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Mary Lee Quilts, El Dorado, Kansas

Who Was Mary Lee Quilts?

A recently acquired quilt pattern collection included two mimeographed patterns from "Mary Lee Quilts, 719 S. Star, El Dorado, Kansas." Of course we instantly think of Scioto Imhoff Danner and her 1930s-1950s business, Mrs. Danner's Quilts, conducted by mail-order from the same Kansas town, and through department store appearances across the country.

A search for "Mary Lee Quilts" at NewspaperArchive.com revealed a 1934 Waterloo, Iowa, department store ad identifying Mrs. Thomas Carrell. Then a search for "Mrs. Thomas Carrell" revealed a similar 1933 ad from an Emporia, Kansas, department store. Both ads are shown below and neither ad mentions Mrs. Danner.

Did Mrs. Danner inspire Mrs. Carrell's pattern business? Were the two businesses connected in some way? How long did Mrs. Carrell continue her business?

The two Mary Lee patterns I acquired are Pomegranate and Bow Knot Border Design. Both are appliques. Pomegranate is the same design as Mrs. Danner's Ladies' Dream shown in her Book 1, page 25, ©1932, and as *Capper's Weekly's* Bluebird Nest or Bluebirds' Home published April 8, 1933. (This design is No. 14.843 in Barbara Brackman's *Encyclopedia of Applique*.) Among the Mrs. Danner's quilt patterns listed in the November 1931 Hutchinson, Kansas, department store ad (see Mrs. Danner's page) is a Bow Knot Border as well as her beloved Ladies' Dream. Both ladies sold a Dolly Varden design.

Emporia (KS) Gazette, May 1, 1933

JAS. A. POOLE DRY GOODS COMPANY

Mary Lee Quilt Show! Tomorrow!

Under Personal Direction of Mrs. Thomas Carrell

25 Different Designs

Including

The Iris	Dolly Varden
Bear's Paw	Bye Low Baby
Lovers' Knot	Circle Feather
Windblown Tulip	Virginia Rope

No Charge for Quilting Instructions

See the beautiful models we have on display.

Stamped Patterns

Range in Price

15c to 50c

Select from These Quilting Supplies

Priscilla Sheeting, soft finish, 9-4	25c
10-4	29c
Cloth of Gold Muslin	yard 10c
45-in Soft Finish Long Cloth	yd. 39c
80-square Prints	yard 15c
36-in. Plain Gingham	15c and 29c
David and John Anderson Plain	
Scotch Zephyrs, 35 in.	yard 85c

Quilting Cotton

Poole's Red Star, 1 lb. fine China Cotton	45c
Mountain Mist, 81x96 Glazine covered	45c
Dixie Maid, 81x108, free quilt patterns in each roll	45c
Two Star, 84x100, 1 1/2 lb. fine china cotton	59c

Wool Filling for Quilts

1 lb. 100% Wool Fleece	\$1.25
2 lb. 100% Wool Fleece	\$2.50

Emporia (KS) Gazette, May 1, 1933

Waterloo (IA) Daily Courier, April 3, 1934

Now It's "Fashionable to be Old-Fashioned"

There's a distinct trend back to the do-things-for-yourself era . . . the "hand-made" is more valuable . . . and many ladies who appreciate the real loveliness have joined the group to

Make a QUILT

Black's is proud to present an exhibit of Quilts, under the personal direction of Mrs. Thomas Carrell. Beautifully hand-made quilts, original designs, reproductions of Colonial patterns and adaptations. Interesting and instructive . . . patterns for every design may be purchased.

"Mary Lee" QUILTS

Twenty-five different designs . . . Mrs. Carrell will help you with free instructions. All the essential fabrics . . . plain colors and fascinating prints . . . for the making-of-quilts are featured in the Wash Goods Section . . . all modestly priced.

See This Special Exhibit . . . Start a Quilt for Yourself.

Black's Second Floor

Waterloo (IA) Daily Courier, April 3, 1934

Who Was Mrs. Thomas Carrell?

Nema Armina Cash was born January 26, 1887, in Mullinville, Kiowa County, Kansas, daughter of Henry Edward and Eva Alice (Ward) Cash. She married Thomas S. Carrell of Casey, Illinois, January 23, 1904. He was a retail clothing merchant in El Dorado, Kansas, in the 1920s and early 30s and died in 1956 after which Nema remarried. Nema Carrell Epler died October 22, 1986, in Wichita, Kansas.

Thomas and Nema Carrell moved from Crawford County, Illinois, between 1910 and 1920 to El Dorado where Thomas was working for A. G. Haberlein, a men's furnishings store. By 1927, he had partnered with C. W. Small as Carrell & Small Clothiers, and their son, Thomas Cash, known as T. Cash Carrell, was a bookkeeper for the Citizens State Bank. By 1933, only Cash remained in El Dorado and he, too, had left by 1936. El Dorado's surviving city directories and telephone books failed to reveal information relating to Mrs. Carrell's quilt pattern business, and the address on her quilt patterns, 719 S. Star, proved to be a mystery as John Skinner, an oil field driller, was the resident of record in 1931 and 1935, while Thomas and Nema's last known home address was 1019 West Pine in 1930.

Nema's death notice in the *Wichita Eagle/Beacon* simply says: "Nema C. Epler, 99, of Wichita, homemaker, died Wednesday, Oct. 22, 1986. Service is pending. Quiring-Old Mission Mortuary." A visit to the mortuary proved to not only be unsuccessful, but I was met with an unwilling and uncooperative attitude. Neither Thomas Carrell nor Nema Carrell Epler were mentioned in El Dorado's newspaper after their respective deaths in 1956 and 1986 so her second husband's name is not yet known or where she is buried.

Mrs. Carrell's story will hopefully continue in time. Stay tuned.

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Where is El Dorado, Kansas?

