recorder* in 1927, recounted the fundraising activity of a small Methodist church in June 1884.

Olive Hill [church] will have an ice cream supper June 16. They will sell the wheel quilt at that time, the proceeds will be used to finish the church. If memory serves us right, ... names were solicited with 10 cents for placing the names on the tire, 25 cents on a spoke, and 50 cents on the hub....Mr. Stauffer was the auctioneer who disposed of the wheel quilt which sold for twenty-five dollars to John Dix.[25]

Community anniversary quilts are created to display local, regional or national spirit and patriotism, and like personal anniversary quilts, are more frequently made to mark significant lengths of time, such as cenntenial celebrations. This type of quilt has gained remarkable popularity in

Kansas, particularly in the last thirty years as the state and its towns have reached centennial years. In the nineteenth century, the nation's centennial was the main catalyst for such quilts which often used printed fabrics with patriotic motifs. These commemorative prints included dates (1776-1876), names or pictures of national heroes, as well as the symbolic flag and eagle. The use of commemorative fabric in quilts was much more prevalent in the last century than it is today.

Many quilt historians link the present revival in quilt making to the celebration of the nation's bicentennial. In the mid-1970s, Americans renewed their enthusiasm for traditional crafts. The current revival in quilting fostered an explosion of new designs, among them the symbol-laden and pictorial community anniversary quilt. Stylistically, patterns for these and other patriotic quilts are generally the most literal interpretations of the event they were made to commemorate of all community quilts.

During times of war, patriotic quilts have increased markedly. According to historian Herbert R. Collins, "The earliest textiles commemorating events in the United States centered around the battles and leaders of the American Revolution."[26] While Collins primarily addressed the manufacture of printed textiles in the form of handkerchiefs, bandannas, banners and ribbons, he noted these same themes were present in quilts.

Few wars spurred women into stitching quilts as much as did World War I. Quilt making was just beginning its first revival of the twentieth century, and support for the war effort was motivation for many to retrieve fabric from the scrap bags and begin quilting. In the United States relief committees sent overseas many patchwork quilts for refugees left homeless and destitute. When the United States entered the war in 1917, women were urged to make "Liberty Quilts" for home use, allowing blankets to go to "Our Boys Over There."[27]

Some women served their country by joining the Red Cross. In Kansas alone there were 110 chapters with more than ten thousand women engaged in its work.[28] In December 1917, *Modern Priscilla* responded to the need for Red Cross fundraising by featuring an article, "One Thousand Dollars for the Red Cross Can Be Raised On A Memorial Quilt."[29] The quilt was designed using red and white fabric to form the cross and, like other signature fundraising quilts, a fee was charged to have a name embroidered on the top. Many groups adopted this pattern for their fundraising efforts.

While World War II did not inspire quilt makers to the degree witnessed in the previous war, some community groups raised funds for the war effort through their quilts. The Buffville Community Grange Ladies met at the local school to piece their "Victory Quilt." The names stitched in the center of the quilt, forming a "V," were those of young men in service from the community. Ernest Redington's name was embroidered in gold thread. He was killed in action in 1944 at Okinawa. Community members paid twenty-five cents to have their names embroidered on the quilt and raffle tickets were sold for fifty cents; the proceeds were used to send packages to service men.

Some women have recorded their political leanings in quilts. It was the exceptional quilt maker who used her skills to symbolically express her opinion or show support for a politician, political party, or cause. In 1936, Kansas governor Alf Landon, was the Republican presidential candidate. During the campaign Robert E. Reed was chairman of the Sullivan County Young Republicans in Sullivan, Indiana. To lend her support to the cause, Robert's mother, Carrie, made a "Sunflower" quilt, symbolic of the candidate's home state.

For women to justify entry into such "male concerns" as politics often involved adding a domestic dimension.[30] It was preservation of home and family that eventually brought legions of women into the political arena to support social reform in education, housing, care for the mentally ill, and sale of alcohol. By 1890 the Woman's Christian Temperance Union was the largest women's organization in America; its goal of a national prohibition act became a reality in 1919 with the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. It soon became apparent, however, that the amendment was unenforceable.

The debate over repeal of the amendment was at its peak in 1932 when Pearl Thompson Davidson voiced her commitment and support for prohibition through a "White Ribbon" quilt. Pearl, an active lecturer for the WCTU since 1925, worked diligently against repeal. Her lecture circuit included churches and schools from Mankato to Liberal, Kansas. At each stop, she asked ladies to make and sign a block for this symbolic friendship quilt. The pattern was the white ribbon, the emblem for the WCTU, and the quilt was constructed in the organization's colors, blue and white. Despite the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment in December 1933, Pearl continued to work for the

WCTU for another seven years. According to family history, the affection for this quilt, which stood as a symbol of her work, was confirmed when her house burned and this was one of the few items she saved from the flames.

By studying quilts made as markers of rites of passage, personal memories and community events, the interests and concerns of many women's lives can be pieced together. Though some quilts are more literal in their symbolism than others, they all express the maker's roles, in both the private and public sphere. Although designers have at times suggested a special use for a pattern, the form a quilt takes is a personal expression. And, even though certain occasions are more celebrated with quilts than others, what is to be marked with a quilt is ultimately a personal decision. New motives for making marker quilts are ever increasing. The common thread among these special quilts is that they all have meaning that goes far beyond necessity.

NOTES

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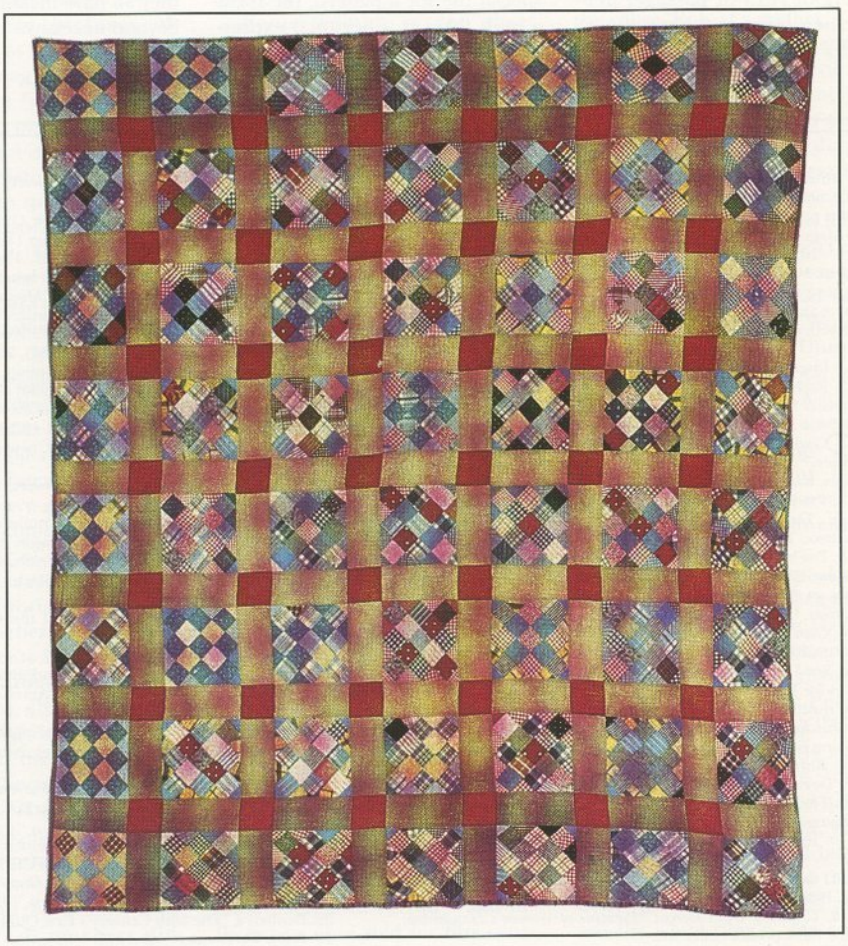
1. Interview with Lillie Webb, Wichita, February 1989.
2. Rachel Maines, "Textiles As History," in *American Quilts: A Handmade Legacy*, ed. L. Thomas Frye (San Francisco: Interprint, 1981), 40.
3. Gayle Davis, "Diaries and Quilts: Women's Lives on the Frontier," (paper delivered at the Kansas Museum of History, Topeka, Kansas, March 25, 1989).
4. Pat Ferrero, Elaine Hedges, and Julie Silber, *Hearts and Hands: The Influence of Women & Quilts on American Society* (San Francisco: The Quilt Digest Press), 11.
5. For more information on the development of women's roles see, Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and Plains* (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1988).
6. *Good Housekeeping Magazine*, January 1912, p. 141.
7. Statistics show 57.6 percent of all women are in the workforce. See U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, figures for June 1989. Another possibility for the increase in symbolic quilts is the continuing influence of the print media. Current quilt magazines are filled with special patterns and touching stories to encourage readers to produce similar quilts.
8. Ruby McKim, *101 Quilt Patterns* (1931; reprinted, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962), 54.
9. The Kansas Quilt Project found that rites of passage quilts constituted 52 percent of the quilts made as a "marker."
10. Interview with Fern Fromme, Bucklin, Kansas, March 1989.
11. Carl N. Degler, *At Odds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 72-73.
12. Clipping from *Dorcus Magazine of Woman's Handiwork*, August 1886, private collection.
13. Degler, *At Odds*, 71.
14. Before 1900, only four percent of Kansas students went on to high school.
15. Interview with Ruby Stein, Sedgwick, Kansas, March 1989.
16. Dorothy Cozart, "Women and Their Quilts as Portrayed by Some American Authors," in *Uncoverings* (Mill Valley, Calif.: American Quilt Study Group, 1981), 20-21. The story by T. A. Arthur originally appeared in the September 1849 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book*; the Stowe book is *The Minister's Wooing*; and the Harris reference is to his story, "Mrs. Yardley's Quilting." See also Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Minister's Wooing* (reprinted; New York: Literary Classics of America, 1982), 788-89.
17. Carleton L. Safford and Robert Bishop, *America's Quilts and Coverlets* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1980), 100, 120-21.
18. Ruth Finley, *Old Patchwork Quilts and the Women Who Made Them* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1929), 78, 193.
19. Nancy Cabot, *Chicago Tribune*, 1933, newspaper clippings, private collection.
20. Mirra Bank, *Anonymous Was A Woman*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1979), 94.
21. Over 40 percent of the "marker" quilts documented by the Kansas Quilt Project were made for a family member.
22. Jessica F. Nicoll, *Quilted for Friends, Delaware Valley Signature Quilts, 1840-1855* (Winterthur, Del.: Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum, 1986), 7, 26.
23. Album quilt in the collection of the Cowley County Historical Museum, Winfield, Kansas.
24. Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 180.
25. Dorothy Cozart, "A Century of Fundraising Quilts: 1860-1960," in *Uncoverings* (Mill Valley, Calif.: American Quilt Study Group, 1984), 42. The "Wheel" quilt is typical of many late nineteenth and early twentieth-century quilts; signatures radiated from the center like spokes from a wheel. Not all fundraiser quilts were signature quilts.
26. Herbert R. Collins, *Threads of History: Americana Recorded on Cloth 1775 to the Present* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979), 47.
27. Cuesta Benberry, "The 20th Century's First Quilt Revival," *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* (October 1979): 10.
28. William Frank Zornow, *Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 232.
29. Benberry, "The 20th Century's First Quilt Revival," 11.
30. Riley, *The Female Frontier*, 177.

RITES OF PASSAGE

Quilts made to celebrate rites of passage make up over half of the "marker" quilts studied. A rite of passage is a ritual that marks a new stage in a person's life. Such rituals include church confirmations, weddings, and baby showers.

birth



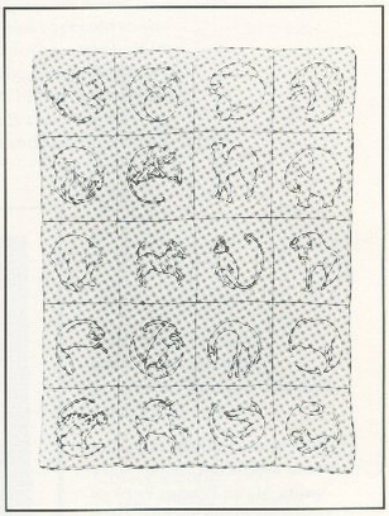
Patch Checkerboard, 1923

By Nancy Lovette Miller • Kinsley, Kansas • Collection of Fern Fromme

Nancy Lovette Miller homesteaded in Kiowa County in the 1880s. She had eight children. In 1923 she made a special quilt for her granddaughter Fern Fromme. According to Grandmother Miller, "Every woman needs an ugly old quilt when she has her babies." Fern, however, never used the quilt as bedding for a home delivery.

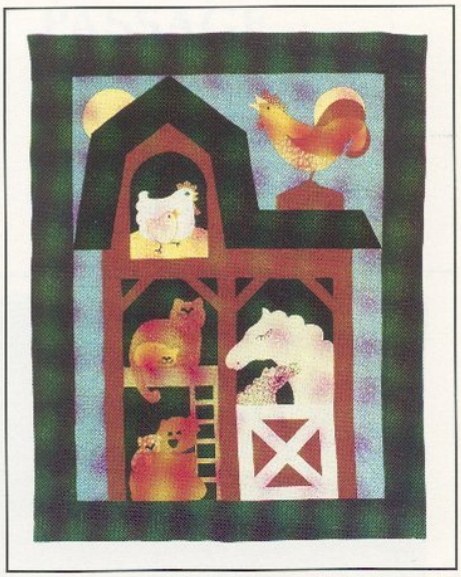
Mexican Rose, 1844
By Susannah Boyer • Sandusky, Ohio • Collection of Bari Garst

In the 1800s quilts made for babies were often full-size. While Susannah Boyer of Sandusky, Ohio, was expecting her sixth child she appliqued a baby quilt. The quilt was brought to Kansas sixty years later by her son.



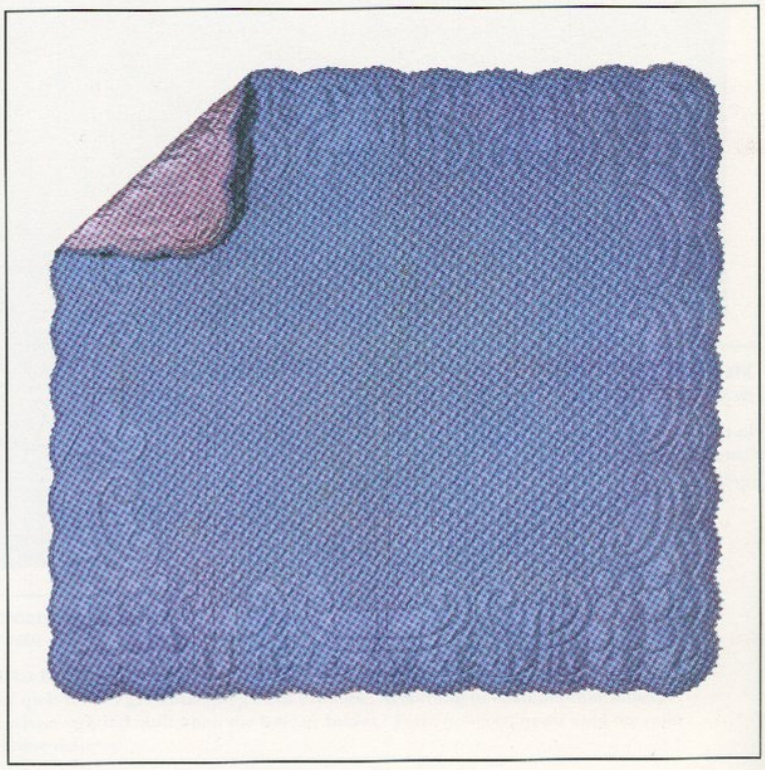
Roly Poly Animals, 1922
By Violet Taylor Horner • Geary County, Kansas
Collection of Bettie Mae Horner Roesler

In 1922, Violet Taylor Horner of Geary County used the "Roly Poly Animals" pattern designed by Ruby McKim of Independence, Missouri. The quilt was made for the birth of Violet's daughter. It was the only special quilt she ever made.



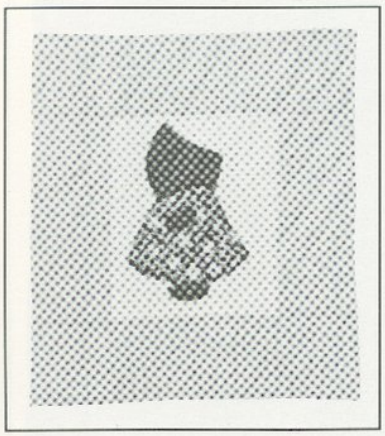
Mothers and Babies, 1978
By Chris Wolf Edmonds • Lawrence, Kansas • Collection of Teresa Wolf Baumgartner

Chris Wolf Edmonds of Lawrence designs quilt patterns. She began making quilts as gifts for relatives. In 1978 she created "Mothers and Babies" for her niece. The pattern is offered on the commercial market.



Whole Cloth, 1939
By Maria Penner Funk Hillsboro, Kansas • Collection of Mary Beth Goering

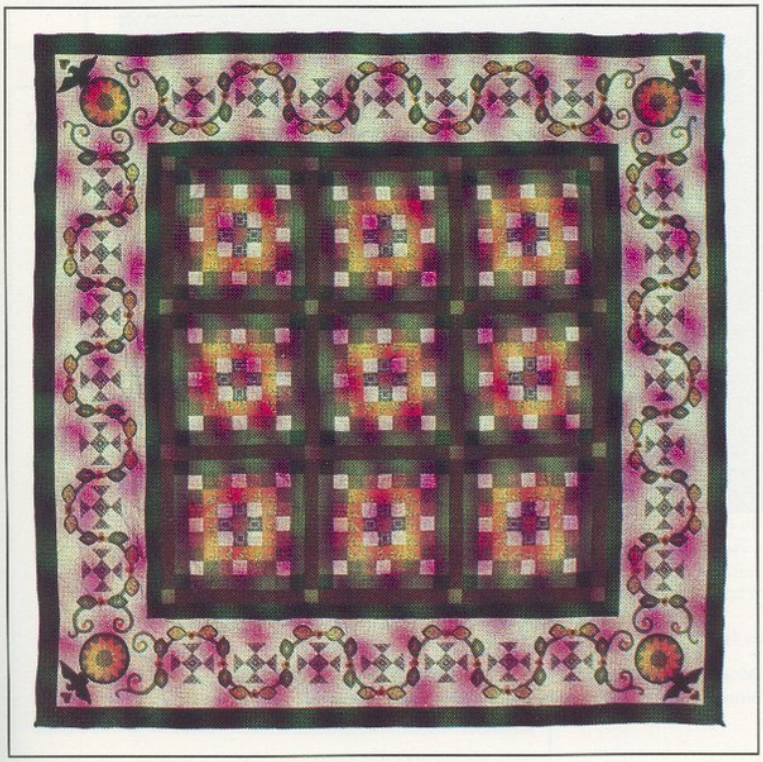
Mennonites sometimes use whole widths of cloth to make quilts. Maria Penner Funk of Hillsboro made a whole cloth quilt for her granddaughter in 1939. In the communities of Hillsboro and Hesston there is a tradition to add crocheted borders to quilt edges. Special quilts are used to take newborns to church.



birthdays

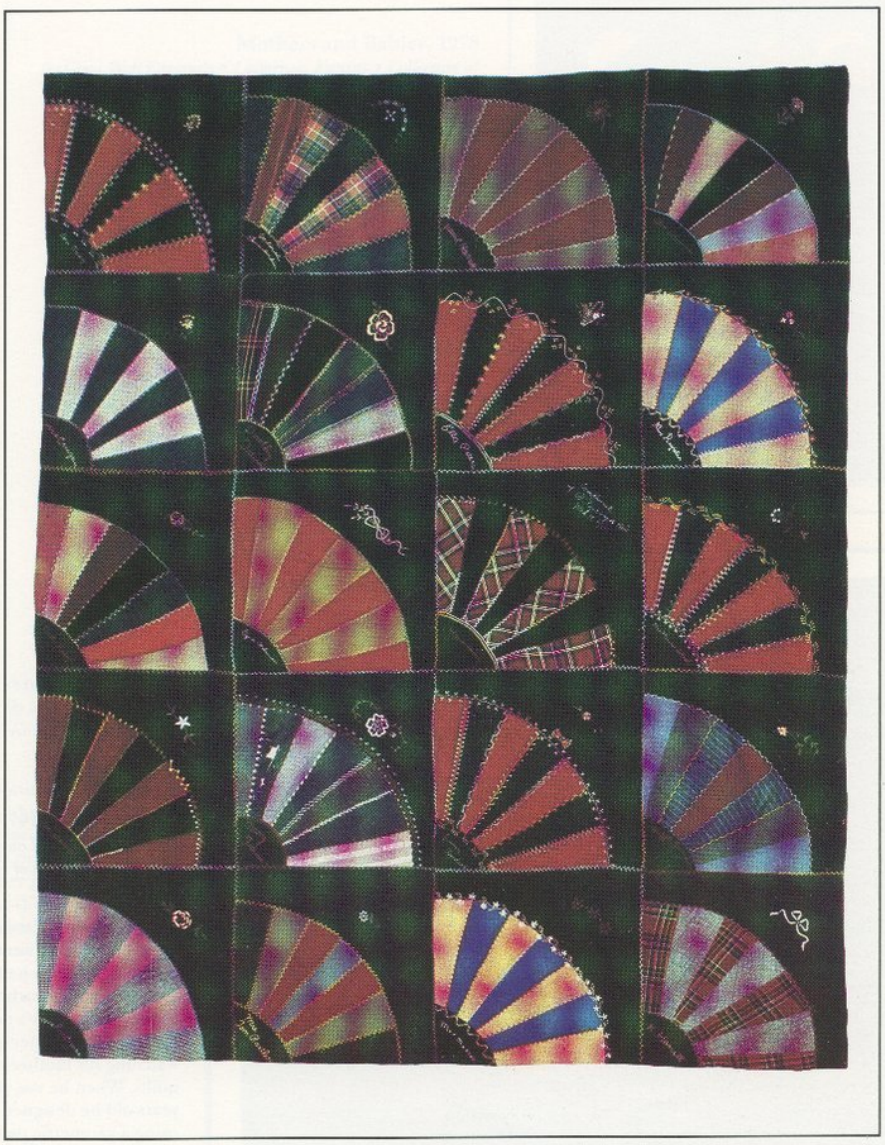
Sunbonnet Sue, 1936
By Rosa Panning • Ellinwood, Kansas • Collection of Eloise Winkelman

"I don't remember learning to quilt," recalls Eloise Winkelman of Ellinwood, "we were just expected to sit down and help [quilt] for a while before we went off to play." Her grandmother, Rosa Panning, made her a "Sunbonnet Sue" quilt for her tenth birthday. Eloise has continued this tradition. She recently completed a "Sunbonnet Babies" quilt for her granddaughter's sixth birthday.



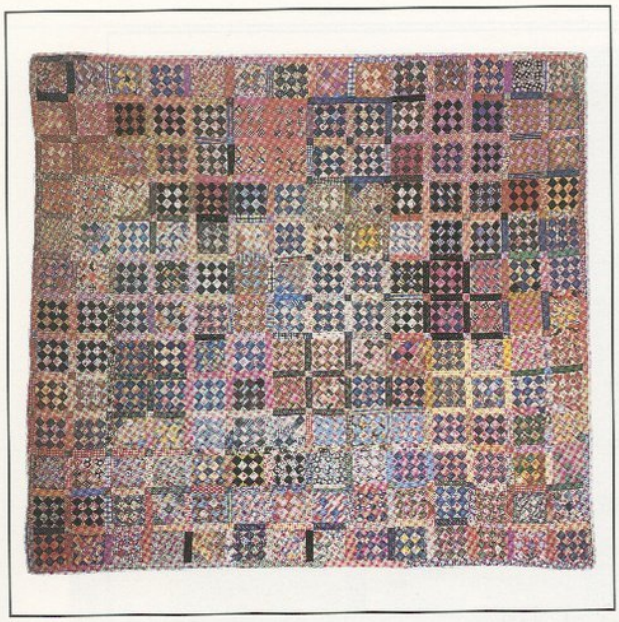
Cotter's Field, 1977
By Jean Mitchell • Lawrence, Kansas • Collection of Cotter Mitchell

The practice of freedom quilts continues in the twentieth century. Jean Mitchell of Lawrence made such a quilt for her son Cotter's twenty-first birthday. Cotter grew up watching his mother make quilts. When he was eight years old he designed a quilt using a geometric pattern. This pattern was used to create his freedom quilt.



Fan, 1912
By Friends of Mary Jane Vore Moss • Angus, Nebraska • Collection of Lucille Wright

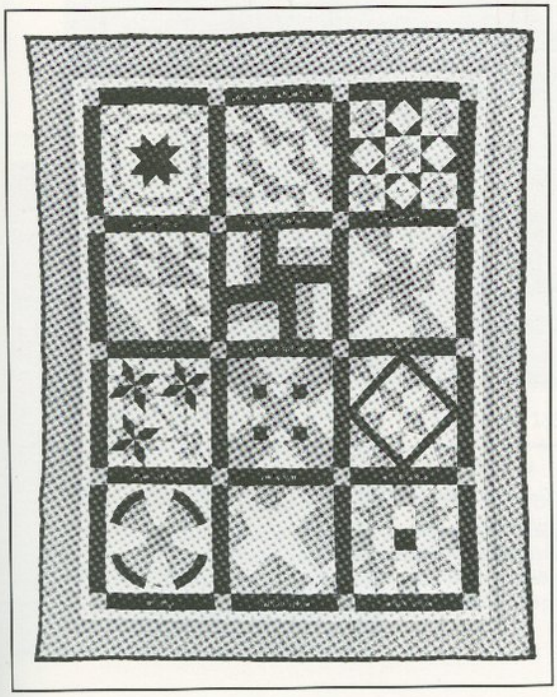
In 1912, Mary Jane Vore Moss operated the switchboard for the local telephone line in Angus, Nebraska. Twenty of the women on her line surprised her with a fiftieth birthday quilt.



graduation

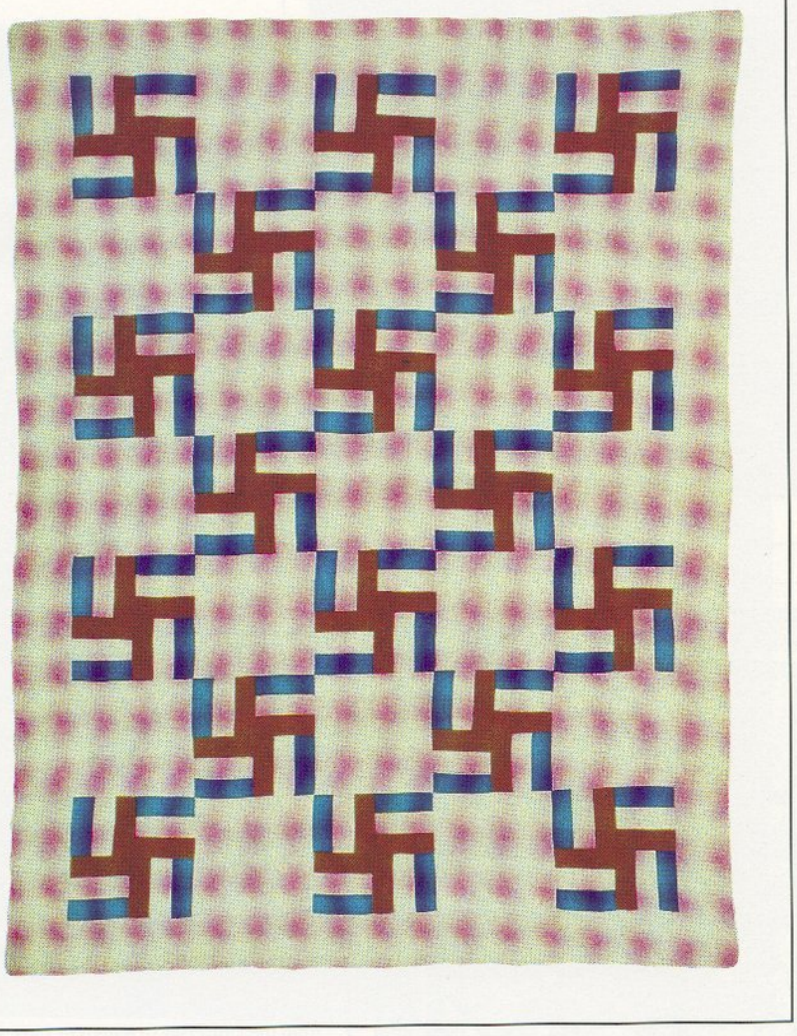
Queen Anne's Favorite, 1917
By Abigail McKinney and Leta Pedersen • Nichols County, Nebraska • Collection of Alberta Bagley

Leta Pedersen graduated from high school in Nichols County, Nebraska, in 1917. She helped her mother, Abigail McKinney, complete the quilt "Queen Anne's Favorite" for her graduation. The quilt has 5,700 pieces.



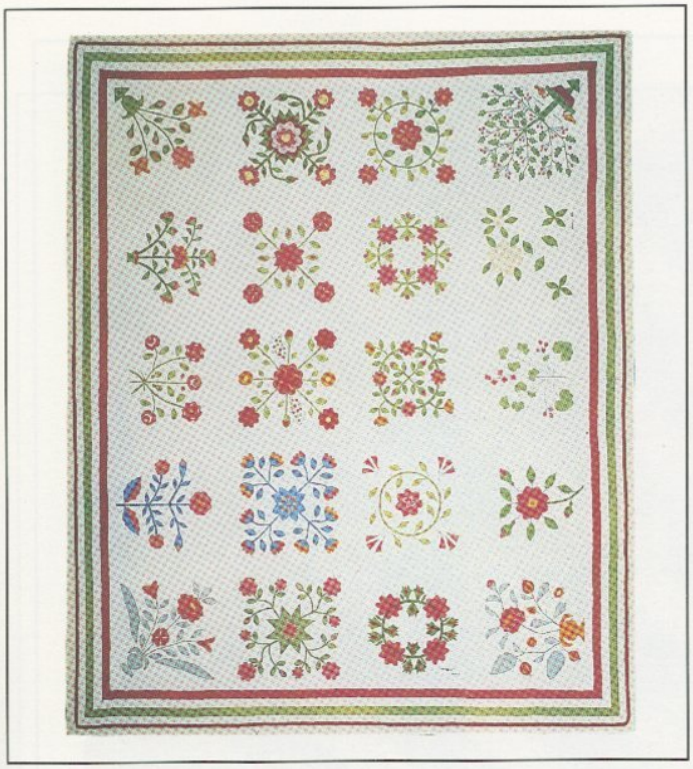
Friendship Sampler, 1981
By Family and Friends of Patricia Michaelis • Lawrence and Russell, Kansas • Collection of Patricia Michaelis

Patricia Michaelis earned her doctoral degree in history from the University of Kansas in 1981. Her dissertation was about the history of commercial airlines' passenger service. Upon graduation, family and friends presented her with a quilt. The quilt's theme focuses on her dissertation subject.



Spirit of St. Louis, 1937
By Lora Housholder Wedd • Spring Hill, Kansas • Collection of Shirley Weld

In 1937, Lora Housholder Wedd selected the pattern "The Spirit of St. Louis" to make a quilt for her son's high school graduation. The pattern was created to honor Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic in 1927. The pattern represents an airplane propeller. During World War II the pattern reminded the maker of the Nazi swastika. The quilt was put away and never used.



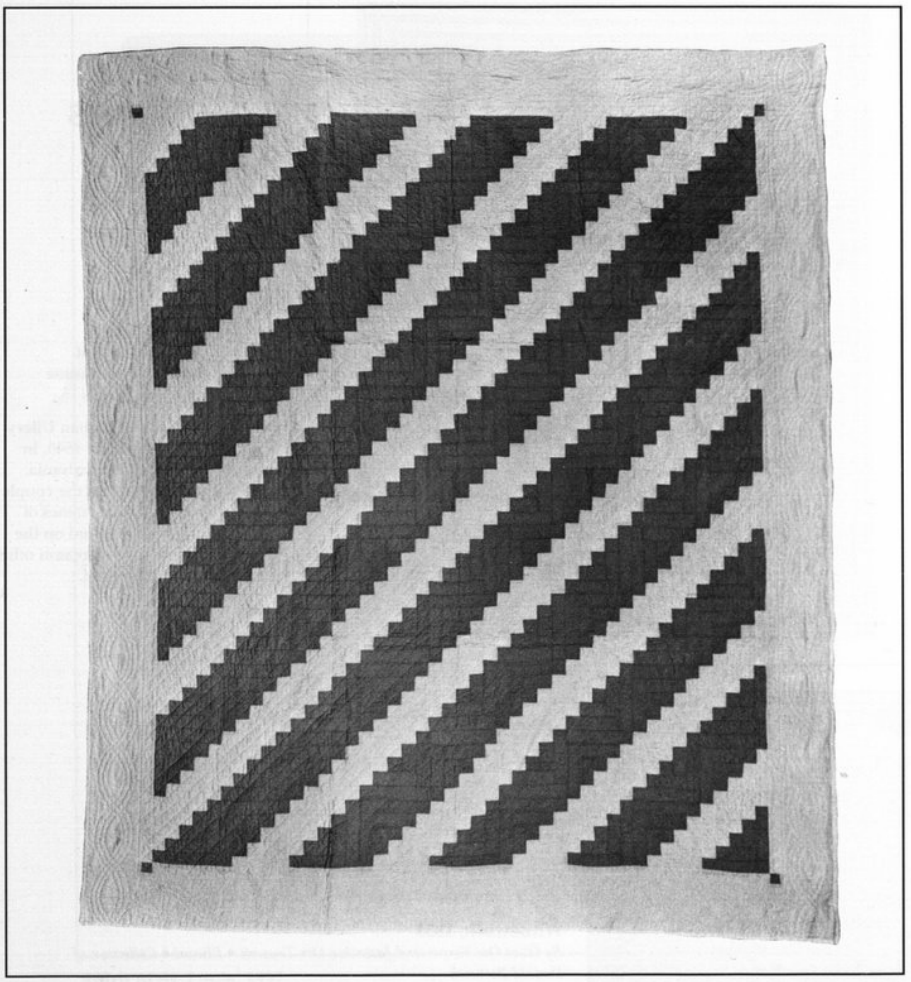
weddings

Sampler, ca. 1845
By Friends of Sarah Greenfield
Washington County, Pennsylvania
Collection of Lucymae Meixies

Sarah Greenfield and Nathan Ullery were married on April 10, 1845, in Washington County, Pennsylvania. Family history tells us that the couple received a sampler quilt. Names of friends and family are found on the quilt. For some unknown reason other names have been removed.

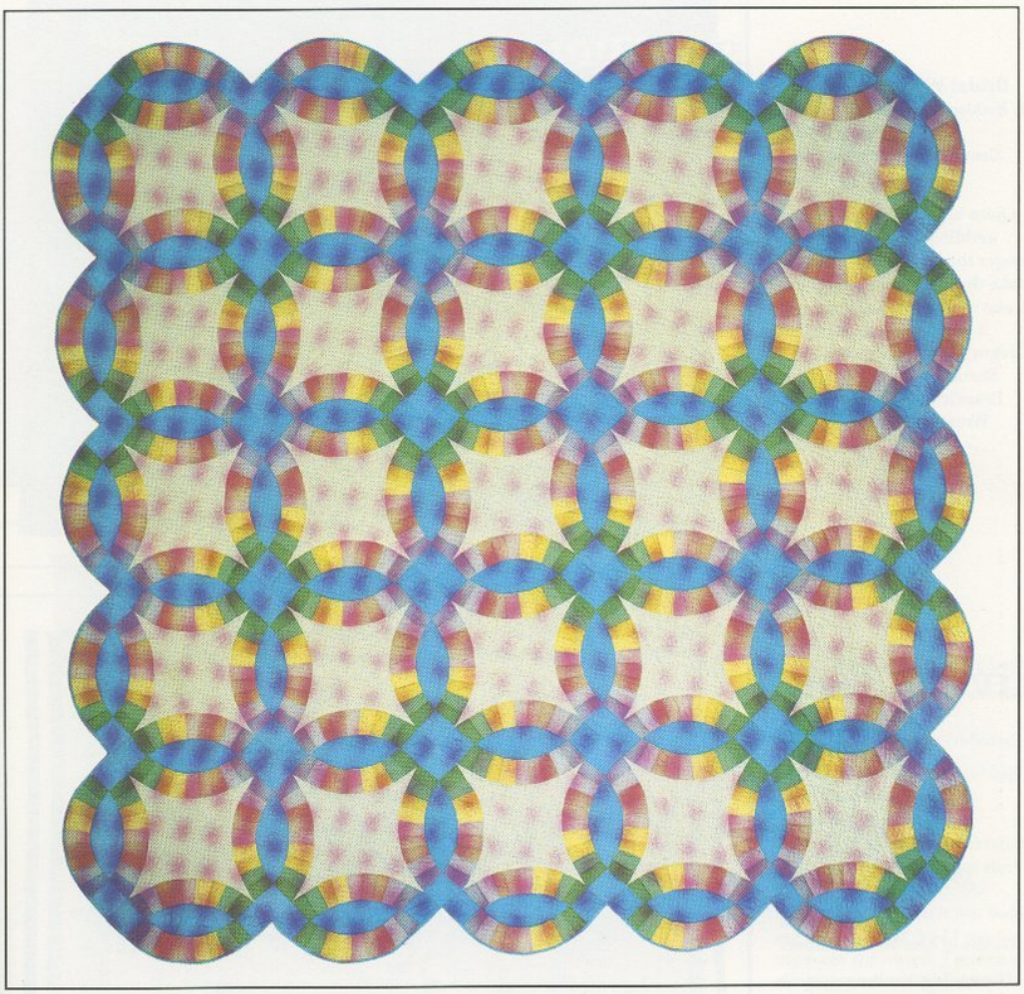
Whitework, 1853
By Olive Orr Varner and Jacinthia Orr Truscott • Illinois • Collection of Donald Bostwick

In 1853, Olive Orr Varner was sixteen years old and living in Wayne County, Illinois. According to family stories Olive and her sister Jacinthia made a whitework quilt for Olive's hope chest. Olive married eight years later. She brought the quilt with her to Butler County in 1878.



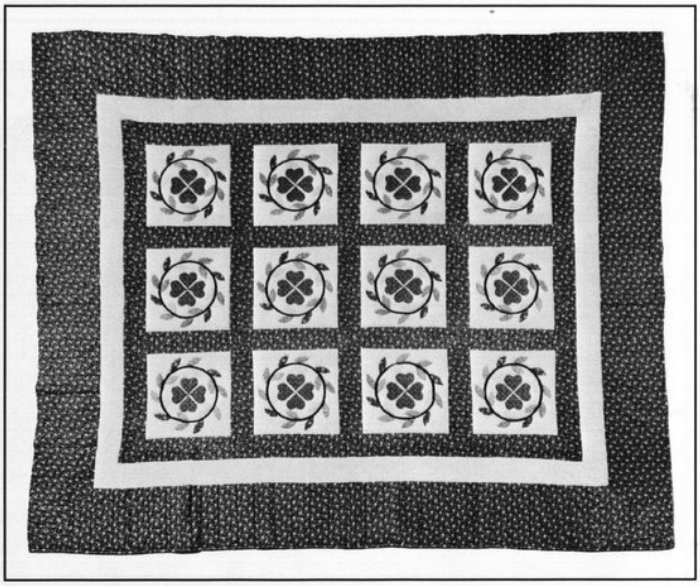
Pioneer Block, 1935
By Friends of Martha Sears Sievers Hansen • Alva, Oklahoma • Collection of Martha Sears Sievers Hansen

Martha Sears Sievers Hansen of Arkansas City began making quilts as a teenager. While living in Alva, Oklahoma, she became engaged. Her engagement party was a quilting bee. Each of the fifty guests was asked to work on a block. Martha set the blocks together and a local quilter finished the wedding quilt.



Double Wedding Ring, 1934
By Marthine Davignon Considine • Stockton, Kansas • Collection of Darlene Bugner

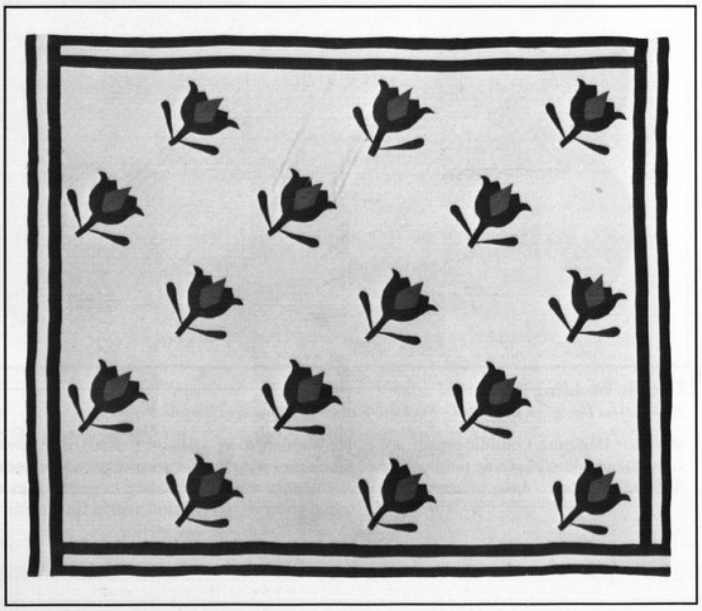
Marthine Davignon Considine made a "Double Wedding Ring" quilt for her marriage. Even though it was made during the Great Depression, Marthine purchased new fabric for the quilt. The pastel cotton fabrics cost twenty-five cents a yard. Although this pattern was promoted as a wedding quilt, many quilt makers have used it to mark other events.



Bridal Wreath, 1980-1981
By Kathleen Brassfield and Friends
Prairie Village, Kansas • Collection of Shauna and Robert Gregory

Quilts are still associated with weddings. However, it is no longer the custom for brides to make their own wedding quilts. Today a quilt is usually given as a gift. Shauna and Robert Gregory were married in 1987. Shauna's mother, Kathleen Brassfield, created a "Bridal Wreath" quilt for her only daughter.

anniversaries



Tulips, 1910
Maker of Top Unknown
Quilted by Jane Welsh and Ann Welsh Ewert
Pennsylvania
Collection of Mrs. Vernon Slocombe

The earliest anniversary quilt found in Kansas was made in 1910. A "Tulip" quilt top was made for the fiftieth anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. John S. Welsh. The top was made in Pennsylvania.

mourning

Grandmother's Flower Garden, ca. 1938-1949
By Grace Marjorie Robards Acre • WaKeeney, Kansas
Collection of Cynthia Acre Ziegler

Grace Marjorie Robards Acre made a quilt from the dresses of her daughter who died when she was only eight years old.

Broken Dishes, 1978-1983
By Rosemary Olberding Holthaus
Seneca, Kansas
Collection of Rosemary Holthaus

Other quilts are made to help the maker work through mourning. Rosemary Olberding Holthaus of Seneca made a special quilt after the death of her husband. She remembers, "When it was snowing and blowing, and I was feeling sorry for myself, I searched my quilt patterns and scrap box of materials and started working on it."