

REFERRING BACK

PATRICIA COX PROPOSES was an article about art and historical society museums and their quilt collections. She suggested that quilt groups might help in the following ways:

1. Studying the quilts in the collection for as much information as possible;
2. Making a written and photographic record
3. Raising money to acquire quilts to en-
4. Acquiring quilts from private collections which are put on the market;
5. Persuading collectors to donate all or part of their collections;
6. Providing money or personnel to mount exhibitions so that collections may be seen oftener;
7. Restore and repair quilts or raising money for recognized professions to do it (see Textile Conservation Institute," Fall, 1978 QUILTERS' JOURNAL).

REFERRING BACK

Joyce Aufderheide is owner of the Hands All Around Quilt Museum, a quilt collector, a familiar face at the national quilt events, and the wife of a long time president and board member of the Brown County Historical Society and Museum.

Since the Hands All Around Quilt Museum is in my home, it is considerably different than an institution specifically used for historical purposes. However, I believe that it serves a similar need; to provide the public an opportunity to view articles not generally seen elsewhere, to preserve articles of our past history and changing culture and disseminate knowledge.

In 1979, the Minnesota Historical Society submitted to the Minnesota Legislature a report with conclusions and recommendations entitled HISTORIC RESOURCE BOOK. Russell Fridley, Director of the Minnesota Historical Society wrote "there is a nationwide crisis in the preservation of historical and cultural resources. A large percentage of art objects, etc... receive little or no care in their preservation or they are treated in ways which increase the rate of deterioration. Reliance on volunteer help is folly".

The establishment of "conservation laboratories" is being considered all over the U.S. and there is need for trained staff in curatorial care through workshops conducted by qualified preservationists.

Of the 225 historic repositories in Minnesota, 15% are privately owned. A very few of these were singled out as "noteworthy" and I feel honored that my collection was labeled "outstanding". Even with this background I would hesitate to advise a museum as to what should be kept or discarded. The Proposal suggests that collections be analyzed and this kind of advice be given by quilt groups! Most museum curators would like to have the freedom to discard or trade but they are sometimes prevented from doing this by founding provisions.

The Proposal asks, "Who is to decide what is to be kept?" I say it is the curator, trained staff and the board. It was suggested that quilt groups provide experts to aid in these decisions. I disagree, since I know very few serious quilt students who have educated themselves in specialized fields such as textiles, conservation, etc. We have more quilt enthusiasts than experts.

Collectors are generally preservators. and have specific reasons for acquisition. Most collectors know how difficult it is to acquire facts since oral history gets bent out of shape with each generation of telling. Written documentation was not the order of the day. I also think we will miss much if we only preserve the known, sure and the beautifully stitched.

I have found that most people viewing quilts find too many facts "mind-boggling" and would rather enjoy the visual impact of the quilt. Most people are only concerned with the pattern name, approximate date, area in which it was made and maybe an interesting fact or two.

I can see a certain positive position in proposals #1, #2 and #7. #3, #4 and #5 aren't consistent with space restrictions. #6 is debatable since larger museums have many categories of artifacts that must be shown and exhibits scheduling is usually done well in advance. I also feel #5 is presumptuous as most collectors are contacted by art institutes and museums at one time or another.

Yes we should encourage and promote quilt preservation! I believe we are doing that with our symposiums where we are educating hundreds of women by exposure. Appreciation has certainly been inspired by these efforts and also by the quilt publications. Sharing and preserving are most rewarding and, for me, is really what it is all about. Anyone want to help me mend them?

Joyce Aufderheide
New Ulm, Minnesota

REFERRING BACK. . . .

Imelda G. DeGraw is Curator of Textiles and Costumes for the Denver Art Museum and author of the 1974 catalogue for the Quilts and Coverlets Exhibit. Their quilt collection includes 20th century quilts made by Charlotte Jane Whitehill and Sciota Danner and the famous Matterhorn by Myrtle M. Fortner, as well as many outstanding quilts of the 19th century.

As a curator of textiles responsible for one of the finer quilt collections in the country, I was most interested in the views of Patricia Cox in her proposal published in your Spring 1979 issue.

First, I would like to say that my opinions are either personal or professional as pertains to the policies of the institution with which I am associated.

As is usually the situation, most of our quilts have come into the collection as gifts as they seem to be one of the heirlooms most commonly kept in families. As our acquisition funds are very limited, we purchase only those quilts not common or a pattern we feel to be important to continue building the collection. The care and preservation of the collection is one of the prime responsibilities of a curator, as is the constant acquiring of knowledge on all segments of the collection.

In our museum there is always a group of quilts on exhibition and we make a point of having a representation of the various techniques. Because of the type of material and the extent of the collection these objects are changed about every four to five months. Quite often there are text panels in the gallery explaining the different types of quilts and a case showing the making process is permanent. Individual labels carry the pertinent information, i.e., name of pattern (if known), material, type of quilt, date or circa, any special information known about the maker and the donor and catalog number.

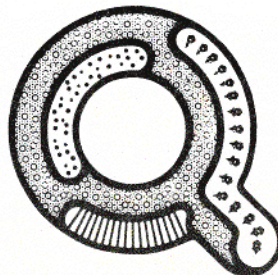
Trading and selling are extremely rare in our museum as they are in most others. We tend to be selective in what we accept as gifts knowing that most donors are offended at having their gifts leave the museum. Trading and selling are highly governed by the director and trustees.

My comments about the proposals follow.

1. Could present many obstacles in that most collections are in storage and the very nature of the material makes handling difficult and is detrimental to the quilts.
- 2, Our collection is photographed and 8 X 10 glossies are available in notebook form; most quilts are also on color slides and available in most instances for purchase.
- 3-4-5. Assistance in raising funds for quilt purchase or encouraging gifts should be welcomed by any institution!
6. Providing money for exhibitions is common here for major exhibitions, but the actual installation is done by trained personnel with volunteer assistance.
7. This department has a large group of staff aides who are constantly working on the condition of the collection; money has been given for the curator to attend conservation workshops; conservation money is constantly needed for outside professional service.

Ms. Cox's whole concept should be very helpful in making people more aware of the need to properly care for and exhibit all types of textiles, as this is becoming an area of great concern to museums and collectors. The more information we can give to help prolong the existence of textiles the more we are contributing to the history and education of the future.

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