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Knockers, Pickers, Movers, and Shakers: Quilt Dealers in America, 1970–2000

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The Quilt Revival in the last decades of the twentieth century gave rise to new quilt-related professions and disciplines, including historians, collectors, shop owners, show organizers, appraisers, artists and makers, teachers, authors, and publishers. Often overlooked is the vital contribution quilt dealers played in bringing antique and vintage quilts to the marketplace, along with other quilt-related activities. Based on interviews conducted by the author from August 2011 to April 2013, this paper discusses how the profession developed, how dealers acquired their inventory and to whom they sold it, and how they managed their business and interrelationships. The sixteen interviews with nineteen American quilt dealers active between 1967 and 2000 reveal that, in addition to buying and selling quilts, dealers often participated in other quilt-related disciplines as historians, collectors, appraisers, teachers, authors, and publishers. Altogether, the interviews with these pioneers provide a fascinating glimpse into the world of quilt dealers and their work.

It is still dark when the men and women line up in front of the double doors. They whisper quietly among themselves for the next two hours, looking around furtively at the others in line. Any laughter is tense and brittle. Their calm demeanors belie their excitement and anticipation. What would they find behind the locked doors? Would it be good quality or just average? Who would win, who would lose? How much could they carry? How much could they afford? Hearts pound. Almost 6 a.m. Finally, the doors open. The tall lanky man sprints in ahead of the others, followed by his partner,



a shorter fair-haired man. “This, this, and this,” they shout. “And that and that.” Buyers grab hungrily at the goods; it is a feeding frenzy. They want to see and buy as much as possible right away. People stop running up and down the aisles after awhile, but trading is still brisk and desperate. Those who missed out on something they really wanted seek out the new owner hoping to convince him to part with it. Quiet exchanges continue throughout the day until finally, the market closes and it is time to leave. Tired but gratified, they all head home with their stash. However, for one couple, the day is not yet over. “New York” is in the driveway, waiting to see what they bought.

Although this account is fictionalized, it illustrates a typical experience at the various antiques and quilt shows described by the dealers interviewed for this paper. Finding good quilts to buy and resell was the core of their livelihood. Every year, there were more and more dealers, especially in the Midwest, competing for the same goods and clients. They all knew one another; they were friends, colleagues, and competitors all at the same time. Over a span of three decades (roughly between 1970 and 2000), the dealers in this study and others like them created a multi-million dollar industry, brought tens of thousands of quilts to the marketplace, placed thousands of them in private and museum collections, conducted research, and began to document American quilt history. With the exception of Michael Kile’s 1986 essay, “On the Road” in *The Quilt Digest 4*, little has been written about the activities of quilt dealers and there has been no systematic study of their influence as a group.¹ This paper provides a glimpse into how pioneering dealers developed the new profession of “quilt dealer,” set up a buying and selling structure, interacted with each other, and participated in other quilt-related activities.²

The Dealers

The individuals selected for this study represent a range of geographic areas, working styles, customer bases, and preferred inventory. Information obtained in sixteen interviews with nineteen American quilt dealers (three interviews were conducted with couples) reveals a great deal about the entire industry and provides a better understanding of the significant role quilt dealers played in the Quilt Revival of the last decades of the twentieth century.³

With one exception, interviewees were active in the business by 1982 or earlier.⁴ The eight men and eleven women interviewed represent seven states: California (two); Ohio (five); Indiana (one); Pennsylvania (two); New York



City (seven, including three couples); Kentucky and Maryland (one each). One dealer was born in 1929; six in the 1930s; eight in the 1940s; three in the 1950s and one in 1972. Five held a master's degree or higher; eleven held a bachelor's degree; one had two years of college; and two completed their education with high school. Together, the nineteen dealers represent a variety of business models ranging from stores on Madison Avenue in New York to smaller shops in rural communities or no permanent place of business. They sold at large and small antiques shows and fairs, out of suitcases, by appointment, and through the Internet.

Following are introductions to the dealers interviewed for this project:

Darwin Bearley of Akron, Ohio, began buying and selling quilts in the early 1970s, and specialized in Ohio Amish quilts, though he also sold other types of quilts. Bearley also sold Native American art and folk art. He sold at antique shows and fairs, and by appointment. He currently maintains a collection of antique Ohio Amish quilts and is still active in the antiques business, but does not focus on quilts.

Xenia Cord of Kokomo, Indiana, began her business in the early 1980s and only accepts quilts on consignment. She sells at antique shows and fairs, and at large national quilt shows and festivals. She maintains personal collections, including miniature sewing machines, aprons, and crib quilts. Cord still actively sells quilts.

Michael Council of Columbus, Ohio, started buying and selling quilts part-time in 1981 and quickly transitioned to full-time. He traveled regularly to New York to sell quilts in the 1980s, but also worked at antiques and quilt shows. He still actively buys and sells all types of quilts, primarily to other dealers.

Laura Fisher of New York City worked part-time selling quilts in the late 1970s and began working full-time in the early 1980s. She had shops in the Antiques Center of America and the Manhattan Art and Antiques Center in Upper Manhattan from the late 1970s until 2005. She continues to sell all types of quilts, in addition to hooked rugs and other American textiles, by appointment and through her website.

Mark French of Yellow Springs, Ohio, is the youngest dealer and newest to the business in this study. He and Council were business partners in the late 1990s, but French currently operates independently, selling all types of quilts



through his eBay store and by appointment.

Rebecca Haarer of Shipshewana, Indiana, worked in her parents' antiques store in Shipshewana and gradually took over, selling general antiques and quilts, with an emphasis on Amish and Mennonite quilts and arts. She is still active at her store, and continues selling quilts and local crafts.

Patricia Herr of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, first collected American textiles in the late 1960s but did not start selling antiques until the early 1970s. She sold—and continues to sell—a variety of American textiles (coverlets, samplers, etc.), as well as quilts, at antique shows and fairs, concentrating on Pennsylvania objects (especially Lancaster County Amish and Mennonite). As a veterinarian by profession, she has never dealt in antiques full-time. Herr maintains a personal collection of American folk art.

Jolie Kelter and Michael Malce of New York City joined forces in 1970, sharing a booth in the Antiques Center of America. Together, they sold quilts of all styles in addition to other American folk art. Kelter and Malce still have a shop on Long Island, in which they sell a variety of American folk art, garden furniture, and quilts.

Roderick Kiracofe moved to San Francisco from Ohio in the late 1970s, shortly after he and partner Michael Kile began buying and selling quilts. They sold all types of quilts by appointment and to private clients. Kiracofe and Kile phased out of selling quilts in the mid-1980s. They did not collect quilts while working as dealers, but Kiracofe is currently building a collection of post-1950 quilts. Michael Kile died in 2000.

Kate and Joel Kopp of New York City opened their first shop in 1970 in Manhattan, selling antiques, folk art, and quilts. Their inventory included all styles of quilts. They eventually moved to a larger space on Madison Avenue and retired from the antiques business in 2000.

Marilyn Kowaleski of Wernersville, Pennsylvania, attended antiques auctions with her mother and began buying quilts in 1972. She eventually focused on Amish quilts, although she did carry other styles. She sold primarily from her store, then later in a group shop and privately to other dealers. She sold her personal collections of potholders, and crib and doll quilts in 1999. She retired in 2005.

Joseph Sarah of Columbus, Ohio, bought quilts for himself in the late 1970s but quickly made the transition to becoming a dealer. In addition to American folk art, he sold a range of quilt styles, eventually focusing on Midwestern Amish and Mennonite quilts. Sarah worked primarily at Midwestern antiques and quilt shows. He is now retired.



Darwin Bearley at a show in the 1980s. Photo courtesy of Darwin Bearley.

Stella Rubin of Darnestown, Maryland, began buying and selling quilts and other antiques part-time in the late 1970s, building her business to a full-time occupation by the late 1980s. Her inventory includes all styles of quilts. She is currently active in the business, selling at antiques and quilt shows, by appointment, and through her website.

Julie Silber, who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, came to California from Ohio in 1967. Between 1972 and 1981, she owned Mary Strickler's Quilt Shop in San Rafael with partner Linda Reuther. Her current business, The Quilt Complex, sells all styles of quilts at larger antiques shows and quilt shows and festivals, and through the website.

Blanche Greenstein and Thomas Woodard, another pair of dealers from New York City, opened their first store in 1972, selling quilts and other American folk art. They are still in business and sell a variety of American folk art, vintage and reproduction hooked rugs, and quilts.

Shelly Zegart of Louisville, Kentucky, began collecting quilts in the early 1980s, and started selling quilts a few years later. She sold at antiques shows, private sales, and by appointment. She collected and sold all styles of quilts and still occasionally sells quilts on consignment or through her website.



Creating a New Profession

With the rare exception of people like Florence Peto, who bought, collected, and sold quilts to private clients and museums in the 1940s and 1950s, the profession of “quilt dealer” was virtually unheard of in the late 1960s. General antiques dealers might occasionally have a quilt in their inventory, but they usually didn’t seek them out. Thus, when quilts gained in monetary value and cultural popularity, only a small group of men and women was poised to step in and capitalize on this new trend.

Many who eventually became quilt dealers first bought American antiques and quilts to decorate their houses, and began selling antiques when their personal collections became too large, or to support further buying and collecting. Still others were already in the antiques business, attending auctions and antiques markets, so that when quilts began appearing more regularly, they added them to their inventory. A third group was captured by the beauty and aura of quilts, began collecting them for personal reasons, and limited their purchases and eventual sales primarily to quilts.

Under the guise of collecting treasures to furnish their apartment, as gifts for friends, or as souvenirs, Kate and Joel Kopp ended up starting a business that lasted a lifetime. In the late 1960s while in Europe for their honeymoon, they shopped at antiques and flea markets like Portobello Road and Bermondsey Market in London, and at flea markets in Amsterdam and Paris. When a friend saw their eclectic antiques collection from their travels, he suggested they visit the antiques auctions at Wingdale, New York, where, in addition to other antiques, the Kopps started buying quilts. “We bought trunks full of quilts, trunks full of quilt tops. All in *mint* condition.”⁵

By the fall of 1970, their purchases filled their apartment, so they decided to open a little shop in New York on 70th Street. Kate quit her job working in the fashion industry and ran the shop. Joel joined her at three o’clock, after finishing his day as a stockbroker. “We had so many quilts, we had to store them somewhere. We got metal racks, and we just filled this place with all these quilts.” The store was “densely filled” with a variety of merchandise, including early photographs and daguerreotypes. “We had pieces for 10 cents to a thousand dollars.”⁶ “America Hurrah,” as the store was soon to be named, thrived for the next thirty years.

Patricia Herr and her husband were living in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, when they began collecting to furnish their house. Herr’s interest in American



Michael Council at the Midwest Quilt Exchange, Columbus, Ohio,
c. 1983. Photo courtesy of Michael Council.

textiles was piqued when she heard Florence Montgomery, Curator of Textiles at Winterthur, speak in 1967 at a local history center. Initially, Herr focused on woven textiles, but one day at a sale she saw a quilt next to a coverlet that she was interested in—and she bought the quilt. Herr lived in an area abundant with antiques and there were lots of quilts and textiles available. As she and her husband bought antiques, they got to know people in the business, and by the mid-1970s they decided to have a booth in a local antiques show.⁷ However, antiques remained an avocation for the Herrs; they both maintained full-time veterinarian practices and never worked full-time as antiques dealers.

Several dealers were already in the antiques business, so when quilts appeared at the auctions and markets they attended regularly and were not very expensive, they bought them. Michael Malce had owned an antiques store for over a decade and Jolie Kelter had been selling antique jewelry when they first met in the late 1960s. In 1971, Jolie was robbed of all her best inventory, had no money, and was “in a desperate situation,” so Michael suggested that for a diversion they go to the antiques market at Shupp’s Grove, Pennsylvania. One of the first things they saw were quilts, hung with clothespins among the trees. After the day was over they had bought more than twenty-five quilts, mostly in the range of \$10 to \$25, “almost a station wagon full.” They soon opened a shop together selling quilts and other folk art, including Navajo blankets and rugs.⁸



Marilyn Kowaleski was also in the right place at the right time. She lived in Berks County, Pennsylvania, next to Lancaster County—both rich sources of quilts. Kowaleski's mother was interested in antiques, so the young woman often tagged along to auctions with her mother. Kowaleski began to see more and more quilts for sale and in 1972 started buying them, because "usually they were going very inexpensively." She had other employment, but continued buying and selling quilts in her spare time, until she saw "the more I bought, the more I sold." When she realized she could make money buying and selling quilts, she quit her job and "became a quilt dealer."⁹

Still others became dealers almost by accident, after "discovering" quilts, building a personal collection, finding they wanted to learn all they could about quilts, and finally realizing that they could make a living buying and selling quilts. On the West Coast, Julie Silber started buying quilts in 1966–1967 after moving to San Francisco. "At the time, quilts were not easy to get. Not because they were rare but because they weren't valued." One of the first quilts she saw belonged to Pat Ferrero, who had paid only \$12 for an "incredibly beautiful piece ... it was crumpled up in the corner of the junk store. In those days if you went into an antiques store and asked for quilts they'd look at you [strangely] and ask, "Why do you want quilts?" Silber and partner Linda Reuther continued to seek out quilts just for themselves; they were both working full-time as nursery school teachers.¹⁰

In 1972, Silber and Reuther brought some of their quilts to Michigan, where Silber's mother Merry had arranged for a small exhibition. The show was hugely popular and an "astonishing number of people who loved the show brought us quilts to see or buy." One of those was a signed and dated quilt by Mary Strickler. "It was one of the most elegant quilts we'd ever seen, and we were able to buy it for way more money that we had ever paid for a quilt before, but it was way more [of] a quilt than we had ever, ever seen before. We probably bought forty quilts while we were there and we had brought maybe twenty. We got in our van and were driving back across the country and got to about Iowa and looked at each other and said, "That was really fun. Why don't we quit being nursery school teachers and open a quilt store?" Mary Strickler's Quilt Shop opened in 1972. Silber elaborates, "It's what I wanted to do—be around quilts all the time—the object, the people associated with them, who bought them, etc. That's how it started for me."¹¹

In 1976, when they started going to antiques auctions, partners Roderick Kiracofe and Michael Kile lived in southwestern Ohio. By this time there



Rebecca Haarer and her mother at Haarer Arts & Antiques (interior), Shipshewana, Indiana, 2011. Photo courtesy of Rebecca Haarer.

were quilts in the sales because people had started to see the value in them. They bought quilts “for fun” and bid on what visually appealed to them. When a college friend came to visit they spread quilts out on the lawn and the visitor asked, “What are you going to do with these?” Kiracofe thought of himself as a collector only and said so. His friend countered, “Have you ever thought of selling them?” Kile was a good businessman and “had been running other people’s businesses,” so when Kiracofe suggested they could have their own business of buying and selling quilts, the entrepreneurial aspect appealed to both of them. Initially, they sold quilts at a few shows in the Midwest to see “how it went,” made some contacts in the antiques business, and within a couple of years took their quilt business, Kiracofe and Kile, to California.¹²

Although the pioneers of the 1970s showed that money could be made buying and selling quilts, it was still a relatively novel profession. Men and women who entered the field in the 1980s tell stories similar to their predecessors of being in the “right place at the right time” and discovering quilts “by accident.” Similarly, they were decorating homes with quilts, were already working in the antiques business, or just “fell in love” with quilts.

Shelly Zegart was looking for art to decorate the large walls of her newly built contemporary house when someone who had seen an article about the quilt dealer Bruce Mann in *People* magazine suggested she consider quilts.¹³



Thomas K. Woodard and Blanche Greenstein with Miss Hawaii, to promote their exhibition of Hawaiian Quilts, c. 1980. Photo courtesy of Woodard and Greenstein.

Zegart was immediately smitten with quilts and set out to learn more about them and their history. She continued to buy from various dealers, but soon realized that “to get the good stuff set aside under the table” and to help fund the quilt-related projects she later developed (notably the Kentucky Quilt Project), she had to become a quilt dealer, too. What began as home decoration became a lifelong relationship with quilts.¹⁴

In 1981, a friend of Michael Council’s was living in the small town of Washington Court House, Ohio, buying quilts there, “paying \$35, \$45 apiece, and then taking them to New York and selling them for \$300 and \$400.” He thought, “Well, I can do *that!*” Council thought it would be more of a hobby and provide some extra income, but “then it just got bigger and bigger. The demand was so vast and huge that I couldn’t even keep up with it. I absolutely had no idea that I would become a quilt dealer of any sort. I just thought, ‘Well you know I’m not working, I can go to sales, I can look around in shops and stuff like that.’”¹⁵

In the early 1980s, Xenia Cord was a member of a small group that organized community antique quilt exhibitions. They invited the public to bring in their quilts for documentation and many owners expressed an interest in selling their quilts. The organizers decided to have a sales component at their shows, selling quilts on consignment. Cord saw the attractiveness of the consignment model and acted on it. She saw that people were more



Kate and Joel Kopp in their first shop, 1972. Photo courtesy of Kate and Joel Kopp.

willing to sell on consignment, thinking, “I don’t want to take this into any local antiques shop or any other antiques shop and ask them to buy from me because they’re going to set the price. I don’t have any idea what these are worth and I don’t trust that situation.”¹⁶

Setting up the System, Finding and Selling the Quilts

The system of buying and selling quilts that developed in the 1970s and 1980s has been called a hierarchy, ladder, supply chain, and web. What evolved was a combination of all of these structures, with the inferior/superior ranking inherent in a hierarchy, the low, middle, and high rungs implied in a ladder, the linear component of supply chain, and the complex inter-relationships of a web.¹⁷ The system was created solely to get quilts out of homes, usually in rural areas of the United States, and move them along until they found a final buyer. One quilt could change hands up to a dozen times in the process, with each person who touched it usually making at least a small profit. The goal of smaller dealers often was to sell as much as possible to New York dealers and the New York dealers wanted to get the very best quilts for their stores.



Mary Strickler's Quilt booth at antiques show in the late 1970s, with Larry Bohnham, Shelley Jacobsen and Linda Reuther (l to r). Photo courtesy of Julie Silber.

Finding the quilts

The first step was to find the quilts. If they had not yet entered the marketplace, they were extricated from homes. “Knockers” were men and women who literally knocked on a family’s door asking if they had any quilts to sell. Knockers were particularly active in the Amish communities, but also knocked on doors wherever they thought (or heard) there might be quilts for sale. Sometimes they lived in the community where they worked; sometimes they traveled outside their community. Kowaleski, who worked and lived in eastern Pennsylvania, but was not Amish, ingeniously hired several local Amish women to go with her when she visited Amish homes. She felt that being a woman herself and also having Amish women with her was a distinct advantage, setting a tone of trust.¹⁸ Darwin Bearley was successful in Ohio Amish communities through persistence, making repeated visits to houses where he knew or understood old quilts to be.¹⁹

The dealers acknowledged that knockers provided a valuable service, but some dealers never considered knocking on doors to find quilts, especially in the Amish and Mennonite communities. Joe Sarah, who was living near several Amish and Mennonite communities in northern Indiana when he first started buying quilts, said about knocking on doors, “Oh, I would never do that. It was such a violation. I had too much respect for their culture.”²⁰



Instead, knowing he bought quilts, Amish women would approach him at auctions. They might show him quilts right there or invite him to come to their houses to see quilts. Rebecca Haarer, who owned an antiques store in Shipshewana, Indiana, in the midst of Amish and Mennonite communities, said about knocking on doors, “I didn’t need to. They came to me.”²¹

Knockers also worked as “pickers” (although only a few pickers ever knocked on doors), the next level of the supply chain. Pickers traveled to various house and farm auctions and small regional flea markets or antiques shows, looking for quilts among farm implements, household furnishings, or vintage and antique furniture. Pickers aggregated quilts to make it more efficient for other dealers to make purchases. Their success depended on travel—the more auctions and sales they attended, the bigger and better their inventory. In many auctions, individual quilts, an auction “lot” of quilts, or trunks filled with quilts were often the last items to be sold. A savvy picker would leave a bid, make a dash to the next nearest auction or sale, and repeat the process for four or five auctions a day and several weekends in a row. According to Darwin Bearley, “In those days, early in the 1970s and early 1980s, there were auctions all over the place. You could go to five, six auctions a day; there would be on-site auctions, on farms or old houses or whatever and there were almost always quilts.”²²

Some men and women acted only as knockers and pickers, quickly reselling their wares to other dealers who moved the merchandise further along the supply chain. Pickers were content with a modest markup, making their profit through volume and rapid turnover. With the exception of travel to buy and sell the quilts, their overhead was low; they usually did not advertise and worked from their houses. Some pickers like Kowaleski had retail shops where they sold what they had found knocking or picking, and they also bought from other pickers and dealers. Most individuals who bought and sold quilts played multiple roles in the supply chain in order to get and sell inventory; Kowaleski was unusual in her combination of knocking, picking, local dealing, and selling quilts to higher-level dealers in New York and California.

Council was very emphatic about his role. “I always was a picker; I was never offended by being called a picker.”²³ Both Council and Kowaleski declared their goal was to be a “dealer’s dealer.”²⁴ Other dealers were their intended market and primary customers. Kowaleski said, “When I bought quilts here in Pennsylvania, I always tried to leave room for maybe one or two dealers to make money on me, on the quilts that I sold, and with that



they always came back because the quilts all re-sold.”²⁵ Council was happy to sell one quilt at a time to an individual, but he aspired to sell large quantities of quilts to dealers in New York, who dealt with the end purchaser. “I never was more than the middleman. I did not encourage, nor wanted to sell to the public. It’s much too difficult to sell to the public, even though you could get a little more money . . . I wanted to sell ten quilts at a time, not one. I’d rather take less money in selling ten than make a little more in selling one.”²⁶

Because all of the New York dealers had retail operations, they usually sold to the end user—collectors, museums, and private buyers. They traveled to the large sales venues like Shupp’s Grove in Pennsylvania and Brimfield in Massachusetts to buy, but they also heavily relied on pickers and dealers from Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania to bring them merchandise.

Dealers in other parts of the country viewed the New York dealers as the “movers and shakers” in the business. The ultimate goal for knockers, pickers, private dealers, and shop-owning rural dealers was “selling to New York.” New York dealers set trends, received lots of publicity and sold many of the most important quilts. But more significantly, they promoted the quilt as art. Some had gallery-style settings in their shops, where quilts were hung on walls in addition to the more common display of stacks of quilts on shelves. As with artwork in other media, a quilt’s visual impact took precedence over its family history.

Even other New York dealers viewed the Koppes as the leaders in the field. Woodard and Greenstein unequivocally state that, “Kate and Joel (Kopp) were really the pioneers in the business-end of quilts.”²⁷ Joseph Sarah added, the Koppes “did a great job of creating a market for quilts. They both have wonderful eyes for not only quilts, but for other kinds of textiles and folk art. They were just extraordinary dealers and . . . they took the time to develop the market in New York. I think they were preeminent for years and years and years. . . . There was no one who did any more for the advancement of quilts in this country than America Hurrah.”²⁸ Rubin summed up what many other dealers outside the city felt about New York dealers—America Hurrah had the most impact on the business, “indisputably,” along with Kelter and Malce, and Woodard and Greenstein. They paid and got the highest prices. “They were in the most expensive locations. They were highly visible and influential in bringing quilts to people’s attention . . . as art.”²⁹ In addition, “the art market, the finance market, the various centers of culture and art and business were in New York. They [the dealers] were able to connect art collectors to quilts.”³⁰



Selling the Quilts

Without exception, all the dealers sold to each other, regardless of geography, status as knocker, picker, shop- or non-shop-owning dealer. There were several reasons for the large volume of dealer-to-dealer sales. First, certain dealers cultivated particular types of buyers. For example, Michael Council sold thousands of quilts to The Gazebo, a major interior-decorating supplier in New York. Another dealer who found herself with a few quilts most suitable to that market, but with no contacts or desire to cultivate contacts in that market, would try to sell her quilts to Council, leaving enough room for his mark-up. Second, dealers like Bearley, Haarer, Herr, Sarah, and Kowaleski, who had direct access to and focused on Amish and Mennonite quilts, sold to dealers on both coasts who did not have direct access to those communities. Bearley, who specialized in Ohio Amish quilts, felt that seventy-five percent of his sales were to other dealers. He also stated that there was no interest in Ohio Amish quilts in Ohio, so most of his Ohio Amish inventory was sold out of state.³¹ Lastly, sometimes a dealer just wanted a quilt that another dealer had. "A lot of it just goes on between dealers, among dealers, and someone may pay \$3,500 for something at a show and sell it pre-show for \$3,900" just because another dealer really wanted it.³²

Of all the dealers, perhaps Rebecca Haarer was the most conflicted about selling Amish and Mennonite quilts, especially since most of them went to buyers or other dealers outside the northern Indiana community where she lived. Having grown up in a Mennonite household, she regretted the loss of cultural objects from the Amish/Mennonite community and she was acutely concerned with the effect the quilt market had on those families. "What the quilt dealer has done to the larger population, including the families from whom they bought quilts... has changed those families. It brought them an awareness that an outsider, a bigger interest, was interested in their [quilts]."³³ Removing the quilt from a household often separated it from its social and personal context, which she felt was an integral part of the object. On the other hand, she also admits that quilts acquired by collectors and museums were frequently exhibited widely, and encouraged a deeper appreciation for and understanding of the Amish people and their material culture.



Marilyn Kowaleski,
1983-1984. Photo
courtesy of Marilyn
Kowaleski

Pricing

Once they acquired a quilt, how did each dealer set the price? None of the dealers used a formula, but said they priced based on instinct, sense of the market, hope, and gambling. (Only Cord, who operates on consignment, receives a set percentage of the sales price.) Herr summed up the goal of pricing, “Theoretically, you sell it for more than you bought it for!”³⁴ Laura Fisher thought the whole idea of the antiques business was “to find the treasure for no money and then to sell it for a goodly amount of money.”³⁵ Stella Rubin priced “purely, seat of the pants.”³⁶ Kelter-Malce declared that, “Of course we’d go for as much as we could get! Sometimes we’d make a big profit but sometimes we’d sell things for less than we paid.”³⁷ Zegart’s practice was to “price it so the next person can make some money on it.”³⁸

Herr also explained that you could make more money out of some things than others, depending on what you paid for it. When you sold to another dealer, you tended to make a little less but the transaction might be easier. “Every now and then you double or triple your money but it doesn’t happen that often. You find a balance between what the value is and what you paid for it.”³⁹



While most dealers set a price and then tried to be happy when they resold at a profit, they admitted that one of the worst feelings was to sell a quilt to another dealer who doubled its price and then resold it to someone else. All agreed it was too stressful to constantly worry about the next dealer making a big profit. Even though dealers tried to follow this self-imposed condition, many recounted a story about a quilt they were not ready to sell, or the time another dealer earned a handsome profit on a quilt which had been in their hands previously. Fisher remembered with pain a baby quilt she bought at a flea market in Lower Manhattan for \$250. It had the name of a friend's new daughter on it, so she thought she would give it to her. On reflection, she decided it was really a very special quilt and consigned it to Sotheby's where it brought \$4,400, a handsome profit but disappointingly lower than Sotheby's pre-sale estimate. Kate and Joel Kopp bought the quilt and later re-sold it for more than \$10,000, according to Fisher.⁴⁰

A story from Kowaleski was representative of dealers who were not quite ready to part with an extraordinary quilt they had just bought. One of her great finds in Berks County, Pennsylvania, near Lenhartsville, was what she referred to as the "Lenhartsville Quilt"—a spectacular bull's eye quilt made up of large pieced concentric circles of diamonds, with stars and appliquéd tulips in each corner. Kowaleski had planned to keep the quilt awhile and enjoy it, but when she showed it to two pickers, Tony Ellis and Bill Galick, they were eager to buy it and pressured her to name a price. She quoted a really high price, thinking they could not afford it, because she really was not ready to sell. They agreed to her price, and with some regret, she sold them the quilt.⁴¹

Sandra Mitchell

No study of quilt dealers active in the last three decades of the twentieth century would be complete without mention of Sandra Mitchell, who died unexpectedly in 2000. Almost without exception, every one of the dealers interviewed talked about her keen eye, boundless passion for quilts, and her influence on the market. Although many were in awe of her knowledge and enthusiasm for quilts, they were equally frustrated by her difficult personality, unorthodox working methods, and stranglehold on important collectors. Many described having a "love-hate" relationship with Mitchell. Her power was such that if you wanted to buy or sell from her—and this was especially the case for the midwestern dealers—you played by her rules. Bearley explained,



“Sandra would almost dictate what they could do and what they couldn’t. She was a powerful little lady.”⁴²

Mitchell started in the general antiques business in the mid-1960s while living in Michigan, but by the mid-1970s she had shifted her focus to quilts.⁴³ She thrived as both a picker and retailer, selling to other dealers as well as end users. She was relentless in her pursuit of quilts, buying in volume and often selling for a small markup. She ferreted out the best quilts, and if other dealers got to a quilt she wanted first, she would pester them until they sold to her.⁴⁴ She had an encyclopedic memory and could remember visual details, as well as purchase and sales prices for virtually every quilt she bought or sold. Mitchell’s appreciation of quilts went beyond details and prices, Zegart said. “Sandra, as crazy as she was in so many ways, loved the material. She really understood it; she knew all the stories of what happened to different quilts.”⁴⁵

Mitchell learned about quilts and the business of quilts through trial and error. When she began buying and selling, there were no guides to quilt dating, but she nevertheless quickly became the expert. Because of the sheer volume of quilts that passed through her hands, she eventually was able to date quilts by pattern and fabrics, and to establish regional characteristics. She didn’t willingly share her knowledge by publishing articles or teaching others. Her eventual partner Michael Council recounted, “She wouldn’t be very forthcoming, but just by standing back and watching her—what sold and didn’t sell, and what she bought and didn’t buy, and things like that—you learned. She didn’t want to teach you but you learned because you were around her.”⁴⁶

Mitchell’s influence went beyond being a picker and dealer. While living in Michigan, she met Merry Silber, Julie Silber’s mother, who began collecting quilts with a Michigan provenance. Together, Merry Silber and Mitchell founded *Quilts: An American Romance*, an annual quilt event at the Somerset Mall in Troy, Michigan. The event included exhibits, workshops and lectures, as well as vendors.⁴⁷ Many dealers mentioned buying and/or selling at one or all eleven quilt events held between 1979 and 1990.

This event was pivotal for more than just providing a marketplace for quilt dealers. It was here that Ardis James met Sandra Mitchell and bought her first quilt. Ardis, along with her husband Bob, assembled the largest collection of American quilts in private hands, and Mitchell supplied many of those quilts over the course of two decades. In this relationship too, Mitchell imposed her own rules. She made it clear that the James were *her* clients; if another dealer



Michael Council, Shelly Zegart, Amy Zegart (l to r) at Shelly's fiftieth birthday party. Photo courtesy of Michael Council.

had a quilt they thought the James might be interested in, *she* would show it to them. Mitchell even kept her business partner at a distance. Council said, "She kept me separate from that. That was her territory. I would give Sandra things to sell and she would sell them to Ardis and Bob. I would never have direct contact with Ardis and Bob ... She would be happy to sell them for me, but she didn't want *me* to sell them."⁴⁸

She could be ruthless in other aspects of her business, demanding that other dealers give her the first opportunity to buy their quilts. Her influence in the market was such that most dealers did not want to risk her ire. However, a few dealers, like the Kopps, refused to play Mitchell's game. Mitchell often would hold off opening her booth at quilt shows, building anticipation among other dealers, and when she finally did, dealers would pounce, frantically searching through stacks of quilts for what they wanted. Kate Kopp recalled, "I'd just have to go somewhere else until they stopped diving. I wanted the quilt, but I wouldn't fight that."⁴⁹

By the time of Mitchell's death in 2000, the market had changed dramatically. The Jameses and other collectors were not buying at the same levels they had been for the past twenty years. The supply of exquisite and unusual quilts in excellent condition had dwindled and general market demand for antique quilts had declined notably. Yet she persevered until the end, always on the lookout for the next great find. Council, expressing that "love-hate" relationship so many described, said, "I miss her. I really do.



But when Sandra died, a lot of the nastiness went out of the business.”⁵⁰ Bob Barnone, a dealer active when Mitchell was working, sums up her impact, “When other dealers pass away there won’t be the same feeling. Sandra was the cement—maybe because of the long duration, maybe because of her nature, maybe because she controlled a lot of the business.”⁵¹

Beyond the Marketplace

In addition to finding and selling quilts, dealers played other quilt-related roles. Many of those interviewed frequently organized small local exhibitions as well as national blockbusters. Others lent or shared images of quilts they owned or had sold to illustrate books, calendars, or one of the hundreds of articles prevalent in shelter magazines throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In addition to helping sell quilts, these articles not only raised public awareness about the beauty of “everyday” quilts but also showed the public that they could be considered art. Rubin believed that “dealers increased people’s awareness about the range of quilts. I think that we have shown people that old quilts don’t have to be abused quilts, and that they can be seen as not only fine bedcovers, but as works of art. We certainly as a group have done a tremendous amount to increase their visibility as art works. There’s more to be done, but we’re working on it.”⁵²

Dealers in this study also played significant roles in building important public and private collections. Museums frequently purchased quilts for their collections directly from quilt dealers, especially those in New York. The late Sandra Mitchell, along with many other dealers in this study, helped Ardis and Robert James build their collection of American quilts, now housed at the International Quilt Study Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. Although Doug and Susie Tompkins also bought quilts from other dealers, Julie Silber is the one most associated with the Esprit Collection of Amish quilts, and served as its curator. Kiracofe and partner Michael Kile frequently worked with Edward Binney to form his quilt collection, much of which now resides at the New England Quilt Museum.⁵³

In no other quilt-related activity are dealers more reviled and admired than in the area of documentation. Sometimes “documentation” was on a small scale—preserving information about an individual quilt’s origin or maker, and passing that along to the buyer. Other times it meant original research to document regional differences in quilts or exploring the breadth of quilt history.



When it came to acquiring and passing along information about a quilt, there was an enormous range of practice among the dealers. In the early 1970s, when quilts were inexpensive, no one thought them valuable enough to justify tracking maker, origin, or family history. Kate Kopp explained, “When quilts cost so little . . . you don’t respect them. If you bought a quilt for \$7 or \$20, and you heard something about it, maybe you’d remember and you’d tell someone.”⁵⁴ More frequently, it was never collected or passed along.⁵⁵ In general, the dealers felt their role was to provide the quilts, not to document or research. Malce said, “We were merchants, and we were dealers in wonderful stuff, but we were *not* researchers . . . We were just interested in buying more inventory, just buying and selling . . . We were *not* fine art dealers who could spend hours pontificating.”⁵⁶ Candid about his role, Council said, “I never have characterized myself as an historian . . . I hate to say this, but it just gives you the idea I was more the K-Mart of quilts, not that my quilts were bad or a lower end or anything like that, but I just moved them through. I just sold them.”⁵⁷ Even Zegart, who founded the Kentucky Quilt Project to document Kentucky’s quilts, explained that a quilt rarely came with accurate or complete information and there was not enough time to research every quilt she bought and sold. “I obviously didn’t spend my days looking into

Mark French at *Infinite Variety: Three Centuries of Red and White Quilts*, March 25-30, 2011. Photo courtesy of Mark French.



more information than I had been given. When I was dealing lots of quilts, everything is churning, you don't have time... If I knew the maker and I knew for sure it came from the family, I would give the buyer that information."⁵⁸

Sometimes information was vague because the dealer did not care or was not able to gather it; other times it was to prevent another dealer from discovering their source. Bearley said this happened to him frequently: "If I bought from a dealer or a picker, they didn't want to tell you what they knew, because they didn't want you to find out where it came from, because there may have been another quilt there."⁵⁹ Kowaleski was the exception among dealers interviewed. She never worried about revealing sources. From the very beginning of her career, "When I bought from the family, I always got the information and I always passed it along to the buyer." Asked if she was not afraid of revealing a source, she replied confidently, "No, not really, because if I bought the quilts from that family there were no other quilts in there because I bought them all! When you go into an Amish house there are not two dozen quilts there. I think the most I ever bought in one house would have been no more than six, usually one, sometimes two or three."⁶⁰

Later in the 1970s, gathering information became more important, partly because quilt values climbed and partly because more buyers asked for it. Rubin credited her friendship with Rebecca Haarer in helping her understand the importance of keeping family history united with the quilt. "Rebecca was very interested in documenting what was going on in the northern Indiana Amish/Mennonite community, so when quilts would come in to her, or she would find them, or her father would find them in the country, they always got the names of the maker if at all possible. But the family name certainly, and relatives' names, all kinds of things."⁶¹

Kiracofe's fascination with quilts was multi-faceted. He was interested in the society and culture that produced them, the personal lives of the women (predominantly) who created them, and the aesthetic appeal of the object. The interest in quilts of Kiracofe and his partner Michael Kile went far beyond their profit potential. When they acquired a quilt they frequently did further research and wrote up information about the pattern, where it was purchased, established a date range, and provided a brief condition report to pass along with the quilt. They documented quilts because they enjoyed the process. Kiracofe reflected that, "We didn't have this concept of a lofty goal while we were in the midst of it—we were doing it because we loved it."⁶² For Kiracofe, understanding the importance of documentation came later. Similarly, Silber



always asked the seller if they had information about the maker, where she lived and any other documentation the dealer could provide, and passed it along with the quilt. She saw herself as an educator. “One role that we played intentionally or not—probably not intentionally—...[was] exposing people to what there was. There wasn’t a day that somebody didn’t come in and say, ‘I’ve never seen that before,’ . . . I think we were educators whether we wanted to be or not. . .”⁶³

Many of the dealers’ efforts at documenting individual quilts blossomed into quilt scholarship. Zegart stated that dealers “are a key to the essence of beginning scholarship in a field, because they are the ones who have to know. . . They put their money down. . . They are going to get burned, and you learn when you get burned with your own money. . .”⁶⁴ Whether dealers faithfully gathered and shared information or merely sold a quilt, to be successful they had to have a basic understanding of dates, regional styles, rarity, and quality.

Other times, “documentation” was on a far larger scale, and evolved into an explosion of quilt scholarship. Short-lived but highly respected to this day is *The Quilt Digest Press*, started by Kiracofe and Michael Kile in 1979. Realizing that they might not be able to support themselves forever only buying and selling quilts, they considered quilt-related businesses that they might do in conjunction with sales. Recognizing the growing interest in contemporary quilt making and the emergence of what would eventually be called the Art Quilt Movement, they thought, “What if we brought the two worlds, the antique world and the contemporary quilt movement together.”⁶⁵ The result was *The Quilt Digest*, a beautifully illustrated annual, with well-researched and well-written articles about historic quilts and contemporary quilt making. Among the *Digest*’s first authors were Herr, Silber, and Kiracofe. The Press continued to publish quality books on quilt history and quilt making throughout the 1980s. Although *The Quilt Digest* was only published for five years, dealers in this study credit it with setting a high standard for future quilt scholarship and publications. Many other dealers were prolific writers about quilts, and the list at the end of this article is a testament to their research, documentation, and scholarship in the field. (See Appendix 1.)

The “Fashion” for Quilts

The dealers were all proud of their role in bringing thousands of quilts out of attics, basements, and trunks—rescuing them from obscurity, possible



neglect and misuse, and placing them in private collections and museums where they were cared for. Malce remembered, “The first quilt that Jolie and I bought together was at the Armory Show, and somebody was using it as a packing blanket. So...we saved it. We bought ‘packing blankets’ all over the country at antiques shows...”⁶⁶

Several dealers also talked about some of the unintended consequences of their work and shared experiences of both accidental and intentional destruction of quilts, especially during the mid-1970s through the 1980s, when the style for all things quilts and Americana in home decoration and fashion was most popular. The Kopps found “the most incredible little pieced tops you’d ever seen” in New York State. “They were probably 1820s, 1840s—tiny, tiny squares with four or more pieces in each one. Just scraps and things . . . Early on, there were lots of these mint condition tops that we’d bring out, and pieces were tiny, little bow ties, little things, little, little, little.” Not long after selling several of these tops, an “emerging young designer” in New York unveiled a line of men’s neckties using “these extraordinary little pieced quilt tops” and soon “there aren’t any small pieced tops anymore.” The Ralph Lauren brand was launched!⁶⁷

Fisher also unwittingly sold to a buyer for Ralph Lauren. Early in her career, a “mysterious woman, Tasha” gave Fisher a standing order for blue and brown pieced quilts. Fisher’s picker scoured the countryside for quilts matching this description and every week “Tasha” would buy ninety-nine percent of what he had found. Once the quilts starting appearing in fashion ads as vests and skirts, everyone began sending Ralph Lauren blue and brown pieced quilts. But too late, the project was over.⁶⁸

Roderick Kiracofe,
Yvonne Porcella, Beth
Gutcheon, and Holly
Junker, at Studio Art Quilt
Associates Board meeting,
1993. Photo courtesy of
Roderick Kiracofe.



Designer Norma Kamali's assistant came to Fisher's shop one day and selected half a dozen quilts, "some really beautiful, interesting things," to take on approval for the designer. Flattered that Kamali liked her quilts, Fisher thought, "how great to have a design person as my client." The dealer also mentioned that she owned some of Kamali's clothing. The assistant invited Fisher to the designer's runway show the following week, where the first model strutted out on the runway wearing a jacket, made from "this incredible silk crazy quilt in lustrous celadon and bronze; really unusual colors." A strip-pieced cotton quilt that "was really like a whirlwind," became hot pants and bellbottoms in the Norma Kamali fashion show.⁶⁹

High fashion was not the only cause of quilt destruction. "Yes, they got washed and they got hung on the wall and they got used on a couch."⁷⁰ Council sold thousands of quilts to Lynn Barnard, owner of The Gazebo in Manhattan. The Gazebo did a brisk business with New York interior designers and individual clients who wanted to decorate their houses and apartments with quilts. Council mused that probably many of those quilts were "used up."⁷¹ One of the Kopps' clients purchased "a masterpiece quilt of tiny little red and green pieces, the whole border was all appliquéd . . . in mint, mint, mint, mint condition. She hung it in her dining room, where it looked fantastic. The next time we talked she had sent it out to a dry cleaner's and she never found it again."⁷² An interior designer selected a circa 1840 *broderie perse* from Fisher's inventory for a wealthy client to use on his bed. The housekeeper threw it in the washing machine.⁷³ Kelter and Malce remember, "There was a vogue for awhile of using quilts on tables, and you put [a] glass top on it, and everything hung down to the floor, and that destroyed a lot of quilts. There was a vogue for making pillows, rabbits . . . when we got tops and quilts in poor condition we'd sell them as cutters. If we were trying to buy a quilt for less, calling it a cutter was good bargaining strategy!"⁷⁴

As prices rose, people usually took better care of quilts, and for most it eventually became too expensive to cut them up for clothes or pillows. However, higher prices didn't matter to some clients. The Kopps had clients who regularly bought Amish quilts to throw over the back of a chair. "That quarter of the quilt now is faded and unfortunately, it's lost most of its value. I think most quilts have been worn out. I think they've been used." Kate Kopp remembered that one Christmas, the head of a major motion picture company came to America Hurrah and bought forty-two quilts for the chairs in his home viewing room.⁷⁵



Some dealers were acutely protective of their quilts. Silber recounts, “We did have interior decorators come in and they weren’t my favorite customers because that wasn’t how I wanted quilts to be seen, but that’s how quilts were seen.” One day an interior designer and his client were shopping for quilts at Mary Strickler’s Quilt Store. They spotted an exceptionally large late-nineteenth-century red and white Drunkard’s Path. The interior designer turned to his client and said, “And I think it will be wonderful when we cut this down the middle and put it on the two boys’ beds, the twin beds.” Silber and partner Linda Reuther declined to sell them the quilt saying, “I’m really sorry, I can’t. I see quilts in a really different way and I just can’t.”⁷⁶

Rubin mentally categorized quilts she sold; some were art but some, especially the “pretty pastels” from the 1930s, were merchandise. When a client wanted a quilt to use on a bed, she would steer them away from the less durable and more rare nineteenth-century quilts to more modern ones. She felt especially protective of Amish quilts because “they are really finite, made by a small group of people in a small number of places and need to be treated as something special.” She was particularly wary when someone asked if she had any “Aim-ish” quilts. “I care about the quilts and I also don’t want the customer to be unhappy. For both reasons, I try to influence what I think is a better match. Ultimately, though, the customer is in control.”⁷⁷

Malce summarized the dealer’s dilemma: As a group, they bought what might have been used for packing blankets all over the countryside and got them into museums, collections, and new homes. Dealers photographed, documented, and researched quilts. Without the dealers’ impetus to open trunks and bring these fabulous quilts to market, where would they all be? “So I don’t feel guilty about being a cog in the destruction of all those quilts. I think I also saved a lot. Look at all the ones that went to museums and the ones that went to collections.” In the end, “When you sell something, it’s out of your power.”⁷⁸

Looking Forward

Mark French represents a new type of quilt dealer; he combines traditional methods, buying in person from pickers and other dealers, with twenty-first-century methods, selling primarily on the Internet. Although as a college undergraduate in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the antiques world and the treasure hunting aspect he associated with it intrigued him, he didn’t buy and



sell his first quilt until 1995. After that first success, he continued buying and selling quilts, working part-time as a picker while he attended law school. He eventually became partners with Michael Council. Throughout the 1990s, Council was still dealing a huge volume of quilts, and French learned about quilts and about the business of quilts from him.⁷⁹

French also learned that even dealers as experienced as Council made mistakes, buying quilts that stayed in their inventory far too long. Generally, dealers would gather quilts that did not sell and send them to an auction house, usually making little or no profit. French had heard about “this new thing called eBay” and offered to put a group of Council’s “overstock” on the site to see what happened. The quilts sold immediately and at a profit. “Within six months his business had probably doubled.”⁸⁰ As in the early 1970s, when there was little competition for already active quilt dealers, there was little competition for buying and selling quality quilts on eBay in the late 1990s.

French eventually established his own eBay store, French72, selling primarily quilts. He likes to buy in person, preferring to see and touch before buying. He acquires his inventory the “traditional” way, from pickers, antiques markets, stores and fairs. He also buys from his former partner, Council. “I have cultivated really good relationships with people I buy from and a lot of people I sell to. We deal with each other because it’s just pleasant. It’s ‘I love Jan’ and I buy as much as I can from her because I just think she’s great. She’s got a good eye and if I’m on the fence about something, I will buy it because I love Jan.”⁸¹

However, his sales are primarily on the Internet and occasionally by appointment. Internet sales can be more than a full-time job and he attributes part of his success to hard work, constant addition of new merchandise to the site, posting accurate descriptions of each quilt and its condition, answering email queries promptly and shipping quickly. “The interesting thing about the eBay store is it’s like a vending machine, it’s always on 24/7. Literally 24/7, because people in Australia are shopping when we’re sleeping.”⁸²

French is not the only dealer to embrace Internet sales. Most dealers interviewed who are still active also conduct Internet sales in addition to vending at the traditional antiques and quilts shows.⁸³ Fisher, Herr, Rubin, Silber, Woodard & Greenstein, and Zegart all report regularly selling quilts through their business websites.

French is upbeat about the future of the quilt selling business and quilt availability, quality, and demand. When people ask him, “Are you ever going



to run out of quilts to sell?" He replies, "The opposite is true in my experience. The reality of it is that there are too many quilts. There are too many really wonderful quilts. The supply part is never a problem." French also feels that quilts are becoming popular once again. "People are yearning for something authentic. Quilts are, at their core, they're authentic."⁸⁴

Conclusion

The topics discussed here only partially address the interview transcripts. Much more information remains to be gleaned from these interviews, and wonderful stories remain to be told. This essay, however, initiates a discussion of this very important aspect of the late twentieth century's Quilt Revival. Although there are striking similarities among all the dealers' experiences buying and selling quilts, the details of each individual's trajectory are unique. Together, their stories show how these pioneers discovered quilts and developed a new profession by converting quilts from either a cherished or neglected family heirloom to a commodity, in the process creating a quilt market and marketplace. Additionally, this group of dealers and others like them made significant contributions to the field of quilt studies. Some dealers built collections (others and their own) that resulted in the preservation of these fragile objects for present and future scholars to study. Today's quilt historians build on a foundation of early documentation laid by dealers—documentation provided either by a dealer's efforts to preserve a quilt's history, or by their own published research.

Acknowledgments

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Notes and References

- 1 Michael Kile, "On the Road," *The Quilt Digest* 4, (San Francisco, The Quilt Digest Press, 1986), 76–85.
- 2 Major New York auction houses like Sotheby's and Christie's also played a significant role in the marketing of quilts, but are not included in this study.
- 3 Interviews resulted in 575 pages of transcripts and almost twenty-six hours of digital recordings.
- 4 Mark French did not begin selling quilts until the mid-1990s and as such represents the twenty-first century model for quilt dealing. He was included in this study for that reason and also because he was partners for a few years and continues working with Michael Council, who is a part of this study. Discussion about French's working methods and business model will be discussed at the end of this paper as in almost all aspects he is outside the norm of this group.
- 5 Kate and Joel Kopp, unpublished interview by the author, New York, New York, November 7, 2012. Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Patricia Herr, unpublished interview by the author, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, November 9, 2012.
- 8 Jolie Kelter and Michael Malce, unpublished interview by the author, New York, New York, November 6, 2012.
- 9 Marilyn Kowaleski, unpublished telephone interview by the author, Wernersville, Pennsylvania, April 19, 2013.
- 10 Julie Silber, unpublished interviews by the author, Berkeley, California, August 17, 2011 and April 19, 2013.
- 11 Silber interview, April 19, 2013.
- 12 Kiracofe interview
- 13 Suzy Kalter, "Knock, Knock. Who's There? It's Bruce Mann, the Quilt Peddler, Delivering His 19th-Century Wares," *People Magazine* 11, No. 17 (April 30, 1979): 75.
"http://www.people.com/people/archive/issue/0,,7566790430,00.html" <http://www.people.com/people/archive/issue/0,,7566790430,00.html>; accessed February 26, 2014.
According to this article, Bruce Mann owned an antiques business in Louisville when in 1970 he purchased 50 quilts for \$320 at a homestead auction in southern Indiana. He realized there was a limited awareness of quilts at the time but bought them anyway because he found them beautiful. As interest in them increased in the 1970s, he specialized in selling only quilts. His clients included many celebrities, including Lauren Bacall, Freddy Plimpton, Phyllis Newman and Kennedy family members. Mann was killed in November 1980 while driving his quilt-filled van to California.
- 14 Shelly Zegart, unpublished interview by the author, Louisville, Kentucky, October 25, 2012.



- 15 Michael Council, unpublished interviews by the author, Columbus, Ohio, October 23, 2012 and January 21, 2013.
- 16 Xenia Cord, unpublished interview by the author, Kokomo, Indiana, October 26, 2012.
- 17 The author is grateful to Jonathan Holstein for explaining the basics of the quilt dealing structure. Jonathan Holstein, unpublished interview by the author, Lincoln, Nebraska, April 4, 2011.
- 18 Kowaleski interview.
- 19 Darwin Bearley, unpublished interview by the author, Akron, Ohio, October 24, 2012.
- 20 Joseph Sarah, unpublished interview by the author, Columbus, Ohio, October 22, 2012.
- 21 Rebecca Haarer, unpublished interview by the author, Shipshewana, Indiana, October 27, 2012.
- 22 Bearley interview.
- 23 Council interview, January 21, 2013.
- 24 Ibid.; Kowaleski interview.
- 25 Kowaleski interview.
- 26 Council interview, January 21, 2013.
- 27 Thomas Woodard and Blanche Greenstein, unpublished interview by the author, New York, New York, November 6, 2012.
- 28 Sarah interview.
- 29 Rubin interview.
- 30 Zegart interview.
- 31 Bearley interview.
- 32 Woodard and Greenstein interview.
- 33 Haarer interview.
- 34 Herr interview.
- 35 Laura Fisher, unpublished interview by the author, New York, New York, November 8, 2012.
- 36 Stella Rubin, unpublished interview by the author, Darnestown, Maryland, November 5, 2012.
- 37 Kelter-Malce interview.
- 38 Zegart interview.
- 39 Herr interview.
- 40 Fisher interview.
- 41 Kowaleski interview.
- 42 Bearley interview.
- 43 Merikay Waldvogel, "Remembering Sandra Mitchell." *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine*, November 2001. 56-61.
- 44 Kowaleski interview.



- 45 Zegart interview.
- 46 Council interview, January 21, 2013.
- 47 Waldvogel, "Remembering Sandra Mitchell," 59.
- 48 Council interview, January 21, 2013.
- 49 Kopp interview.
- 50 Council interview, January 21, 2013.
- 51 Waldvogel, "Remembering Sandra Mitchell," 60.
- 52 Rubin interview.
- 53 These are only three examples of the many collectors who relied on the knowledge and professionalism of quilt dealers; the often complex relationship between quilt dealers and quilt collectors deserves further study.
- 54 Kopp interview.
- 55 Bearley interview.
- 56 Kelter-Malce interview.
- 57 Council interview, January 21, 2013.
- 58 Zegart interview.
- 59 Bearley interview.
- 60 Kowaleski interview.
- 61 Rubin interview.
- 62 Kiracofe interview.
- 63 Silber interview. April 19, 2013.
- 64 Zegart interview.
- 65 Kiracofe interview.
- 66 Kelter-Malce interview.
- 67 Kopp interview.
- 68 Fisher interview.
- 69 Laura Fisher, *Quilts of Illusion* (New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 1990), 87, fig. 3.64. Fisher interview.
- 70 Kelter-Malce interview.
- 71 Council interview, January 21, 2013.
- 72 Kopp interview.
- 73 Fisher interview.
- 74 Kelter-Malce interview.
- 75 Kopp interview.
- 76 Silber interview. April 19, 2013.
- 77 Rubin interview.
- 78 Kelter-Malce interview.
- 79 Mark French, unpublished telephone interview by the author, Yellow Springs, Ohio, February 8, 2013.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Cord, who still works only on consignment, does not sell on the Internet.
- 84 French interview.



APPENDIX 1

*Selected bibliography of quilt books and essays by the interviewees*Darwin Bearley

Antique Ohio Amish Quilts: The Darwin Bearley Collection. Foreword by Jonathan Holstein. Steckborn, Switzerland: Bernina, 2006.

Xenia Cord

Cord has published dozens of articles over the past twenty-five years in books and trade magazines, including *McCall's Quilting*, *American Patchwork & Quilting*, and AQS's *Blanket Statements*.

"Black Rural Settlements in Indiana Before 1860," and "Indiana Applications to the Cherokee Restitution Appropriation of 1906: A Little-Known Source for Black Genealogy." In Gibbs, Wilma L., ed. *Indiana's African-American Heritage*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1993, 99–110 and 215–232.

Contributor, with Kay Triplett and Lori Lee Triplett. *Chintz Quilts from the Poos Collection*. St. Etienne de Montluc, France: Quiltmania, 2013.

"Enrolled Upon the Bed: American Name-Inscribed Quilts." *Quiltmania* 91 September-October 2012, 34–38.

"Marketing Quilt Kits in the 1920s and 1930s." *Uncoverings* 16 (1995) 139–173.

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