

THREE GENERATIONS OF QUILTS

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by Florence Peto

Examination of Patchwork quilts made through successive generations will reveal interesting cycles of taste in composition and design. From the earliest days of patchwork, through the years when needlework was practiced by every female member of the household, to the time when the sewing machine appeared, the influence of expediency is increasingly apparent. Convenience in handling and availability of manufactured cloth were factors in this evolution. Thus designs on quilts show a relationship to the eras in which they were made. The three quilts here reproduced may serve to illustrate the point.

The Ann Heck spread (Fig. 1) is a fine example of late-eighteenth-century patchwork. From a central medallion the pattern is built out in a series of five borders of varying widths; these alternate piecework with applique. Though simplicity and restraint prevail the finished work has an air of elegance. Except for the vases and flower bouquets cut from highly glazed English chintz, the material is homespun, homedyed linen, ivory white for the background with a peculiar yellow-gold flecked with black predominating in the inner borders. The outer border displays rose tones, as do the flowers of the Chinese patterned chintz. Pleasing blue is seen in the vases. The excellent quilting, in homespun thread, treats each border as a unit; "princess feather" in graceful curves surrounds the central vase, while "lover's knot", "clam shell", "loop", and close horizontal lines enrich the succeeding borders. The dimensions are very large, the width greater than the length; the binding is hand loomed braid.

Paul and Barbara Heck came to New York from Ireland on the ship Perry in 1760. Barbara (1734-1804) helped Philip Embury to organize the first Methodist Society in this country; for her zeal she was called the

Fig. 1 - APPLIQUED QUILT (late eighteenth century). Made by Ann Heck of homespun linen decorated with English chintz. Large enough to cover a pair of twin beds. From the Newark Museum.

mother of Methodism in America. When the Revolution came, the Hecks, who were Loyalists, went to Canada, where they were again founders of Methodism, in the province of Ontario. In spite of the tireless devotion to a cause, Barbara found time to instruct her daughter Ann in the domestic arts. This quilt, product of Ann's handiwork, was owned by the Brookfields, an old New Jersey family who lived in Newark for over a hundred years. It is now the bequest of Mrs August Baker Brookfield to the Newark Museum in memory of her husband.

Soon after this quilt was made, the favorite way of constructing a patch quilt came to be in unit blocks, a method more convenient for handling, as most of the work may be done before the final joining together with latticework, strips or alternate white blocks, or square to square for an all-over, kaleidoscopic effect. Many an otherwise undistinguished pattern achieved interest by originality of "set", while many another, pleasant enough in its own right, lost significance with a cluttered setting. The Ship's Wheel (Fig 2) was and still is a popular pieced pattern. The red, green and white diamond-shaped patches of the eight-pointed star, set together point

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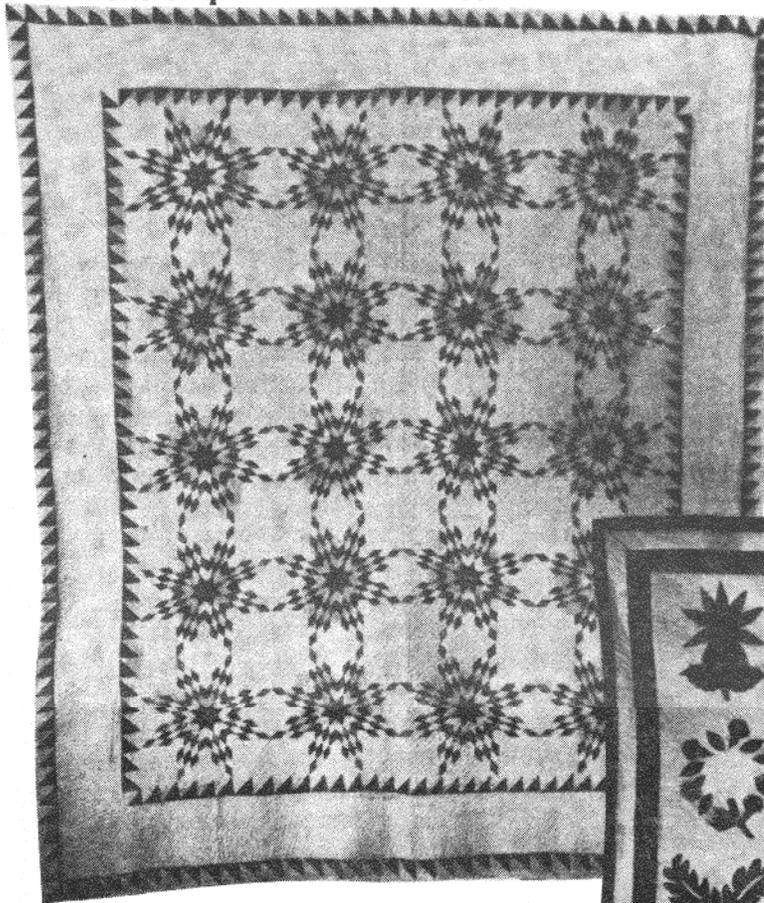


Fig. 2 (above) QUILT IN "SHIP'S WHEEL" PATTERN. In red, green, and white, with *sawtooth* patch border. Made by Harriot and Charlotte Fleming, nieces of Francis Scott Key, shortly after September 1814. *From the collection of Mrs. Edna M. Seybolt.*

Fig. 3 (right) --PATCHWORK QUILT MADE IN BLOCKS. Made during the Civil War in the family of Barbara Hundloser of Maryland. *From the author's collection.*



the "ship's wheel" to her niece, Alice Stover, who in turn gave it to her niece, Edna Stover Seybolt, in 1908. It is now owned and shown by courtesy of Mrs. Edna M. Seybolt, great granddaughter of Joseph Fleming.

Figure 3, though made in blocks, is diverse in pattern, informal and gay. It resembles the album quilts of the 1840's though it bears no signatures. Made during the Civil War in the family of Barbara Hundloser of Maryland, it is a quilt typical of later work, reflecting the imagination and individuality of the maker and a perhaps unconscious humor. It must have been fun to make. Colors are red, dark green,

point to point, have a clean-cut, cool look. To this quilt the "sawtooth" patch borders add smartness and simple sparkling beauty. Did the name of the pattern have special meaning to the quiltmaker? Here is the story:

Joseph Fleming and Francis Scott Key were first cousins; their families were intimate and occupied adjoining plantations in Maryland. Joseph had two daughters, Harriot and Charlotte. It is not clear which of them made the quilt - probably both worked on it. It was made shortly after their father's cousin Francis had his exciting experience as a prisoner aboard a British ship on the night of September 13 14, 1814. Francis became a hero to his young cousins and it is not difficult to believe that a ship's wheel meant something more to them, as their needles flew, than a quilt pattern. Charlotte presently married James Stover who became Sergeant at Arms in the Ohio Senate, 1866-1867. In 1884 Harriot Fleming gave

orange, blue, yellow and rose tones; borders are of red and white strips. Birds of red-dotted yellow calico placed at intersections of the unit blocks vary the "set" of this quilt. The square above the prancing red horse shows a green tree bearing many red apples while a brown serpent twines about the base. In the block below the horse is a sheaf of wheat neatly tied with a bow. And do not miss the birds encircling a nest with three eggs defying gravity above it. This merry quilt was sold once during the war to raise money for Confederate soldiers. It now bears a blue-ribbon award taken at the Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society in Timonium, September 1939.