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THE QUILTS OF HERITAGE HONOREE MARY GASPERIK – Around The Frame

📅 August 13, 2021 👤 Lois Levihn

Mary Gasperik's quilt Road to Recovery was entered in the 1939 New York World's Fair and depicts the road from Depression to hope to recovery.

When I attended the 2021 Celebration at the Quilter's Hall of Fame in Marion, Indiana I had every intention of interviewing Marti Michell, this year's inductee into the Quilter's Hall of Fame. Since The Celebration was cancelled last year, due to COVID-19, it was good to be out amongst fellow quilters once again. Alas, my time schedule didn't allow me to meet Marti at the quilt walk through, but I did get to view and learn about Mary Gasperik the 2021 Heritage Honoree and her outstanding quilts. This category honors a person who is deceased or was active in the quilt world at least 80 years ago. After viewing her quilts and the inspiration and design work behind them, it is quite evident why she was chosen.

Mary's quilts reflect her rural Hungarian heritage and becoming familiar with American culture. Born in 1888, she arrived through Ellis Island at the age of 16, lived in Chicago, became an American citizen, married Stephen Gasperik in 1906 and raised three children: Stephen, Elsie and Elmer. In 1933 Mary became a member of the Tuley Park Quilting Club which became an integral part of her life. Located close to where she lived, her fellow quilters helped her grow as a quilt maker.

Mary quilted large quilts with cornucopias, feather wreaths and ferns on her large borders, but she also created quilts for her children. The Detroit News started publishing quilt patterns as early as 1929 and in 1932 the newspaper's Quilt Club Corner was established and a quilt show, and contest was announced. First held in 1933 and continuing annually through 1940, these were large three-day events, exhibiting over 2000 quilts to 50,000 visitors from across the nation.

Living in Chicago, Mary had no idea of the Club's existence until 1935 when she attended a World Series baseball game where the Cubs hosted the Detroit Tigers. A Tigers fan left a newspaper behind where she read



redesigned them making them her own using her expert skills in embroidery, applique and quilting to create intricate works. One pattern design called for a large oval of flowers in the middle. Mary changed the shape to a heart making it much more impactful and titled it "Daisies Don't Tell".

The 1939 New Yorks World's Fair quilt contest theme was "Better living in the world of tomorrow". Unlike the 1933 Chicago World's Fair where thousands of quilts were entered, the quilts for this contest had to be original designs and only 250 quilts were entered. Mary's life and times inspired her to create this quilt which includes a woman who represents herself. Elsie Krueger took her mother's handwritten Hungarian note regarding the quilt and translated it into English. It reads, "This dear old lady is trying to bear the trials of poverty inflected upon her by the Depression and in passing along with years. She must stop and rest to gather fresh courage to reach the "World of Tomorrow" heedless of the traffic only one thought persists in her mind, to attain her goal. The autumn leaves represent the passing of the Depression as it touched humanity. The birds are singing songs of encouragement. Beyond those mountains lies Recovery. The New York World's Fair 1939." Although Mary's quilts won many awards, this quilt didn't win a prize, even so, it is regarded to be amongst her best in terms of workmanship and creativity.

Many thanks need to be given to Mary's children and grandchildren who kept the quilts in the family along with her ribbons and newspaper articles. Many thanks to quilt historian Merikay Waldvogel, and granddaughter Susan Salser who did the research to provide an extensive historical record of Mary Gasperik's work. To view Mary's quilts and read more about her quilt journey go to: quiltindex.org/

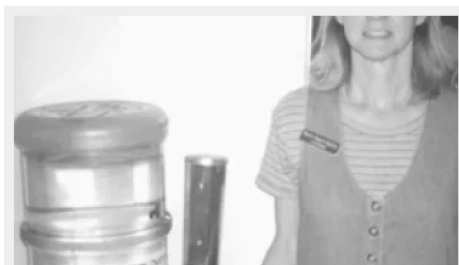
This column is dedicated to my good friend and fellow quilter Louise Bridges 1935-2021.

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She is the author of the "Around the Frame" quilting column. She is a graduate of Wayne HS. Quilts have always been important to her, she loves the stories surrounding them, the techniques used in making them, & restoring them.

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