

QUILTERS' JOURNAL

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EXPERT ON QUILTS WILL BE SPEAKER

Oswego Woman Studied Hawaiian Work In Islands

Mrs. Pine L. Eisfeller wife of Staff Sergeant Eisfeller of Fort Ontario, who was awarded the blue and red ribbon prize for her Hawaiian quilts at the state fair, has been invited to speak at the Central City Chapter, Oswego, on Thursday, October 22. Mrs. Eisfeller made a study of quilts in the Hawaiian Islands where she spent several years. She learned the story of the quilt and the art of the quilt.

Quilts from Hawaii To Be on Exhibition

Quilts from Hawaii will be displayed by Mrs. R. C. Eisfeller at 1 p. m. today at a meeting of the Genesee Valley Quilt Club in the lecture hall of the Municipal Museum. Mrs. Eisfeller lived in the Hawaiian Islands several years while her husband was stationed there.

TO SHOW QUILTS 1938

MATTISON DISTRICT, Feb. 2. Mrs. Eisfeller will exhibit her collection of Hawaiian quilts at a lecture to be given by the Mattison District Home Bureau Monday, Feb. 7, at 1 o'clock.

Hawaii Sets Theme for Church Tea

Far off Hawaii taken as theme of the Women's Society tea at Westminster.

Quilts in Hawaii Designs Capture Several Ribbons

Four quilts, representative of far-off Hawaiian motifs, won blue and red ribbons in the domestic arts department in the Harriet May Mills memorial building at the state fair yesterday. They were entered by Pine L. Eisfeller of Fort Ontario, and include a blue ribbon winner, Kaomi Mail, a pinning press gently, a forget-me-not pattern carried out in blue and red.

PALLADIUM-TIME

OSWEGONIANS WIN

Receive Several More Awards
New York State Fair
Attendance at the State Fair, Syracuse, Tuesday, was 20,800 compared with 24,08 a year ago and 18,122, in 1934. The Labor Department attendance on revised figures was 70,610.

Winning nine of 10 games, Edward Trombadori, Rhinebeck, Dutchess County, won the quilt contest with 18 counties entered.

INTERESTING TALK ON QUILTS OF HAWAII

The Women's Club of the Oswego Evangelical held a meeting Thursday evening at the parish house. Covers were presented by Mrs. Raymond Jones as president.

A feature of the meeting was an interesting talk on Hawaiian quilts by Mrs. Pine L. Eisfeller of Fort Ontario. Mrs. Eisfeller explained the designs and techniques of the quilts. She has lived in the Hawaiian Islands and made a study of the art of the quilt.



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WINS MANY PRIZES

Mrs. Pine M. Eisfeller Displays at Syracuse Fair
Mrs. Pine M. Eisfeller of Fort Ontario, Oswego, was awarded seven first prizes and three second prizes Monday for her exhibit of Hawaiian, applique and hand quilted covers at the New York State Fair, Syracuse. Mrs. Eisfeller's display was in the Women's Society building.

Hobbies Topic for Golden Gate Unit

Mrs. George Hearst, vice president of the Golden Gate Unit, will speak at the January 13, 1937.

Mrs. Eisfeller guest speaker. The Women's Guild of the Golden Gate Unit held a regular meeting in the chapel Tuesday afternoon. Mrs. F. V. D. Cruser, new president, presided. Plans were made for activities for the coming year. Mrs. Pine L. Eisfeller of Fort Ontario was the guest speaker.

Mrs. John Chapman of 100 800, P. L. Eisfeller who spent years in Hawaii.



**PINE
HAWKES
EISFELLER**

by Joyce Gross

Pine Hawkes was born in the state of Washington on June 12, 1894. She was born with the umbilical cord wrapped around one foot and two fingers. In those days medical

science had not reached the heights it has today and the mother was not sure her crippled baby would live. She didn't even give the child a name, but in her despair would hold her and rock her with the little baby's cowlich swaying gently to the motion of the rocking. Sometimes she would sing a song about pine trees.

One day a neighbor child was asking about the baby and Mrs. Hawkes said that the little girl didn't even have a name. The child said, "Yes she does. Remember what you always sing to her." So she was named Pine. (She herself later changed it to Pine, pronounced Piney.)

One year after Pine was born, Mrs. Hawkes left her husband and returned with her two daughters to San Francisco, where she resumed her former job as a printer. She frequently worked nights so that she could be with the two children during the day.

As a child Pine spent a good deal of her time in the hospital because her crippled foot needed a good deal of surgery. She was still young when the authorities decided that her mother couldn't supervise her properly while working nights and they placed her in an orphanage on 6th & Lake Streets in San Francisco. She remembers frequently being in trouble for talking at the wrong time or wetting the bed. The punishment for the former was standing in the upper hall with her apron over her head ; for the latter, dry cereal for breakfast with nothing to drink. She relates these incidents quite as a matter-of-fact with no apparent bitterness. The orphans went to public school which in Pine's case was Grant School.

During the 1906 earthquake the front of the orphanage's brick building fell

away and the Red Cross took them to San Rafael to stay until it was rebuilt.

Shortly after the earthquake the family went to live with Mrs. Hawkes' brother. Pine remembers hearing her uncle say, "It's all right to bring Dorothy (her sister) but I can't stand that cripple."

The first sewing the child did was a nine-patch under the watchful eyes of her grandmother. Her mother taught her tatting, crocheting, etc. Pine has left-handed so of course had to convert all of the right handed instructions.

Pine married at nineteen and soon had a baby girl. She divorced him and married again. She was married 11 years, 11 months, and 11 days and had two sons before getting a divorce. On July 9, 1929 she married Robert Eisfeller, who was in the Army Medical Corps. In 1930 they were sent to Hawaii

In March 1945 Pine wrote an article for AMERICAN HOME entitled "Heirlooms for Tomorrow" She explained how she began quilting, "I had always been interested in needle work and while my husband was on a tour of duty ... I undertook to finish a quilt as a means of earning some extra money. This was a commercial quilt, simple and pretty, and after finishing it I made a similar one for myself. It sold before it was finished! That's how it began!

"One day I was asked if I had ever seen any Hawaiian quilts. I hadn't and from the descriptions I was unable to picture them in my mind. But I inquired among my friends and eventually found a woman who knew a woman who owned one and off we went to see this Hawaiian quilt.

"I found it truly beautiful and different. There was little about it to suggest the patchwork blocks of the early 1800's in New England although there was some resemblance to the later applique patterns of the South and Midwest. Each quilt is a block in itself. The material is seamed to the size desired with white for the background and color for the design. The color is folded into eighths and cut much as we would cut a paper doily. It generally consists of a central motif, the whole being of a highly intricate pattern, which is anything but simple to cut and baste to the foundation..."

Mrs. Eisfeller would frequent a Hawaiian quilt shop with her little black notebook and secretly sketch the quilt patterns. The owner did not like her to sketch them, but she managed to get enough to satisfy her customers. By this time she was cutting and basting Hawaiian quilt tops for other army wives. Each top cost \$10 plus the left-over scraps, and she could

do two a day. Her lovely yellow and white Chrysanthemum is made from the small scraps received from two quilts she cut.

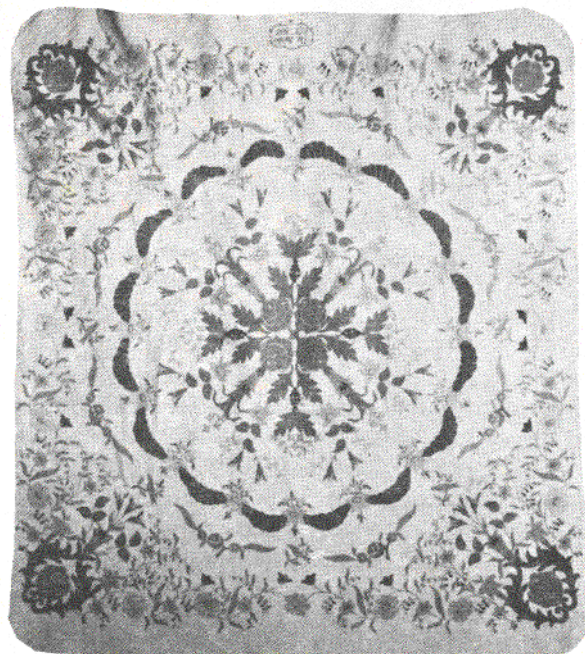
In 1935 she and her husband moved to Oswego, N.Y. Friends persuaded her to enter four of her Hawaiian quilt in the PLY. State Fair in Syracuse. She won two firsts and two seconds! She continued to win prizes in the fairs, but felt if she could hear what the judges said about the quilts as they judged them she would obtain valuable information. In 1939 she took her quilts to enter them in the Altamont Fair. Instead of leaving, she hid in the back of the room, listening carefully. She still feels the knowledge she gained that day helped her win more and more prizes.

In a pamphlet by the Rock River Cotton Company of Janesville, Wis. is an announcement "Pine L Eisfeller has the enviable record of receiving ten first and six second prizes for her collection of Fine Handmade Quilts. She is prepared to cut and baste, or sell completely finished - Hawaiian Quilts - this is her specialty. Do not fail to see her exhibit at the New York State Fair, and get the benefit of her quilting experience." There is no copyright date but Pine noted, "1937" She acknowledged that the company kept her stocked with batts.

In 1942 when Pine' entered the WOMAN'S DAY NATIONAL NEEDLEWORK CONTEST, she and her husband were living in Schenectady, but by the time the results were announced in 1943, they had been transferred to Spokane. She won the 2nd Grand Award and the first prize in the Quilting class, beating out Rose Kretsinger and Bertha Stenge, two very well-known experts. She also won a 2nd prize in the Outline class.

Pine started her Garden quilt about 1938. Her inspiration came from Arsinoe Kelsey Bowen's quilt described and pictured in Ruth Finley's OLD PATCH-WORK QUILTS. She had a photographer copy the picture and made her pattern from that. Later, WOMAN'S DAY was to make the pattern available to the public though Pine feels they took some liberties with it.

Mrs. Eisfeller wanted her quilt to be more flowery with less white space than the original and her quilt is more pastel and delicate than Rose Kretsinger's vivid Paradise Garden There is a myriad of pattern pieces and Pine kept them separate in envelopes carefully marked. She didn't cut the rose buds until later because she didn't know how she was going to make them.



THE GARDEN

In a WOMAN'S DAY article of March 1943 two of Mrs. Eisfeller's quilts are pictured. The article reports, "Mrs. Eisfeller's quilts (the Tree of Life and The Garden) would be outstanding even if they were selected on workmanship alone. Anyone who has applied a pattern, no matter how simple, knows the difficulties of sewing down pointed lines, of making a neat job of thin seams... Both of Mrs. Eisfeller's quilts are full of these. They are difficult quilts to make.



TREE OF LIFE

Each will require months of patient, expert work. The designs are elaborate, there are many separate motifs to be appliqued, many colors to be worked with care so that they blend and form a satisfying whole rather than a jumbled mass." WD estimated that the materials for either quilt would cost \$12.

In the May 1943 issue of WD, details of the 2nd Grand Award winner White Magic were pictured. (White Magic was the name given the quilt by WD because Pine had entered the quilt unnamed) Mrs. Eisfeller explained, "A great deal of my quilting is done freehand, and without conscious planning, but if I mark it, this has to be done first. When the material is transparent enough I put my design underneath, and mark it lightly with a pencil, having my article pinned firmly to a board or worktable. If the design has to be traced, I use an orange transfer paper or a well-worn black carbon, and if the tracing is done carefully this will usually work out or can be laundered out... I always work from the right side, so my design is always put on the right side. It seems that the stitches are even when worked that way.

"My quilts are laid out on the floor. I have sandbags or old electric irons for weights. The underside is put down first, wrong side up, and smoothed very carefully, then the cotton interlining and lastly the top. When these are satisfactorily arranged I press them lightly with a warm iron. This will make the three layers adhere to each other a little better. I take off my shoes and sit in the middle of the quilt, then baste from the center to the four sides, then across the quarters to make sixteen squares. Sometimes if I feel real ambitious, I baste diagonally from the half mark of each side to the one adjoining. Then I baste all around the edge. Sometimes when the quilting is very intricate, I use a few pins as I am quilting, to hold it a little more securely as I go along.

"To quilt I use a good glazed thread about 32 inches long, run the thread an inch or so between the materials and take a back stitch for the first one on the wrong side and bring the needle up through to the right side. I pierce the material four times with the needle for one operation, in other words, take two running stitches. The underside must be eased along and not smoothed as the tendency is to do, and I have found that I do not have many more wrinkles on the wrong side than most quilters do using

a frame. With this method I have been able to make 28 stitches to the inch."

Pine elaborated on the tools and materials in her article "Heirlooms for Tomorrow", My first quilts were made on muslin

.For the colored part I used percales, which seemed the most reliable as to colorfastness. Then too, percale had the advantage of being a square weave, the same thread count either way.

"As my finances got better, I used better material and now I always advise, 'The best your pocket-book affords.'

"I am just as particular about my thread. I like a hard glazed thread that is manufactured by one of the sewing machine companies. It comes in a variety of colors and numbers, but I like 70 or 80. With this I use a regular needle, 10 for quilting, 11 for appliqueing, sharps. The small eyes are harder to thread, but also harder to unthread. The thread for appliqueing is about 22 inches long and for quilting about 34 inches." Mrs. Eisfeller always kept an emery stone handy to sharpen her needles. She still has a large supply of needles in a box 1" x 5" x 8". She used Wilcox-Gibbs threads called "Brooks", and Milward & Sons needles from England, and a dart for pulling out threads or marking a quilting line. On her dress is a safety pin with a small piece of cardboard hanging by a string from her dress which she uses occasionally to check the width between her quilting lines. In White Magic one can see the influence of her Hawaiian quilting.

All of her quilts are signed and dated, a result of her stay on the East Coast, where she saw so many undated and unsigned quilts. The inscription is made with very narrow bias tape which she makes herself with the aid of a 37" x 1 1/2" stainless steel strip. She had the useful instrument made in a metal shop. The inscription on the Garden was appliqued directly onto the quilt.

The AMERICAN HOME article continues, "You have a choice of two cottons for the lining, the sheet with glazed finish and china cotton. The first comes in several sizes and you can choose the one that best suits you. This type of filler is easier to handle.

The china cotton comes in two sizes, has no glaze finish and is soft and fluffy. It looks and feels almost like wool and must be handled gently as it pulls apart very easily. Be the way, I learned to quilt without frames!"

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Details of the White Magic 2nd Grand Award WOMAN'S DAY NATIONAL NEEDLEWORK CONTEST. Photos by Ed Gross

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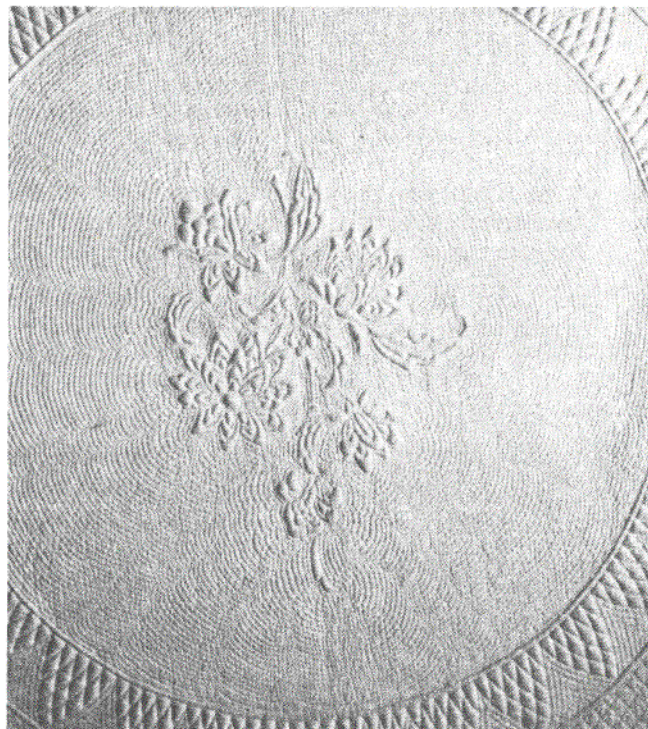
WD incorrectly reported that Pint's Tree of Life quilt was taken from "a picture of an ancient Persian bath mat". In reality it was a modified version of "a 17th century Persian quilted bath carpet now preserved in the South Kensington Museum in London" and pictured on pg 32 in Marie Webster's QUILTS: THEIR STORY AND HOW TO MAKE THEM. AMERICAN HOME referred to the same quilt as The Persian Tree.

One of the heartbreaks Pine suffered, occurred in her move from Syracuse N.Y. to Spokane, Wash. She had wanted to take all of her quilts in the car with them, but her husband persuaded her to send them. Much to her dismay, 18 of them were missing when the boxes arrived.

When her husband returned from WW II they moved to El Granada, Calif. In 1953 Robert Eisfeller moved to Spain and never returned. He died there in Nov. 1973. Pine had already moved to Oroville in Calif. the previous April to live with her beloved cat Smokey, next door to her daughter and son-in-law.

After she moved to Spokane she dropped from sight of the quilt making world. Her two-pound See's candy box full of prize ribbons has two 1st Premium Awards from the 1948 California State Fair and One First Premium Award from the 1949 California State Fair.

Her quilts are not as bright now as they were in those magazine pictures. They haven't been exhibited much but they have been used and washed many times. They are quilts well deserving of a place in a museum and more recognition from the quilt world.



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L Eisfeller

* * * * *

Donna Renshaw, one of the early quilt teachers in the present quilt boom, had given me the name of a friend of hers, who was a fantastic Hawaiian quiltermaker. I wrote her name and address in a notebook under "to be filed." Some years later, Cuesta Benberry wrote a letter to me about the winners in the WOMAN'S DAY NATIONAL NEEDLEWORK CONTEST. I put the letter down for a moment and for no apparent reason opened a notebook to a page with a name and address on it. I could hardly believe that the name matched the name of the Second Grand Prize Winner. It wasn't long before I had Pine Eisfeller on the phone and had made an appointment to see her and her quilts. They were fabulous and to see White Magic, Persian Garden, and The Garden was a joy!

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