

BERTHA MECKSTROTH *cont from pg 4*

Miss Meckstroth did all her own designing and appliqueing but MMM discovered a secret that most of her family and friends did not know. She sent her work to the South to be quilted.

In an article entitled "Meckstroth Exhibit Highlights Program at Century of Progress," dated Nov 9, 1933, Bertha's friend Jean Ten Broeck wrote in the Lloyd Hollister papers about the event, "An artist there is in Glencoe, the beauty of whose works elicits exclamations of admiration and amazement whenever it is exhibited. She is Bertha Amelia Meckstroth, and her exhibit of 'Sculpture and Painting in Cotton, Linen, and Silk' was displayed by request for the second time Saturday, Oct 28 (1933) in the Illinois Host House at a Century of Progress Exposition. 'Never will you ever see such an exhibition,' Mrs. Albio Headburg, Chairman of the Illinois Art Committee for the Fair proclaimed when she introduced Miss Meckstroth as 'This most unusual woman'. With that opinion we are in complete accord. From the comments we heard all during the afternoon, many others concurred.

"Writing in fabric is her creation we are told by one who has known the artist many years, and declares her to be 'the only person known who writes in cloth'. The verses, the phrases, the names on her beautiful pieces are written in inverted applique, a type of needlework which with quilting she uses almost exclusively.

"Achievement so exquisite as hers only comes from the heart and hands of a real artist in whom the creative urge for expression of originality, imagination, sensitiveness and instinct for the finest in color and design. All these gifts are hers. Combined with these qualities are intellect and a cultural background, a knowledge of art, of languages, of literature, the classics. Such are the sources from which

she creates with deft fingers, her works of beauty.

Her fellow alumnae were on hand to help her with the show and MMM wrote, "I never saw her happier or prouder as she bustled about everywhere telling of her ancestors, her childhood and the background of her work."

She enjoyed exhibiting her quilts. Sometimes groups such as the Woman's Club of Evanston or the Radcliffe Club asked her to exhibit. According to MMM twice she "hired the ballroom of the Orrington Hotel and got members of her family and friends to help string clothesline, and the Cloth Sculptures hung like banners in a mideaval hall.

"Other times it was an outdoor party in her own backyard. They would have to be hung the day before, which was taking a terrible chance on the vagaries of the weather, but she wasn't the least concerned as she seemed to have a connection with the Proper Authority."

MMM became an alumna trustee of Radcliffe in 1953 and she now had a new interest in Bertha Meckstroth. "As I have suggested she was a mixed blessing. Her favorite time to telephone was Saturday morning about 11 am. Our telephone then was in a back hallway and it was like State and Madison Streets without any traffic control. There were not only four of our own children, but at least one friend apiece rushing madly back and forth demanding 'grub' and 'rides' and permissions. She had called this day to complain about the color of ink used on a Radcliffe Club invitation. 'Mrs. Magie, dear, since when has Radcliffe had to use a Communist color on an announcement?'

"'But,' I reminded her, 'Miss Meckstroth, don't you remember 'Radcliffe's color is a cherry red and I'll wear a cherry ribbon 'till I'm dead, dead, dead?'"

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ALBUM QUILT - *see pg 14*

On May 12, 1931 during the term of Governor Wm H Murray, his wife organized a "quilting bee" at the Governor's Mansion.

Each state senator selected a resident of his district to make a quilt block and sign it with her name and age. The youngest was 65 years old.

Mrs. George Nigh, wife of the present governor has again assembled women from across Oklahoma, to make a new quilt in celebration of the 75th Diamond Jubilee of Oklahoma Statehood.

CATALOG

Quilts from the exhibit of the Oklahoma Historical Society entitled "A Century of Quilts" are shown in 27 color plates of full quilts and some details.

It is a varied collection dating from 1840 to WW II with silk crazy quilts, utilitarian quilts and some beautiful, finely quilted "best quilts" Most of the quilts have provenance although the descriptions are very short.

Oklahoma Historical Society, Historical Bldg, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105.