

# Uncoverings

## 1995

Volume 16 of  
the Research Papers of  
the American Quilt Study Group

Edited by Virginia Gunn

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Published by the American Quilt Study Group  
660 Mission Street, Suite 400  
San Francisco CA 94105-4007  
Manufactured in the United States.

*Uncoverings* is indexed in:  
*America: History and Life*  
*ARTbibliographies*  
*BHA (Bibliography of the History of Art)*  
*Clothing and Textile Arts Index*  
*Feminist Periodicals*  
*Historical Abstracts*  
*MLA International Bibliography*  
*Sociological Abstracts*

ISBN 1-877859-11-7

ISSN 0277-0628

Library of Congress catalog number: 81-649486

Cover: Sunflower Quilt, Mountain Mist® Pattern  
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## Preface

After a decade of quilt history research focused primarily on nineteenth-century American quilts, these papers center on the twentieth century. They also reflect a trend in scholarship toward multicultural and interdisciplinary perspectives.

The scholars whose research appears in this sixteenth annual volume of *Uncoverings* have mined new sources of information to expand our knowledge of quilt history. It is interesting to note that a significant portion of the heretofore unused primary sources have been preserved by families. This reinforces our beliefs that families have always valued the work of quiltmakers and quilt designers, even in times when quilting did not receive national attention. As always, this collection of papers raises new questions and points out avenues for further work.

Kathryn Berenson used French inventories and commercial records, as well as information from extant artifacts and paintings, to study the tradition of corded and quilted needlework known as Marseilles work. Her research points to an extensive production for export that undoubtedly influenced European and American quilting traditions.

Ricky Clark analyzed the rich collection of Ruth Finley's papers saved by family members. This information helped reveal the practices and influences that shaped Finley's classic book, *Old Patchwork Quilts and The Women Who Made Them*. The paper also highlights the importance of the printed media in the early twentieth-century quilt revival.

Naida Patterson gathered information from numerous primary sources, many saved by the family, to highlight the work of artist and quilt designer Marion Cheever Whiteside Newton. Newton ran a successful cottage industry producing Story Book Quilts in finished and kit form during the 1940s and 1950s. This study

sheds light on a neglected period of quilt history and also points out the important connection between art training and quilt designing in the twentieth century.

Merikay Waldvogel analyzed newly discovered correspondence between Frederick J. Hooker, the sales manager for the batting department of the well-known Stearns & Foster, Co., and Margaret Hayes, a professional artist in Tennessee whose family preserved the important letters. Her study, which reveals the marketing strategy that led to the design and production of Mountain Mist patterns, helped recover long-forgotten company history.

Xenia Cord used her rich collection of commercial quilt products and quilt-related ephemera to begin an investigation of the commercial sources that promoted quilting in the 1920s and 1930s. Her study calls attention to the complex and obscure relationships that existed between companies successfully marketing the various forms of quilt kits.

Marlene O'Bryant-Seabrook employed oral history methods to detail the remarkable and poignant story of a South Carolina mother and her invalid son who made quilts together. This study of an African-American family calls attention to the African heritage of males as textile artisans. O'Bryant-Seabrook's work provides a model to use in quilt research among people under-represented in printed sources.

Carol Williams Gebel surveyed a wealth of ethnographic and quilt history literature to identify the various roles quilts and quilt-related textiles play in helping people of different cultures cope with the grief associated with the final rite of passage. Her work points out the need for further in-depth multicultural study.

In a final essay, Judy Elsley, explicates two pieces of quilt-related literature to reflect on the issue of differences in approaches to quilt scholarship. She offers the insights of a feminist literary critic as she enters the current discussion about the gulf that sometimes exists between academic and independent quilt scholars.