

MY SEARCH FOR SUNBONNET CHILDREN

Pattern research may seem dull and tedious to some, but my search for Sunbonnet Girl and Overall Boy patterns has led me from a time in my life when I was faltering under the weight of depression to a time of renewed faith in God and myself. I would like to share a part of this growth.

In the spring of 1975, I awakened one night with a strong impression that I should remember something important and write it down. It was a strange but persistent sense of urgency, I wrestled with thoughts of what I might have forgotten and fell asleep. I awoke in the morning with the same persistent, but gentle nudge to bring a thought or idea to the foreground. It was that evening when I felt as though a light suddenly was switched on, and I knew that I would begin to research the history of the Sunbonnet Children, I would share the results with others and hopefully enrich the lives of those it would touch. I also knew it was the answer to prayer.

In the beginning, I wanted to assemble a history of the patterns and relate this to our nation's history and the changing roles of American women. This would be an immense project for a working wife and mother with no research background. The initial goal was too broad in scope and overwhelmed me. A more realistic goal was essential.

During the past two years, I have worked out some guidelines which have proven most helpful to the present success of "putting together" the results of my study. These include: definition of a realistic goal, organization enthusiasm and diligence. (Throughout my first year, I floundered on all counts.)

I have found it works well to have both short range and long range goals. For example, I initially worked toward a complete and documented history of the patterns, and will continue to strive for these results. In the meanwhile, I would like to share the information I

collect and assemble through a more casual and workable format of simple line drawn books and articles.

To use resource materials effectively, I had to organize both time and materials. My beginning efforts were haphazard and disorganized which resulted in a hit and miss approach. In retrospect, I would keep a correspondence log of incoming and outgoing mail with a copy of each piece of correspondence. (Do send a stamped self-addressed envelope with each inquiry to help defray postage expenses on the other end.)

I also discovered it is important to schedule a specific time to work on my study. I produce the best results when I can work alone with no outside demands, so I set aside a three hour time period on Friday mornings. At times, I still feel pressured by household chores during those hours, but have a real sense of frustration if I do not take the time to organize, write or read research materials. The time is valuable not only to organize, but also to check procedures and progress of the study.

Another primary ingredient is enthusiasm. Your enthusiasm will give life to your project and it is contagious. I get excited when I tell the story of the Sunbonnet Children as I introduce the quilt block children from all sections of our country. The appliqued and embroidered boys and girls seem to lend a sense of fellowship within a group as they recall old memories or spark an interest in the design for a new quilt.

Just a word about diligence. There were times when I received no responses to my inquiries and became discouraged and ready to give up. Through the efforts of other persons, I was able to keep a positive attitude. My turning point came during one of my lowest moments in the research when I received a packet of patterns from Wyn Redall of California. Her support and encouragement gave me the incentive to continue. Through the help of those who followed, I can now begin to share the findings.

SUNBONNET CHILDREN
(con't. from page 17)

Although my knowledge of "how to" was somewhat limited, I have had remarkable cooperation and assistance from magazine editors, pattern collectors and numerous individual quilt loving persons. There is a long list of women and men who have contributed to my research and I owe them a great deal of credit for their additions to my present collection of both patterns and information.

Sunbonnet Girls and Boys have been a part of our needlework heritage since the turn of the century. To date, I have over 200 patterns and references to several others, but some are no longer available through needlework departments, so I must rely on continuing help from those who are willing to share their patterns and knowledge.

In an effort to involve others in the vitality of the Sunbonnet Children, I am working on details for a national Sunbonnet Girl and Overall Boy Quilt Block contest within the next year or so. Perhaps old and new patterns will merge to make an historical statement for the 1970's as we also reflect on our past.

--Pat Mensinger--
Colfax, Washington

DAR MUSEUM EXHIBITION

A special exhibition featuring "all white" bed coverings opened on May 15th at the DAR Museum, 1776 D Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. and will remain open through August 31st. The textiles in this exhibition are all from the DAR Collection and feature important stylistic developments in needlework during the neo-classical era of American decorative arts. The beauty of all white work resulted from an infinite number of intricate stitches. Most of these bed coverings feature a large central motif, and the designs were suited to the revival and interpretation of Greco Roman motifs. White surface areas were another vestige of "classical purity." These florals, cornucopias, wreaths, urns, medallions, and tassels will be found on textiles as well as furniture of the period.



Stuffed Coverlet, from Penn. or Ohio, c 1810, from the DAR Museum Collection. Gift of Mrs. George Bucham.

(continued)

There were twenty quilts and coverlets on exhibition as well as the needle working tools from the period. Hours are nine to four, Monday through Friday with guided tours from ten until three. Admission is free. There is no catalogue of this exhibition. For further information and photographs, contact the museum.

NOTE FROM OUR CIRCULATION MANAGER

Please check the expiration date on your address label. Your current subscription to QUILTERS' JOURNAL expires on the date listed on the label. To insure continued service, renew on or before this date. A convenient subscription form is included in the current issue on page 21.

Remember a friend or relative might also enjoy QUILTERS' JOURNAL as a special gift. Subscription rate... \$5.50 per year, prepaid. The Journal is published four times a year--June, September, December and March.