

VIRGIE STEWART & THE TULEY PARK QUILTING CLUB:

by Barbara Brackman

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The Tuley Park Quilting Club was active in Chicago during the 1930's quilt craze. Sponsored by the Chicago Park District, the club met at the neighborhood fieldhouse at 501 E 90th Place on the South Side. Two pictures of the group quilting at frames are shown in "Quilting" with the captions "Park Quilting Clubs at Work" and "Showing some of the Quilts made in the Parks." One of the group's leaders was Virgie Stewart and in her estate, her grandnieces found these photographs of a 1938 quilt show sponsored by the Tuley Park Quilting Club at the neighborhood center. Virgie Stewart is featured in several of the photographs. Her family recalls that she was several times elected president of the Club because of her quilting skills. Her quilts won several prizes. The family stories credit Aunt Virgie with three World's Fair ribbons. Her "Dogwood" quilt (see pg 15) won a ribbon at the 1933 Sears Century of Progress Quilt Contest. At the end of a long road on her "Road to Recovery" quilt architectural symbols of the 1939 New York World's Fair are featured. Quilted in the sky are the words, "New York World's Fair 1939". Though her quilt does not appear in the

**QUILTING by Alice Beyers, published by South Park Commissioners. ©1934. Republished by East Bay Heritage Quilters in 1978. Both editions are out of print.*



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prize winners list for the Fair, it may have won a ribbon at one of the local preliminary contests held in various department stores.

Virgie Stewart was born in Cleveland, Tennessee but spent most of her life in Chicago. She and her husband Bill retired to Gulfport, Mississippi in the early sixties. Virgie returned later to Tennessee where she died in 1981 at the age of 94.

When she was president of the Tuley Park Club she was



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1. Center panel of the NY World's Fair quilt designed and made by Virgie Stewart.

2. Three unidentified visitors to the Tuley Park Quilt Show

3. Quilting demonstration by Club member's Virgie Stewart is at the head of the frame.

4. Virgie Stewart pointing to a sign reading "100th quilt made by Tuley Park - 1933."

5. Virgie Stewart stands on right of her "Daisy Quilt". Family believes this quilt (in the collection of Miss Stewart's grandniece Faye Stewart Morgan) won a second place at the Chicago World's Fair.

6. & 7. This "Dogwood" quilt (Mountain Mist pattern #29) was made by Virgie Stewart and entered in the Chicago World's Fair of 1933.

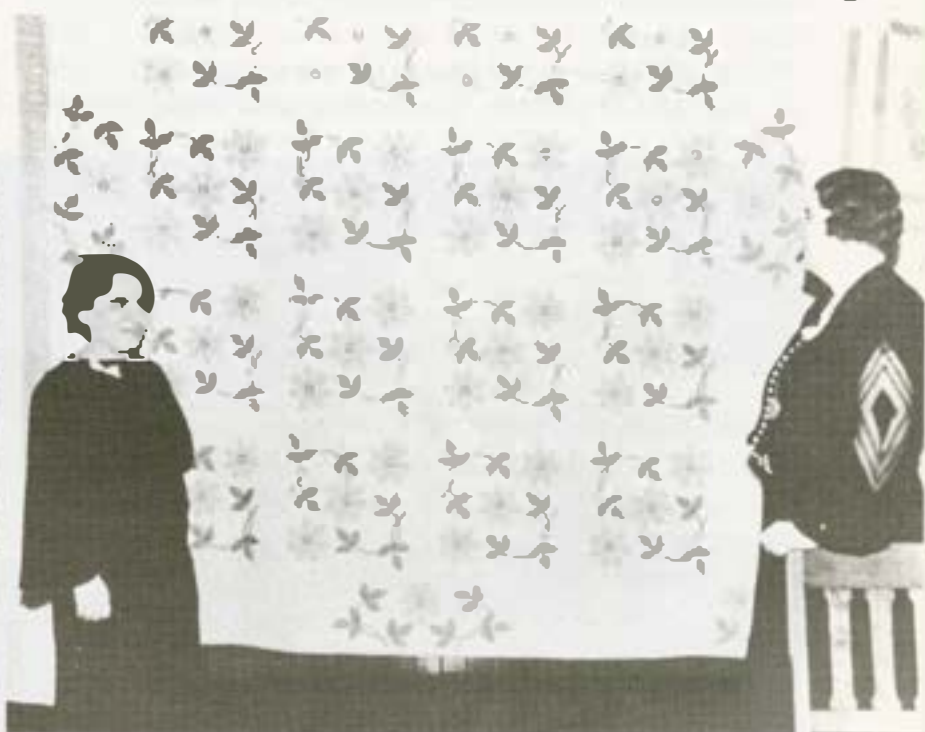


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active in its fund raising. One of her grandnieces recalls Virgie confiding to her that to earn money for the club she told fortunes for a small fee. During club luncheons she would circulate among the ladies, listening to conversations. After lunch she would assume her fortune telling role and tell each lady's "fortune" based on the conversations she had overheard. The Tuley Park quilters were thrilled and the club prospered.

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When Virgie left Chicago her friends at Tuley Park wrote the following recalling her presidency, and the quilt shows on which she worked and her lonely support for Alf Landon in the 1936 presidential election.

The quilts Virgie Stewart left her family are treasured heirlooms. Each appears to be an original design, handsomely done. But Virgie's Stewart's main contribution to quilting seems to be her leadership in the Tuley Park Quilting Club. She was obviously well-loved by her fellow quilters.

To a Dear Friend:

*This little verse is for Virgie so dear
 We want her to know as we're all gathered here
 How much we shall miss her as weeks go by
 For long she has been our main standby
 For long she has bossed us and made us like it
 Although in the main we would profit by it
 We can ill afford to let her go.
 She's always laughed at our jokes and tricks
 And discussion including politics
 We will never forget that rig to complete
 The time she mourned over Landon's defeat
 But when the kidding got too rich
 She reminded us "girls you came here to stitch"
 She's given advice and help galore
 That's why we will miss her more and more
 She's engineered eight fine exhibits not less
 And waked early and late to make them a success
 Cooked us fried chicken dinners complete with
 hot buns
 Baked the best cakes and cookies under the sun
 All these things she did when was able
 We will now be content though not in clover
 To eat those biscuits baked by Kroger
 Enough of this nonsense we only have tried
 To tell you dear Virgie how much you're our pride
 And how it shall hurt us when we see you go
 Though we'd not want to keep you when you have
 planned so
 We know with a wonderful husband you're blessed
 Which makes us feel better we all have confessed
 Though we know many projects attracted your art
 We feel the old quilting clubs nearest your heart.*

Pictures courtesy of Faye Morgan



Unidentified quilter demonstrates the technique with a background of quilts.



Unidentified quilters at the quilting frame "C" clamps and boards on saw horses.



Visitors admire the variety of quilts displayed at the quilt show.

* In this article, figure 1 is attributed to Virgie Stewart. It says:

1. Center panel of the NY World's Fair quilt designed and made by Virgie Stewart.

This quilt was designed and made by Mary Gasperik, a different member of the Tuley Park Quilt Club. Extensive research about this quilt has been done by Susan Salser, granddaughter of Mary Gasperik and can be found on this page, <https://quiltindex.org//view/?type=fullrec&kid=18-14-98>.