



Photo: Utah
State Historical
Society Museum
Services

EMMA BULL CRAZY QUILT

by Joyce Gross

in 1972 I wrote asking the Utah State Historical Society if they had a quilt collection. They replied, "We don't have a collection of quilts; there is only one, but it is a bell-ringer." They enclosed a tribute to Emma Bull written at the time of her death which included a description of the quilt she had made. It did, indeed, sound like a bell-ringer.'

In 1981 Sally Garoutte who was going to Salt Lake City volunteered to do some detective work on the "bee-ringer." She saw the quilt and arranged for them to send us a photo for publication and found some additional material.

We are grateful to Ms Garoutte and John M Bourne, Coordinator of Museum Services of the Utah State Historical Society Museum for their assistance.

The 1895 Tribute to Emma Bull included an article from the Salt Lake HERALD, Dec 25, 1892. "Mrs. Joseph Bull, of the Seventeenth Ward, has almost completed one of the most unique and elaborate quilts of its class ever produced by human ingenuity, patience, and skill. The reader should not abruptly turn away from this statement because it applied

to an article which is usually commonplace in the household. The most ordinary object can, by the application of fine materials, used with taste and ability, be sometimes made a 'thing of beauty' and therefore 'a joy forever'. Such is the case in the present instance. The objects upon this production of Mrs. Bull's are largely either symbolical or are representations of local landmarks, or flowers or birds indigenous to this section of the country. Among the conspicuous representations are the following: "The centre-piece consists of a straw Beehive resting upon an old wooden stand, on which appears the word "Utah;" bees are on the wing, and the whole is embowered in flowers. Underneath this is the old Eagle Gate, with the figures "1859". Over the Beehive is the Salt Lake Temple as it now appears. The building is on a delicate pink ground and surrounded by a frame, as a picture: over this is the Flag of our Nation, with thirteen stars upon it, representing the original states; surrounding it are stars in sufficient number to make up fortyfour and a space in which to insert Utah when she shall be admitted into the political sisterhood.

Emma Bull *cont from pg 10*

"The upper right hand corner consists of a Fan, each of the twenty-one splints being different in color from any of the others; the upper left hand corner is a Spider and Web, the lower left corner a 'Union Jack' -the commercial flag of Great Britain.

"On one side is one of the first log cabins built in Utah and above it the inscription, 'Home, 1847'. On the other side is the Pioneer Printing Press of Utah, also marked with figures '1847'. Near this is a Harp over the inscription and music, "Home, Home, Sweet, Sweet Home."

"Opposite the last named object is an Anchor and below this the 'Dipper,' or Seven Stars; on the other side are the Square and Compass, while near the lower edge are the letters 'E.G.B.' the initials of the lady whose nimble fingers worked this fine specimen of womanskill, and the year, '1893'. Over this is Mrs. Bull's Family Crest - a Stag with a rose in its mouth. Near this is a Segó Lily.

"There are also, in addition to what has been enumerated forty-one other embroidered pieces, among which are native Utah Birds, a Shell, Stars, Flowers, the Horn of Plenty, an Indian Tomahawk.

"The materials used upon this splendid specimen of handiwork are exclusively the best of silks - thread and fabric. The shades range all the way from the most subdued tones to the most brilliant

colors, and their arrangement, in order to preserve the features of harmonious blending and appropriate contrast, is very remarkable. The needlework is done with delightful precision; while the entire combination exhibits fertility of invention and prolific ideality

"We understand that Mrs. Bull intends placing this creditable artistic production in the World's Fair. It is to be hoped that she will also place it on exhibition here, that all who wish to do so may have the opportunity of inspecting it. Those who do so will not deem this description of it colored in the least degree beyond its merits."

Further information about Mrs. Bull was obtained from Tullidge's HISTORY OF SALT LAKE CITY in the Biographical Supplement. Emma Green was formerly of Birmingham and was the only member of the family to join the LSD church. She married Joseph Bull on October 28, 1954. In 1855 he was appointed on a mission to California and he was given permission to take his wife. However she did not accompany him.

His first born son was born after he left and he did not see the child until he returned in Jan 1958. Mr. Bull made many further trips to both coasts as well as England on newspaper business.

Emma Bull was a member of the early dramatics group as well a professional dressmaker.

OKLAHOMA QUILT *cont from pg 8*

Following lunch, we started joining the rows together, made bias: and prepared borders. At the end of the day, the rows were joined in groups of two and the participants felt secure enough about the process to proceed on their own another day. Most of the women were not familiar with the block method before working on this quilt. Several were excited by the possibility of making a quilt for themselves this way. There was discussion that some of the blocks needed more quilting, an opinion I agreed with, but I saw the finished quilt when I judged the Oklahoma State Fair in Sept. and no additional quilting had been done.

The plan is to donate the quilt to the State Historical Museum after exhibiting it at Diamond Jubilee events. A comparison between the two quilts, made fifty years apart, is interesting. The new quilt has more blocks that relate to the State of Oklahoma

and with the large center block, seems more focused on the state. Some of the individual blocks in the new quilt are exceptional, but the overall quality does not compare with the 1931 quilt. This may not be due to a difference in skill as much as to the organization of the project. In retrospect, most of the problems would have been prevented if the people working on the blocks had been able to get together before starting their work. Many of those who made the actual blocks got their instructions second and third hand and some clearly did not understand that the blocks were to relate to the county and were to be hand quilted. In the final analysis, the quilt may be more symbolic of the State of Oklahoma than an example of the state of quilting in Oklahoma - a mixture of the magnificent and mediocre, held together by the threads of a common background.