

QUILTERS' RESEARCH NETWORK

Barbara Brackman and Joyce Gross have been developing a cross reference of quilt researchers and their topics. So often we could be helpful to each other if we were aware of who is working on which project. The Network hopes to foster communication.

If you are interested, send \$5.00 to Darlene Roberts, 156 S Gladstone, Aurora, IL 60506. Include your name, address and phone number with a short summary of your specific interests in the field of quilt history. You will receive an index plus periodic updates.

by Nancilu B Burdick

On Apr 9, 1985, a lively group of researchers met in network session at Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga, TN. The meeting preceded the 12th Southern Quilt Symposium

Laurel Horton led the discussion of a wide variety of on-going projects. Participants research range all the way from a single, appliqued, Memphis "story" quilt, to the compilation of quilt history for the whole state; from the authentic duplication of one significant old Kentucky quilt, to the documentation of more than 100 quilts made by one Alabama woman.

After each person discussed her interests and research in progress, the primary focus was on the process of research, how to sort out fact from fiction, search out and approach quilt owners, and compile authentic records. As an example, Laurel showed her remarkable research notebook, kept while researching and collecting quilts for the exhibition "Social Fabrics: South Carolina's traditional Quilts" at the McKissick Museum, Univ of No. Carolina. Ms Horton was guest curator for this exhibition and worked with support from many groups and funding from several sources.

No less significant was Bets Ramsey's discussion of the Tennessee State Project she and others are working on, with no funding. The importance of proceeding with such research, despite lack of funding was emphasized. For only so much funding can be forthcoming and states eventually recognize the vital importance of quilts and quilt makers in their state's history.

Many publications (UNCOVERINGS, 1980-83, KANSAS CITY STAR PATTERNS, QUILTERS' JOURNAL etc) were displayed as examples of the end result of authentic research. Before the meeting adjourned, interest was expressed by several for the need to meet more frequently for sharing and mutual support. Some felt an eastern chapter of the American Quilt Study Group would be helpful.

by Barbara Brackman

The meeting was held in the Study Center at 8 am on May 4, 1985 during the Heartland Quilt Symposium. The purposes of the network were discussed (see below).

The guide to museum collections being coordinated by Mary Cross was discussed and new people encouraged to do their own area. Those interested should write to Mary to receive guidelines.

Study centers at symposia were discussed with researchers encouraged to make their wants and needs in this area known to symposium organizers.

Ways those interested in antique quilts can influence organizations to document, preserve and display antique quilts were mentioned including the suggestion to write in guest books of small museums, "I would like to see more quilts."

Those attending talked of their particular interest in old quilts.

The meeting closed with discussion of the value of quilting old tops and the lament that there are few guidelines for how to do it. There appeared to be a consensus on a need for more discussion as to whether it should be done and if it should be done under what conditions and how it should be done.

Ed note: Most museums and historical societies believe that objects should remain in the state they are received and that nothing should be done to the object that cannot be undone. There is much to be learned from studying an unfinished quilt top which cannot be seen as a whole quilt; e.g., type of thread used, length of stitches, how the seams are treated, etc. It was suggested that if one is determined to quilt an old top it should be treated in the manner of an old quilt as to quilting pattern and type of material used for the back and binding. It was also pointed out that sometimes the new thread cuts the fabric when quilting.

The JOURNAL would welcome your comments about this subject.