



A detail of the Star Signature quilt, circa 1900, shows the John Hancock of President McKinley, among others.

QUILTS



Katherine M. Schneider Kolm's Embroidered History Quilt, 1949, is full of fun and tabloid-like headlines.



PHOTOS BY LINDA CATAFFO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Carrie Odgers Rinehart made the Patchy Zoo quilt - replete with whimsical poems - in 1942 for her great-nephew.

The flowers in Helen Alleman's Flowery Fields, circa 1930, were made of dress-making remnants.



Between the threads is a wealth of state history

By JILL SCHENSUL



Between the neat, small stitches and the hodgepodge of fabrics there are memories. Memories of anticipated wedding days, of a little great-nephew named James, of a dying father who wanted to leave a lasting treasure to his children.

The walls of the Morris Museum are draped in the memories that are part of "New Jersey Quilts 1777 to 1950, Contributions to an American Tradition," on display through Feb. 14. The 35 quilts were chosen from more than 2,100 unearthed and documented during the Heritage Quilt Project of New Jersey, conducted over the past four years throughout the state.

"We tried to select quilts representative of what we saw through the project," said its vice president, Rita Erickson. "There were some good quilts that were too fragile to hang." The oldest quilt on exhibit is a wool Sawtooth Star quilt, circa 1800.

"Our goal is not only to record but to inform about conservation," said Erickson, who will be one of three speakers today at the museum. "We want to bring families to value their quilts and their history."



Collector Oscar Appel, far left, with the Star Signature quilt, the first of the many quilts he now owns. Hilary Elizabeth Reuben and her grandmother Edna Dunlap admire Hilary's Lone Star quilt. Behind them is Dunlap's Sunburst and Swag quilt.

QUILTS

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That has certainly happened in one family, where three generations have come together to celebrate the quilts they've inherited. The Sunburst and Swag quilt at the exhibit entrance was handed down through the family of Harold Dunlap, who recalls the family's fondness for fabric and thread. Dunlap's mother, Mary Elizabeth "Lizzie" Hiler Dunlap, for instance, displayed her sewing prowess early on. Lizzie admired a friend's dress, but since the family didn't have the money to buy one just like it, she borrowed it, took it apart, made a pattern from it, sewed the borrowed dress back up, and sewed one for herself, too.

Dunlap's wife, Edna, inherited quilts from her family, too, including the Lone Star, which now belongs to her granddaughter, 12-year-old Hilary Elizabeth Reuben. Although Hilary's quilt isn't in the show, it is featured in the book published as a result of the heritage project. Hilary also has retrieved a cameo pin that her great-grandmother, Lizzie, is

wearing in a photo in the book.

Oscar Appel of Totowa began collecting quilts in the Twenties; the quilt that got him started is the bright red-and-white Star Signature quilt. Appel bought it at the estate sale of Emma Scarr, his fifth-grade teacher in Paterson.

"I happened to see the quilt, and it impressed me," Appel said. "It had a lot of Paterson names, names of families I knew well." It had, in fact, about 1,000 names embroidered around the stars — including Scarr's and, in the center star, President and Mrs. William F. McKinley and Vice President (and Paterson native) G. A. Hobart, and his wife. The quilt was made as a fund-raiser for the Paterson Chapter of the International Order of Odd Fellows: People paid to have their names included on the quilt — a common fund-raising device in the 1800s.

Appel is a collector of "everything under the sun" and says the price of quilts has risen steeply since he began collecting them. A vintage quilt in fine condition can cost \$4,000 to \$5,000; the complex Baltimore album quilts can fetch more than \$100,000.

Their popularity surged in 1971, Erickson said, when the Whitney Museum's quilt exhibit

took them from the bed to the wall, where they became "art."

Erickson and others in the heritage project wanted to get back to the history of the makers: "Often a quilt carries the last remnant of history of the grandmother or the great-grandmother. It's not just folk art."

The seeds of the quilt project began 10 years ago in Kentucky, when local historians saw their heritage sold off to buyers from the East and West coasts. Today, many states are conducting quilt projects.

Erickson said New Jersey quilts are noteworthy on several counts: It appears that the block design was popular here first. Paterson, the Silk City, provided silk for many quilts. State quilts also often have a tan-and-green cotton tape used as binding in the 1840s and 1850s (sometimes called Trenton tape, because that was where it was believed to have been made).

The state also played a key role in the manufacture of the sewing machine, with Singer in Elizabethport in the 1870s. Most of the quilts in the show are hand-sewn, but some show evidence of machine stitching. "Purist quilters would not have expected it," Erickson said. "By the 1930s, it became a matter of pride to do it by hand."

One such machine-sewn quilt, the Crazy Quilt for T.C.W., was made by Ephraim B. Watson. Watson suffered from tuberculosis and passed his time making quilts — one for each of his seven children. The one on display is for Theresa Camp Watson and features appliquéd household objects: pitchers, goblets, a coffeepot, a lamp, and a horse similar to the Watsons'.

The Embroidered History Quilt was done by hand, tirelessly — almost crazily. It's exhausting even to look at and amazing to think it was done by a woman in her seventies. The quilt is a wild mélange of names, history, trivia, all embroidered by a Katherine M. Schneider Kolm of Vineland. You'll find everything here, from headlines such as "Mother of Cigar Smoking Baby Deplores Habit" to lists of criminals, presidents and vice presidents, women in Congress, the real names of Jack Benny and Mary Livingstone (Benjamin Kubelky and Sadye Marks), and lots more — all in 81-by-92½ inches.

Some quilts were made for mar-

riages, some for departures. Throughout, the personality of the quilt maker (or makers) shines through. The whimsical Patchy Zoo quilt was made for James De Groodt, "from his great aunt Carrie Rinehart, Seventy Years Old, February 14, 1942." The quilt features a menagerie of fantastic animals — a yellow-and-blue-striped zebra, a red-and-blue plaid lion, a flowered fox, and a pink-and-white rabbit — all with original verse-descriptions.

Among them:

*A Monkey checkered
Red and white
Is such a very
Funny sight
You'll never find*

*One anywhere
Cept in our
Patchy zoo so rare.*

The surprises are many in this delightful, patchy exhibit.

Today's lecture series begins at 1 p.m. with Erickson's talk on New Jersey's contribution to quilting, followed at 2:15 by a talk on Quakers, and at 3:30 p.m. by Barbara Schaffer, president of the Heritage Quilt Project of New Jersey.

Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$4, \$2 children and seniors. The museum is at 6 Normandy Heights Road in Morristown. Information: 538-0454.

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sembles, hand bells, and a liturgical dance ensemble, as well as organ music by Richard E. Frey.