

# Uncoverings

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## *Ihr Teppich: Quilts and Fraktur*

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*A friendship quilt, pieced of Rolling Stone blocks, found on the Eastern Shore of Maryland led to the identification of a group of quilts inscribed in fraktur calligraphy made in Lehigh and neighboring counties of southeastern Pennsylvania between 1851 and 1870. Almost every quilt contains a dedication block identifying the owner by name with the phrase Ihr Teppich and a date. It appears that most of the quilts were inscribed by professional calligraphers, two of whom signed their work. This study attempts to identify the women for whom the quilts were made and the calligraphers who inscribed them, to discover the nature of the bond between the people whose names are on each quilt, and to determine if the quilts were made to mark a particular event in the life of the owner.*

I found Aveline S. A. Stern's 1862 friendship quilt in an antique mall in Easton, MD in 1999. It was not until I brought the quilt home and examined it closely that I realized that it was inscribed in fraktur<sup>1</sup> letters and, amazingly, that the scrivener had signed his name, William Gross. (See Appendix I). I remembered that a similar quilt was mentioned in *Lest I Shall Be Forgotten* by Nancy and Donald Roan. According to the Roans, "The Kemmerer (sic) Museum in Bethlehem [PA] owns a signature quilt with the names written by William Gross, a well-known baptismal certificate scrivener."<sup>2</sup> I was intrigued by the prospect of discovering the identity of Aveline Stern and the nineteen other people whose names were on her quilt.

*Lest I Shall Be Forgotten* describes a group of signature quilts discovered in the Goschenhopp Quilt Roundup<sup>3</sup> that sounded remark-



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ably similar to Aveline Stern's quilt, but was inscribed by a different calligrapher also thought to be a professional scrivener.<sup>4</sup> The idea of hiring a penman to write the names in a particularly decorative hand seemed very different from what I knew about the mid-nineteenth century enthusiasm for friendship quilts. My first call to the Kemerer Museum started me on a path to learning about fraktur and its connection to the quilts of a group of Pennsylvania German women.

To my astonishment there were far more fraktur inscribed quilts than I had ever imagined and some of them belonged to people I knew. Eventually, I gathered information on twenty-eight items (quilts, tops and a set of blocks) inscribed in fraktur letters and dated between 1851 and 1870.<sup>5</sup>

In the introduction to *Artists In Aprons: Folk Art by American Women*, Agnes Halsey Jones writes "If it is also very much the exception when the artist's name is known . . . the place where it was created is even more frequently ignored, an accurate account of anything else about the piece's history is an absolute marvel."<sup>6</sup> With the fraktur quilts I had names, dates and a general location, all clues that might lead to an accurate account of their history.

In the context of the Pennsylvania German culture of southeastern Pennsylvania, the subject of the fraktur quilts divided logically into three categories: the quilts as physical objects, the scribes whose work made the quilts unique, and the people whose names are on the quilts. I wanted to learn as much as I could about all of it. Finding Aveline Stern was just the beginning.

### *The Pennsylvania Germans*

"Signature quilts first began to appear in profusion in the early 1840s, beginning in the Middle Atlantic States where they peaked in popularity between 1841 and 1846."<sup>7</sup> The women who made the fraktur quilts were participating in the enthusiasm for friendship quilts that swept the country during the mid-nineteenth century. Living in farming areas of southeastern Pennsylvania, they were not far geographically from the center of the fad, but as members of the close knit Pennsylvania German community they were separated from the mainstream by differences of language and culture. During the third quarter of the nineteenth century



some of these women created a distinctively Pennsylvania German type of friendship quilt.

The Pennsylvania Germans are the descendants of the German, Swiss and French Huguenot settlers welcomed by William Penn.<sup>8</sup> They began to arrive in Pennsylvania in 1683 and continued to immigrate throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> The vast majority of the German immigrants were members of the Lutheran and German Reformed churches; unlike the Amish, Mennonites, and other pietistic sects who were fleeing religious persecution, the “church Germans” came in search of economic opportunity.<sup>10</sup>

They arrived in such numbers that by the time of the American Revolution, the population of Pennsylvania was between one-quarter and one-third German, most of whom were concentrated in the southeastern counties north and west of Philadelphia. The German influence greatly disturbed Benjamin Franklin, among others. Franklin once referred to the Pennsylvania Germans as “Palatine Boors.”<sup>11</sup> The cause for this concern was that, unlike other immigrant groups, the Germans did not assimilate into the surrounding Anglo-American society. Because of their numbers and their tendency to stay in the areas where they first settled, the Germans established a regional folk culture “with distinctive elements in the decorative arts, cookery, domestic architecture, linens, the construction of farm buildings, and agriculture.”<sup>12</sup>

A dialect known as Pennsylvania German developed, derived from the German spoken by immigrants from different parts of Europe and mixed with the English of their neighbors in Pennsylvania. It was this dialect that was at the core of the Pennsylvania German culture.<sup>13</sup> “Pennsylvania was effectively a bilingual state for much of the early nineteenth century.”<sup>14</sup> Church services were conducted in German and, even after the passage of the Common Schools Act in 1834, many Pennsylvania German children attended one-room schools where instruction was in German. Sarah Schultz, born in 1836 in Berks County, described school life in the 1840s. The curriculum included spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic in both German and English.<sup>15</sup> Education was not a high priority for Pennsylvania German farm families. “Most children attended school only for several months a year and then only for a few years.”<sup>16</sup>

“German was the language of religious worship and of conversation



at home and within the local community, while English was the necessary language of commerce and law and of anyone who had the slightest ambition in politics, higher education, or other pursuits beyond the local villages and farms.”<sup>17</sup> In 1860 readers in Allentown, the county seat of Lehigh County, could choose amongst six weekly and three semi-monthly newspapers. Only two of these were published in English.<sup>18</sup>

“The Pennsylvania Germans did not bring the quilting tradition with them from Europe. Most households relied primarily on handwoven bed coverlets through the middle of the 1800s.”<sup>19</sup> When they began to make quilts the women of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions used the same patterns as their “English” neighbors, but often made very different choices of color. Some of them also chose a unique method of inscribing their friendship quilts by employing the Pennsylvania German tradition of *fraktur*.

### *The Quilts*

In *Lest I Shall Be Forgotten* the Roans refer to these friendship quilts as *Beddleman* (beggar) quilts and state that a small sum of money was requested for placing a name on the quilt.<sup>20</sup> This information was provided in interviews with people who were born generations after the *fraktur* inscribed quilts were made. There is no contemporary evidence that money was solicited in connection with putting names on the quilts. They are more accurately described as *fraktur* inscribed quilts.

The database for this study includes twenty-four quilts, three quilt tops and a set of blocks on which names are inscribed in *fraktur* letters.<sup>21</sup> All were made in Pennsylvania. Twenty quilts and the unassembled blocks were made in Lehigh County;<sup>22</sup> one top was made in Montgomery County and one quilt in Berks County. The other three quilts and two tops most likely originated in Montgomery or Berks County. (See Appendix II)

The following observations are based on data collected on these twenty-eight items. In most cases the information came from the present owners of the quilts. The records of the Goschenhoppen Quilt Roundup and the accession files of The State Museum of Pennsylvania, the Lehigh County (PA) Historical Society, the Kemerer Museum of Decorative Arts (Bethlehem, PA), the Talbot County (MD) Historical Society and the



Figure 1. Rolling Stone block used in fraktur quilts. Photograph courtesy of Naronia Kemmerer Gebert.

International Quilt Study Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln also provided physical descriptions.

In *Forget Me Not: A Gallery of Album and Friendship Quilts*, Jane Bentley Kolter writes, “Certain small geographic areas were likely to develop a particular pattern . . . discrete regional styles often appear within a county or group of towns.”<sup>23</sup> The fraktur inscribed quilts are a type of friendship quilt specific to the area around Lehigh County in southeastern Pennsylvania. The quilts, tops and blocks have many elements in common. They are all of repeat block design with only three different block patterns used. (See Figures 1, 2, 3) The colors are typical of Pennsylvania German quilts. Each item has names inscribed in fraktur letters and all but three include the German words “*Ihr Teppich*,” meaning “her carpet”, to designate the owner of the quilt. In most cases the inscriptions appear to have been done by a professional scrivener. The quilts, tops<sup>24</sup> and blocks are all dated between 1851 and 1870 and twenty-three have a dedication block stating the name of the owner. The makers/owners of twenty-three of these items have been identified; all of them were Penn-



Figure 2. Rolling Stone Variation block used in fraktur quilts. Photograph courtesy of the Goschenhoppen Historians, Inc.

sylvania German women of the Lutheran or Reformed faith. Twenty-one of the women lived in Lehigh County. This study concentrates on the quilts made in Lehigh County that comprise seventy-five percent of the sample.

The quilts are remarkably similar over the twenty-year period 1851 to 1870. Only three block patterns are found among the twenty-eight items studied: Rolling Stone, a Rolling Stone variation and a Nine Patch Star called Flying Crow by the Goschenhoppen Historians in their quilt documentation project.<sup>25</sup> The Rolling Stone block was used in seventeen of the quilts, two tops and the set of blocks. Six quilts and one top were pieced in the Flying Crow block. A Rolling Stone variation was used in one quilt.



Figure 3. Flying Crow block. Photograph courtesy of the Kemerer Museum of Decorative Arts.

The smallest quilt measures 73 x 86 inches; the largest is 107 x 106 inches. Several of the quilts are set with more blocks in the horizontal than the vertical rows. The number of blocks varies from twenty to forty-four in the completed quilts. The block size ranges from ten to twelve inches. The blocks are separated by sashing and often with cornerstones. Every quilt and top has a border. The borders range from slightly more than three inches to eleven inches wide. One quilt has an inner border of half-square triangles and three have an appliqued dogtooth border in addition to a wide plain border.

All of the items in the database contain multiple fabrics. Each block is composed of a center square inscribed in fraktur and two contrasting calicoes. The center square on one quilt is a small print; on all the others





Figure 4. Incorporating blocks as part of the border, Sarah Major's 1852 Rolling Stone quilt (1997.007.0780), inscribed in the style of the Footed Letter Scrivener, includes more names than any other quilt in this study. Photograph courtesy of the International Quilt Study Center, University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

it is plain muslin. Caroline Brobst's quilt uses only three red prints, one yellow print and white. The other quilts all include many different fabrics; one contains thirty-five different prints. However, they have a remarkably similar appearance because of the use of traditional Pennsylvania German colors: Turkey red, chrome yellow, yellow-green, double pink, chrome orange and double blue. The smallest of the quilts includes twenty-six different prints in its thirty blocks. A number of the quilts are predominantly red and yellow with white for the sashing, border and



back. The quilts made in this coloration have a rather formal appearance. By contrast, others which have no plain fabric except in the dedication square, are more distinctively Pennsylvania German. The backs of these are usually cotton prints. The backs of several of the quilts are alternating strips of bright prints, a common construction in Berks, Lehigh and Montgomery Counties.

The quilting on most of the quilts is simple. Usually the block pattern is quilted around each piece, often on both sides of the seam. Most of the sashes and borders are quilted in diagonal lines, straight lines, and crosshatching. Very few of the quilts have more elaborate quilting designs such as cables or feathers. Linda Otto Lipsett writes, “. . . large amounts of fine quilting were not so important on a quiltmaker’s friendship quilt . . . the quiltmaker need quilt it only enough to hold the layers together. She was making her friendship quilt primarily for its sentimental value, not for use.”<sup>26</sup>

On two of the quilts the dedication block is set on point. On two quilts the dedication is inscribed in the border. The maker of the Sarah Major quilt, which has the most blocks, creatively placed eight of the forty-four blocks in the wide border in order to accommodate the large number of names (see figure 4). With these few exceptions, the quilts conform to what appears to have been a rigid formula for making a Pennsylvania German friendship quilt.

The focus of the fraktur quilts is on the names; all the other design elements are secondary. The construction consists of simple pieced blocks; the quilting is functional rather than decorative. The choice of fraktur lettering reflects the community in which the quilts were made.

### *The Scriveners*

Pennsylvania German fraktur is an extension of the medieval European tradition of decorated manuscripts. “The term ‘fraktur’ comes from a reference to the German fraktur alphabet. . . a decorative lettering, equivalent perhaps to Old English Gothic. Americans have expanded the term fraktur to mean the entire decorated manuscript.”<sup>27</sup> From the mid-eighteenth century until after 1900, colorfully decorated documents



distinguished by beautiful calligraphy were created for Pennsylvania German families. “Unlike their European counterparts, American fraktur are personal family records . . . meant to be kept by the family, displayed and enjoyed.”<sup>28</sup> The most common fraktur is the *Taufschein*, a baptismal certificate made primarily for Lutheran and Reformed families.<sup>29</sup> *Taufscheine* are treasure-troves of genealogical information because they usually include the mother’s maiden name, invaluable information rarely found in records of the time, and the names of the godparents who were often close relatives.

In the creation of these family documents the art of beautiful handwriting was highly prized. “Traditionally, rural Pennsylvania-German families hired ‘scriveners,’ or professional penmen, to record personal data on *Taufscheine* . . . they were generally itinerant and they worked for hire.”<sup>30</sup>

It seems natural that women accustomed to valuing the skill of a talented scrivener would prefer to seek such a person to inscribe a treasured friendship quilt, rather than rely on the untutored hand of a friend or family member. Such a choice would involve a considerable expense. According to Corinne and Russell Earnest, a penman might charge as much as \$0.15 per word or phrase.<sup>31</sup> Based on the number of names on the quilts, the cost of the calligraphy might have ranged from \$3.00 to \$6.00, considerable sums in the mid-nineteenth century.

As with all friendship quilts, the names are what matter on these quilts. The blocks are simply constructed; the quilting is often unremarkable. The focus is on the names. The choice of exquisite fraktur calligraphy affirms the importance of the community of family and friends whose names are recorded, and sets these quilts apart from the larger body of friendship quilts made during the period 1850 to 1870.

The hands of at least five different scriveners appear on the quilts in this sample.<sup>32</sup>

The work of two scriveners appears on only one quilt each. The lettering on the Elizabeth Fisher quilt, made in 1861, is very simple and unadorned. Quite possibly it was done by a person named on the quilt, perhaps Elizabeth Troxel who was listed in the 1860 census as a 19-year old school teacher.<sup>33</sup> The other example is Carolyn Brobst’s 1852 quilt that has an elaborate fraktur inscription in the border identifying the owner



Figure 5. Calligraphy of William Gross, author's collection.

and her home in Lynn Township, Lehigh County. There is a decorative flourish under the name in each of the other blocks.<sup>34</sup>

Each of the other three penmen inked a number of quilts. William Gross inscribed at least five quilts between 1862 and 1870. Three of these quilts were made in Lehigh County. On each of the quilts Gross inscribed the owner's name, the words *Ihr Teppich*, "her quilt" in the Pennsylvania German dialect,<sup>35</sup> and the year above a drawing of a vase of drooping tulips. (See figure 5) In the base of the vase he wrote his own name. The other blocks contain names in fraktur letters with no embellishments. Corinne and Russell Earnest write in *Papers for Birth Dayes*, "William Gross was probably the most prolific of the fraktur scribes. He usually signed his works, making them easily identifiable. He often abbreviated his first name to either Wm. or Wlm."<sup>36</sup> In the dedication block of Aveline Stern's 1862 quilt, Gross signed his name W. Gross. Gross was active circa 1861 to 1886.<sup>37</sup>



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Three quilts, all dated 1854, and a set of partially assembled blocks dated 1856, were inscribed by James Mack. There is no record of traditional fraktur created by James Mack. He may have been a talented amateur penman whose skill was sought by relatives and neighbors. In 1850 James Mack and his parents shared a home with the Samuel Heimbach family.<sup>38</sup> The Heimbach name appears on every piece James Mack inscribed, all of which were most likely made in Upper Milford Township, Lehigh County. In 1850 Mack was thirty-three years old; the census listed his occupation as “none.”<sup>39</sup>

The four examples inscribed by Mack are distinguished by the prominence given to Mack’s name rather than to that of the owner of the quilt. (See Figure 6) In spite of clues offered by designations such as “*mey Grossmutter*” (my grandmother) none of the owners have been identified. Each piece includes a block with the inscription “*James Mack Hat Die*

Figure 6. Calligraphy of James Mack. Photograph courtesy of Alice Casey.



*Namen In Den Tepig Gefrackturt*” and the date. The inscription translates as “James Mack wrote the names on the quilt in fraktur letters.”

In 1856 James Mack inscribed a set of twenty-nine blocks that were never assembled into a quilt. Attached to several of the inked blocks are slips of paper on which the names Mack inscribed were written in script. This indicates that the calligraphy was done after the blocks were pieced, but before they were assembled.

James Mack’s lettering is far more elaborate than that of any of the other scribes. He seems often to have been experimenting by adding different flourishes. In some instances the same letter is executed in different ways when repeated in a single block.

Fourteen quilts and three tops dated between 1851 and 1859 appear to have been inscribed by the same hand. (See Figure 7) Except for a single top, each item contains a dedication block that identifies the owner

Figure 7. Calligraphy of the Footed Letter Scrivener. Photograph courtesy of the Goschenhoppen Historians, Inc.



Figure 8. Inscription from the Susanna Kemmerer quilt. Photograph courtesy of Naron Kemmerer Gebert.

with the words *Ihr Teppich* and a date surrounded by an open wreath of leaves and branches.<sup>40</sup> On all of the items each name other than the owner's is underlined by a double "S" curve that resembles bare, crossed branches. The stylistic similarities in the calligraphy on these seventeen quilts and tops are so striking that it seems reasonable to attribute them all to the same artist.

In *Lest I Shall Be Forgotten* Nancy and Donald Roan identify that artist as Jonathan Kemmerer, who signed his name in a uniquely embellished block on his sister Susanna's 1852 friendship quilt.<sup>41</sup> However, comparison of the Jonathan Kemmerer block with others on the same quilt and to the other quilts with the same flourishes and style of dedication block shows clearly that a different hand from all the others executed Jonathan's block. (See figures 8 and 9).

The anonymous artist identified as the Footed Letter Scrivener may have inscribed the fraktur quilts with the distinctive crossed branches



Figure 9. Inscription from the Susanna Kemmerer quilt. Photograph courtesy of Naron Kemmerer Gebert.

decoration.<sup>42</sup> The Footed Letter Scrivener is so called because “the legs of his capital letters “M,” “N,” and “K” kick out like a foot. The horizontal bar of his number “4” slants down toward the left. His other letters are angular.”<sup>43</sup> The Footed Letter Scrivener was active circa 1843 to 1860 in Lehigh and adjoining counties of southeastern Pennsylvania.<sup>44</sup> This group of seventeen items falls within the time frame and the locale of his activity.

### *The People*

Who made the quilts?<sup>45</sup> Why were they made? Except for items inscribed by James Mack it has been easy to identify the owners.<sup>46</sup> The outstanding feature of these quilts is the dedication block proclaiming in fraktur





calligraphy *Ihr Teppich*. Deciphering the ornately inscribed names was the first step toward discovering the identities of the women who owned the fraktur quilts. This proved to be a challenge. Fraktur letters can be so stylized as to be practically unrecognizable. For example, the upper case “S” looks almost exactly like the “G”; the “O” and the “D” are easily confused. When one is unsure of the initial letter it is easy to misidentify an individual or family. Compiling accurate lists of the names on the quilts was a time consuming project. Another complication was the German practice of *Rufnamen*, or call names. It was customary throughout the nineteenth century for parents of German ancestry to give most, or all, male children the first name John and to name daughters either Maria or Anna. These children would then be called by what we would term their middle name.<sup>47</sup> This can lead to considerable confusion when trying to compare church records with census information. A further challenge is presented by the fact that because of the overwhelming numbers of families of German descent in mid-nineteenth century Lehigh County, the same surnames appear over and over again. The census enumerators, who sometimes seemed to be comfortable in neither English nor German, often relied on phonetic, and creative, spelling when recording names.<sup>48</sup>

It seems likely that in most, but not all, cases the owner was also the maker of the quilt.<sup>49</sup> There is no discernible pattern as to why the quilts were made. In several instances the date on the quilt coincides with the marriage of the owner, but in other cases the owner was a child, an older single woman or, in one case, the mother of a growing family. It appears that most of the quilts were made to commemorate a community of family and friends rather than to mark a particular occasion. According to Ricky Clark, “A series of quilts from the same period and community, all signed and in the same pattern indicates a fad. While we often dismiss fads as inconsequential, they affirm an individual’s place within a social group.”<sup>50</sup>

There are 867 names inscribed on the twenty-one quilts and the set of blocks made in Lehigh County: 451, or fifty-three percent, are women’s names; 413, or forty-seven percent, are men’s names.<sup>51</sup> There is no pattern as to who was included on a quilt. Some quilts contain the names of parents or siblings long dead, while omitting close family members



still living at the time the quilt was made. On some quilts almost all the names are those of family members.<sup>52</sup> Other quilts present a picture of a neighborhood, recording the names that appear in close proximity on the census rolls.

The owners of the Lehigh County quilts were all rural women of Pennsylvania German descent. (See Appendix III) None of them resided in Allentown, the only area of the county that could be described as urban in the mid-nineteenth century. They ranged in age from six to thirty-six in the year the quilts were made. It is necessary to piece together a picture of their lives from public records that focus on their husbands and fathers. Census information about the occupation and property of heads of households indicates the economic status of their wives and daughters. The owners of many of the quilts lived in the homes of solidly middle class farmers. Susanna Kemmerer, Rachel Ortt, and Angelina Ritter were probably considered the daughters of relatively rich men.<sup>53</sup> Sarah Major, on the other hand, would have been poor even by nineteenth century standards.<sup>54</sup> Caroline Brobst was an orphan and Rebecca Schwenker a widow who boarded out her children so that she could work as a servant.<sup>55</sup>

No connection has been found between Caroline Brobst, Rebecca Schwenker or Maria Anna Handwerk and any of the other women who owned fraktur inscribed quilts made in the 1850s. However, there were complex and overlapping relationships among the other fourteen women who owned such quilts dated between 1851 and 1856. It is reasonable to suggest that the idea for such a quilt spread as women saw a friendship quilt made by a relative or friend and became aware of a novel way of employing a scrivener's talent. The remaining thirteen quilts and set of blocks, made in Lehigh County between 1851 and 1856 and inscribed either by James Mack or in the style of the Footed Letter Scrivener, were owned by women who also had some connection, direct or indirect, to each other.

The earliest of the Lehigh County quilts, dated 1851, belonged to Elmina Morey. Elmina was related to Matilda Person, Susanna Kemmerer and Angelina Ritter who also owned fraktur quilts; all of the quilts appear to be inscribed by the Footed Letter Scrivener. She was born Elmina Kemmerer in 1830 and married Daniel Abner Morey June



22, 1851.<sup>56</sup> Susanna Kemmerer was her first cousin and in 1852 Elmina's brother Nathan married Matilda Person, whose quilt is dated 1853.<sup>57</sup> The names of Angelina Ritter and Susanna Kemmerer appear on each other's quilts, both of which are dated 1852. They were probably second cousins since there were several marriages between Ritters and Kemmerers.<sup>58</sup> In 1856 Angelina married Addison Morey who may have been related to Elmina's husband.<sup>59</sup> Elmina Kemmerer Morey may not have been the first woman to think of having her friendship quilt inscribed by a fraktur calligrapher, but she probably was the inspiration for her younger relatives to do so.

The descendants of John Adam Wieder of Salisbury Township, Lehigh County link many of the quilt owners.<sup>60</sup> The names of members of this family are inscribed on the quilts belonging to Susanna Kemmerer, Eliza Bader, Elisabeth Heiberger, Harriet Knappenberger, Sarah Major and Rachel Ortt.

Rachel Ortt's quilt is particularly notable because the owner's name is spelled incorrectly in the dedication block. The scrivener wrote "*Rahel Ortt, Irh Teppich, 1853.*" Since the calligraphy preceded the quilting, Rachel must have been willing to accept the mistake and complete the quilt. When the quilt was made Rachel was thirty-five years old and a member of a family who the records of the Upper Milford Reformed Congregation<sup>61</sup> show was singularly averse to marriage. Only two of her parents' nine children ever married. The names of twenty-two Ortts representing four generations are inscribed on the quilt. The same church records show a connection between the Ortt and the Heimbach families for whom the James Mack quilts were made.<sup>62</sup>

The unidentified owners of the quilts inscribed by James Mack were probably the granddaughters of Wendel and Susanna Heimbach. The three completed quilts are all dated 1854 (see Plate 1). Each identifies Susanna Heimbach as "*Die or Mey Grossmutter,*" (the *or* my grandmother) and two add the words "*Mey Goth,*" (my godmother). Susanna and her husband Wendel had at least four children whose births are noted in the records of the Upper Milford Reformed Congregation. One of their sons, Samuel, is listed in the same house as James Mack and his parents in the 1850 and 1860 census. The church records list several granddaughters for whom Wendel and Susanna were godparents. The unassembled blocks



are dated 1856, the year Susanna Heimbach died. They may have been intended for a fourth grandchild.

The Anna Maria Desch and Harriet Knappenberger quilts look very much alike. Each is pieced of Flying Crow blocks of mostly red and yellow prints with white sashing, pink cornerstones and a Turkey red dogtooth inner border. Anna Maria Desch and Harriet Knappenberger were neighbors. Their parents had been married on the same day, May 27, 1827, in the same church.<sup>63</sup> Church records show that Anna Maria's godparents were Phillip and Maria Heimbach whose names are on one of the quilts inscribed by James Mack.<sup>64</sup>

There is no evidence of similar connections among the owners of the four Lehigh County fraktur quilts made between 1861 and 1870. It appears that far fewer such quilts were made during that period. Elizabeth Fisher's 1861 quilt was probably inscribed by an amateur calligrapher, and the owners of the three quilts signed by William Gross each lived in a different township.

However, Aveline S. A. Stern did have contact with Elmina Morey and with Rebecca Schwenker. It was Aveline's 1862 quilt that prompted this study and the resources of the Lehigh County Historical Society have revealed the outlines of her life.<sup>65</sup> She was born Aveline Sarah Ann Ziegenfuss on September 15, 1842 in Upper Saucon Township. Her father John Henry, called Henry, and mother Sarah were the parents of four sons and three daughters. Aveline was the fifth of these children. Aveline's father Henry Ziegenfuss was not a man of property; he worked successively as a shoemaker, a laborer and a miner. For many years he was employed by the Lehigh Zinc Company, one of the first industrial enterprises in the area.

The names of Aveline's parents, all of her siblings and her nephew Henry Ziegenfuss (but not his older sisters) are on her quilt. Except for the dedication block the only decoration on any of the names inscribed on the quilt is a double box drawn around the name of Aveline's sister Matilda who had died in 1852. The family belonged to the Friedens Church and many of them are buried in the church cemetery.

In 1850 Aveline's brother Charles, then nine years old, lived in the home of Joseph Morey, a neighbor of Elmina's future husband Daniel Abner Morey.<sup>66</sup> At the same time Josiah Schwenker, age four, probably



Rebecca Schwenker's son, was living in the home of Henry Ziegenfuss's neighbor David Mack,<sup>67</sup> whose name appears with that of his wife and son on Rebecca Schwenker's 1853 quilt. If Aveline was too young to notice Elmina and Rebecca's quilts, her mother Sarah would surely have been aware of them.

The present location of Elmina Morey's quilt is unknown, but it was photographed and documented during the Goschenhoppen Quilt Roundup. Its similarity to Aveline Stern's quilt is striking. Both quilts consist of red and yellow Rolling Stone blocks, green sashing and borders with pink or red cornerstones. On each the quilting is around the piece in the blocks and diagonal lines in the sashing and borders.

In 1860 Aveline is recorded in the census as a servant in a hotel.<sup>68</sup> On January 12, 1861 Aveline married Joseph Stern. The marriage was recorded in the "Pastor's Book" of Rev. Joshua Yaeger, an Evangelical Lutheran preacher who for more than fifty years served as pastor for a number of churches including the Friedens Church. Circuit riding preachers kept their own record books of christenings, marriages and funerals at which they presided. These "pastor's books" are often more complete than church records.<sup>69</sup> At some point, perhaps in 1862 when Aveline's brothers Charles and William enlisted in the Pennsylvania Volunteers, her husband, Joseph, also joined Union forces. Nothing is known of Aveline's life between 1861 and 1867 when the same Pastor Yaeger, who performed her wedding, presided at her funeral.<sup>70</sup>

Aveline's gravestone in the Friedens Church Cemetery is in the traditional German style, tall and narrow with a rounded top, but the inscription is in English: "Aveline Sarah A. Wife of Joseph Stern. Born Sept. 15, 1842. Died May 28, 1867. Aged 24y. 8mo. 13 days." Aveline obviously cherished her three-part name. Not only did she include the initials "S" and "A" on her quilt, the initial "A" is squeezed onto her gravestone as if the family had insisted that the stonecutter carve her complete name.

There are two references to Aveline's husband Joseph in the Allentown newspapers. One was a notice of their marriage; the second, dated February 16, 1868 announced his marriage to Levina Kunsman.<sup>71</sup> Joseph's remarriage less than nine months after Aveline's death raised the possibility that she had died as a result of childbirth and that the child had survived. In the mid-nineteenth century a widower with a young



Figure 10. Susanna Kemmerer's 1852 Rolling Stone Quilt, inscribed in the style of the Footed Letter Scrivener, was made when Susanna was eleven years old. It remains in the Kemmerer family. Photograph courtesy of Naron Kemmerer Gebert.

child was likely to remarry as soon as possible. Aveline's death preceded the requirement for birth or death certificates in Pennsylvania, so there is no record of the cause of death, nor any reference to the birth of a child in newspaper or church records.

A grave in the Friedens Church Cemetery is marked with a stone inscribed, "Jonas son of Joseph and Evelina Stern. Born May 22, 1867. Died Aug. 12, 1892. Aged 25 yrs, 2 ms & 20ds." Jonas was born six days before Aveline died. In 1880, Joseph and Levina were still living in Upper Saucon Township with Jonas, then age twelve, and two younger



Figure 11. Susanna  
Kemmerer Berkenstock  
(1841–1934) in old age.  
Photograph courtesy  
of Naron Kemmerer  
Gebert.

children.<sup>72</sup> The census records that Jonas was “deaf and dumb”<sup>73</sup> and that he attended school.

Surely, Aveline Ziegenfuss Stern’s life was as eventful as that of any other young woman who filled all of the traditional nineteenth century roles of daughter, sister, wife and mother. Aveline even worked for a time outside the home. Yet the total of what is known about her is contained in a few paragraphs. Even the descendants of her brothers and sister knew nothing other than her name. It was that name, inscribed by William Gross on her friendship quilt, that inspired this research.

Linda Otto Lipsett wrote, “In many instances, friendship quilts are the only remaining records of the women whose names are inscribed on them.”<sup>74</sup> The intriguing use of fraktur calligraphy to inscribe the friendship quilts of a group of mid-nineteenth century Pennsylvania German women has led to the recognition of a unique body of quilts made in a restricted geographic area. The names on each quilt can be used to recreate the community in which each of these women lived (see figures 10 and 11) and to insure that not only she, but those she loved, will not be forgotten.<sup>75</sup>



A a	<i>A a</i>	A a	P p	<i>P p</i>	P p
B b	<i>B b</i>	B b	Q q	<i>Q q</i>	Q q
C c	<i>C c</i>	C c	R r	<i>R r</i>	R r
D d	<i>D d</i>	D d	S s	<i>S s</i>	S s
E e	<i>E e</i>	E e	T t	<i>T t</i>	T t
F f	<i>F f</i>	F f	U u	<i>U u</i>	U u
G g	<i>G g</i>	G g	V v	<i>V v</i>	V v

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H h	<i>H h</i>	H h	W w	<i>W w</i>	W w
I i	<i>I i</i>	I i	X x	<i>X x</i>	X x
J j	<i>J j</i>	J j	Y y	<i>Y y</i>	Y y
K k	<i>K k</i>	K k	Z z	<i>Z z</i>	Z z
L l	<i>L l</i>	L l	ch	<i>ch</i>	ch
M m	<i>M m</i>	M m	sch	<i>sch</i>	sch
N n	<i>N n</i>	N n	ß	<i>ß</i>	sz tz
O o	<i>O o</i>	O o			

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Appendix I. Fraktur alphabet courtesy of the Indiana German Heritage Society.





Appendix II. The Lehigh County Quilts

Quilt Number	Original Owner	Date	Size	# Blocks	Pattern	Scrivener	Back
1	Morey, Elmira G.	1851	97x96	36	Rolling Stone	FLS	print
2	Brobst, Caroline*	1852	88x86	25	Rolling Stone	unknown	white
3	Kemmerer, Susanna	1852	107x106	36	Rolling Stone	FLS	white
4	Knappenberger, Harriet*	1852	90x80	30	Flying Crow	FLS	white
5	Major, Sarah	1852	91x91	44	Rolling Stone	FLS	?
6	Ritter, Angelina	1852	98x94	25	Rolling Stone	FLS	print
7	Bader, Eliza S.	1853	?	35	Rolling Stone	FLS	?
8	Desch, Anna Maria	1853	100x84	30	Flying Crow	FLS	print
9	Heiberger, Elisabeth*	1853	?	30	Rolling Stone	FLS	?
10	Ortt, Rachel	1853	96x88	30	Rolling Stone	FLS	print
11	Person, Matilda	1853	105x93	30	Rolling Stone	FLS	?
12	Schwenker, Rebecca	1853	89x94	30	Rolling Stone	FLS	print
13	Heimbach #1	1854	92x91	36	Flying Crow	J.Mack	strips
14	Heimbach #2	1854	99x89	42	Flying Crow	J. Mack	?
15	Heimbach #3	1854	?	42	Flying Crow	J. Mack	strips
16	Handwerk, Maria Anna	1856	73x86	30	Rolling Stone	FLS	white
17	Heimbach blocks	1856	NA	29	Rolling Stone	J. Mack	NA
18	Fisher, Elizabeth	1861	86x83	25	Rolling Stone	unknown	print
19	Stern, Avaline	1862	89x71	20	Rolling Stone	Wm. Gross	print
20	Dieber, Rebecca Carolina	1868	85x82	36	RS-variation	Wm. Gross	white
21	Miller, Madarah	1869	83x98	30	Rolling Stone	Wm. Gross	strips

\*dedication in border

FLS indicates the Footed Letter Scrivener



Appendix III Original Owners of the Lehigh County Quilts

Quilt Number	Name	Date	Age	Township	Status	Property Real/Personal
1	Morey, Elmira G.	1851	21	Upper Saucon	married, husband farmer/handlord	?
2	Brost, Caroline	1852	15	Lynn	single, orphan living on farm	?
3	Kemmerer, Susanna	1852	12	Salisbury	single, father farmer	\$8,500/
4	Knappenberger, Harriet	1852	22	Lower Macungie	single, father farmer	\$4,000/
5	Major, Sarah	1852	36	South Whitehall	married, husband laborer	/ \$100
6	Ritter, Angelina	1852	17	Salisbury	single, father farmer	\$8,000
7	Bader, Eliza S.	1853	19	Upper Milford	single, father laborer	/ \$300
8	Desch, Anna Maria	1853	19	Lower Macungie	single, father farmer	\$3,000/
9	Heiberger, Elisabeth	1853	31	Upper Macungie	single, father farmer	?
10	Ortt, Rachel	1853	35	Upper Milford	single, father farmer	\$7,500/\$1,000
11	Persom, Matilda	1853	21	Upper Milford	single, father farmer	\$6,000
12	Schwenker, Rebecca	1853	30	Upper Saucon	widow, servant	?
13	Heimbach ???	1854	?	Upper Milford	farmers/carpenter	\$400 to \$3,000/
14	Heimbach ???	1854	?	Upper Milford	farmers/carpenter	\$400 to \$3,000/
15	Heimbach ???	1854	?	Upper Milford	farmers/carpenter	\$400 to \$3,000/
16	Handwerk, Maria Anna	1856	18	Heidelberg	single, father farmer	\$3,000/
17	Heimbach ??? (blocks)	1856	?	Upper Milford	farmers/carpenter	\$400 to \$3,000/
18	Fisher, Elizabeth	1861	20	South Whitehall	single, housework (hired)	?
19	Stern, Avaline	1862	20	Upper Saucon	married, husband ?, father miner	/ \$500
20	Dieber, Rebecca Carolina	1868	6	Low Hill	single, father farmer	\$5,000/\$400
21	Miller, Madarah	1869	15	South Whitehall	single, father teamster	\$1,600/\$600



## Notes and References

1. The word *fraktur* refers to a German writing style similar to Old English Gothic. Appendix I shows the fraktur alphabet included in the Indiana German Heritage Society's 1987 reprint of *Witter's Deutsch-Englische Schreib - und Lese-Fibel für Amerikanische Freischulen*. I am grateful to Eberhard Reichmann, Editor-in-Chief of the Indiana German Heritage Society, Inc. for permission to include these pages. Suzanne Cawley gave me a copy of this reprint of a German-English primer which I used to familiarize myself with fraktur script. I frequently consulted Silke Heller Reddington for help in transcribing names.
2. Nancy and Donald Roan, *Lest I Shall Be Forgotten* (Green Lane, PA: Goschenhoppen Historians, Inc., 1993), 18.
3. Nancy Roan and Ellen J. Gehret, *Just A Quilt or Juscht en Deppich* (Green Lane, PA: Goschenhoppen Historians, Inc., 1984), 3. "The name Goschenhoppen refers to a geographical region established in the folk mind . . . forty miles northwest of Philadelphia. Within this historic region . . . a particular Germanic folk cultural pattern emerged. The Goschenhoppen Historians, Inc. are organized to identify, preserve, and disseminate the folk culture and history of this area." The Goschenhoppen Quilt Roundup, 1990–1992 documented quilts and quiltmakers of the region.
4. Roan, 18.
5. I am grateful to Ellie Bennett, Alice Casey, Xenia Cord, Sarah Dillow, Carolyn Ducey, Corinne Earnest, Naron Kemmerer Gebert, Patricia Herr, Carol Herrity, Jonathan Holstein, Charles Kennedy, Susan McKelvey, Morgan McMillan, Linda Miller, Chris Moline, Robin Munson, Anna Norton, Candace Perry, Nancy and Donald Roan, Barbara Schaffer, Charles Schaffer, and Dorothy Swezak who helped me to discover the quilts, the scribes, and the quiltmakers.
6. C. Kurt Dewhust, Betty MacDowell, Marsha MacDowell, *Artists In Aprons* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979), xiii.
7. Jessica F. Nicoll, *Quilted for Friends* (Winterthur, DE: The Henry Francis Dupont Winterthur Museum, 1986), 7.
8. Corinne and Russell Earnest, *Fraktur: Folk Art and Family* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 1999), 10.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Irwin Richman, *Pennsylvania German Arts* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 2001), 9.
11. Frederick S. Weiser, *The Gift Is Small The Love Is Great* (York, PA: York Graphic Services, Inc., 1994), 7.
12. Mahlon H. Hellerich, ed., *Allentown 1762–1987: A 225-Year History* (Allentown, PA: The Lehigh County Historical Society, 1987), 151.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Terry A. McNally and Cory M. Amsler, "Pennsylvania-German Schools in Bucks County," *Bucks County Fraktur*, ed. Cory M. Amsler (Kutztown, PA: The Pennsylvania German Society, 2001), 88.



15. Dennis K. Moyer, *Fraktur Writings and Folk Art Drawings of the Schwenkfelder Library Collection* (Kutztown, PA: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1997), 14.
16. Joint Planning Commission Lehigh-Northampton Counties, *History of the Lehigh Valley Region*, 1963, 41.
17. McNally and Amsler, 85.
18. Hellerich, 159.
19. Patricia T. Herr, *Quilting Traditions* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2000), 9.
20. Roan, 17.
21. Eight of the fraktur inscribed quilts are now in museum collections. The Carolyn Brobst quilt is owned by The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, PA; the Elizabeth Fisher quilt by the Talbot County Historical Society, Easton, MD; the Harriet Knappenberger quilt by the Lehigh County Historical Society, Allentown, PA; the Sarah Major and Matilda Person quilts by the International Quilt Study Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; the Rebecca Dieber quilt by the Kemerer Museum of Decorative Arts, Bethlehem, PA; the Angelina Ritter and Anna Maria Desch quilts by the Goschenhoppen Historians, Inc., Green Lane, PA. The other quilts, tops and blocks are in private collections.
22. Appendix II: The Lehigh County Quilts summarizes the physical characteristics of the quilts made in Lehigh County.
23. Jane Bentley Kolter, *Forget Me Not: A Gallery of Album and Friendship Quilts* (Pittstown, NJ: The Main Street Press, 1985), 59.
24. One quilt top inscribed with the names Bieber, Hunsperger, Hisry and others has neither a date nor a dedication block. The top may have been made in Montgomery County.
25. Nancy Roan in a telephone conversation with the author, 30 September 2003, stated that the documenters of the Goschenhoppen Historians had not previously seen this block and could not identify it in any published source. The name Flying Crow was adopted for the sake of convenience. Quilts were not identified by pattern name in either the exhibit or the book that resulted from the 1990–1992 documentation project.
26. Linda Otto Lipsett, *Remember Me: Women & Their Friendship Quilts* (San Francisco: The Quilt Digest Press, 1985), 25.
27. Corinne Pattie Earnest and Beverly Repass Hoch, *German-American Family Records in the Fraktur Tradition* (Albuquerque, NM: Russell D. Earnest Associates, 1991), 3.
28. Earnest, *Fraktur: Folk Art and Family*, 6.
29. *Ibid.*, 26.
30. Russell D. Earnest and Corinne P. Earnest, “Ausfiller and Dindamen: The Fraktur Scriveners of Bucks County,” *Bucks County Fraktur*, 179.
31. *Ibid.*, 183.
32. I am grateful to Corinne Earnest for sharing her knowledge of fraktur with me. Her observations on the examples of inscriptions on quilt blocks helped me to recognize characteristics that distinguish different calligraphers.



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33. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1860 Federal census, State of Pennsylvania, Lehigh County, South Whitehall Township.
34. Lucinda R. Cawley, Lorraine D. Ezbiansky and Denise R. Nordberg, *Saved for the People of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1997), 22–3.
35. The Germans who had adopted quilting after settling in Pennsylvania used the German word for carpet to describe the bedcoverings that began to replace woven coverlets in the mid-nineteenth century. The word is variously spelled *Teppich*, *Tepig* or *Deppich*.
36. Russell D. and Corinne P. Earnest, *Papers for Birth Dayes: Guide to the Fraktur Artists and Scriveners*, Vol 1, 2nd ed. (East Berlin, PA: Russell D. Earnest Associates, 1997), 335.
37. Ibid.
38. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1850 Federal Census, State of Pennsylvania, Lehigh County, Upper Milford Township.
39. In both the 1860 and 1870 census James Mack's occupation is listed as laborer.
40. The dedication block on Elmina Morey's 1851 quilt includes only her name and the date within the distinctive open wreath.
41. Roan, 18–9.
42. Unknown scriveners are often referred to by a "tag name" based on some peculiar characteristic of their work.
43. Earnest, *Papers for Birth Dayes*, 287.
44. Ibid.
45. When it became obvious that seventy-five percent of the items in the sample were made in Lehigh County, I concentrated my research on census, church records, histories and genealogies of Lehigh County. I believe that the top in the style of the Footed Letter Scrivener inscribed Abessina Mensch *Ihr Teppich* 1859 was made in Upper Hanover Township, Montgomery County and that the quilts and tops inscribed, by apparently the same hand, Anna Eliza Bieber *Ihr Teppich* 1854, Bieber (no name or date), Sophia Moser *Ihr Teppich* 1859 and Rebecca Reitnauer *Ihr Teppich* 1859, as well as the quilt inscribed Hannah Derolf *Ihr Teppich* 1868 by William Gross, were most likely made in either Montgomery or Berks County. The quilt inscribed Susanna Merkel *Ihr Teppich* 1870 by William Gross was made in Maxatawny Township, Berks County. I am aware of other fraktur inscribed quilts on which no research has been done.
46. Appendix III: The Original Owners of the Lehigh County Quilts summarizes what is known about these women.
47. James M. Beidler, "Names and Naming," *German Life* (October/November 2003), 64.
48. In the Upper Milford Township census for 1850 Saul Weider's children Anthony, Erwin and Elmina, whose names appear on Eliza S. Bader's 1853 quilt, are listed as Andany, Arwine and Allamina.
49. Rebecca Carolina Dieber certainly did not make the quilt that William Gross inscribed for her in 1868. In 1868 Rebecca was only six years old; she was also blind.



Rebecca was one of six children. Both her older sister Alice and younger brother James were blind. Charles Rhoades Roberts et al, *History of Lehigh County Pennsylvania*, Vol. II (Allentown, PA: Lehigh Valley Publishing Co., 1914), 223.

50. Ricky Clark, "Mid-19th-Century Album and Friendship Quilts 1860–1920," *Pieced by Mother Symposium Papers*, Jeannette Lasansky, ed. (Lewisburg, PA, Oral Traditions Project, 1988), 82.
51. Men's names often appear on friendship and album quilts of the mid-nineteenth century, but the percentage of men's names on the fraktur inscribed quilts is surprising. I do not know of a comparable group of friendship quilts that could be used for a comparison.
52. Of the thirty people named on Rachel Ortt's 1853 Rolling Stone, I believe that only one is not a relative.
53. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1850 Federal Census, State of Pennsylvania, Lehigh County.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Naron Kemmerer Gebert, *Kemmerer Past to Present* (Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 1997), 105. The Kemmerer family history provides invaluable information about the lives of several of the quilt owners. The entry on Susanna Kemmerer, 113, states that she "had a great interest in quilts and many other artistic crafts . . . Even at the age of 90 years, Susanna kept busy with light household chores and although her eyesight made it difficult to sew on quilts, she was still able to mark them with stencils."
57. Ibid., 104–13.
58. Naron Kemmerer Gebert, letter to the author, 6 March 2003.
59. The Lehigh County Historical Society maintains a card file of marriage and death announcements published between 1812 and 1874 in *Der Friedens Bote* and *Unabhaenger Republikaner*, German language newspapers published in Allentown, PA, hereafter cited as FB/UR.
60. Dorothy Elsie Worman, *Gilbert-Knappenberger-Jarrett & Allied Families* (Decorah, IA: The Anundsen Publishing Company, 1990), 290–301.
61. *Church Record of the Upper Milford Reformed Congregation Now Zion's Reformed Church, Zionsville, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, 1757–1885* copied by Wm. J. Hinke, 1936, is in the collection of the Lehigh County Historical Society, Allentown, PA.
62. The names of Jacob and Susanna Ortt and those of Wendel and Susanna Heimbach appear frequently in the church records during the 1820s as the births of their children were recorded.
63. Raymond E. Hollenbach, *Records of Lehigh Church, Zion's Lutheran Church, Lower Macungie Township, Lehigh County* (Translated and Transcribed from the Originals, 1964), 157.
64. Ibid., 118.
65. Ziegenfuss family historians Brian Ziegenfuss, Ray Parsons, Robert Ziegenfuss, and Larry Zickefoose gave me information about the family genealogy. They are all



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descendants of Aveline Stern's siblings but had no information about her other than the fact that she died before 1894.

66. 1850 Census, Upper Saucon Township, Lehigh County, 200. It was not uncommon at the time for very young children to board with neighbors or family members and to work as casual laborers in the home or on the farm.
67. *Ibid.*, 93.
68. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1860 Federal Census, State of Pennsylvania, Lehigh County, Upper Saucon Township, 789.
69. Carol Herrity, librarian at the Lehigh County Historical Society, in a conversation with the author, June 27, 2002. The marriage is also recorded in FB/UR.
70. A. R. Horn, DD, *Das Leben und Wierken von Vater Josua Jager: Life and Work of Father Joshua Yaeger* (Allentown, PA: National Educator, 1889), 59. This book is in the collection of the Easton (PA) Area Public Library.
71. FB/UR.
72. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1880 Federal Census, State of Pennsylvania, Lehigh County, Upper Saucon Township, 26
73. When Eliza Ziegenfuss, widow of Aveline's brother William, applied for a Civil War pension in 1870 she listed her oldest daughter Sarah Ann as a resident of the Philadelphia Deaf and Dumb Asylum. Eliza signed her petition with an "X."
74. Lipsett, 28.
75. A copy of my research on the names inscribed on the Lehigh County fraktur quilts is available at the library of the Lehigh County Historical Society, Hamilton at Fifth, P.O. Box 1548, Allentown, PA 18105-1548. Phone 610-435-1074.