



THE G. O. P.

FOR VICE PRESIDENT

CLEVELAND AND STEVENSON

GROVER CLEVELAND  
NOMINEE FOR PRESIDENT

GERMAN E. STEVENSON  
NOMINEE FOR VICE PRESIDENT



# Quilted Ballots

## *Political and Campaign Textiles*

Julie Powell

*Detail of a pieced quilt top, 88" × 77", features 11 red cotton Grover Cleveland bandannas from his 1888 and 1892 campaigns. In the center background is a McKinley/Hobart 1896 campaign bandanna, 18" × 18", that touts the themes "Sound Money" and "Protection." The felt "beaver" top hat, 7" h. × 10¼" d., contains a large oval cardboard label proclaiming it "The 1892 G.O.P. Campaign Hat" and has pictures of Benjamin Harrison and Whitelaw Reid. A hand-carved wooden parade cane, 33"l., has a likeness of William Jennings Bryan as its head ornament and three separate carved letter messages down the shaft: "William J. Bryan President 1900," "Champion of the Democratic Rule," and "The Solon of the 19th Century." A hearty blast can be blown from the 1892 tin parade horn which has the candidates' names, Cleveland and Stevenson, stencilled on the side. Collection of the author.*

**L**egend has it that George Washington fastened his first inaugural coat with a special set of brass or copper clothing buttons. Experts believe about 27 varieties of such clothing buttons were made dating from that inaugural ceremony and Washington's first term in office. These were in essence our first known political buttons. Other artifacts inspired by Washington's first inauguration and accession to the presidency in 1789 include Liverpool transferware tankards, bandannas, and tokens. The latter two traditions continue, though to a lesser degree, through present-day campaigns.

American political history reveals varied and vigorous approaches to a "run for the White House." The personalities and characteristics of the candidates and the ingenuity and financial resources available to the political parties were factors upon which the style and the attendant material culture of the campaigns depended. Today a lion's share of the money raised for campaigns is spent on television time, debates, and spot commercials where previously campaign funds were used to purchase and distribute buttons and lapel devices, ceramics, glassware, and textiles. Some political artifacts have changed in form and quality over time. Brass clothing buttons and tokens have evolved into celluloid and lithograph campaign buttons. China and glassware have continued to be produced but lack the beauty and elegance of their 19th-century ancestors. One constant remains among the ever evolving political artifacts — quilts. Talented and creative quilters continue today to express their patriotic and personal commitments with needle, thread, and fabric. This paper will itemize chronologically the range of political and campaign memorabilia with an emphasis on textiles, especially quilts.

George Washington and American independence were popular subjects for the English and Scottish textile printers. Designs were freely "borrowed" from historical paintings. These copper-plate printed furnishing fabrics

were specifically intended for the American market. Quilts can be found at Winterthur, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, and the Kentucky Historical Society constructed entirely of these fabrics, such as one entitled "The Apotheosis of Benjamin Franklin and George Washington." The design shows Washington driving the chariot of America; her shield reads, "American Independence, 1776."

The 1824 election had a crowded and diverse field of candidates: John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, William Crawford, and Henry Clay. No candidate could get a majority of electoral votes. Therefore, the House of Representatives chose the new President from the three candidates with the highest number of votes. At the last minute, Clay shifted his votes to Adams, thereby assuring his victory. John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson were the first to distribute decidedly feminine campaign souvenirs nearly 100 years before women were granted the vote. These colorful cardboard thread boxes have velvet pincushion lids that read "Adams Forever" and "Jackson and No Corruption" and display the candidates portraits on the underside. Later, Lincoln is pictured on the cover of a small Mauchlineware box. The underside of its lid has a paper label which reads "Use Clark's O.N.T. Spool Cotton." The box may be simply a souvenir gift, but if it should happen to be a campaign piece, one wonders how many male voters were swayed by a container of cotton thread. Also, a pink Bristol glass boudoir oil lamp, decorated with hand-painted rosebuds bears the name Harrison, is dated 1892. Was it perhaps expected to shed a little Republican light on the female members of the household?

Jackson, who had lost in 1824, ran again and was victorious in 1828. One of the best historical patterned chintzes is blue and white yardage printed to commemorate Jackson's first inauguration of March 4, 1829. It pictures our first seven presidents, flanked by eagles and sailing ships. Jackson, in full military

regalia, is set apart in an oval frame beneath which is the inscription, "Andrew Jackson Magnanimous in Peace Victorious in War."<sup>1</sup> Political tokens — coin-like disks bearing the faces and slogans of candidates — were popular and used generously by 19th-century campaigners. They were generally kept in pockets; some had holes at the top and were worn on watch chains or as lapel pins. One interesting example from 1840 has the bust of Major General W. H. Harrison on the front. An eagle on the back says, "Go it Tip, Come it Tyler."

1840 was a landmark year in the history of American politics; the hoopla-filled effort to elect William Henry Harrison marked the beginning of presidential campaigns as we know them today. The Whigs decided to present the educated, aristocratic general to the voters as a common man. The campaign unleashed an unsurpassed torrent of artifacts. Many of these embodied a log cabin, cider barrel theme. Mass rallies and torchlight parades attracted as many as 25,000-50,000 participants. And no wonder. They came to enjoy the music, speeches, sociability, and, last but not least, the hard cider. Log cabin campaign headquarters, with free-flowing cider barrels, were erected in most communities.

A Baltimore album-style quilt top, signed in ink by Rebecca Diggs and owned by the Smithsonian Institution has a block with the "Harrison" log cabin complete with all of the Whig Party attributes: front left, an inked inscription on the cider barrel; atop the roof is a raccoon, the Whig symbol of rural existence. Harrison proclaimed that his latchstring would always be out for veterans and other voters, an early version of today's "open

door" policy. There appears to be a ink-lined latchstring on the right side of the cabin door.

Political yardage was plentiful in 1840. Some cotton chintz fabrics show Harrison, his log cabin, and its latchstring and cider barrel while a bandanna illustrates Harrison in an equestrian, military pose with sword drawn. Such textiles were joined by ceramic representations in the Harrison campaign. For example, John Ridgeway of Staffordshire, England, responded to the log cabin mania with his "Columbian Star" dinnerware which featured the central rural cabin scene.

One result of all this Whig hoopla was a record turnout of 80.2 percent of adult white male voters. As we exit the 1840 election, we can note that then, as now, sales of alcoholic beverages were probably prohibited on election day. There are rumors, however, of "election cakes," laced with whiskey, being served at the polls in Kentucky.

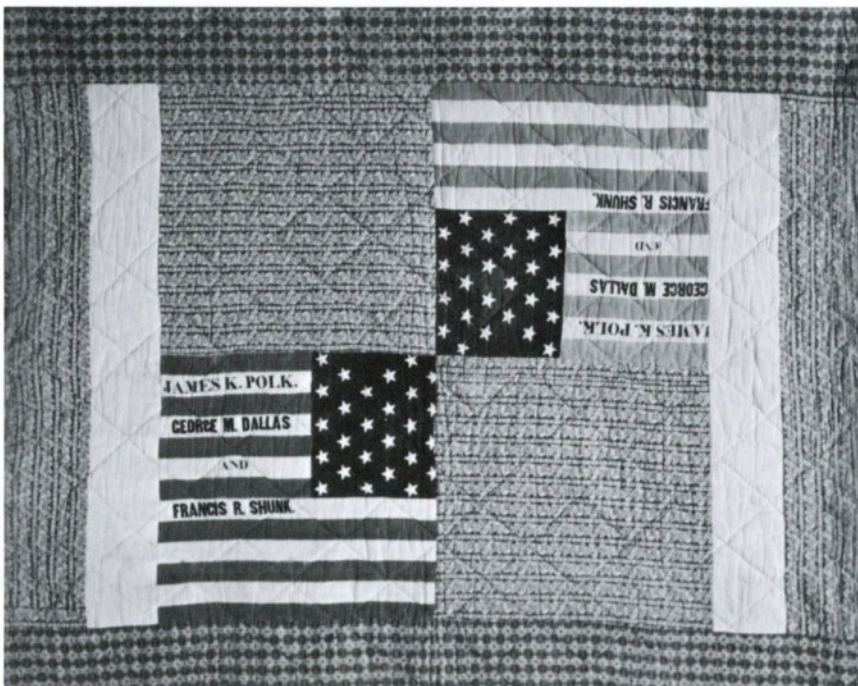
Henry Clay, "The Great Compromiser," was the Whigs next candidate in 1844. One of his tokens reads, "Henry Clay, the American System, United We Stand." Clay was an experienced statesman who sought the presidency three times without success. His campaigns left behind more than their fair share of political textiles. A Pennsylvania family named Young pieced and tied a quilt about the time of the 1844 Clay campaign. A great grandson donated it to the Barracks Museum in Trenton, New Jersey. The quilt's six campaign flags speak to its significant political value. Clay's portrait is seen in the star ground and his name and that of his running mate, Freylinghuysen, a New Jersey native, are printed in the white stripes.

Other Clay quilts include a feathered star quilt (see cover) and a silk quilt made by the candidate's wife Lucretia Hart Clay. Its central oval portrait of Clay and thirty other floral and scenic squares are worked in elaborate embroidery and broderie perse chintz appliqué. Mrs. Clay gave the quilt to the wife of Kentucky Governor John Crittenden in appreciation of their husbands' close personal and political friendship.<sup>2</sup>

Clay's 1844 opponent was Democrat James Knox Polk, who was not without similar memorabilia. A parade banner with Polk's portrait is the highlight of one quilt. The star to his right represents the State of Texas. George Dallas, Polk's vice-presidential partner, was mayor of Philadelphia early in his political career. Francis R. Shunk was the Pennsylvania gubernatorial candidate. Three of the parade flags used in the quilt bear the Polk-Dallas legend.<sup>3</sup>

Nancy and Donald Roan's study of textiles from the Goschenhoppen Folk Region, *Lest I Shall Be Forgotten, Anecdotes and Traditions of Quilts*, exhibited a second quilt containing

*Quilt with Polk/Dallas/Shunk 1884 campaign parade flags, 80" x 73". Probably a utility bedcover, handmade of the brown prints and solid-colored cotton fabrics of the period. Collection of the Historical Society of Montgomery County, Norristown, Pennsylvania; gift of Miss Elizabeth Morgan. Courtesy of the Goschenhoppen Historians.*



the Polk, Dallas, and Shunk names on two similar parade flags.<sup>4</sup> Francis Shunk lived in nearby Trappe, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Miniature tintype and ferrotype photographs of presidential candidates began appearing in the late-1850s. These, like Washington's brass buttons, were precursors of contemporary campaign buttons. The ferrotypes were often mounted in circular brass frames that contained embossed names, slogans, or dates. One of the first, in 1860, was of Abraham Lincoln with Hannibal Hamlin, his running mate, on the reverse. In the early 1870s the first paper campaign photographs, albumin prints, also in brass embossed frames were introduced as lapel pins. The simple developing processes and lower material costs of albumin prints increased their use and popularity until ferrotypes were rarely found after the 1880s campaigns. Then, just before the turn of the century, a process to manufacture thin sheets of celluloid was adapted to the button industry. The campaign button became simply a metal disk covered by a colorful paper picture and a thin layer of celluloid, all held in place with a metal ring. The Whitehead and Hoag Company of Newark, New Jersey, patented the process in 1896. Campaigns ever after have enjoyed an ample supply of celluloid pinback buttons which replaced the earlier tokens, ferrotypes, and albumin photo lapel pieces. Lithographed pinback buttons came onto the scene in the 1916-1920 period; their designs are printed directly on a sheet of tin, cut out and bent back to form the rim. Both types of pins are still commonly used.<sup>5</sup>

All four 1860 presidential candidates: Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, John C. Breckenridge, and John Bell — are represented on one flag quilt made from campaign ribbons. Numerous ribbons have been cut and pieced into the remainder of the quilt. The ribbon that lies below the flag and between the numerals pictures the earlier 1852 Democratic slate of Franklin Pierce and William King. Still another ribbon, at the bottom, represents C. H. Strattan, who sought the county clerk's office. The Indiana State Museum in Indianapolis, owner of the quilt, indicates it was made by 13-year-old Maggie Frentz in 1876. It may represent a centennial endeavor which happens to contain a large number of earlier campaign ribbons.

Campaign ribbons were silk keepsakes with lithograph-printed candidates' names, pictures, and slogans. Relatively inexpensive to manufacture, they were used widely for nearly all campaigns. Later varieties called "portrait silks" were woven or embroidered by a few eastern seaboard companies and the British firm, Thomas Stevens. Ribbons often served as bookmarks and were, therefore, gen-



erally well-preserved.

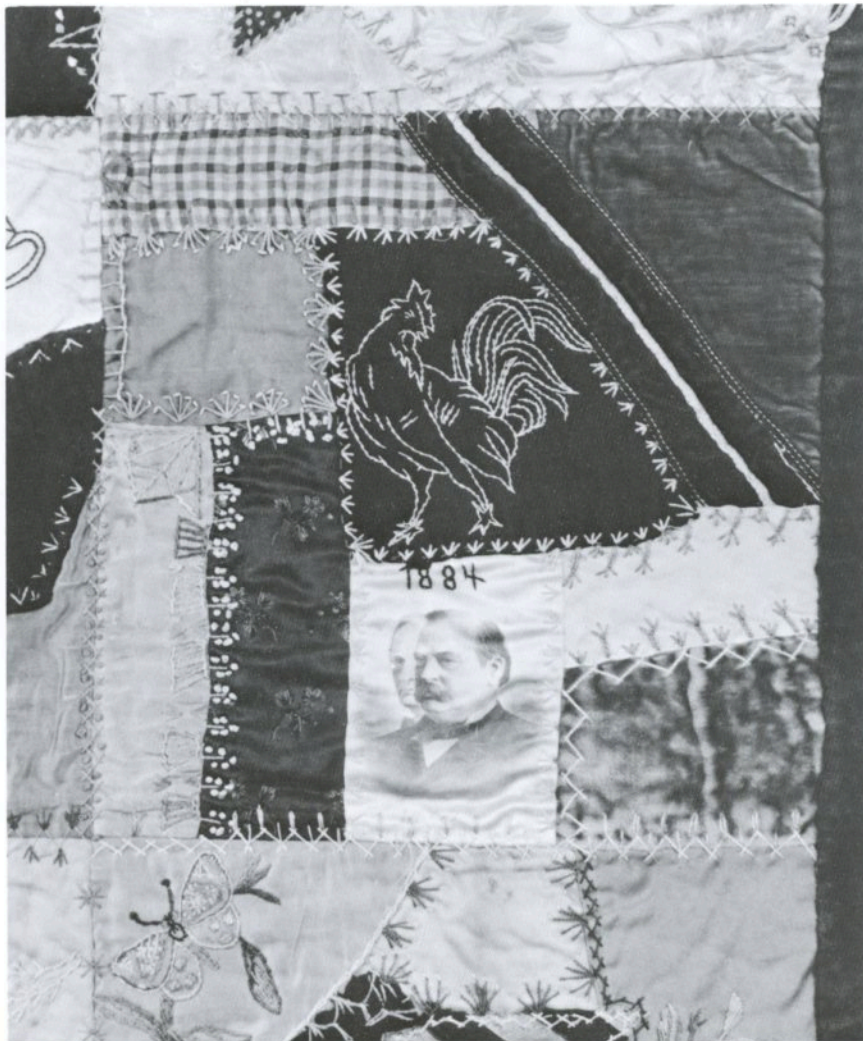
The Republicans chose another war hero for their standard bearer in 1868. Brass campaign tokens are found which bear the image of General Ulysses S. Grant. Also, campaign yardage was printed specifically for the 1868 contest. Two different paisley-style striped fabrics were roller-printed for Grant's 1872 campaign. Their coloration of madder-style chocolate browns, reddish oranges, and light tans with black outlined figures is similar to dress yardage of the period but sports the slogan, "Let Us Have Peace."

Past president Lincoln, however, got top billing on a red, white and blue Grant campaign quilt emblazoned with Union stars which reads "Grant PR [president]/Colfax VI [vice-president]/Union Forever." Letters appliquéd across the two lower borders read, "This quilt was made by Elizabeth Holmes in her 68th year."

Another quilter, Susan Lowry, settled in California with her family in 1852. She made a pieced Birds-in-the-Air quilt about the time of the 1868 campaign. Susan used a recycled hand-painted parade banner that reads, "Thanks to God and Grant For Our Union Victories" for the back of her quilt.<sup>6</sup>

Red bandannas were perceived as a direct link to the common working man. The 1888 campaigns of both Harrison and Cleveland relied heavily on bandannas to deliver their messages to the voters. More than 50 varieties have been documented. Most campaigns from 1880-1900 were dominated by economic issues which were easily and inexpensively articulated on cloth. Daniell and Sons of New

*A group of Lincoln 1860 and 1864 ferrotype images with embossed brass or metal frames, 7/8"-1 1/2" h; two suspended from decorative eagle-shaped lapel pins. Both rectangular pieces are albumin prints: one framed, the second in a book-shaped locket. Also, three pieces of roller printed yardage from both of U. S. Grant's campaigns. The piece on the left, from 1868, has oval framed portraits of Grant in uniform with a drum and bird design. Above the ovals is "Let Us Have Peace" and below, "US Grant" and its vertical stripes carry the legend, "US Grant/First In Peace/First In War." On the right is a repeating vertical design with eagle, flag and shield, from 1872, with "Grant" and "HW" (Henry Wilson, running mate) above the shield. The vertical stripes bear the repeating initials "USG." Below is a paisley-style print, also from 1872, that illustrates a musket, drum, bugle, and flag design. The horizontal stripes repeat "Grant and Wilson" and "Let Us Have Peace." Collection of the author.*



*Detail from an 1884 Cleveland/Hendricks crazy quilt showing a campaign ribbon, 3/4" x 4", with black printed portraits of the candidates and embroidered date on white satin. Above the ribbon is a large, 5" x 5", rooster, an early Democratic party symbol, embroidered in white thread on a black silk patch. Both pieces are framed with a decorative outline stitch. Collection of the author.*

York City advertised red bandannas with white motifs at a cost of 9 cents each in the June 10, 1888 issue of *The New York Times*.<sup>7</sup> Some of these bandannas and handkerchiefs have been incorporated into period campaign quilts.

The following three quilts all utilize political bandannas as major elements in their designs. One, a bright yellow Lone Star quilt has black and white printed oval portraits, taken from a Cochrane's Turkey Red campaign bandanna and carefully placed in the center of each small corner star. "James A. Garfield, Republican Candidate for President," and "Chester A. Arthur, Republican Candidate for Vice-President," are printed below the portraits. A second quilt features a red bandanna as a well-placed central medallion. It is an unusual pieced quilt. Garfield, Arthur, and a pair of eagles peer out over a skillfully planned and constructed geometric design. The ribbon in the eagle's beak reads, "The Union and Constitution Forever."<sup>8</sup> The third quilt is a 1892 Harrison quilt which illustrates the abundant supply of bandanna yardage. Front and back are the same, lengths of seamed fabric proclaiming the pertinent issue of the campaign, "Protection To Home In-

dustries." One can see printed dotted lines running through the fabric indicating where to cut and hem when making a single campaign handkerchief.

A persistent New Yorker, Grover Cleveland was both a successful and unsuccessful campaigner. He was the winning Democratic candidate in the 1884 election but lost in 1888 only to return victorious again in 1892. An ordinary crazy quilt becomes infinitely more interesting to a political collector when one notices a grumpy-looking Grover Cleveland and his running mate, Thomas Hendricks, in a 1884 campaign ribbon. Just above the ribbon is an embroidered rooster, the predecessor to the Democrats' donkey symbol. Cleveland's 1884 Republican opponents, James Blaine and John Logan, are pictured on a woven ribbon in another crazy quilt top. An unknown dedicated Democrat managed to procure 11 Cleveland red bandannas for her quilt top. One of the bandannas is from 1888; the others were used to support the 1892 Cleveland-Stevenson ticket.

In 1888, Grover Cleveland met his match in Benjamin Harrison. Harrison successfully deployed many of the tactics and symbolism that his grandfather, William Henry Harrison, had used in the landmark 1840 campaign — lots of political memorabilia.

"Tippecanoe and Morton Too" is one of three different kinds of campaign bandannas that were used in the construction of a quilt, components of which would have comfortably outfitted a whole contingent of bandanna-waving Harrison supporters in a torchlight parade.<sup>9</sup>

Harrison and Cleveland had a rematch in 1892. Historians ascribe Grover's success in this campaign not necessarily to Adlai Stevenson I, who is seen in a photograph with Cleveland on an ornate brass lapel pin, but to another powerful personal ally — his wife. Grover had courted and married the young and beautiful Frances Folsom. Frances and Grover were very much in the public eye, doing no damage at all to his image as a credible candidate. Advertising trade cards show Grover admiring Frances happily seated at a Household sewing machine and the couple blissfully entwined in a heart of Merrick thread.

The American woman's rights movement which began with the Seneca Falls, New York, convention in 1848 ushered in its own series of memorabilia to successfully promote passage of the 19th Amendment. Felt hat bands, Votes For Women lapel buttons, and Bissell carpet sweeper advertising fans are just a few of the many articles used to enhance the suffrage cause. Finally, American women could cast their first vote in a presidential election on November 2, 1920.



A group of advertising trade cards featuring Grover and Frances Cleveland, each 3" × 4½". Collection of the author.



Scenes from the book *The Roosevelt Bears Their Travels and Adventures*, by Seymour Eaton, decorate all sides of this 8"h. × 4¼"w. pitcher made by the Buffalo Pottery Company, Buffalo, New York. Two early 1860s transfer printed children's plates, 5½"d., have raised embossed alphabet rims. They depict (left) President Abraham Lincoln and (right) General Winfield Scott. Collection of the author.



*The Ronald Reagan 1980 Inaugural Quilt is a brightly colored full-bed-sized piece designed by Ed Larson, Santa Fe, New Mexico, pieced and quilted by Fran Soika, Novelty, Ohio. Private collection. Courtesy of Ed Larson.*

In the 20th century women and a few men who had made politically relevant quilts continued to do so. Fannie B. Shaw said she was inspired to make her quilt, *Prosperity Is Just Around the Corner*, by President Hoover's radio programs. She depicts many of the town's tradesmen and citizens in a wonderful three-dimensional setting. The center square shows her husband plowing his fields. The inscrip-

tion reads, "The Backbone of the Nation Goes On." The Democrats' donkey, the Republicans' elephant, and Uncle Sam with a scroll promoting Farm Relief and Legal Beer can be seen in the lower row of blocks.<sup>10</sup>

Our most frequently elected President, Franklin Roosevelt, with his various campaigns and four terms of office, generated a plethora of campaign artifacts. Pinback but-

tons show him with his changing vice-presidential running mates: John Nance Garner in 1932 and 1936, Henry Wallace in 1940, and Harry Truman in 1944. An unknown FDR advocate from Texas embroidered "Roosevelt Third Term, 1941-1945" across the middle of her donkey quilt.<sup>11</sup>

One of Roosevelt's landslide victims in 1936 was Alf Landon from Kansas. On a Democratic Donkey quilt, each star was embroidered with the name of a state and the number of its electoral votes. The bottom center square noted "Landon and GOP." A single number eight is positioned below the GOP square in the border indicating both Mr. Landon's sole number of electoral votes and those of his home state.

The selection of World War II General Dwight Eisenhower by the Republicans in 1952 laid the foundation for a lively campaign. A very plain quilt top has a later version of the red bandanna for its center square. It features a smiling Eisenhower and urges the viewer to "Win With Ike."<sup>12</sup>

More recently, Jill Read, a Georgia quilter and member of Jimmy Carter's Peanut Brigade, who traveled with that group throughout the country campaigning in 1976, worked on a quilt between these trips. Her border contains embroidered peanut patches made exclusively for the New Hampshire primary. The quilt is titled *Jimmy Who?* because that was the question most frequently asked of campaign workers before Carter became nationally prominent.<sup>13</sup>

Ed Larson, a Santa Fe, New Mexico artist, designs quilts with strong political statements, draws them out full size on brown paper, and commissions selected quilters to construct and quilt them for him. Larson chose Ronald Reagan's 1980 inauguration as the subject of a remarkable quilt. It was made and quilted by Fran Soika of Novelty, Ohio. Pieced letters across the top read, "Hooray for Hollywood, our 40th Moral Majority President." Nancy, in red, stands at his side and Jimmy Carter exits off to the right side of the quilt. Earlier presidents he has depicted on quilts include Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Richard Nixon.

Finally, *Election '92* was made by Marion Mackey of West Chester, Pennsylvania while watching the campaign antics on television. She used photo transfer techniques to place the candidates into her pieced design featuring Clinton, Bush, and Perot.

Struggling for the right to vote and publicly express their political opinions, our quilting ancestral soul sisters would probably rejoice at the 1992 victories achieved by female candidates for national, state, and local offices and the appointments of women to high level cabinet, administrative, and judiciary posi-

tions. Will we, the quiltmakers of the 1990s, join with Rebecca Diggs, Fannie Shaw, Fran Soika, Ed Larson, and Jill Read to celebrate, support, and protest in cloth the political endeavors we encounter in what remains of this, our 20th century and on into the 21st century?

#### End Notes

<sup>1</sup>A quilt made from this fabric is owned by the Museum of Political Life, West Hartford, Connecticut; gift of Diane and Fred Jorgensen.

<sup>2</sup>The quilt is at the Kentucky Museum, Bowling Green, Kentucky; Accession # 84.34.

<sup>3</sup>The quilt is in the White House Collection, Washington, D.C.

<sup>4</sup>Nancy and Donald Roan, *Lest I Shall Be Forgotten, Anecdotes and Traditions of Quilts* (Souderton, PA: Indian Valley Printing, Ltd., 1993), 80.

<sup>5</sup>Edmund B.; Sullivan, "Lapel Devices" *Collecting Political Americana* (Hanover, MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 1991), 23-38.

<sup>6</sup>Susan Lowry's quilt was documented by the California Heritage Quilt Project. See Jean Ray Laury, *Ho For California! Pioneer Women and Their Quilts* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1990), 68-69.

<sup>7</sup>Otto Charles Thieme, "Wave High the Red Bandanna: Some Handkerchiefs of the 1888 Presidential Campaign," *American Material Culture: The Shape of Things Around Us*, ed. Edith Mayo. (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984), 92-111.

<sup>8</sup>The quilt is from the collection of Shelly Zegart, Louisville, Kentucky. See Katy Christopherson, *The Political and Campaign Quilt* (Frankfort, KY: 1984), 32-33.

<sup>9</sup>The quilt is owned by the Shelburne Museum in Vermont; Accession # 1964-238.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas K. Woodard and Blanche Greenstein, *Twentieth Century Quilts 1900-1950* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1988), cover, iv-v.

<sup>11</sup>The Roosevelt donkey quilt is from the collection of Joyce Aufderheide.

<sup>12</sup>The Eisenhower quilt top is from the collection of the author.

<sup>13</sup>The Carter quilt is in the collection of its creator.

*Julie Powell and her husband Robin have amassed a collection of political memorabilia including textiles which were featured in Ladies Circle of Patchwork Quilts, October, 1992. Their collection formed the nucleus of the exhibition, "Patriotism, Politics, and Material Culture," shown at the Lancaster County Historical Society in the summer of 1993. Julie is in her second term on the board of directors of the national American Political Items Collectors. She is also co-owner of Vintage Textiles and Tools, a business selling historic quilts and related material. Julie is a quilter and member of both the Mainline and Heartstring Quilters guilds, a National Quilters Association certified judge, and a member of the American Quilt Study Group.*



*Detail of block from 1840 Baltimore album style quilt top, signed in ink by Rebecca Diggs. The block explicitly details the William Henry Harrison Whig party campaign symbols, log cabin, cider barrel, raccoon and latchstring. Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, Daisy Joseph Accession.*