

AMERICAN QUILT STUDY GROUP

by Jane Cook

*Jane Cook has been quilting for 15 years and calls herself "an amateur quiltmaker with a strong intellectual interest in quilters and the lives they lead." In her "spare time" she manages a french market place La Ville Du Soleil (a french market place). She is a charter member of the American Quilt Study Group.**

The American Quilt Study Group met on Nov 5-7 at Dominican College in San Rafael, Calif. 69 women were present to hear the 10 papers presented.

President Sandy Metzler-Smith opened the Friday evening meeting with a clever slide show pointing out the various dangers to quilts from their environment and improper handling, in an effort to protect the many beautiful antique and contemporary quilts brought by the attendees. The Show-and-Tell that followed was a wonderful display of superb and unusual quilts, many of which were of museum quality.

Six diverse papers were presented on Saturday. Mary Antoine de Julio spoke about a most outstanding needle worker, Betsy Reynolds Voorhees. A collection of her many needlework talents, journals, poems and correspondence is found at the Montgomery County Historical Society in Fort Johnson, New York. This collection is an excellent example of the various kinds of needlework women did between 1820 and 1855, especially because she signed and dated over two-thirds of her work. This remarkable woman produced so many items and all of such high quality that she would be considered a superwoman by anyone's standards. She herself considered needlework to be an art and expressed this back in the 1840s.

A paper on the American Red Cross and its efforts to raise money around WWI through quiltmaking was presented by Nancy Rowley. She researched the communities involved and the organizers of three Red Cross quilts found at the Latah Historical Society in Moscow, Idaho.

Margaret Malanyn profiled 15 early Dearborn quilts ranging from 1830 to 1910, found in the collection of the Historical Museum in Dearborn, Michigan. She interviewed the donors or descendents of these quilts, learning a great deal about the Dearborn area and the important social events of the day.

"Cuna Molas: The Geometry of Background Fill" was presented by Bertha Brown, who has studied and collected molas since the 1950s. She described all of the various types of background fill with fine examples for all to see. In 1971, Mary Cross was invited to see the quilts of American painter Grant Wood's family. She detailed these quilts and their histories, as well as presenting an overview of quilts as depicted in two of Grant Wood's paintings and his particular vision of the rural Midwestern environment and man's relationship to it.

Sally Garoutte presented a fine paper entitled "Marseilles Quilts and Their Woven Offspring." Her well-researched presentation covered the origin of the Marseille quilt in the 17th century, its export to the U.S., and its influence upon the textile industry in England. Advances in technology allowed the industry to imitate on the loom the beautiful effects created by hand in the Provence region of France.

Saturday night was highlighted with a slide sharing and social hour.

On Sunday, four papers were presented, followed by a group discussion of the future of AQSG. Tandy Hersh gave a fascinating talk on the evolution of the design elements found in a quilt from 1809, made in the Cumberland Valley of Pennsylvania by a Scottish woman. She made an important point about not underestimating the value of old, disintegrating quilts for their historical connections and research value.

Pat Nichols presented "String Quilts on Foundation of Cloth or Paper." The wide variety of quilts made by this technique was fascinating to see. Ellen Eames told about "Ten Related Quilts of Mecklenberg County, North Carolina." These Broderie Perse quilts were rich with floral chintz appliques and panels, made by women whose lives were all interrelated.

The final speaker was Barbara Brackman, who presented the history and content of the Hall-Szabronski collection of quilts and quilt-related items at the University of Kansas. The three women responsible for this collection were fine models for us all to follow in their thoroughness and dedication.

** The AQSG was founded by Sally Garoutte in Nov '80 when a group of 50 met to hear research papers presented by 10 quilt historians. For info send legal size SASE to 105 Molino, mill valley CA 94941. (please do not send to the JOURNAL.)*