

Uncoverings

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Introduction

Sandra Metzler

Like the past three UNCOVERINGS produced annually by the American Quilt Study Group, the goal of this publication is to translate into print research about the history of women's textile arts in order to make it more accessible to the general public. As you read, you will be introduced to not only valuable information but to the individual researcher as well. Rather than overlaying an editorial uniformity, we make a concerted effort to maintain each scholar's intent and style.

UNCOVERINGS 1983 contains research papers of several broad themes spanning general and specific geographical areas. For examples, surveying and interpreting the available written sources on quilting history are Virginia Gunn's "Victorian Silk Template Patchwork in American Periodicals 1850-1875" and Barbara Brackman's "A Chronological Index to Pieced Quilt Patterns 1775-1825." The cultural eras of study are clearly defined by the authors as are their methods.

"White Perceptions of Blacks in Quilts and Related Media" represents many years of meticulous investigation on the part of researcher, Cuesta Benberry, to trace through time the historical attitudinal changes of white Americans toward African Americans. In addition to published sources, Benberry uses related media such as crafts and paintings as well as the quilts themselves.

The social context surrounding the textile arts is frequently the emphasis of new research because of its vast importance in understanding material culture. Laurel Horton's "Nineteenth Century Middle Class Quilts in Macon County, North Carolina" and Nancy Habersat Caudle's "Quilts and Quiltmakers of the Penobscot Peninsula, Downeast Maine" give detailed backgrounds of specific locales and the people who live there. Caudle uses oral history interviews extensively to illustrate in real terms what it is like to be a native Maine quiltmaker. Bets Ramsey, on the other hand, uses the memories of old-timers to inspire the designs of a new quilt in "Recollections of Childhood Recorded in a Tennessee Quilt."

Discovering the logical outgrowth of stenciling on fabric from the popular fad of theorem painting of the early 1800's, Diana Church examines the rare "Baylis Stenciled Quilt" and its social context in detail. Similarly, incorporation of new craft techniques into a traditional culture is the fascination of Suzanne Yabsely. The technique of applique found throughout quilting history takes on new meaning and forms in a Native American culture, and the explanations for these are explored in "Applique Button Blankets in Northwest Coast Indian Culture."

Finally, Katy Christopherson questions how and what kinds of quilt data are important to researchers based on her experience in "Documenting Kentucky's Quilts: an Experimentation in Research by Committee." The author suggests the necessity of periodic reassessment of research into quilting history.

Thus, it is apparent that subjects for quilt history research are as varied as the people involved — from the original women who made the quilts at a certain time and place to the women who so avidly study them.