

Uncoverings 2002

Volume 23 of
the Research Papers of
the American Quilt Study Group

Edited by Virginia Gunn



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Presented at Rockford, Illinois

October 4–6, 2002

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Cover: Detail of Pot of Flowers Quilt, possibly made by Lydia Ann Herman in 1849, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Collection of Byron and Sara Dillow.



Contents

Preface	vii
<i>She Hath Done What She Could: Discovering Memories on a New York Friendship Quilt</i> Melissa Jurenga	1
<i>One Pot of Flowers Quilt Pattern— Blossoming Through Centuries</i> Connie J. Nordstrom	31
<i>Read Me a Story: Cultural Values in Children's Quilt Fiction</i> Judy Elsley	65
<i>Quiltmakers' Online Communities</i> Kim M. King	81
<i>Fanny and the Busy Bees</i> Carolyn O'Bagy Davis	101
<i>The Wilkinson Quilt Company: "America's Original Makers of Fine Quilts"</i> Marilyn Goldman	131
Authors and Editor	163
Index	165



Preface

The twenty-third annual seminar of the American Quilt Study Group will be held in Rockford, Illinois from October 4-6, 2002. The Mississippi Quilters Guild will host this event, held in the "Forest City" of northern Illinois. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Janet Berlo, Susan B. Anthony Professor of Gender Studies and Professor of Art History at the University of Rochester. She will be sharing insights and passages from her memoir entitled *Quilting Lessons*. A variety of tours, workshops, and study centers will complement the six research presentations, which appear in this volume of *Uncoverings*.

The first two papers of Volume 23 focus on nineteenth-century history. Melissa Jurenga documents a quilt from the James Collection housed in the International Quilt Study Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She uses a combination of artifact analysis (including digital image enhancement), interviews, genealogy, oral history interviews, and on-site research and networking to uncover the intriguing story of a New York friendship quilt made by Mercy Jane Bancroft Blair in the mid-nineteenth century.

Connie Nordstrom focuses her research on a distinctive Pot of Flowers pattern, part of the mid-nineteenth century Germanic red and green floral applique tradition. Her careful design analysis of all known nineteenth- and twentieth-century examples helps to pinpoint where this pattern originated and flourished in the nineteenth century and also illuminates how the pattern maintained its appeal throughout the twentieth century.

The middle chapters of this volume analyze two phenomena that reflect the widespread interest in quilting in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Judy Elsley's extensive analysis of popular children's quilt fiction reveals the cultural values transmitted in



stories featuring quilts and quilters. It underscores the important way that quilts serve as an effective metaphor for teaching respect for the values and traditions that provide the foundation for family and community in an increasingly interdependent world.

Kim King examines the Internet communication of present-day quilters. Her research calls attention to the increasing importance of electronic communication and interaction in the quilt world and to the wide variety of avenues available to explore. Her analysis of online quilting communities demonstrates that today's quilters are searching for and successfully creating vital supportive communities via technology. The Internet is extending, not destroying, communities.

The final papers in this volume add important new information to our knowledge of early twentieth-century quilt history. Carolyn O'Bagy Davis introduces us to Fannie Springer Schumacher of Mitchell, Nebraska, and the Busy Bee Club she helped to organize in 1920. Carolyn's analysis of seven decades of club minutes, combined with information from oral interviews, provides a wonderful case study of the important roles early quilting and social clubs played in the lives of rural women across America.

Marilyn Goldman also uses extant documents and catalogs as well as personal interviews to bring us the first in-depth study of the Wilkinson sisters, successful quilt entrepreneurs, who established and ran the Wilkinson Quilt Company in Lingonier, Indiana, from 1908 through the 1940s. They used innovative and creative techniques to market their beautiful original whole-cloth art quilts to an elite clientele.

This group of papers adds substantial and rich information to the ever-growing body of knowledge about quilts and quiltmakers. They are an important addition to the previous papers published by The American Quilt Study Group. The row of *Uncoverings* on my bookshelves is consulted on a regular basis. It is hard to believe that thirty years ago all the books published on quilt history barely filled the same amount of space.