

Uncoverings 2008

Volume 29 of
the Research Papers of
the American Quilt Study Group

Edited by Laurel Horton



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Collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.



Contents

<i>Preface</i>	7
<i>The Circuit Rider's Quilt: Reality and Romance</i> Susan Price Miller	11
<i>More than Warmth: Gift Quilts by Aging Women in Antebellum America</i> Aimee E. Newell	43
<i>Irene Post: Quilt Artist and Neighbor of Bertha Stenge</i> Sue C. Cummings	75
<i>Modern, Yet Anti-Modern: Two Sides of Late-Nineteenth- and Early-Twentieth-Century Quilting</i> Marin F. Hanson	105
<i>Quilts for McKinley: Women's Involvement in Politics</i> Arlesa J. Shephard	137
<i>Quilts in Transition: A Study of Strafford County, New Hampshire, Probate Inventories</i> Loretta B. Chase	159

Contributors

189

Index

193



Preface

This volume of *Uncoverings* features the full versions of oral papers presented at the 28th American Quilt Study Group Seminar, October 3–5, 2008, in Columbus, Ohio. As with each of the previous volumes, the juxtaposition of the individual papers generates resonances among various themes, subjects, and approaches.

Three of the papers deal with subjects with particular significance to Ohio. Susan Price Miller's examination of a single quilt begins in southwestern Ohio. Sue Cummings's purchase of quilts at auction led her to uncover the life and career of an otherwise unknown Ohio quiltmaker. Arlesa Shephard looks at quilts associated with William McKinley, an Ohio-born political figure.

The other papers span the better part of two centuries of American textile traditions. Lorie Chase guides us through the intricacies of probate records of a single New Hampshire county for the years 1773 to 1849. Aimee E. Newell describes gift quilts made by older women between 1820 and 1860. Marin Hanson discusses modern and anti-modern trends reflected in quilts made between 1870 and 1945.

This year's papers also offer an observable contrast in research methods and approaches. Three authors—Hanson, Newell, and Shephard—use quilts to illustrate discussions of broad themes—



women's history, political history, and art history. These papers construct thematic narratives in broad strokes, examining quilts in museum collections or in published works, and referencing appropriate secondary sources. These three young authors have all written MA theses on quilt-related subjects, earning degrees from major universities.

Thirty years ago very few advanced-degree programs allowed students to write theses on quilts. There were virtually no opportunities to present serious quilt-related papers at academic conferences or to publish research on the subject in scholarly journals. In 1980 AQSG initiated an annual seminar and published juried papers in order to address these lacks. Gradually, AQSG and its members have established quilt study as a valid and respected scholarly pursuit. The publication of research papers by emerging scholars in this and previous volumes of *Uncoverings* is a gratifying measure of AQSG's success.

The other three authors in this volume demonstrate another aspect of the fulfillment of AQSG's mission. These scholars are long-time participants in the organization's member network, which has, from the beginning, included both academic and grassroots scholars. Miller and Chase are veteran AQSG presenters, while Cummings makes her AQSG presentation debut. In this volume, each of these mature authors has defined a narrow topic—a single quilt, a single quiltmaker, a single county—then addressed that topic through an astonishing array of research strategies and experience. Chase's interpretation of probate records would have been impossible without her accumulated knowledge of New England textile traditions and local history. Miller's sources included nineteenth-century public records and local historical material, as well as twentieth-century periodicals. Cummings traced her quiltmaker through a maze of obscure documents, enhanced by information gleaned from oral interviews and paper ephemera.

These six authors not only conducted extensive research; they also chose to submit their papers to be juried, edited, and—finally—published in this journal. At a time when the internet offers oppor-



tunities to make one's opinions and theories instantly and widely available, these authors have made a long-term commitment to serious scholarship. Here, then, are six additional contributions to the over two hundred articles published in *Uncoverings* since 1980.

Laurel Horton
Editor