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LILLIAN WALKER



## MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRIP

by Jean J Street

*Jean Street is a quilt teacher and noted quilt show producer in San Jose/Watsonville Calif. Her current research project is Ribbon Applique and she would welcome information to augment her studies.*

Ever since Mark Twain captured my imagination back in grammar school days with his tales of the Mississippi River, one of my life's goals was to travel that River by boat. My dream was finally realized in Nov. 1980 when I stepped on board the Mississippi Queen. As she departed the calliope played "Cruising down the River" followed by other songs, just as river boats have always done.

When we awoke the following morning, the boat was tied to a big oak tree beside the riverbank. Beyond the levee, out of our view, was the beautiful plantation, "Houmas House". After breakfast we strolled over the levee and saw a vista unique to this region. Beyond a white rail fence stood great oak trees heavy with Spanish moss and a vast stretch of green lawn leading to a white columned mansion.

The house tour was led by a very pretty young lady in a "Gone With the Wind" dress and an ample supply of southern charm. Naturally I was on the lookout for needlework and I was not disappointed. In the main bedroom upstairs on a four poster bed was a beautiful Sunburst patchwork quilt that was very finely quilted. It was touched by every other person on the tour!

We had been advised that no photographs were to be taken inside the mansion so when the tour ended I followed the pretty guide and pleaded my case to take a photograph of the Sunburst quilt and with true Southern hospitality she took me to

one of the owners. He led me back upstairs and allowed-me to take photographs without flash. The condition of the quilt was surprisingly good when one considers how many people have touched it so I suggested that he should somehow protect the quilt from all the admirers.

There are beautiful quilts in the South which I believe have been treated as "family treasures" because Southerners realized their unique value

I strolled back to the boat through the beautifully maintained gardens and century old oaks hanging heavy with Spanish moss, and thought how I would have enjoyed talking to that quilter who spent so many hours somewhere here in the South stitching her contribution to the beauty of her beloved home.

*The site of the Houmas House was "purchased" from the Houmas Indians in the last quarter of the 18th century by Maurice Conway and Alexander Latil. The mansion is a magnificent Greek revival style built in 1840. "Back houses" which were built at the time of the site-purchase, resemble houses built in rural France of that period. They were attached to the great house by an arched carriage house and used as the kitchen and servants' eating area. Around 1899 the mansion fell into a state of disrepair. Dr. George B. Crozat of New Orleans purchased it in 1940 and spent the last 25 years of his life restoring the house and gardens to their original state of splendor. His heirs have opened them to the public.*

*The site was the setting of the movie, "Hush, Hush, Sweet Charlotte" and the TV movie 'moon of the Wolf" and the pilot film of "Longstreet"*

*Left) Sunburst quilt. Right) Houmas House*

