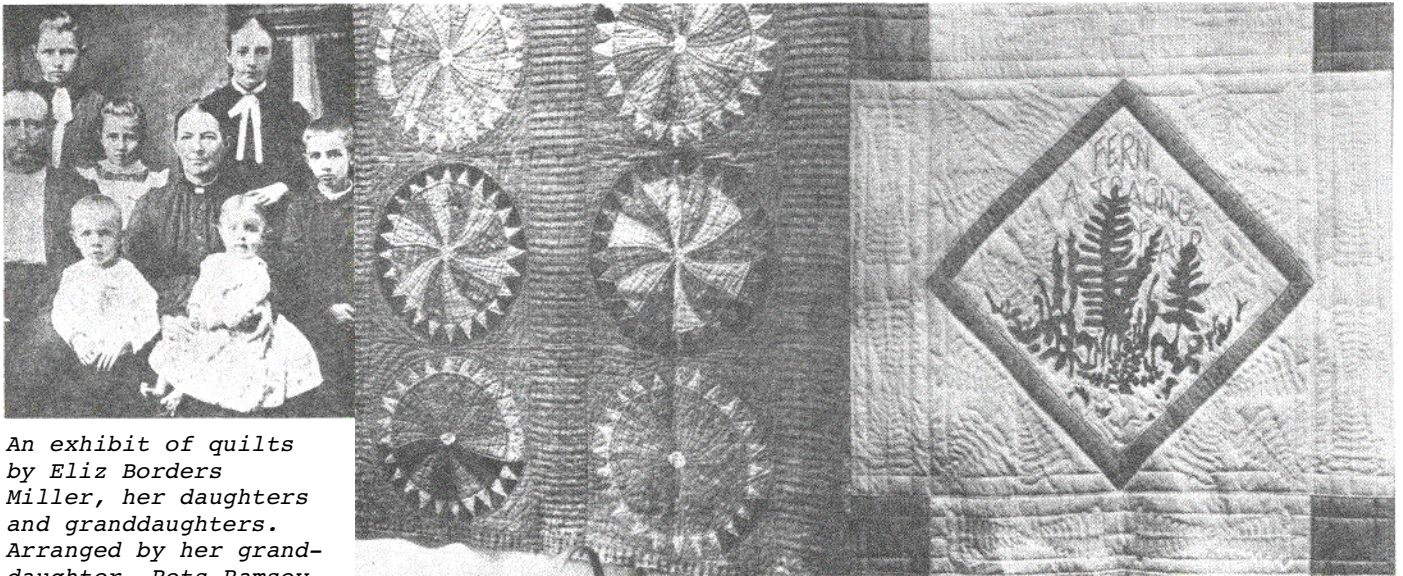


THREE GENERATIONS OF QUILT-MAKERS



An exhibit of quilts by Eliz Borders Miller, her daughters and granddaughters. Arranged by her granddaughter, Bets Ramsey.

1) The James Madison Miller family: front, James, Frank, Eliz, Vinnye. Back, Becky, Ollie & Maggie. 2) Quilt @1890 by Eliz. Miller made of blue chambray, pillow ticking & ass't household scraps. Background is lavender/white checks. Bands of blue/tan stripe separate the blocks. 3) Fern quilt made by Bets Ramsey, 1974. Poem inscribed, "Fern/A tracing?of air" by Paul Ramsey. Collection of Dr & Mrs. Earl Campbell. Photo by W.C. King.

Mrs. Ramsey is a textile artist and teacher in Chattanooga, Tenn. She became aware of her grandmother's talents while doing a research project.

by Bets Miller Ramsey

It is not unusual for three generations of quilters to work together and pass on technique and knowledge from one to another. Traditions are treasured. Family ceremonies have continuity. But Elizabeth Borders Miller died before her granddaughters were born. She did not guide their awkward, young fingers as they sewed their first patches. Still, the story makes a circle.

When, in 1873, Elizabeth Borders and James Madison Miller married, her parents gave them land in the Redbud community near Calhoun, Georgia, and there they lived and died. They raised cotton and children and farmed. It was a good life. They weren't rich, but they weren't poor and they had many pleasures. Elizabeth's was sewing. She made stylish clothes and beautiful quilts. Even her everyday quilts had unexpected turns of fabric and pattern. Quilts were a necessity, with seven children to cover, for in north Georgia nights get cold.

Farm life was never easy, but one task that gave rest and fulfillment was quilting. The girls thought it tiresome to card the homegrown cotton for batts, but Elizabeth found the rhythm relaxing. She knew what pleasure the finished quilt would bring. The girls enjoyed the piecing and quilting. The boys sometimes helped on winter evenings.

Before she died in 1907, Elizabeth had made three quilts for each of her children. "I don't know who they'll marry," she said, a little doubt in her voice as if it might be someone she didn't like, "but I want them to have these when they do."

It was her gift of loving and caring that would go with her children, wherever they wandered. It was something of home, to remember and cherish.

Ollie Miller McBrayer was her mother's best student. She made dozens of quilts through her lifetime and was a professional dressmaker. Although her quilts lack some of her mother's ingenuity, they show taste in color and design along with fine workmanship.

Vinnye, the youngest daughter, was taught by her older sisters. Sewing was more of a chore than a pleasure to her. In later life she made a few quilts to pass the time. Hers are neat and orderly, all new material and a little dull. She had no children and she seldom used the quilts her mother gave her.

Lee, the youngest son moved to Chicago and was comforted by his quilts in that cold place. The other children took their quilts to use and enjoy.

Related photographs of family and locals and split-oak baskets augmented the exhibit.