

Uncoverings 1999

Volume 20 of
the Research Papers of
the American Quilt Study Group

Edited by Virginia Gunn



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Cover: Papago Indian Activity's Quilt
made by Goldie Tracy Richmond of San Simon, Arizona in 1966
Pieced, appliqué and embroidered cotton, 81" x 91"
Collection of Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona, Tucson

Cover photograph by David Elliott
Photograph courtesy of Carolyn O'Bagy Davis
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Preface

Members of the American Quilt Study Group will gather on the Michigan State University campus in East Lansing, Michigan, from October 15-17, 1999 to attend the twentieth annual seminar dedicated to exploring quilt history. Dr. Marsha MacDowell, professor in the Department of Art and curator of Folk Arts at the University Museum, will deliver the keynote address on "Quilts and Their Stories: Revealing a Hidden History."

Worldwide interest in quilts continues unabated. The e-commerce venues have helped to fan the flames during 1999. The movement of quilts generated by brisk sales has risks as well as rewards. Increasing efforts will be necessary to keep the artifacts tied to any information about their origins and stories. When links can be kept and studied, quilts continue to prove to be outstanding sources for interpreting and understanding culture.

This volume of research papers marks two decades of research focusing on quilts, quilting, quiltmakers, and the textiles and materials of quilts. The depth of the field we are mining is underscored by continuing discoveries of interest and insight.

Two studies reveal the value of material-culture research methods as two quilts, an Album Block and a Bear's Paw, lead to fresh insights on aspects of American culture. This volume of *Uncoverings* begins with the results of Molly Miles's careful reading, research, and interpretation of verbal clues inked on a nineteenth-century quilt. She finds the quilt to be an autobiography in textile form, tracing the journey of Kezia D. Benton from her home in New York state to faraway California for gold and settlement. Our book ends with the unique story associated with another nineteenth-century quilt. Cynthia Dimock Quaglia used Fleming's model for arti-

fact study to analyze a pieced quilt made in Rhode Island. Her research unearthed an unusual and unexpected cultural context related to tuberculosis and belief in vampires.

Two authors provide new interpretations of distinctive quilt-making done by cultural groups, the Mennonites of Ohio and the Acadians of Louisiana. Mennonite quilts have been a subject of artistic interest for several decades. Valerie S. Rake adds to our understanding of the women who made them, with her in-depth study done in Wayne County, Ohio. She used archival research and interviews to understand the way sewing and quilting helped Mennonite women maintain traditional appropriate behavior while developing the skills that help financially support Mennonite worldwide service. Jenna Tedrick Kuttruff used extant Acadian cotonnade quilts as a vehicle to obtain information on the textile traditions of Louisiana Acadians. Utilizing her extensive knowledge of handweaving techniques, Jenna carefully analyzed the construction and fabrics of three cotonnade quilts. She offers new insights on how these weavers manipulated the weaving process to achieve both variety and efficiency in their efforts.

This volume also highlights two talented quiltmakers. Zöe C. Smith's study of Carrie Chew and her quilts reveals the importance of strong ethnic and rural roots and a family-centered approach to life. We see how a fine traditional quiltmaker embraced the changing fashions in quilting and quilt culture as a positive way of establishing affiliation in a changing urban culture. In contrast, Carolyn O'Bagy Davis studied an unusual western quilt artist, Goldie Tracy Richmond. Davis completed interviews and field trips and analyzed the applique pictorial masterpieces that record Richmond's life as a trader among the Tohono O'odham Indians in the remote desert country of Arizona.

All of these quilt-related studies contribute to our fuller understanding of life and culture. They are worthy chapters in two outstanding decades of quilt history preserved by the efforts of the members of the American Quilt Study Group. We look forward to continued research for our twenty-first volume, to be published in the first year of the twenty-first century.