



CARRIE ALMA HALL
by Joyce Gross

HALL, CARRIE ALMA author, lecturer, dress-maker, quilt maker, doll maker. b. Dec 9, 1866 Caledonia, Wisc. Co-author *THE ROMANCE OF THE PATCHWORK QUILT IN AMERICA* (1936) and author *FROM HOOPSKIRTS TO NUDITY* (1938) Her collection of blocks, scrapbooks, and a quilt donated to Kansas University, Lawrence Kan. d. July 8, 1955 North Platte, Neb.

Carrie A. Hall moved to North Platte, Neb. in 1941 and established her Hand Craft Shop where she made and sold character dolls. She and Emma Andres became correspondents and in 1942 Miss Andres began a scrapbook of Mrs. Hall's letters. The last letter is dated Jan 5, 1955. We are very grateful to Miss Andres for sharing these letters so that we may gain further insight into this famous quilt author.

The following are excerpts from her letters:

Sunday afternoon October 11, 1942

I had such an interesting letter from a woman in Conn. Her name is Mrs. Roger Hale Newton* from Thimble Farm Pine Orchard. I am sure she makes interesting quilts. I am going to suggest to her that she make a "Little Women" quilt - Wouldn't that be interesting? So many incidents in the lives of the four girls and especially if she used "Little Men" along with it. She has 14 women working for her.

October 25, 1942

I love the way (the Emiline Eliza doll's) dress flare out over her bustle - and in my mind I can see Mother when she wore that dress - it was one of my special favorites -I always loved fine clothes and so did mother - and she never slighted the making of them even if the material was not so fine. The workmanship was always of the finest.

*Mrs. Newton designed quilts for the *LADIES HOME JOURNAL* as Marion Cheever White-side from 1949-1961 including a Little Woman quilt in Oct. 1950

November 1, 1942

I have pieced 5 quilts in the last two weeks - three I gave to the Red Cross and two were for Evelyn (my niece). She lined one with canton flannel and tied it like a comforter and has a nice warm cover for the boy's bed. Next week she will do the other one and the girls will have one also.

So you are making patches for the Red Cross quilts and hunting the pieces for them. Just to be doing the same thing I do! Ha, Ha! Well, I have three finished and patches cut for 2 more - so that's that!



*Carrie Hall
(nee Hackett)
aged four*

November 15, 1942

My head is too thick to take in the fact that one may piece a quilt with 120,000 pieces in it - Really, I think that is too many - it makes my head swim - maybe it is the flu - but I am sure 120,000 pieces in one quilt would make it swim even if I did not have the flu. November 22, 1942

No wonder you have so many grand friends you are such a precious friend yourself. I just couldn't put a value upon all that you have been to me ever since I had the first letter from you - In fact I feel that I know you better than if I had met you in person - for we are apt to let actions speak for us at all times and when there is no such contact then it is up to us to tell our innermost thoughts to our friends and thus reveal our very soul ...Each letter tells of some other unselfish, lovely action on your part that makes me glad I know you.

You will remember that I asked you about Mrs. Peto's book *HISTORIC QUILTS* and you didn't answer my question - just evaded it - at the time I was so busy I didn't think



"'I was born with a needle in my hand', Mrs. Hall once said. At the age of nine, she completed a Starquilt." From a brochure advertising her books,

much about it, but nevertheless I still had a hankering to know about the book. So knowing Mrs. Peto was the one who helped you locate the old quilt that you bought and that she was the one who wrote the article for WOMAN'S DAY magazine I decided to write them and ask them for her address. They forwarded my letter to her and to my surprise and unfounded delight along came a letter from herself with an announcement that she was sending a book which she hoped I'd accept as a GIFT - now can you beat that? I don't know what I've done to merit such a lovely gift - for it is a lovely book - and she also stated that on Christmas '55 her husband gave her a copy of my book for a gift - and that she enjoyed it etc. - will wonders never end? Sunday January 21, 1943

Evelyn doesn't know that all my remains of patchwork and books pertaining to them are to go to the Thayer Museum* along with all I have given them.

Sunday January 24, 1943

I plan to have the dolls ready to send in about a week or ten days at the latest -that would make it possible to have the check for them not later than Feb 10 as I have a big bill to meet that day. You see how close I have to figure - as I told you before I am doing all this (making the dolls) on a shoestring - and as Evelyn and her family have so many hospital bills the past year, I don't want to ask them for even a loan. But you have been so wonderful to me and helped me in everyway - with all this I am not forgetting the loan of \$25.00 without interest - which you so kindly sent me when I was in desperate straits. I hope to have that paid back in at least six months.

Wednesday morning March 3, 1943

In Sunday's letter I forgot to tell you that the Sunday School class were thrilled

** Now known as Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence Kansas.*

with the picture of the Ninety and Nine* quilt - so you see that one never knows where the little pebble thrown into the pond will make ripples - I think I have that wrong end to. One never knows where the ripples will reach made by the little pebbles thrown into the pond - and as long as they are ripples of Joy & Happiness let them ripple away as far and as fast as they can.

Next Saturday

As for eating licorice Nigger babies -you must like licorice better than I do else they would be no temptation - but if they were gum-drops - Ah me - I'd have a feast for sure.

Saturday March 13, 1943

My dear Eniffa Leonardo** - Master Magician and 11teenth wonder of the world -

Yes life does move along and the years are added to our short life so rapidly that the children grow up and marry or else go to war as this generation is having to do - and we older ones are left sitting on the fence, as it were - but just because we are 76 years young, we, myself and the little lady that makes vestments for the poor parish priests - can add a bit of joy and happiness to others.

Sunday March 21, 1943

I am so sorry that even a dime store doesn't have any candy - and my sweet tooth is as hollow as any old hag's - just can't fill it up with anything else - even the cookies we get nowadays are not sweet.

Sunday, March 28, 1943

My dear Emma Leonardo - 19th wonder of the world - How is the world doing today?

I was so interested in the letter from Mrs. Stenge - If you will be so kind as to send me her address I'll write her and send her a leaflet about my books - not that I expect to sell her one but just as a gesture of friendship from one quilt fan to another - I did think her quilt was lovely - and the quilting looked as if it were beautifully done - I am so glad she got such a thrill out of your letter and also to have you tell me how she expressed herself in reply - and I can assure her that you do write MOST interesting letters - it is quite a thrill to get one of them.

** The Ninety and Nine was made by Charles Pratt. See story on page 5.*

*** Mrs. Hall had many names for Miss Andres. This one undoubtedly made reference to Miss Andres artistic abilities.*

Monday evening April 19, 1943

My dear Emma Leonardo - Do you know I had to buy myself a new thimble today -this old one was so full of holes that I kept poking the needle into my finger -so in the next box you will get the thimble and also I happen to have an odd right arm - (for a doll).

Easter Sunday afternoon April 25, 1943

Did I tell you I had an answer from Mrs. Stenge? and she has a copy of my book -has had it for some-time and swears by it -or so she said - now isn't that (something) - also she has a doll that needs renovat-ing and I asked her to send it along to have an esti-mate of the expense of fixing her for a parlour orna-ment - now isn't that nice? You know, when I think about the past two years - it won't be two years till July since I began making dolls and you began buying and then selling them.

Sunday afternoon May 2, 1943

...I had another letter from Mrs. Stenge but she thought she would leave the repair of the doll till later - she is very busy with her Victory Garden - Me I'm not interested in a victory garden - in the first place I never did like to dig in the dirt -I love to work and I really mean that - but I like nice clean work - like making lovely dresses etc. for anyone who can wear them -big, little, or medium size - but preferably DOLLS.

...I have to order beads for the dolls by the dozens and sell them one at a time and that keeps me won-dering just how I am going to meet the next install-ment - But after all that is what gives zest to life - the everlasting struggle to keep ahead of the sheriff - Ha! Ha!

Monday evening August 2, 1943

My dear: You are a real sport - rather than steam open the one letter you will recklessly spend another stamp - just to help out Old Uncle Sam - so that is being a real sport - and two letters in one day is al-most too much - as it is one of those HOT ones - the day I mean - not the letter?

Thursday evening September 16, 1943

My dear - Do you know what I did this afternoon? Well, I played "hookey" and went to the church meeting and now I am just passing the time until a friend comes to take me for a trip out south of the city to an eminence - That's a good word isn't it??? In other words to a HILL - and I never saw such a flat town - for blocks in every direction one can look down any street and see for miles - well for blocks and blocks - I said I didn't believe there

was a HILL anywhere around so this friend is going to SHOW ME - so that's that.

Sunday afternoon September 19, 1943

...You bet I am a republican - one of the Teddy Roo-sevelt variety - that means "Speak softly but carry a big stick."

Monday November 1st

I am perfectly well as far as any disease is con-cerned. I can't work 16 hours a day and then feel as chipper as a youngster. I wonder why???

December 9, 1943

"I am 77 years young today".

Sunday morning January 2, 1944, Happy New Year to you.

Dear Emma Leonardo - I was writing letters yester-day... On Christmas Day I wrote 14 letters and then on Sunday I wrote enough to make 20 letters and 10 postcards and yesterday, New Year's Day I wrote 10 letters and two postcards and today I am doing the rest of them.

Sunday afternoon January 16, 1944 4 pm Dear Polly Anna Waddles - Isn't life funny? That is a form of ad-dress we used to use to each other when I was a girl - now please don't insult me by saying "How can you remember so far back? - and the strangest part of it is that as I slipped the paper in the typewriter I wished I had a new name for you as I was sort-of-fed-up on all the old ones and I wanted to be CUTE - and that just popped into my mind - I know I hadn't thought of it for years and years - I haven't the slightest idea how

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it ever originated or why - only I do remember we used it as an affectionate address to those we liked - so it is perfectly all right to address you - Ha Ha!

Friday December 29, 1944

Dear Leonardo - Just finished the last package and after a bit of rest thought I'd write you a line as it may be several days before I have an other opportunity - am sending the typewriter to the shop tomorrow to be overhauled and cleaned - you see the NEW SHOP is going to be so spruce that everything must be in keeping - Ha! Ha! Even I myself will have to have a bath and a shampoo.

Sunday January 14, 1945

My dear Leonardo; Thanks a million for the funny postcards. They helped when I was so tired I didn't know straight up - or even sideways. Well the moving almost got me -and I said the next move is up to the sheriff and the undertaker - Altho I really think I'm going to like my new home immensely when I get adjusted to all the different places I have hidden things away. Some of the boxes I have not even unpacked as yet - and one picture and one of my dresses and I have so few - seem to be playing hide and seek with each other and doing it so well I can't find them - oh well what is a dress more or less?

Sunday December 9, 1945

. . . Well in spite of a serious illness and two moves this past year of 1945 I have had a grand year - and have in mind a plan to increase the business here next year and get it in shape so that I can turn the Playtime dolls over to a supervisor and helpers and that will leave me free to create new dolls and make the character dolls.

New Years Evening January 1, 1949

Dear Emma Jane: Your letter of recent date came in due time and the various Christmas greetings were all appreciated - you surely are the wishinest gal I ever knew.

We have a Penny store and a Montgomery Store and a Woolworth dime store and then this past summer the Sears-Roebuck firm decided on a grand big building and it will be ready for occupancy early in the spring. As it was under cover and could be heated they had a midnight mass in it (ed. note: 1800 persons gathered). My love as ever and always Patty.

Saturday January 8, 1949

Dear Emma Jane: The landlord is a Democrat and as you know I have a little doll representing FOR & Eleanor - everytime he comes

in he always looks at them special (they were K import dolls) also I am a red-hot Republican - so you see the dolls didn't mean much to me - so I gave them to the landlord for a New Year's gift - he was delighted and sent me another plan - Ha Ha

In regard to your friend Mrs. Stenge -if she is too far gone on her vacation to attend to the doll before she goes this time, perhaps when she comes back she can send it - by that time I'll have these completed and the New Head-maker will be going strong - I really think it is going to work out fine - but I'm not going to trust them - but let them take time to get the right hang of it and all so that they will really be better than Julia Vees. I know that is not a nice thing to say - but she was so nasty to me that I feel sure we should be able to outdo her work - even if she was so sure I couldn't get along without her. She also thought her heads were the crowning masterpiece of the dolls - oh well what difference does it make what she thinks. The old saying is "Clothes make the man" and so I have a legitimate reason for thinking my part of the dolls was the most important - and I do not want to think of the unpleasant side of the former business arrangement - it is over and done with and that's that - and a rather big THAT at that. Love Patty

Saturday January 23, 1949

Dear Emma Jane: As you can see I am doing my Sunday letters today and there are some 19 or 20 letters to write - need a secretary, a general manager as well as a HEAD MAKER and a bookkeeper and a mail man -that to mail the packages -

Sunday February 27, 1949

My dear Humpty-Dumpty Emma Jane - Well I hope this letter will not be too much like the one that fell so FLAT - poor letter, it couldn't help carrying the message of my weary soul as that was all I had to give it that day - and I too, get drained to the dregs sometimes - My love as always Patty

Sunday March 13, 1949

My dear Emma Jane: So you like your new name, Ha??? Well I thought it was time to make a change as we had about worn out all the other ones -

Must say bye now and go on to the other letters else I'll be late to Sunday School - You see I go out past the post office and I mail the letters that are ready on my way - others that are not too important can wait till the postman comes Monday morning and then he takes them along

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with him. Really they are just grand to me - even if I am in the farthest room they bring the mail right in to me - even if I am at the sewing machine or press tables. I think it is because I have never given up the wheel chair. Of course I can walk around the room but it is so much more comfortable to sit in the wheel chair -if I just want to move a few feet I just roll it over and don't have to get up and then sit down again - really I am getting spoiled and I don't mean MAYBE! Patty

Sunday April 11, 1949

My dear Emma Jane, Two letters and SAGGY BAGGY ELEPHANT (a children's Golden Book published at that time) arrived this week. Well to begin with the CUTE little elephant. I loved him and I also loved the finale! You leading the parade. That is what I expect of you - no matter how hard the going I expect you to surmount all difficulties and lead the final parade. Ha! Who cares about the UPS and DOWNS - we all have them the only thing is to see that the DOWNS do not get us DOWN for good - see???

So you don't like onions - well I love them - smell and all. Mr. Hall used to make the finest fried steak with onions that ever was - and I love it. To be sure, garlic is something else again - Ha!

Last week at BPW Club they sang a song about Carrie Halls dolls - do you know the song I'd Like to Buy a Paper Doll that I Can Call My Own"? Well that was the tune they sang it to and these are the words -

"I'd like to have a famous dolly made
by Carrie Hall

A dolly with historical appeal
And then where I would go, I'd let
everyone know

My dolly represented someone real
Wher'er I'd live I'd always have my
dolly

As famous as the snows of '49
I'd like to have a dolly made by Carrie
Hall

The little lady who made North Platte
shine.

Sunday May 29, 1949

Thank you for your kind offer to send me your copy of Mrs. Peto's book. I truly do not want to own one as I have passed up the quilt stage several times and also now have decided to dispose of my treasures one by one. I will give them to my choicest friends so that when Evelyn (my niece) has to clear this place out after I am gone, it will not be too hard for her to decide what to do with this and that -

Saturday July 31, 1949

Dear Emma Jane da Vinci - Would you believe it - I have a quilt to piece - next month -for a very special friend - it is a Delectable Mountains and is really quite lovely -with a double border one of the three strips called "Ribbon Border" and then the saw tooth border outside that - the main part of the blocks are of a print and the ribbon border is three shades of the print.

Sunday August 7

Yes, I am going to piece a quilt - but you know I piece mine on the machine so it isn't so hard and I can do a lot in a day -but I have several dolls to finish before I get to it.

Saturday eve August 20

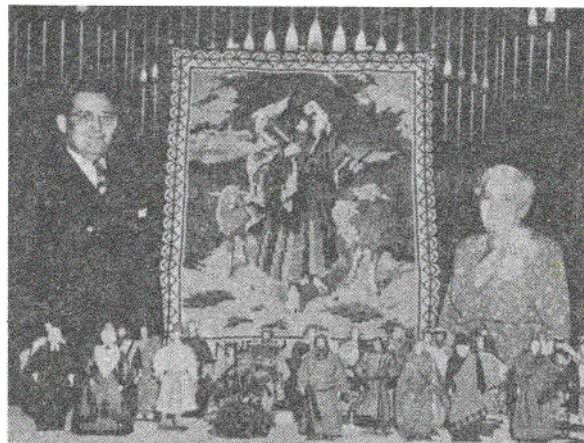
So there was a Carrie Hall in North Platte way back in 1926 - well maybe there was - but of this I am sure - it wasn't ME

Sunday September 11

So we are both "Quilted minded" again. I think the quilting will be a decided improvement to the Ninety and Nine - as many people who saw it here asked about the quilting - of course I couldn't say one way or another.

Sunday October 16

Dear Emma Jane - But I have bad news to tell - got a nasty spell of rheumatism in, my legs and can't walk - just hobble and a few steps with a cane and then have recourse to the wheel chair - Am having infra-red treatments for it and taking tablets every four hours but to date am no better. The worst of it is that I am so nervous that I can't sew - so what shall I do with myself? Oh well, maybe by next week I will OK.



Carrie Hall at a banquet given in her honor in 1949. The Ninety & Nine made by Emma Andres, hangs behind her. Some of her famous dolls are on the table.

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Sunday October 23rd

My dear Emma Jane - Well to begin with I feel a wee bit better. Ain't life FUN -especially life with dolls. They are such patient little brats, no crying, no tummy aches, no fuss at all - and they never seem to get themselves in a MESS - it is always their little owners that create the mess - if any -

Sunday October 30, My dear Emma Jane -Yes, I know all about insurance adjusters -remember our house burned in 1938 - and I will never forget the Victrola - I was the 2nd person in Leavenworth who had a Victrola way back when they first came out -and I had accumulated a grand album of red seal records - the total investment was in the neighborhood of \$500 - the adjuster allowed us \$50 for the entire lot - So that is that! - it took all the insurance company allowed plus another \$500 to make the house in condition to be lived in -so that's another that - but at that time it seemed a terrible BIG THAT!

Saturday morning November 5

Dear Emma Jane - This will be a surprise for sure - as this is your "regular" Sunday letter being written today.

Saw Mrs. Snyder - since I can't get out much I miss seeing the few friends I have here in North Platte - but they come in and see me every once in a while.

. . .we all have our insurance outs - and have to adjust ourselves to circumstances. Be a good girl and I will love you just the same. Patty

Saturday November 12

Dear Emma Jane - Please excuse this letter if it seems out-of-joint - we had a terrible accident this morning - Evelyn's husband and daughter were in a train-auto accident and both are in the hospital and we do not yet know if they will recover.

Saturday eve November 19

Dear Emma Jane - This is the regular Sunday letter being written on Saturday night -so the news from the hospital is better -the two patients are both OK. That is they will both recover.

I think you will be interested to know that I am feeling much better for the past few days - I went down town all by myself today - the first time for more than a month.

The letters continued although they became briefer. Most of them were typewritten although there was an occasional one written by hand.

August 15, 1954

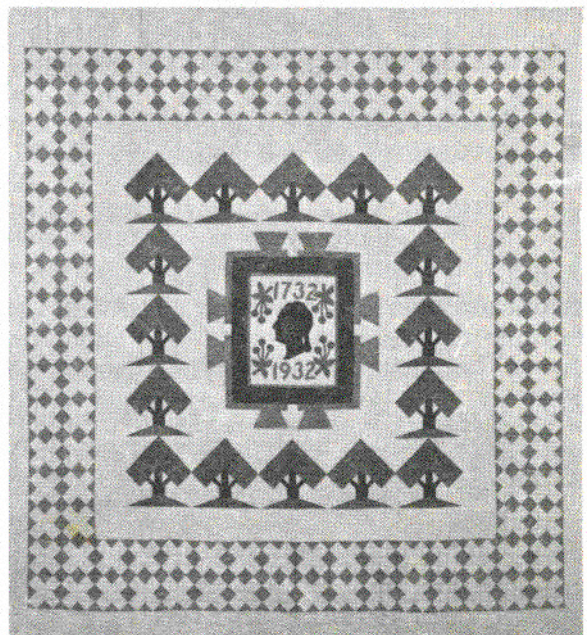
Dear Emma Jane "Ann" - Your letter came yesterday - and I'll send a few lines in reply - Truly I don't know how much longer I can see to work or write so if some week fails to be on top you will know that I have given up trying to write - The prolonged heat and old age and its ailments have just about gotten the best of me.

January 5, 1955

Dear Emma Jane - Your letters have been so "cheery" and easy to read that I have gotten a lot of pleasure out of them. Did I tell you that Evelyn's oldest boy and his wife have added another boy to their family -so last week I pieced another 9 Patch for their bed - Lots of love and Best Wishes for the New Year from Patty.

This was the last letter and was written in very shakey handwriting.

Mrs. Hall passed away on July 8, 1955 in North Platte, Nebraska.



The George Washington Bicentennial made by Carrie Hall is in the Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, KS. On a label basted to the back of the quilt is a note "Made by Carrie (Mrs. A. Hall, Maplehurst, Leavenworth, Kansas. For sale, price \$50.00