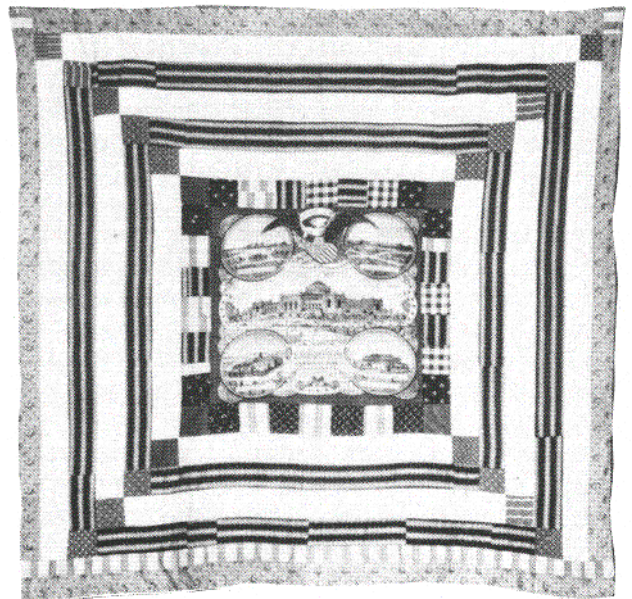
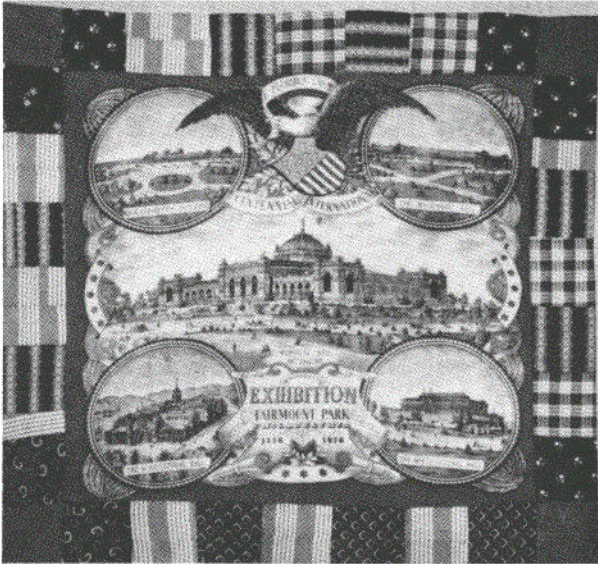


(a) Top, Photo taken by Lester Geiger, Made in America, N Y (b) Middle, From the collection of Shelburne Museum, Inc. (c) Lower left, collection of the Newark Museum. (d) Lower right, From the Gross collection.





CENTENNIAL QUILTS

by MarySue Hannan

MarySue Hannon is a familiar contributor to JOURNAL readers. You will want to read her article on "Edith Gregor Halpert" in issue #20.

As my interest in quilts has developed, I have found that those quilts embodying a printed scarf or bandana are of special interest. In March 1983, it was my privilege to see three such quilts. They are not particularly beautiful or artistic, but the ingenuity of the maker to use her souvenir of the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876, which some say was the most spectacular exposition ever held in the United States, has a folk art quality and originality that lifts these utilitarian quilts from the banal to the collector's circle. In May 1876, Philadelphia hosted a Centennial celebration which attracted millions of visitors to celebrate the first hundred years of our country. They came from the cities and the farming communities across this land and they came from Europe. Some of the first manufactured goods produced in our country were on display as well as some of the early time-saving devices invented so it was no wonder that the business men of the time realized the potential of the tourist dollar and were prepared with a large supply of souvenirs. To the textile lover or quilt historian, probably the most interesting souvenirs are the scarves* or squares of fabrics imprinted

*Eight of these scarves or commemorative handkerchiefs are pictured in Herbert R Collins *THREADS OF HISTORY*, Smithsonian Institution, 1979.

in a variety of colors with motifs such as the five buildings of the exposition under a large eagle, the main building, "1776", "1776-1876", "Philadelphia", or "The Philadelphia Exposition". These came two to a width of fabric and were sold either individually or in a long strip and were printed in the United States, England, France and Germany, in at least five designs and as many color combinations. They were worn, used as table runners, made into pillow tops, and yes, made into quilts.

Florence Peto acquired such a quilt in the Philadelphia area which she describes* as follows:

Cotton cloth of American manufacture displayed flags, stars, eagles, liberty bells, liberty caps, "bombing bursting in air," vignettes of Washington and shields with two significant dates 1776-1876. There were even striped patterns incorporating lines from Longfellow's poem: "Though, too, sail on, O Ship of State, Sail on, O Union, strong and great!" There was one stripe which employed the names of the thirteen colonies. All these commemorative prints appear in the quilt which is centered by a kerchief printed in black on white of Memorial Hall, the building which housed the fine arts of the exposition...

Sad to say, the maker is unknown but the quilt has been well cared for through the years and is now owned by Newark Museum.

Recently at an antique show in a local church, I was surprised to find a tied comforter made from two strips of uncut scarves. The quilt measured over 90 inches square and had twenty blocks, each depicting all five buildings, the eagle, the date the date and the place. The strips were two squares wide and five squares long, sewn in the center, laid over a thick wool batt backed with a grey calico and tied every few inches with a fairly new, bright mer-

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AMERICAN QUILTS & COVERLETS by Florence Peto, Chanticleer Press, N Y 1949

SHELBURNE MUSEUM POSTCARD

The Shelburne Museum sells a postcard showing a Centennial Commemorative Handkerchief used as a medallion in the Flag Quilt from their collection. The whole quilt is pictured on page 41 in their catalog QUILTS AT SHELBURNE MUSEUM.

as a present to Mrs Hoover at inauguration time. According to the story in NEEDLE-CRAFT, the original quilt was blue and white. Of course I had no way of knowing what shade of blue was used, but I decided on a rich Yale blue as being attractive and having a lot of character to it. I dyed six flour bags which I had on hand this color. It took sixteen bags in all, seven of which went into the back or lining. It was interlined with Canton flannel, and I used 1100 yds of thread in the quilting."

"But how did you come to use flour-bags?" Mrs Murray was asked.

"Oh that's the most natural thing in the world." she replied with a smile, "though the story goes a long way back. It goes back to my grandmother, Margaret Packard and the pioneer days of Illinois. Grandma Packard was born in 1828 in what is now Bloomington, and was known as 'The Mother of Bloomington.' She grew up to be an expert quilter. I can well remember, as a child, playing in and around her old pine quilting-frame, and so can my mother. We still have the frame, and it was set up for making the Hoover quilt.

"My grandmother was extremely thrifty and practical; I suppose pioneer conditions teach you that. Anyhow, my mother was

brought up to be the same and taught to work with any materials at hand, as were her own children. So there is the answer to the flour-bag query. But I learned, too, a lot about thriftiness from Grandma Packard herself, who died but a few years ago, just a little short of the century mark. She never really accepted the sewing machine, declaring it was only meant for lazy folk! And she handed down to me all her famous quilt-patterns, which are numbered among my dearest treasures."

So much for Mrs Murray's story, which every reader is sure to enjoy and perhaps profit by. It may be added as a matter of interesting record, that the war afforded this competent, friendly member of our circle a wonderful opportunity to preach her ideas of thrift and industry. She taught innumerable women the homely art of sewing, and to like it: and at the same time she spread the gospel of the used flour-bag! Mrs Murray is very active in club-work, and is a lecturer for the Farmers' Institute, as well as a conscientious housekeeper, homemaker and mother. And still she finds time for making quilts! Truly there must be something to this "coming from pioneer stock"!



CENTENNIAL QUILTS

cerized thread. It had been acquired in Portland, Maine where it had been used all these years by the same family. It had been washed many times until the original colors which probably were bright blue and sepia, had faded to a soft turquoise and tan. Unfortunately, there is no picture of this quilt that I later learned had been sold to a dealer in North Carolina.

Later in the same month, I saw another quilt with an identical scarf used as a center medallion. The colors were completely different, but the design was the same as in the quilt described above. It was a popular design because it showed more of what the traveler had seen. The maker of this quilt must have had a large scrap bag of men's shirting and dark calico pieces which she tastefully arranged to frame the square in lights and darks to make a most

striking quilt and to give us yet another fabric reference library dated. There was a subtlety about her color selection that made this the most artistic and interesting that I have seen. Regretfully, the questions of who and where it was made cannot be answered on this quilt; we can only thank the anonymous quilter and learn from this that all quilts should have a label with all the pertinent information firmly attached to them.

Having seen the price tag on these two quilts, I have come to the conclusion that the only form of collecting that is still affordable is one where quilts are kept in one's mind or photo album.

Author's note: We would appreciate any information about quilts using commemorative scarves and centennial quilts.