

QUILTERS' JOURNAL

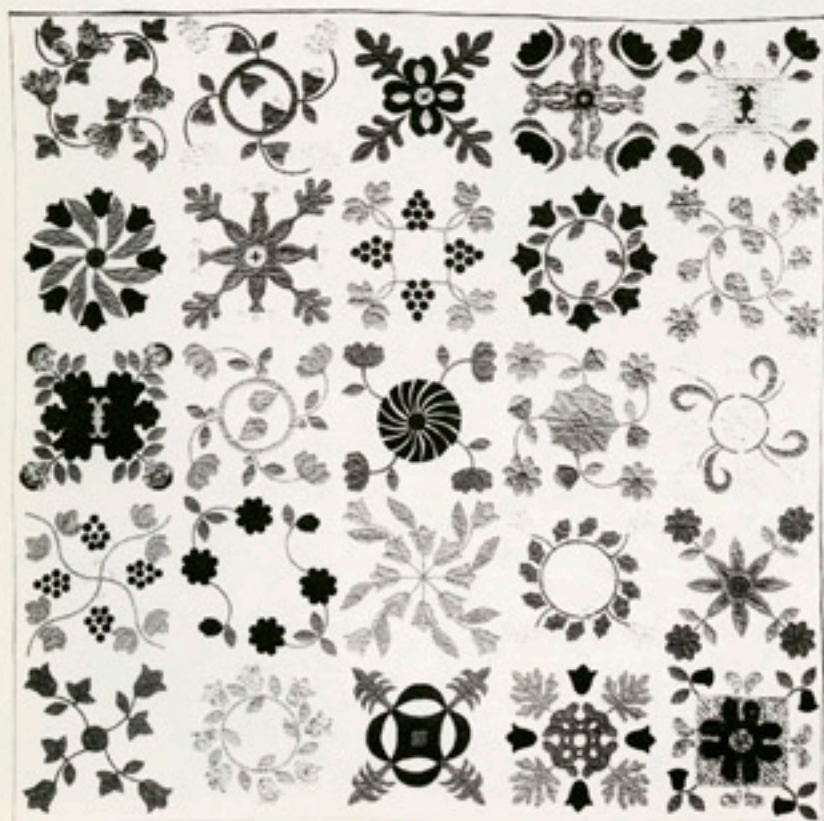
NO. 30



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ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE INCLUDE:

- 1 **"American Quilts."** New York Historical Society Exhibit, 1948. Quilts from the collections of the Society, Florence Peto and the Hudson River Museum.
- 2 **"Eagle Quilt"** made by Anna Catherine Markey Garnhardt. One of the quilts featured in the DAR Museum quilt exhibit "Old Line Traditions: Maryland Women and Their Quilts".
- 3 **"Bride's Quilt"** made by Charlotte Jane Whitehill and THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN "Flower Album Quilt" pattern.

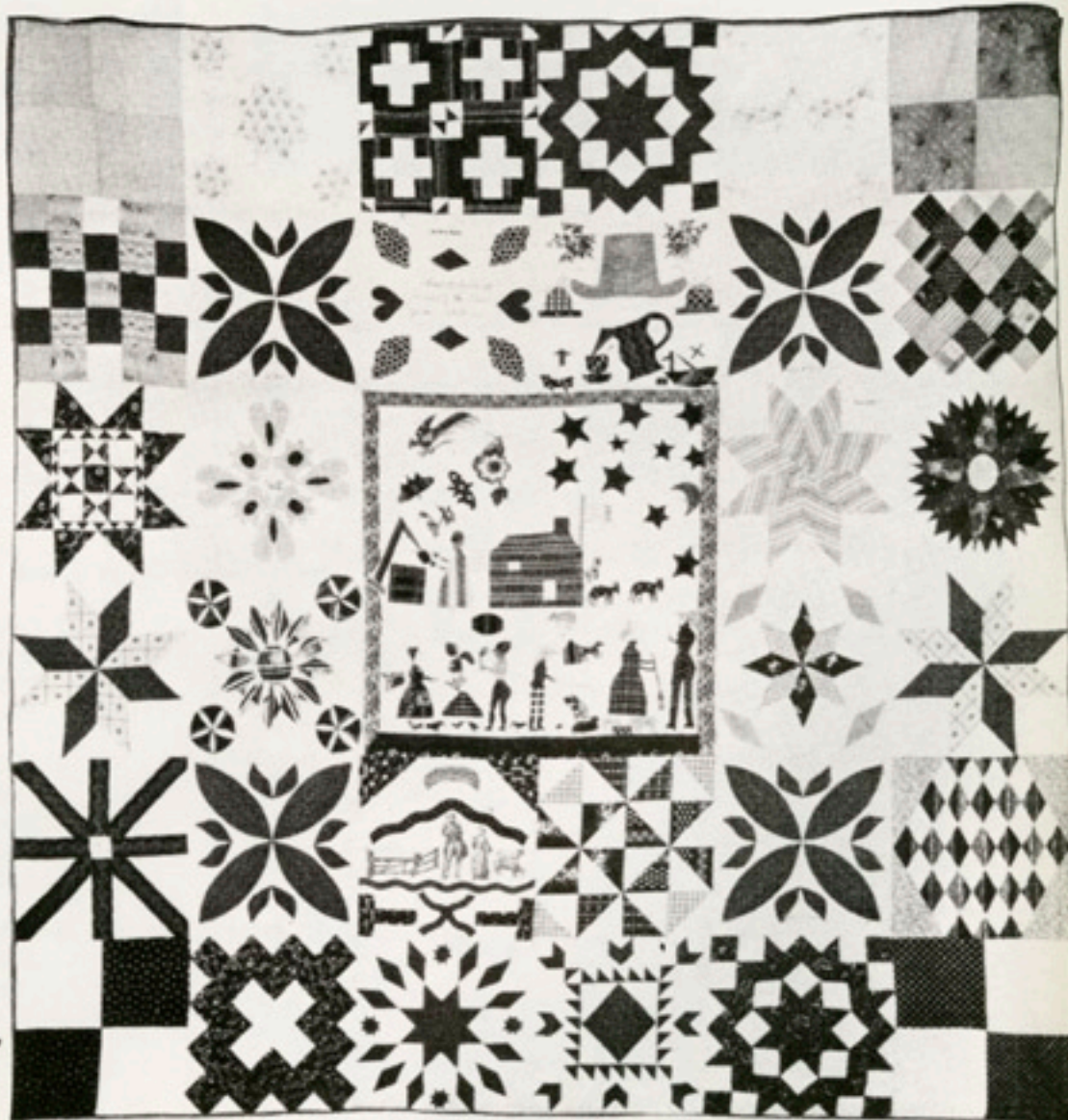


You are cordially invited to attend
a lecture on
HISTORIC QUILTS
their backgrounds and place in American folklore
by
MRS. FLORENCE PETO
Tuesday, February 3, 1948
at 8:30 P.M.
Admit two

Judging by the amount of space newspapers and magazines gave to the New York Historical Society's 1948 quilt show, it must have been impressive. It is rare for quilt historians to have such a volume of material about an event and the JOURNAL is grateful to Emma Andres for saving the correspondence and clippings sent by her friend Florence Peto.

On a visit to the N Y Historical Society this year, the article "American QUILTS: An Exhibition" (see pg 1) came to light and it was a lovely surprise to discover all the other material in the files. It was from the different reviews we were able to put together the incomplete listing of the quilts shown. If you find others, please let us know.

It would be interesting to hear Mrs Peto's reaction to THE NEW YORK SUN article by Mr Stowe (see pgl08).



BALDWIN QUILT

Photo courtesy Hudson River Museum

AMERICAN QUILTS: AN EXHIBITION

by Richard J Koke

Mr Koke was a curator of the New York Historical Society Museum. This article was originally published in the NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY, April 1948 and is republished with permission.

On Feb 4th the Society presented for public perusal a special exhibition of American Quilts, a well-loved type of folk art characteristic of American life for three hundred years. From the Society's collection and from the collections of Mrs Florence Peto, the Hudson River Museum at Yonkers, and the Washington Headquarters Association we have gathered and placed on display fifty-two quilted bedspreads, with associated material, covering the period 1770 to modern times. The exhibit seeks to tell what quilts were, how they were made, and what went into their making.

Few objects of American folk art are more representative of the aesthetic craving, the character, the temperament, and the activity of the women who designed and made them. "Quilting" itself is a term given to the actual process of fastening together by a running stitch two layers of cloth separated by a cotton or wool interlining. Any article with stitched interlining may be called a "quilt", but usage restricted the meaning until it now refers to a special type of bed covering. Draperies and coverings were not the only items of quilted design. There were others such as chair pads, parasols, waistcoats, and, for the ladies, petticoats and skirts.

Though the origin of quilting is lost in antiquity and its pictorial forms were practiced in medieval Europe, this unique needlecraft has nevertheless become closely associated with American tradition. The French and Spaniards brought pennants and garments with quilted trimmings to the New World, but quilt-making, as we know it, was introduced to the North American continent by Dutch and English housewives. Warm quilted bedspreads and door and window hangings to guard against cold drafts and winter weather were vital necessities in the Colonial home. Only after the utilitarian need for bed coverings had been filled did quilt-making for display develop into an artistic outlet.

Many motives influenced women to piece quilts. Sometimes they desired a bed covering or wanted to make a gift. Sometimes



A view of one of the galleries showing, from left to right: "Pin Cushion Quilt", "Irish Chain-Pattern Quilt", "Autograph Bridal Quilt", "Tulip-Design Crib Quilt", "Sunburst Quilt", "Star of Bethlehem Quilt", and "Mariner's Compass Quilt".

they sought expression for their love of color and yearning for decoration. Sometimes quilt-making served as a relaxation for restless fingers. And in numerous women there existed an intense love of needlecraft for its own sake. Many of the most beautiful quilts were quilted in lonely homes and in remote hamlets. Indeed no social function was more popular in 19th century America than the "quilting bee," where ladies gathered at the quilting frame beside the warm fire and stitched and gossiped and formed friendships.

The colorful designs on flamboyant quilt-tops were made from every available scrap of material. Calicoes, printed cottons, India chintzes, and palampours were great favorites. Discarded items of wearing apparel and pieces of cloth exchanged by neighbors and friends were saved in the scrap bag for future use. Even fragile silks, satins, velvets, and fine linens - once shunned because of their lack of durability - became favorites for the popular "crazy quilts" of the late 19th century.

The striking variety of design and motif, either as repeat or over-all pattern, impresses the onlooker immediately. Early quilt-makers were often uninstructed in design or in the use of color, but they, in their humble way, created magnificent examples of quilt art. The technique of pieced work has resulted in such expert geometric creations as the Society's "Sunburst Quilt" and the "Star of Bethlehem Quilt" in the Florence Peto

Collection. The technique of applique - where pieces of cloth cut to desired shapes were sewed to the plain background of quilt blocks - has resulted in a variety of designs of endless originality.

Color varied from the clash of harsh hues typical of Pennsylvania German quilts to a sensitive, almost pastel-like, blending of tones. However, some of the finest examples of quilt-making are found in white quilted bedspreads, which, in the total absence of color, depend for their beauty entirely on design and the perfection of quilting stitchery.

The identities of many quilt-makers have passed into oblivion, yet in these picturesque bed coverings is to be found something of the lives of thousands of women who are now unknown. Among the most interesting is the "Friendship" or "Autograph Quilt" usually intended as a gift. These are signed, sometimes dated, and often inscribed with sentimental verses appropriate for the occasion. It was common practice for members of sewing circles or church groups to design individual quilt blocks which later were incorporated into a quilt-top. In the Society's exhibit is a friendship quilt given as a wedding present to Frank H Platt of New York City, c 1875.

The twenty quilt blocks were designed, initialed, and presented to the bridegroom by twenty of his young lady acquaintances! The lovely "Baldwin Quilt", owned by the Hudson River Museum, replete with scenes of farm life, is likewise inscribed: Anson Baldwin, Esq./Presented by the Ladies/ Yonkers, October 1847.*

Constant handling and laundering resulted in the loss of many quilts. Today authentic 18th century examples are rare. The majority which have survived, carefully preserved in storage and cedar chests, are of 19th century origin. But quilt-making, in spite of industrial change and the decline in hand-sewing activity after the introduction of the sewing machine, never died out. Properly, quilts should be made only by hand. Societies, magazines, folk-art groups, and fairs have done much to foster again an appreciation of the quilting art, and even today in the mountains of Tennessee and Kentucky quilt-making is practiced as in the days of our foremothers.

**The "Baldwin Quilt" from the Hudson River Museum is shown on the covers of Florence Peto's AMERICAN QUILTS & COVERLETS, Chanticleer Press, N Y, 1949 and as pl IV. A description is on pg 31.*

PARTIAL LIST of the 52 QUILTS EXHIBITED N Y HISTORICAL SOCIETY Feb 3 to Apr 25, 1948
For other articles about this exhibit see pgs 18 & 19

Peto Collection

Candlewick spread (probably Bergen Co)
Candlewick spread (signed "Dennett 1845")
Voorhees stuffed (dated 1830, 1831)
White stuffed quilt (c 1830)
N J "Mariner's Compass" (now in Shelburne collection)
"Star of Bethlehem" (now in Shelburne collection)
"Tree of Life" (signed "Miller 1830")
"Bride's Quilt" (dated 1880, New England)
N E, "delicate tracery of hearts, flowers vine leaves and other motifs in red against a creamy ground."
"Centennial Qlt" (now in Newark Museum)
"Pin Cushion Qlt" (now in the Shelburne Museum)
"Irish-Chain-Pattern Qlt" (now in Shelburne Museum)

"The Ninety & Nine" by Charles Pratt
"Ruth & Naomi" by Charles Pratt

N Y Historical Society

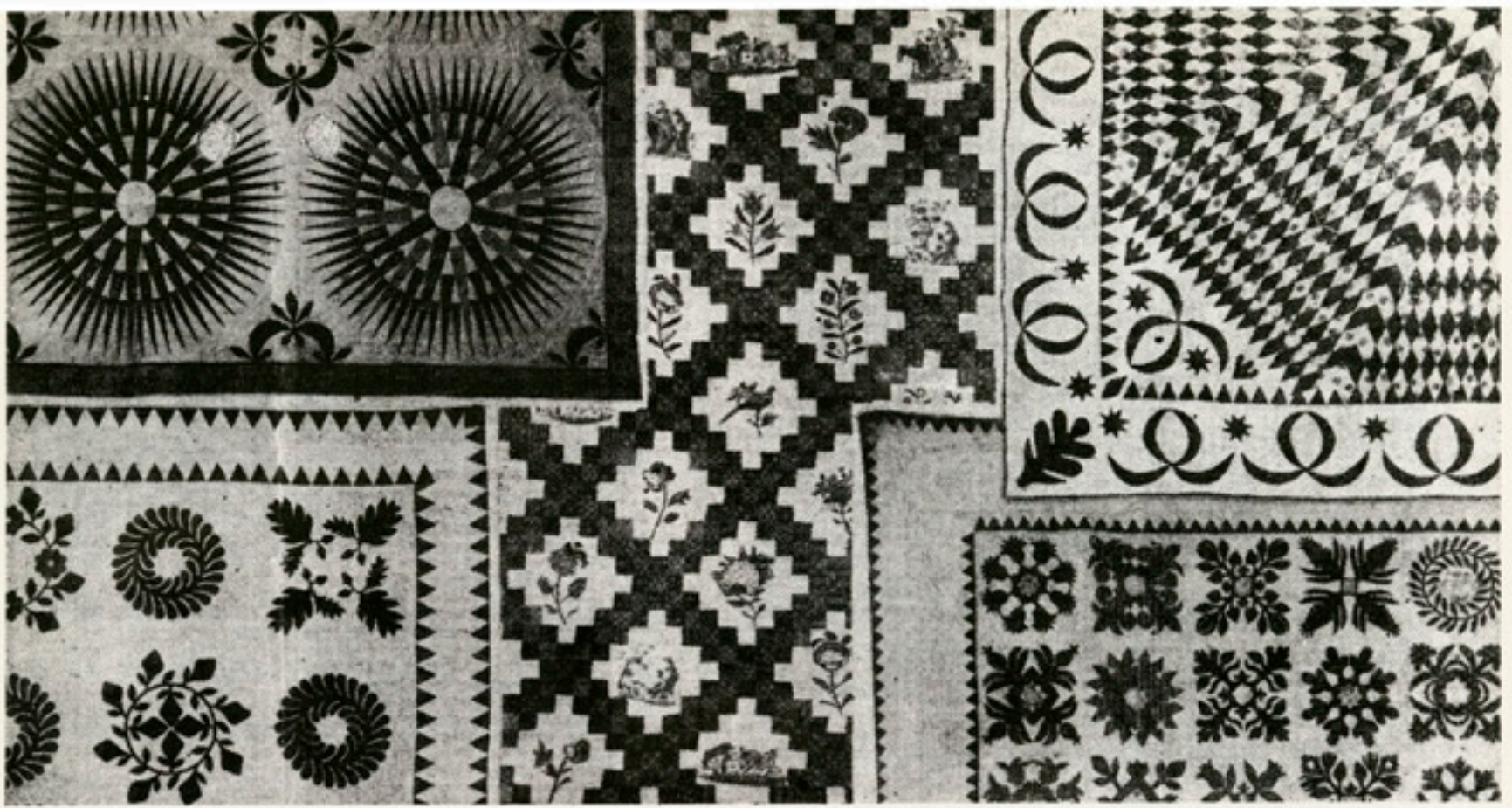
"Sunburst"
"Eagle Quilt"
"Platte Friendship Quilt" (c 1875)
"Lobster"
"Many Mansions"

Hudson River Museum, Yonkers

"Baldwin Quilt" 1847

Ownership not identified

"Tulip Design" crib quilt



From: WOMAN'S WEAR DAILY March 17, 1948

This article appeared originally in WOMEN'S WEAR DAILY, March 17, 1948 under the title "QUILTS - An inspiration to 1949 Cottons"

Cotton textile designers and converters will find a visit to the New York Historical Society highly profitable for there is an exhibition of American quilts dating from 1770 to 1944 that is full of inspiration for 1949 cotton prints and woven designs. The showing is especially timely for the cotton fabric market which is centering designing efforts on next spring. With the trend in the direction of small patterns the alert designer should find many motifs and color schemes that are adaptable for 1949 sports and informal clothes.

Sunburst, wreath and snowflake motifs are characteristic of the old-time quilts as may be gathered from those reproduced here.

The "Mariner's Compass" Quilt shown at top left has two motifs which could be worked up alone or together in achieving an unusual print for piques or seersucker types. Shades of one color or contrast could be used in translating the compass motifs. The other stylized motif would be particularly smart in one color prints.

Wreaths of leaves or flowers compose the design in the lower left quilt which has a double sawedge border. Similar motif ideas have already made their appearance in modern cottons but with the return of the

quaint in designs cottons can find fresh inspiration in the individual motifs which can be used separately or together. Especially good for muslins, percales or broadcloths.

There are fancy background as well as individual floral spray ideas in the center quilt that can be developed in delicate or strong color contrasts. The build-up of the checks suggests particularly interesting novelty diamond designs, which could be done in sophisticated colors. It also has possibilities as a monotone especially if carried out in sophisticated dark colors such as plum or bottle green.

For a junior border print the design at upper left is most inspirational for the diamond in graduated effects could be handled to produce the impression of gores in a very full skirt. The simplicity of the border based on stylized bowknots and pine tree is most appealing for a young print that could combine them or use them singly.

Snowflake motifs can provide inspiration for a calico-like print, for each has some individual recommendation for percale or broadcloth prints. This autograph bridal quilt has something in common with the quilt at the extreme lower left in the saw-edge border.

NEW "QUILT DIGEST" IS THE BEST YET

by Bets Ramsey

This article was originally published in the CHATTANOOGA TIMES as a weekly column "The Quilter" written by Bets Ramsey on May 1, 1986 and is reprinted with permission.

Publishers of QUILT DIGEST 4 have put together their best book to date, and it is not one to be missed. Michael Kile and Roderick Kirakofe insist upon the best in photography, reproduction, printing and material. In this issue of the QUILT DIGEST they have added impressive scholarship. If you are not a regular subscriber to the series I urge you to visit your local bookseller or place your order with the publisher.

I knew that SueEllen Meyer was writing an article on Pine Tree quilts because she asked to borrow one of my quilts to photograph. I knew that trees had long been a favorite subject of quilters. I was not prepared for the depth and sensitivity of her study as she explored women's roles in the settling of America and the relationship of trees to their lives. Here is a remarkable presentation that integrates history and quilting in a special way.

The women who came to America found the forests frightening and were intimidated by tales of Indians and wild animals. They felt closed in by the darkness of the woods. In time, the westward movement took place and other women longed for the sight of a tree in the great sweep of the flat prairies. Homesteaders planted trees to domesticate their plots of land, to give

shade and fruit. One woman wrote, "Every tree and shrub we planted in the ground was a companion, whose growth it was a delight to watch" Mrs Meyer, from impressive research, presents a significant study of pioneer women, their personal accounts, their quilts. She clearly defines the meaning of the tree patterns in the lives of the women who made them. I am grateful for her thoroughness and excellence of writing and for publishers who care about such matters.

Besides the showcase feature of marvelous quilts, old and new, another section features unusual quilts. In selections from THE ART quilt, the book she has written with Michael Kile, Penny McMorris introduces modern artists whose works have been influenced by quilting.

Two excellent articles round out the contents of the book. Nancy Callahan gives a thoughtful history of the Alabama Freedom Quilting Bee in "Helping the Peoples to Help Themselves." Shelly Zegart writes about Susan E Daggart, her friends in the Young Ladies Sewing Society in upstate New York in the 19th century, and the decision to remain single. Again, impressive research qualifies the article as an important addition to the literature of women's rights and quilt history.

You may order the QUILT DIGEST 4 from Quilt Digest Press, Dept 22-955 14th St, San Francisco CA 94114. Send a check for \$16.95 plus \$1.75 for shipping.

(FLORENCE PETO continued from pg 19)

... I'll send you a clipping of the newspaper WOMEN'S WEAR - one from the cotton-market.* They have published a series of three, each showing how to use quilt designs as inspiration for designing cotton goods. The first one gave my collection credit, the others did not, nor did they pay for the privilege of photographing the quilts and using them. I am a dumbell. Now LIFE wants to photograph them. The March AMERICAN COLLECTOR** had an article about them but it was written by a member of the Society and she asked my permission. As I say, I do not know just how much good this exhibition has done me. Publicity, yes but

has it sold my books? Which is what I wanted. The Society would not give out folders - nothing that sounded like advertising could be done! If anyone asked - was there any literature - they referred them to me. But the letter(s) are not about how can they buy a book but all sorts of crazy questions - like "did I make them all myself" or they have something older and 'very different'. One woman insisted she had a quilt older than any I had shown (in spite of the fact that there are four 18th century pieces) and it turned out to be a Crazy Quilt - Victorian. Sometimes I am ashamed of women - they are so stupid!

*See pg 3 for the article

**See pg 18 for an excerpt of the article

AMERICAN QUILTS: AN EXHIBITION at the NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Reviews of the Shows

THE BERGEN EVENING RECORD, Jan 29, 1948
... "Mrs Joseph E Peto's entire collection of 50 quilts will be placed on exhibit for three months beginning Tuesday at the headquarters of the New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West. The collector herself will open the exhibit Tuesday at 8:30 p m with a lecture"...

COURIER, Prescott, Arizona, Feb 3, 1948
"Miss Andres invited to NY Quilt Show"

"Prescott and New York City will be linked in interest through the special exhibition of "American Quilts" ...

"Miss Emma Andres, who has had considerable correspondence with Mrs Florence Peto...through their mutual interest in the quilt hobby, has received an invitation to attend the show..."

NEW YORK TIMES, Feb 4, 1948 ... "In variety of techniques and patterns the display rates as one of the most comprehensive so far seen in New York"...

THE NEW YORK SUN, Feb 6, 1948 "The Quester" by Charles Messer Stow

... "Mrs Peto ... gave an amusing and edifying talk on the craft in the society's auditorium, illustrating it with a number of the more than 2,000 patterns she has come across in her research. The Quester never has attempted to learn the names of those patterns for he believes that many if not most of them are not those known to the original makers, and Mrs Peto herself showed designs known by more than one name. Even in the most elaborate quilts a lack of ability to design on a broad scale is apparent. Each square or block is complete in itself and not a component part of an all-over pattern. Intricate needle-work and careful matching of colors are an attempt to make up for inability to create design. ... patchwork quilts are tokens of a dawning American culture and records, sometimes pathetic, of yearning for aesthetic expression. Anyhow, they are objects to collect and to study."

ANTIQUES, March 1948
"Hand made White Elegance"
by Florence Peto

"The quilts shown here are included in a special exhibition of quilts from the author's collection which is currently on

view at the New York Historical Society ... Mrs Peto, an ardent collector, is author of numerous articles in ANTIQUES and of the book "Historic Quilts".

Ed note: In this article by Mrs Peto there are pictures and descriptions of a crewel spread, a candlewick spread and two quilted and stuffed quilts.

AMERICAN COLLECTOR March 1948
"Of American Quilts and Quilters"
by Elizabeth Marting
Ass't Editor The N Y Historical Society

The exhibition of American quilts which went on view at The New York Historical Society early in February ... has been expertly arranged by Mr Richard J Koke,* ... to offer a complete story of quilts and quilt-making in the United States. Upwards of 50 finished examples have been assembled. A quilt frame is set up as well, and there are numerous explanatory charts, photographs, diagrams and samples of material on view. An authentic touch is a bonneted lady in a dove-gray brocaded silk dress featuring the quilted skirt, which evidently was a later substitute for the warm quilted petticoat once beloved - and for good reason - of feminine New York!

ANTIQUES Apr, 1948 "American Quilts on Exhibition" pg 301

... the earliest is a "Windmill" bedspread believed to have been made in York, Penn. about 1770... One... is the quilt dated "1847"... given to Anson Baldwin of Yonkers by the ladies of St John's Church there as the result of his facetious remark that all the parishioners' attentions (feminine, presumably) were fixed upon the clergyman. Coals of fire in the form of a handsome quilt, signed by the makers, rewarded Mr Baldwin.

*See pg 1 for article by Mr Koke and pg 3 for the review in WOMAN'S WEAR DAILY.

ALL BUFFALOS ARE NOT IN NEW YORK!

Mary Alma Parker, Charleston, S C writes: In Issue #21, pg 5 col 1 of the article "Record Breaking Quilts" (is) an item labeled "New York". The "Buffalo" mentioned is not in New York but in Dallas County, Missouri.

FLORENCE PETO WRITES TO EMMA ANDRES
ABOUT THE APPROACHING QUILT EXHIBIT

Excerpts from correspondence between Florence Peto and Emma Andres. For other letters between the close friends see JOURNALS #10-14.

11/30/47

... "The (New York) Historical Society wants the quilts early (by January 19th) so they can get prepared for the opening of the big show. I am excited about it. Bertha Stenge writes that they will be going to California for the winter but she may be back in the spring in time to see the show. She sounds as if she would be willing to take a trip to N Y to see them...

1/21/48

... Now, if only the talk to the New York Historical Society goes off as well. I always worry over whether I am going to be "good" or not; I don't know why I should for, honestly, I don't remember ever having an engagement that was a failure. People love the Quilt Talk after they have heard it... Just think there isn't a quilt in the house - they all went out yesterday in the Society's truck. I nearly cried.

Handwritten copy of Telegram sent to Florence Peto from Emma Andres (no date presumably Feb 2, 1986)

"Greetings from that Arizona Quilt Fair; wishing you and your audience of quilt lovers a grand evening. I will be with you in that. The pleasure of having had Dad Pratt's 'Ninety & Nine' and 'Ruth & Naomi' here in Prescott for my display in Aug will be relived. Knowing they again will give much inspiration with your grand lecture this should be an evening long to be remembered." (signed) Emma Andres.....

Feb 6, 1948

"Thank you my dear for the wonderful telegram and all the warm friendship and interest that prompted the sending of it! And then your note this A.M. too! Really getting the message early the morning of the 3rd was so heartening..

Now I must tell you something of that grand affair. To begin with - the Society's auditorium is a handsome room - built like a small theater with slanting seats; it is carpeted and the seats are velvet; beautiful paintings hang on the walls, crystal chandeliers sparkle. The stage was back-grounded with dark green velvet curtains

and onto that they had fastened the "Ruth and Naomi" (by "Dad" Pratt see JOURNAL #13 Fall '80) - with lights, soft lights on it. Wouldn't the old man have been proud? When I talked they threw (a) spotlight on the chart of designs. A console organ played all the Stephen Foster songs as the audience was gathering. People came in private cars with chauffeurs - for the Museum stands in high-toned section of New York - and I mean REAL New York - the fine remnants of the old families.

My family was so proud of me; I guess I gave the best lecture I ever did! Had them laughing a lot, and people like to laugh. I HAD to be good; there were people there from Newark Museum, Brooklyn Museum, Hudson Valley Museum, historical societies and magazine editors. Someone from ANTIQUES was there and someone from McCALLS.

I NEVER received so many congratulations and that is one reason I have not been able to write before - the phone has rung constantly with this one and that telling me how good I was and how much they enjoyed it...

You would lose your mind at the exhibition. How I wish you could see the quilts as they hang. The Society did a wonderful job and they look simply out of this world - lights are thrown on some of them, like paintings. It is getting fine notices in the press and over radio... I guess crowds will go.

A number of the papers gave the show a plug and failed to say the quilts were mine; well, as they say, that is life. I hope some this publicity sells books ... Either the March number or the April number of ANTIQUES will have the article on white spreads; I called it "White Elegance". The quilts are on exhibition.

Good by for now and thank you again for all the encouragement; I don't believe I disgraced you."

Letter dated April 5, 1948

"The quilt show has attracted lots of attention. Magazines have made a big thing of it - just how much good that does me, I do not know. WOMAN'S DAY editor ... was here and selected two quilts from what I have here and three or four from the show to do for the magazine...

They tell me at the N Y Hist Soc that (my own latest Nine-Patch)* has attracted as much admiring attention as the old ones! It is a pretty thing.....

*See JOURNAL #29

(Continued on pg 14)