Filling in Quilt History: A 16th-Century French Patchwork Banner

by Janine Janniere

French scholar Janine Janniere, following a lead unearthed in her study of European, and particularly French, quilting has brought to light a description and documentation of an extremely important piece of early French patchwork. She presents here the history of the textile, a singular illumination in a half millenium period for which we have practically no data on quilts, quilting or patchwork in Europe.

—Editors’ Note

The history of early patchwork in Europe is very sketchy. Both surviving examples of early work and written references to it, are extremely rare. The few literary references which have been found are very important in helping us understand the pre-18th century period. Some early quilt authors did search for quilt references through much early European literature, but found very little, an intriguing fact. Two early European references are cited regularly in quilt literature, the "Lai de Desire," quoted as a French poem of the 13th century, and Swift’s description of Gulliver’s clothes in Gulliver’s Travels. More than five hundred years, however, separate these two references. After mentioning the verse in the "Lai," Averil Colby regretfully points out this gap: "no further mention is made in the lay and after this solitary contribution to the early "European" domestic tradition of patchwork, there is another gap in recorded reference for several hundred years. It is disapponting to find little early history of a social development of which there has been such a strong revival for more than two hundred years. Early references, because they are so few and so widely scattered, appear to be slightly out of focus and unreal."

Intrigued by this first French reference and hoping the rest of the text might give us some clues to the context of French patchwork of that time, I decided to study the poem. Should it still be considered a reference to French patchwork bedcovers? This is not really what resulted from my research.

This poem is part of a collection of anonymous Breton lais of the 12th and 13th centuries. A lai has been described as a literary composition in verse, containing fairy elements. These narrative tales were recited by itinerant Breton poets entertaining courtly society. Most of these anonymous lais describe two distinct worlds; one is the mysterious and magical world inhabited by fairy creatures, the other is the real world, the life and environment of kings and noblemen, which was the traditional background of courtly literature. The action most often takes place in England. The "Lai de Desire," which is the subject of our reference, is a tale set in Scotland. As a matter of fact, scholars have agreed that the author of the original manuscript (who wrote the poem in the Anglo-Norman dialect sometime between 1190 and 1208), given his precise knowledge of the geography and of the local legends of Scotland, most likely lived in England. Desire is the long-awaited son of a noble and respected vassal of the King of Scotland. A young maid was sent by the fountain fay (fairy) of Calatir to lure Desire to her, and he falls in love with the fay.

One day he is led to a leafy bower to meet his beloved. That is where the bed and the pieced cover appear. The appliqué reference is less clear.

Though the bed was set in the fairy world, we may assume that even in works of fiction authors draw inspiration from their own experience. So perhaps we can project that this anonymous
A poet, living in England, had seen some patchwork bedcovers in the castles of Scotland.

The second quote, again from the British Isles, is precious to quilt historians because it actually includes the word "patchwork," and refers in the early 18th century to an existing English tradition which must have been quite widespread, given Swift's commonplace reference to it.

Still, these very few words, both from works of fiction and more than five hundred years apart, are somewhat frustrating to quilt historians as they offer so little to study and interpret. They do, however, have a common British source which confirms most of the documentation studied so far on the history of patchwork in Europe.

What about France? While studying a late 19th century dictionary of furniture and decoration by an authority of the period, I found under the word "Mosaic," a section on what was called "mosaic fabric." I read that as early as the 15th century, it was fashionable to make rugs, quilts and cushion covers from several pieces of fabrics sewn together, looking like "what we call the Arlequin costume." These mosaics were called "oeuvres a l'aiguille" said Henry Havard, the author of the dictionary, and were included in the same category of needlework as "tapisseries d'entretaille" (applied work and embroidery made in the 15th and 16th centuries). As an example of these mosaics he quotes a passage from the 1507 memoirs of a French painter, Philippe de Vigneulles. Unfortunately, as was often the practice then, Havard included no notes, references, or bibliography, giving us no way to check his assertions.

This was the beginning of an exciting period of research that went on for several months and led me to what can be considered the most complete written reference to early European patchwork thus far reported. This "discovery" falls in the middle of, and thus bridges, the five hundred year gap mentioned earlier. And wonder of wonders, it is a direct account from the hand of the maker, a man who wrote his memoirs in the early 16th century.

In 1507, on April 25th (St. Mark's day), a fabric merchant proudly hung a needlework masterpiece in front of the cathedral in the main square of the city of Metz (in the northeast of France). He wrote an accompanying poem and a letter, addressed to the people of Metz, which he posted beside his masterpiece. It defied anyone to make a similar piece, and asked God and the Virgin Mary to protect his city. In the manuscript of his memoirs, he devotes four pages to this achievement and refers to it again in the major work for which he is mostly remembered, a chronicle of his city. I will attempt a nearly literal translation, in today's language, of the section relevant to quilt history for non-readers of French.

"In the year 1507, I, Philippe, made a piece of needlework the like of which had never been seen: it was a piece of cloth cut and sewn together, in which there were more than eight thousand pieces put and joined together, all on the bias and in wool, and it looked like a painting, it was so well done. In the center, there was the picture of Our Lady, Sainte Katerine on her right, Sainte Bairbe on her left. At the top were the coats of arms of the six Paraiges of Metz,° and their names in Roman letters on each one. There were also the coats of arms of our Holy Father the Pope, of the Emperor on the right, and of the very Christian King on the left.° Then, all around, there were the coats of arms of all the Lords of Metz, with several beautiful stitches of applied embroidery and braided in "noulx d'amour"°° of various kinds, each one different. Above the picture of Our Lady, inscribed on the cloth itself in beautiful letters, there was the following prayer, (...)

And in the middle of the cloth, at the very bottom, were two men, dressed as in the old days, holding a shield in which was my seal in letters and around which was drawn the inscription: 'Philippe de Vigneulles made me.' And then, the date in letters and figures. And this piece was put and hung in front of the cathedral, on St. Marc's day, in the above year. And the date in letters and figures. And this piece was put and hung in front of the cathedral, on St. Marc's day, in the above year. Beside it, I put a poem that I, Philippe, wrote and composed and it said (...)

(I will comment later on this poem of six stanzas of eight lines each.)

Under these verses, (...) there was a long letter in prose, where I declared how and why this piece was made and that I, Philippe, offered to give ten gold coins to anyone who dared undertake such a piece or even half of it. I was willing to offer such a sum to anyone in Metz, in the duchy of Bair and of
Lorraine. And this poem, and this letter, and this piece were hung all day long on St. Marc's day of that year, in the Cathedral square, in the view of everyone and no one dared remove them or deposit a coin to take up the challenge."

He must have considered this piece a major achievement since he mentioned it again, but more briefly this time, in the final version of his chronicle, a few years later. In the early history of patchwork, it is rare if not unique to find such a thorough, informative and descriptive testimony.

Who was Philippe de Vigneulles? Quite an interesting character, it seems. He was of peasant origin, born in June 1471 in a humble family of the village of Vigneulles, near Metz. He was not able to have much schooling, and at the age of 12 went to work as an apprentice with a Metz draper. Then, his ambition and desire to learn encouraged him to leave his native region in spite of his young age and his lack of money, and to travel throughout Italy for five years. After returning to Metz he pursued his career as a draper and hosier and was very successful. By the end of his life, in 1528, he had become one of the richest people of Metz, a well-known and respected member of the bourgeoisie of his city.

Due to a severe illness in 1505, when he lost the use of his legs, he took up writing, to "pass the time," as he said. Being an expert needleworker, during that period he also undertook the pieced and applique hanging he proudly showed to his fellow citizens in the spring of 1507.

He was the first person to write the chronicle of his city from its origin to 1527, and it is as a chronicler that he has often been referred to, even though, professionally, he remained always a merchant.

I cannot draw here a complete picture of this complex and interesting character. Several noted scholars have studied his writings and life and I can refer the reader to that work. I will, however, draw from those studies what seems relevant to the making of his extraordinary piece of needlework.

Philippe was very proud to be a citizen of Metz, the "noble city" as he called it. In the foreword to his memoirs, he explained his intentions were to describe all the good and bad "adventures" that happened to him, as well as the events of the world around him, in France, in Europe, but mostly in his city. His chronicle is a very rich testimony of the daily life of the people of Metz, and he could be considered a social historian of his time. Some scholars have stressed that he commented on the events with little critical sense. He never actually contested the social hierarchy or the political system of his era and showed great respect for the governing noble authorities of Metz. Mainly, he wanted to conform.

In spite of his success and wealth, he never forgot he was a "simple merchant," and declined the offer of an official position. Still, he had become one of the richest and most famous representatives of the growing "bourgeoisie commercante". He showed great ambition in his career, and a determination to excel in many areas. His needlework "performance" and the accompanying poem demonstrate his love of contests and his desire to be the best, as well as his definite sense of humor and his cheerfulness. Considering his poor education, it is quite remarkable to see all the talents he developed: he was an excellent needleworker, he could draw, play music and, of course, was a dedicated writer for the last part of his life.

His hanging appears first as a symbol of his patriotism, of his respect for the official power and of his profound religious fervor. This was far from unusual. Jean-Paul Mas explains how the festive events and celebrations in the city were organized to encourage the patriotism of the citizens and how such happenings demonstrated the strength of the political system and the cohesiveness of the society. By exhibiting such a piece, Philippe demonstrated he was a good citizen and, at the same time, showed his joviality and his desire to be an entertainer for his fellow citizens. Charles Livingston wrote:

"He was proud of his trade and admired a well-made piece of work from both the aesthetic and technical point of view. He thus described complacently in his Journal (p. 154 ...) an extremely intricate cloth masterpiece that he exhibited in front of the cathedral in 1507. With his children, he liked to take part in theatrical and religious performances and in carnival processions. Sometimes, he himself organized and financed these events."

The description of his needlework hanging is quite remarkable and helps the reader visualize the final piece. As far as the sewing techniques are concerned, it is most probable he used piecework, appliqué and embroidery.
Several questions remain: did the eight thousand pieces of cloth form a pieced background onto which the appliquéd figures were sewn or were the appliquéd figures themselves pieced? Does "joined together" mean pieced or applied? Different interpretations are possible.

The figures and letters had to be what has been called "applied embroidery," ornamented with several embroidery stitches. He himself used the word "entretailles" which, according to Henry Havard, was the 15th and 16th century term for applied embroidery, as I noted above. We are fortunate to be able to illustrate the coats of arms of the six "Paraiges" and their names, which he applied to his hanging.

The fabric was wool, cut on the bias. No padding or quilting is mentioned so we can assume this was a pictorial "top" with perhaps an added lining.

What about colors? Unfortunately, his description does not list any, but, in the third strophe of the poem, he used the word "bigaire." "Bigarré in modern French means a mixture of different shapes and colors. Arlequin wore what can be considered the epitomy of a "bigarré" costume. From the meaning of this word therefore, we can imagine his hanging was of at least several contrasted colors.

Although he wrote that no one had ever seen such a masterpiece, it is highly unlikely his hanging was one of a kind, however intricate it might have been. It could probably be compared to other work, such as the Swedish piece mentioned in note 1. It was perhaps a forerunner of the pieced and appliquéd textiles made in Germany in the 18th century and illustrated in History of the Patchwork Quilt.23 From what Henry Havard said about "mosaic work" from the 15th to the 18th century, fabrics were manufactured to imitate pieced work and were also called "etoffe mosaic."24 As far as applied embroidery is concerned, he writes that at the end of the 15th and in the 16th century, during the luxurious festivities of the court, magnificent hangings such as this were made representing complete stories, with fifteen to twenty characters sometimes pictured.25

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Beyond the description of the techniques used, I believe this reference is particularly interesting for what it reveals about the feelings and personality of the maker. The message is personal, direct, powerful and humorous. In his poem, after glorifying God and asking him to protect his city from all dangers, the last four strophes are witty and entertaining. He says, for example, to those who speak ill of him and envy his needlework, that he is ready to be cut to pieces if they can make such a colorful ("bigaire") piece. He ends by saying he had better stop and rest for poetry is not his common practice and he prefers prose. The long letter he wrote explaining how and why he had made such a piece is unfortunately not reported in his memoirs.

Philippe's account has filled the gap observed by Averil Colby. His description and history should join Desire and Gulliver in future quilt history books as an essential reference. His contribution is another step toward a more comprehensive vision of the early history of European patchwork. I hope future work in this vast and largely untouched area of quilt research will uncover other testimonies.26

Janine Janniere is currently teaching English at the National Institute of Applied Sciences in Toulouse, France. Her previous position was at Paris X University. She holds a B.A. in American Studies from Paris VIII University. After receiving the 1975 Scholarship Award from the American Women's Group in Paris (a FAWCO Foundation-affiliated group), she enrolled in a Masters program in Education at the University of Connecticut, in Storrs, and obtained her Masters degree in 1977. She discovered the American quilmaking tradition during her years in rural New England and has concentrated on it ever since. She has done further research on the subject within a Ph.D. program in American Studies at Paris VIII University. After obtaining a research grant from the Fulbright Commission in 1984-85, she toured the United States for several months doing field work and was also a Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Appalachian Affairs of East Tennessee University. She has been lecturing in France on this subject for a number of years.

Endnotes

3. Ibid., p.73. It might be relevant to mention that, at the time, the Bretons of Armorique were closer culturally to their cousins, the Insular Bretons, than to their neighbours, the French. This independent duchy was a subject of constant rivalry between the kingdoms of England and France and joined the latter officially only in 1532. At the end of the 12th century, it was under the rule of the Plantagenet dynasty, first Henri II and then Richard I. For comments on the Lais and on the cultural context of the time, see Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, edited by Roger Sherman Loomis, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, Chapter 6: "The oral diffusion of the Arthurian Legend" by Loomis, p.52-63; and Chapter 11, "The Breton Lais," by J. Hoenfield, p.112-121.
4. Prudence Mary O'Hara Tobin, op. cit., p.52, 75, 76 and 165. The places identified in the Lai are the regions of Galatir (Calder), Murray and Lothian.
5. Averil Colby (op. cit., p.22) made a slight mistake. Désiré is a young...
Self portrait of Philippe writing his chronicle in front of the fortress walls of Metz. He illustrated the frontispiece of his chronicle with this ink drawing in the early 16th century. (This manuscript, Ms 840, B. M. Metz, was destroyed during World War II). Photograph courtesy B. M. Metz.

man, not a "mortal maid". The poem says,
"la colie fut a eschekers
de deus pailles ben faiz a chers ..."
(O'Hara Tobin op. cit., p.175-176, lines 179/180)

In her gloss, Ms. Tobin says that the word "pailles" (used for the two sorts of cloth used in the bed cover) refers to a rich cloth made of gold or silk coming from Alexandria, p.392.

I point out that he wrote "patchwork" and not "patchwork quilts". He does not tell us how this technique was used. Interestingly, two French translators made their own interpretations, choosing probably what was most familiar to their readers. A French-Canadian translation of 1661 (Vervier, Girard) says literally that Gulliver's clothes "looked like the pieced quilted bedcovers of various fabrics so dear to the English ladies ..."; Jacques Pons, for France, (Gallimard, 1965) chose to translate it as: "looked like a costume of Arlequin."

1 Henry Havid, Dictionnaire de l'aménagement et de la décoration depuis le 18e siècle jusqu'à nos jours, Maison Quentin, Paris, n.d., 4 volumes, p.988-989. This dictionary is well-known among French textile scholars and curators, and is a "classic" in a decorative arts library.

9 He finished writing his memoirs in 1522. The original 502-page manuscript is kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale, in Paris, under the title Mémoires de Philippe de Vigneulles, bourgeois de Metz. (1471-1522) ref. N.A.F. 6720. His description is on folios 223, 224, 225 and 226. The only printed edition of his manuscript is: Gedenkbuch des metzer bürgeren Philipp de Vigneulles aus den Jahren 1471 bis 1522, edited by Heinrich Michelant, Stuttgart, 1852. His description is on pages 154, 155 and 156.

10 The "Parigues" was a group of the major noble families of Metz who governed the city.

11 He was referring to Maximilian I, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and to Louis XII, King of France. Metz was torn between both but remained always French, at least through its language. According to some scholars, Philippe did not know German. Marise Hasselmann, "Le vocabulaire des réalités méridionales dans la Chronique de Philippe de Vigneulles", Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Nancy II, 1982, p.6.

12 The literal translation of "nous d'amour" is "love knots." This term was not recorded in the 18th and 19th century embroidery reference books I have checked so far. I welcome any contribution from embroidery experts.


14 Hence his name, meaning "from Vigneulles", not to be confused with the "de" of noble descent. His parents were Jehan and Magui Gerard.

15 In the prologue of his tales, he explains that, while waiting to recover (and even though he was a "simple merchant"), he started writing adventures that occurred in the "noble city" of Metz, Les Contes Nouvelles Nouvelles, Philippe de Vigneulles, ed. by Charles Livingston, Droz, Geneva, 1972, p.57, lines 10 and 22.

16 Today a square in Metz bears his name. On the plate, underneath his name, one can read "Chroniqueur messin" (Metz chronicler). Marise Hasselmann, op. cit., p.7.

17 Among these, we can list Charles Brunoe, who edited the introduction to his chronic in 1933 (op. cit.); Charles Livingston, an American University professor who studied his writings for over 30 years and whose widow donated the manuscript of his tales to the Library of Metz (op. cit.); Marise Hasselmann, Professor at the Sorbonne, who wrote a Ph. D. on his Chronicle in 1982, op. cit.; Jean-Paul Mas who also wrote a Ph.D. on Philippe's writings, "L'oeuvre de Philippe de Vigneulles (Journal, Chronique, recueil de nouvelles): du vécu au récit," University of Clermont Ferrand II, 1988.

18 Charles Livingston, op. cit., p.18.

19 According to Jean-Paul Mas (op. cit.): conversation with the author, January 27, 1994. See also his dissertation p.270 and 277.

20 He cannot be considered a French painter, as Henry Havard wrote in his Dictionary (op. cit.). He used to illustrate his writings with pen drawings such as the one pictured here.

21 Jean-Paul Mas, op. cit., p.276-277.

Appendix—From Mémoires de Philippe de Vigneulles, bourgeois de Metz (1471-1522)

Item l'an après mill v.c et vij je Philippe fis une piece d'oeuvre à l'aiguille la non pareille que jamais on avoit veu: c'est assavoir que ce fut ung draps tailie et couue ensemble; auquel draps y avoit plus de vij mil pieces de draps mises et junetee ensemble, toutes de biais et alaine et sembloit à le veoir qu'il fu peint, tant estoit justement fait. Et y avoit à milieur l'image notre dame et sy avoit à destre et a senestre l'image st Catherine et st Baire. Item dessus y avoit les airmes de vij paragies de Metz et les noms d'icelues en lettre romaigne, mise sus chacun, item y avoit les airmes de notre st pere le pape et les airmes de l'empereur à destre et du roy tres cristien à senestre. En après estoit tout en l'autour les airmes de tous les seigneurs de Metz et avec ce y avoit plusieurs biaux et trait entrelazés et entrelazés a nolx d'amors en diverses sortes, que l'une ne ressemblait l'autre; et y avoit dessus l'image notre dame en escript en draps mesme et en belle lettre de forme, l'oorexon cy après dite et en ceste forme ycy comme vous veez y cy apres.

Veraigne humblement te daigne ne viegne,
O vireye phye deffens que mort ma vie.

L'oorexon devant dite vailt autant à dire et se doit entendre ainsi:
O vireye souvereign,
Humblement te suplie,
Defens, que mort soudaigne
Ne viegne sus ma vie.

Et tout à mey lieu du dit draps tout au bout dessoubz furent faits deux bon-hommes habilis a la moud du temps passé, losqques tenions ung écussion là où estoit fait dedans le signet de quoy le dit Philippe husoit en ses lettres; et y avoit en escript tout entour du dit écusson: Philippe de Vigneulles m'a fait. Et sy estoit le millier en lettres de chifre, et fut ce dit draps mis et poussé et étendu devant la grande eglise de Mets le jour de la st Mair; l'an dessus dit; après duquel fut mis ung taulieu lequel je Philippe avoit escript et compouzé et disoit aisyn:
Gloire soit à la trinité,
A père, à fils et st esperit,
Et veulent garde ceste cité
Et préservre de tout périr.
A photo of one page of the manuscript in which Philippe de Vigneulles discussed his banner. Although the text of his Memoires was published in the mid-19th century, this is the first publication of a photographic reproduction of his manuscript. (Ms N.A.F. 6720, folio 223, B. M. Metz). Photograph courtesy Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.
Contemporary American Quilts: An International Review

by Michele Walker

A designer and contemporary quilt artist and author, Michele Walker was one of three jurors who picked a show of contemporary American quilts for an exhibition in Britain funded by the British Crafts Council. The exhibition gave British quiltmakers a needed look at the work of the most provocative and innovative American quilt artists. Ms. Walker here discusses the contemporary quiltmaking milieu in Britain, and describes the exhibition’s impact on that scene. -Editors’ Note

Interest in quiltmaking has, since the 1970s, grown as prodigiously in Britain as it has in other parts of the world. There as elsewhere, the majority of those involved in the revival have taken up quilting as a pastime.

The boom, largely American-inspired, continued during the past decade despite a recession, and its financial potential has not escaped notice. A number of populist quilting events, publications, textile lines, etc., have emerged to cater to this ever-growing audience. Quiltmaking at this level has unquestionably enrolled the largest number of contemporary makers and should not be underrated. Yet it represents only one area of quiltmaking, and the work which comes from it is rarely innovative, stimulating or challenging. Good technique is the main criterion of judgment.

After a promising start in the early 1980s, there are still only a small number of imaginative quiltmakers working in Britain, and few seem to be emerging from the younger generation. For quiltmakers who are interested in working at this level, Britain still has no important juried shows of the caliber of America’s Quilt National. So contemporary British quiltmakers look to show their quilts in more prestigious exhibitions abroad. Well-established contemporary British quiltmakers with international reputations, such as Pauline Burbidge, are represented by one-person shows. But the stimulation which might come from large, mixed exhibitions displaying diversity in attitude, design and technique has been sadly lacking.

British quiltmakers have had some exposure to American quilts both antique and contemporary. Historic (or antique) American quilts were first exhibited in London in 1974 as part of a touring show American Pieced Quilts, circulated by the Smithsonian Institution. For a British maker like myself, who had previously associated patchwork solely with hexagons and paper templates, this show offered an exciting alternative in terms of color and design and the use of fabric on a large scale. It inspired a new generation of makers with an art school training.

In 1978 Beth and Jeffrey Gutcheon visited Britain and introduced the concept of repeated block design in a series of workshops and lectures. They were followed by Michael James who continues to retain strong connections with British makers. By the early 1980s the work of such quiltmakers as Nancy Crow, Jan Myers-Newberry and Linda McDonald was becoming familiar to the British audience through lecture tours and workshops. British quiltmakers who wished to work at this level, however, have found it very difficult at home.

It was against this background that in 1991 Linda Theophilus, Head of Exhibitions at the British Crafts Council (she was involved in the 1982 Council exhibition, Quilting Patchwork, Applique 1700-1982, Sewing as a Woman’s Art) announced that it intended to organize and finance a selected exhibition of contemporary American quilts.

The backing of the Crafts Council for this show indicated to the British public that it was to be a reputable event. The Council, publicly funded, is the national body which supports and promotes contemporary crafts in England, Wales and Scotland. It aims also to encourage public understanding of craft, and extend its boundaries, in Britain.

In recent years a change in Council policy has enabled foreign makers to be included in its exhibitions. It was felt that a show of contemporary American quilts would be of great interest not only to British makers with whom they share a tradition, but to a wider audience both within and beyond the world of textiles. It was the first time that an event of this nature had originated in Britain.

The show was researched and selected by myself, Pauline Burbidge, Linda Theophilus and Penny McMorris (American quilt historian and writer). Our main aim was to present the strength and diversity of innovative, contemporary American quiltmaking.

From the outset it was decided to show the work not only of well-known, established makers, who have been influential since the beginning of the 1970s revival, but also that of newcomers, or those working outside the "mainstream" who are not making quilts in the traditional sense. This latter group was the most difficult to contact, and this was the area in which we felt we would have liked more entries.

Approximately 200 letters were sent, mainly to individual makers but also to organizations, etc., which we thought...
might be able to make recommendations. We also tried to follow up any work we had seen in previous exhibitions or publications that appeared interesting.

From about 100 replies, we made a selection (from slides and statements) of 46 pieces of work from 35 makers. Slides were first seen by Penny McMorris, who then sent them to the Crafts Council together with her comments so that they could be incorporated with our selection.

The exhibition occupied both galleries at the Crafts Council in London, approximately 3,000 square feet. Although it was not selected with specific categories in mind, it was when hung, organized into the sections described below.

The exhibition began with new pieces from Michael James and Nancy Crow, well-established makers who have been instrumental in both countries in encouraging this revival.

Political quilts followed, the work of makers who have chosen to exploit the paradox between the warmth and comfort that a quilt symbolizes with the harsh events of modern life. They addressed issues such as environmental pollution, the Gulf War, the LA riots and divorce. Makers included Merrill Mason, Katherine Knauer, Lee Malerich and Ilisha Helfman. It was this section that many viewers found most interesting. The quilts were seen to be commenting on the times in which they were made and indicated a challenging new direction away from the preoccupation with surface design that has, until the last few years, dominated the present resurgence of interest.

The highly embellished quilt surface, developed by many makers during the 1980s, was represented by the work Jane Bureh Cochran, and by a GREEN QUILT made as a collaboration by Susan Shie, James Acord, Anne Warren, Therese May (who also submitted a new work) and Terrie Mangat. Parallels can be drawn between the Crazy work made during the same period of the last century with quilts from this section. Today however, the deliberate use of raw edges and unfinished threads directly challenge the traditional standards of order and neatness.

While still adhering to the basics of quiltmaking (several layers of fabric stitched together) many makers are now creating their own "cloth," eschewing the use of commercially dyed and printed fabrics. Linda MacDonald, Nancy Erickson, Lenore Davis, Joan Schulze, Elizabeth Busch and Ellen Zahorec were representative of makers in that section, while Susan Wilchins chose to layer and sculpt the fabric to create a complex textured relief.

The second gallery included the work of Faith Ringgold and Miriam Schapiro. Both are fine artists, instrumental in gaining attention and status for women's art. Barbara MacCallum also addressed issues of gender within a traditional female art form. Her work created the most controversy not only in its subject matter (the work synthesized previous concerns of gender, her experience of living in New York and having several years earlier nursed a close relative with AIDS) but also in its use of materials not conventionally associated with quiltmaking. Both works conveyed an intimation of disquiet, as did the work of Rise Nagin, with its multi-layered meanings.

Overall, the submissions indicated that American contemporary quiltmaking is diverse, alive and well. The work was vigorous, though at times many quilts displayed a frenetic patterning and embellishment of the surface which made them indistinguishable from each other. There was also a notably common use of either painting directly on the fabric, stenciling, dyeing or using photographic transfer techniques. The tendency for makers to create their own "cloth" is less usual in Britain. From a selector's point of view I found the work of makers less well-known in the quiltmaking world particularly impressive. I think, for example of Ilisha Helfman, Merrill Mason and Barbara MacCallum, none of whom regard themselves as quiltmakers but whose work nevertheless gives the medium a more challenging dimension and new direction. I was also interested in the number of makers exploring political and social themes in their work.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the education section organized a series of events, study days, lectures, workshops, gallery tours and residencies within the galleries to explore in greater depth issues relating to the show and contemporary quilts in general. It was an opportunity for discussion and debate.

The exhibition attracted about 12,000 visitors, treble the number normally expected at that time of the year (July 15 - September 5). It stimulated interest across a wide-ranging audience and certainly challenged people's preconceptions about quilts.

For many viewers it offered a first opportunity to see work previously known only through reproductions in books and lectures, where scale and subtlety of detail is lacking. I am thinking, for example, of Rise Nagin's work "Exile: House and Mountain" and "Dwelling," in which she used layers of translucent fabrics and colors to produce haunting, dream-like imagery. It is only on close inspection that the amount of thought and skill that went into making the work, and the technique, can be appreciated. All too often a quiltmaker's skills (and this applies to both new and old quilts) are reduced to "6 easy steps" in a how-to book.

Judging from the reaction of visitors, many of whom made several visits to the show, and the comments of those who have seen it since it has been on tour, Contemporary American Quilts has stimulated a great deal of interest in Britain, particularly through the wide diversity of approaches it illustrated. The traditional American pieced quilt has undoubtedly been a major influence in Britain during the present quiltmaking revival and this show will undoubtedly foster and strengthen creative links between the two countries in...
the future. It is interesting to note also this resurgence of interest completes a circle, for it was the British quilt styles of the 18th century that played a major role in establishing the strong American tradition. During the 19th century these styles were reinterpreted and developed in a uniquely American way, and now, recognizable descendants, they are returning to re-invigorate their ancestral stock.

Contemporary American Quilts, a fully illustrated book, accompanied the exhibition and is available in the Gallery Shop. Price £9.50. An education handbook, Exploring Contemporary Quilts, is available from the Crafts Council Gallery Shop at £5.50, or £6.00 mail order. A major illustrated article discussing modern American quilts was published in the July/August issue of Crafts magazine, available in the Gallery Shop. Price £4.50.
Approaching Analysis:
The Lancaster County Quilt Harvest

by Patricia Keller

The quilt survey movement in the United States, a phenomenon largely of the last decade, was not conceived as a national effort, with standardized goals and methods. Instead, starting in 1982 in Kentucky, the idea spread across the country, so there are now few states in which quilt surveys have not been done. Inspiration and methodology were borrowed or methods reinvented, with varying degrees of sophistication and application of scholarly standards. Most of the surveys have been designed and run by quilt enthusiasts rather than people trained as scholars in the decorative arts, folklore, art history, etc., and concern has been expressed about many of the surveys’ designs, methodologies, use and interpretation of data collected, and, ultimately, value to quilt scholarship.

Patricia Keller was the director of the Lancaster County, Pennsylvania quilt documentation project from its founding in 1988 to 1993. She and her steering committee felt that such a survey offered a unique opportunity for collecting and interpreting social and historical data. To fully exploit these possibilities Ms. Keller assembled a distinguished multi-disciplinary body of scholars and subjected the survey’s design, methodologies and interpretive potential of data collected to their scrutiny and suggestions. This was the first time such an approach had been applied to a quilt documentation project; her article describes how it was conceived and implemented.

Ms. Keller welcomes inquiries about the methods discussed in her article as they apply to quilt documentation projects. She may be contacted in writing through this journal.

—Editors’ Note

The Heritage Center Museum of Lancaster County established The Lancaster County Quilt Harvest quilt documentation effort in October, 1988.’ As conceived and developed, the Quilt Harvest is a multifaceted history project focusing on the social, economic, intellectual and political lives of women and men in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, through analysis and interpretation of 18th, 19th and early-20th century quilted textiles and quiltmaking traditions specific to this geopolitical entity.’ The design of the Lancaster project was informed by preceding artifact studies and methodologies, including several prior state and regional quilt documentation projects.

The Quilt Harvest project correlates with the Heritage Center Museum’s mission of collecting, documenting, exhibiting and interpreting the decorative arts of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The intention of this article is to describe one feature of the Lancaster project’s design, an aspect that may prove useful as a resource for quilt documentation projects interested in extending the interpretive potential of project data.

As originally conceived, The Lancaster County Quilt Harvest consisted of four interrelated, essentially sequential components. The initial phase consisted of several months of detailed and comprehensive planning leading to the mass quilt documentation effort (data collection). The products of documentation required an extended phase of data organization and computerization necessary to support an extended period of taxonomic development and interpretive inquiry.* The mass-documentation fieldwork phase of this project, similar to many previous and subsequent American regional and state mass quilt documentation projects, consisted of a series of public quilt documentation events. During these events the project team assembled an extensive written and photographic base of detailed empirical information about the physical appearance and structural characteristics of Lancaster County quilted textiles brought by their owners for documentation. By interviewing quilt owners and makers the team also collected information detailing the individual quilts’ histories of use and ownership, biographical data about the quilts’ makers and owners, descriptions of makers’ tools and techniques, and a range of additional evidence pertaining to the production and use of quilted bedcoverings and other quilted textiles in Lancaster County during the period under study.’ As was originally intended, the necessarily capsulized data collected through the public quilt documentation days provided a guide to opportunities for subsequent audio-or videotaped ethnographic interviews with quiltmakers and quilt owners. The information collected during the subsequent interview process clarified and expanded the anecdotal base of historical information, and provided opportunities to explore current attitudes and remembered aspects of individual and group behavior.

Two fundamental objectives motivated the Quilt Harvest project Steering Committee and informed the research design. On the pragmatic level, the documentation questions were designed to guide fieldworkers in recording detailed empirical information from quilts made in Lancaster County in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. This data would later be subject to quantitative analyses to substantiate or modify an informal yet commonly operative taxonomy of physical characteristics thought to distinguish quilts made in Lancaster County in the period under study. By identifying physical attributes which distinguish dated quilts made by members of various ethnic, religious, economic and social groups from Lancaster County’s various geographic (and demographic) sub-regions, the project team anticipated de-
veloping diachronic systems of taxonomic classification for Lancaster County quilts.

Though development of differentiating taxonomic profiles was an arguably sufficient impetus for the intensive undertaking planned, the Steering Committee was persuaded from the outset that the Quilt Harvest afforded an important and unparalleled opportunity for deeper social and historical analyses based on quilts and quiltmaking behaviors as apparently gendered manifestations of material culture. To this end, the "Quilt Harvest" project design embraced a corollary objective: interdisciplinary examination of the project's empirical and anecdotal data. As suggested by Fleming's model for artifact study, such cultural analysis promised to reveal intersections of function and meaning connecting the indigenous production, use, and retention of quilted bedcoverings to the larger contexts of Lancaster County's social, political, intellectual and economic life.

Once computerization of the Quilt Harvest project data was well under way, the enormous interpretive potential inherent in the aggregate database, as well as questions about the statistical significance of the sample, prompted design of a transitional review and planning study in preparation for the project's interpretive phase. In early 1993 the Heritage Center Museum organized an interdisciplinary team of consulting academicians and independent scholars to join the members of the project team in a review of the Quilt Harvest project methodology and data. The consultants were asked to suggest theoretical and conceptual issues and models from the perspective of their specific discipline and/or individual research which they thought could prove applicable to the project database and developing multiple lines of interpretive inquiry and analysis. The consultants were also invited to comment on the project's sampling characteristics, and suggest additional augmentative or corrective work they thought necessary.

The composition of the panel was carefully considered to include representatives of a number of research fields and academic disciplines; it was not thought, however, that this configuration exhausted the possibilities for interdisciplinary thought relative to this project. The panel included social and cultural historian Barbara G. Carson (Commonwealth Center for American Studies, College of William and Mary) whose professional experience has emphasized statistical interpretation of American material culture within the context of American social and cultural history; historians Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (University of New Hampshire) and Louise Stevenson (Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster) who approached the project data in light of overarching issues in American history and American women's history of the 18th and 19th centuries, respectively; folklorist Bernard L. Herman (University of Delaware), whose professional experience has emphasized material culture studies and statistical reconstruction and interpretation of material and socio-historical contexts; textile historian Barbara A. Brackman, lecturer and author of several recognized reference works on American quilts; Thomas Winpenny (Elizabethtown College) an historian with specialized training in the history of technology whose research has focused upon the impact of 19th century industrialization on south-central Pennsylvania; and statistician Rebecca J. Siders (University of Delaware) whose cross-disciplinary approach combining American social and cultural history with social science statistical analysis supported inquiry, analysis, and interpretation of the Quilt Harvest project database.

The review and planning study was designed to afford each consultant the time and information necessary to become thoroughly oriented to the Quilt Harvest project and its methodology prior to traveling to Lancaster for a one-day roundtable conference. Three months before the Lancaster conference, each consultant was provided with a synopsis of the review and planning study's design and objectives, an extended written overview of the Quilt Harvest project methodology, a system description detailing the computerized database files, file relationships, screens, codes, and reporting capabilities; sample quilt documentation forms, and additional background materials. Follow-up telephone conferences and meetings with each consultant clarified ambiguities and addressed questions concerning both the review and planning study and the overall project design.

Consultants and project team members next prepared informal written summaries or listings of their initial observations and suggestions for future analysis and interpretation of the Quilt Harvest data. These were collated and distributed to all participants for review prior to the Lancaster conference. A synthetic analysis of the combined initial observations and interpretive suggestions revealed two primary and interrelated categories of investigation which corresponded to the documentation project's initial objectives: 1. visual and structural analysis of various Lancaster County quilts' physical attributes and changes in these typologies over time; and 2. investigation of social and historical contexts for quilts and quiltmaking behavior in Lancaster County. Consultants' initial suggestions included models of quantitative testing for points of congruence between two or more of the 22 identified data fields (for example, maker religion/presence of inscription/date of object), and 82 questions relating project data to larger social and historical contexts (examples: Is there a discernible relationship between quilt production and wartime? Is there a discernible shift in the demographic profile of those making quilts in a pre-industrial era vs. an industrial society?).

Following this period of preparation, consultants and project team members met in Lancaster in June, 1993, for an continued on page 12
informal, day-long exchange and synthesis of observations, insights, and ideas for future research based upon the Quilt Harvest effort. A slide presentation including scenes from the public documentation effort and a broad representation of the objects documented during the Quilt Harvest project (including quilts, quilt tops, pieced and quilted pillow slips, quilting patterns, etc.) served as one catalyst for an enlightening and enormously productive discussion extending through much of the day. Reports of sample frequencies suggested by the consultants’ earlier queries were also distributed, and were useful for helping the group discuss concerns relative to the sample’s statistical validity and for supporting additional theoretical and conceptual discussion of topics for future research.

The entire day’s proceedings were audio-tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. A hard-copy executive summary as well as a diskette copy of the entire transcription were distributed to each participant for review several weeks after the Lancaster conference. The executive summary organized the points raised during the conference discussion within topically-related categorical headings. Each participant also received a list of specific questions requesting additional information (such as bibliographic references) and clarification of difficult concepts or comments made during the Lancaster conference. Consultants subsequently provided this additional information either in writing or during individual conferences.

This opportunity for collaborative interdisciplinary review of the Quilt Harvest project methodology and interpretive potential proved enormously beneficial and productive. Undertaken at a point of transition between data compilation and interpretation, this study provided an opportunity for valuable extended discourse helpful for assessing the overall validity of the project’s actual sampling. Equally important, the multiple perspectives on the project and its interpretive potential provided by academicians and scholars from varying disciplines and backgrounds contributed new insights and promising theoretical and conceptual models to inform future quilt project data analysis and interpretation.

Patricia Keller received her material culture training as a Fellow in the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture, receiving an M.A. in 1984 from the University of Delaware. Her research has been particularly directed toward Pennsylvania German material culture with special emphasis on paint-decorated furniture and quilted textiles, and she has written and lectured frequently on these and other decorative arts topics. As Director/Curator of The Heritage Center of Lancaster County from 1984-1993, she organized numerous original exhibitions interpreting regional decorative arts. Patricia served as director of The Lancaster County Quilt Harvest, a regional quilt documentation project sponsored by the Heritage Center, and continues as a volunteer curatorial research associate for that project. Currently, Patricia is a doctoral student in the American Civilization Program within the History Department of the University of Delaware, pursuing synthesis of American social history, women’s history, and material culture study. In June, 1994, she will guest curate an exhibition of quilts from Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, for the Hershey Museum of American Life in Hershey, Pennsylvania. Patricia has recently been named a 1994 Sullivan Fellow by the Museum of American Textile History in North Andover, Massachusetts. She will examine the impact of regional taste and patterns of consumption on printed cotton textile manufacturers in America, 1840-1940, through a case study of the network of commercial interactions connecting quilters in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, with American printed cotton textile mills in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
museum's arguably arbitrary but nevertheless politically defined region of interest. As noted by folklorist Joyce Ice, object surveys defined by geopolitical boundaries rather than by the realities of cultural geography are obviously problematic. Commenting on the concept of statewide quilt surveys, Ice's observations are equally applicable to any survey bounded by a geopolitical entity. Ice notes, "While state borders are clearly marked and convenient boundaries for surveys, they are also arbitrary governmental lines that do not necessarily relate to quilting in a meaningful way. Furthermore, a state survey precludes other regional groupings across state lines that might be more useful in terms of quilt patterns, types, and styles. Assuming, a priori, that a state is a significant unit for study may in turn restrict or skew observations that can be made about regions within a state." (Joyce Ice, review of The Quilts of Tennessee: Images of Domestic Life Prior to 1930, by Bets Ramsey and Merikay Waldvogel, in Southern Folklore 46, no. 2 (1989): 192-193.) Clearly, evidence collected during the Lancaster Quilt documentation effort will not be an adequate base upon which to structure larger regional models of quilting behavior. However, quilt documentation efforts are either underway or concluded for a number of (geopolitical) areas surrounding Lancaster County; neighboring counties and towns, to the north and south of the county are presently in process. Meaningful analyses of the relationships linking quilting to cultural geography in the middle-Atlantic region and beyond will depend upon analyses based on the synthesis of these and additional documentation efforts.

The Lancaster County Quilt Harvest documentation effort owes intellectual debts of gratitude to a number of preceding quilt documentation projects and their leaders, including: Shelly Zegart of The Kentucky Quilt Project, Inc.; Jeannette Lasansky and the quilt documentation forms published by Quilt Project of the Oral Traditions Project of the Union County Historical Society (Ms. Lasansky served as an initial paid consultant to "The Lancaster County Quilt Harvest"); Phyllis Tepper and the quilt documentation forms published by The New York Quilt Project; the quilt documentation forms by Jonathan Holstein published in The Quilt Digest (1983); and the quilt documentation forms designed by Holstein and published by the American Textile Registry. In turn, "The Lancaster County Quilt Harvest" has provided a documentation model adapted by the Goschenhoppen Historians' quilt documentation project, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, and the Berks County, Pennsylvania, quilt documentation project.

Because the project's research design anticipated the need for sophisticated quantitative analysis, the written documentation was collected in a hard-copy format designed for easy adaptation for subsequent computerization. Computerization of the project data began in 1992 on an IBM compatible PC running MS-DOS and using Enable, a relatively inexpensive software package that includes integrated database, spreadsheet, graphics, word processing, and telecommunications modules. Cathy Krall, an experienced computer systems analyst, developed the input forms and database structures using the Enable database module. The design was intended to correspond with the hard-copy documentation forms, the confidential owner/subject identification system, and filing system already in place. The analyst designed the programs to be menu driven and to present a self-contained application interface for data entry. Three members of the project steering committee thoroughly familiar with the "Quilt Harvest" and its findings were responsible for entering the data. As analysis requires, researchers will be able to support and select data from each of the files and prepare a variety of reports. Provision is made within the program for keyword search capability among the anecdotal information recorded. Additionally, the Enable package can export data in a variety of other formats (ASCII, dBase, Lotus, etc.) for input to other analysis packages. (Much of this description is derived from an unpublished internal document, "Quilt Harvest Database: System Overview" compiled in June, 1993, by Cathy Krall.) The data compilation phase also included archival organization of the original documentation materials, including photographic slides and negatives, original documentation forms, and other written information such as photocopies of quilters' diaries, quilt pattern clippings, or marriage certificates.

Quilt documentation projects in the later 20th century confront a significantly limited "window of opportunity" for direct access to those few women and men still living who were born in the latter decades of the 19th century. They and their now aging sons and daughters are frequently the last remaining keepers of oral tradition and family lore. Although the "Quilt Harvest" project team recognized the importance of Lancaster County's entire continuum of 20th century quiltmaking activities, the realities of diminishing direct access to elderly informants, as well as available time and funding for the fieldwork, led the project team to restrict its 1988-89 documentation efforts to quilted textiles made in Lancaster County prior to the impact of American involvement in World War II.


Members of the "Quilt Harvest" project team who participated in the transitional review and planning study included author, lecturer, and regional textile historian Patricia T. Herr, now a trustee with the Heritage Center's (HCLC) Board; historian and former HCLC associate curator Susan Sharpless Messimer, now curator with the Lancaster County Historical Society; HCLC trustee and dedicated volunteer Phyllis Thompson, now President of the HCLC Board; computer systems consultant Cathy Krall, and the author.

The consultants were also provided with copies of local news clippings on the Lancaster quilt documentation project as well as project-initiated press releases announcing documentation events throughout Lancaster County. These helped them gain perspective on the way the project was "marketed" and perceived within the community and how that might have influenced the sample.

Several consultants requested that summaries of their observations and potential interpretive questions be extracted from extended telephone conferences during which the project and its methodology were discussed.

Categorical headings suggested by the conference discussion and included within the executive summary are: 1. Quilt Design and The Lancaster Quilt Aesthetic; 2. Quilt Production; 3. Quilt Function; 4. Quilt Transmission; 5. Gender and Quilts/Quilting; 6. Theoretical and Conceptual Modes/Issues; 7. Project Biases; 8. Architecture and Quilts/Quilting; and 9. Work to Be Done.
American Museum in Britain

by Shiela Betterton

Shiela Betterton draws a profile of The American Museum in Britain, where she was for many years, Textile and Needlework Specialist. The Museum is an outpost of American folk and formal culture in the place where much of it originated. She has concentrated for The Quilt Journal on the Museum’s textile, and particularly quilt, collections. Included is basic information on the Museum’s location, hours, collections, facilities for scholars, etc. This is the second in what will be a continuing series of profiles in The Quilt Journal of museums outside the United States with interesting quilt collections.

—Editors’ Note

The city of Bath in the west of England (now designated a World Heritage Site) has long been famous for its Roman Baths complex and its fine 18th century Georgian buildings. Not far behind them in tourist popularity, however, is the American Museum in Britain.

The Museum, which opened in 1961, is located about three miles from the city centre at Claverton Manor. The house, designed by Sir Jeffrey Wyatville, architect to King George IV, was built about 1820 on a site high above the valley of the river Avon, with commanding views to the south and east. It was in the grounds of Claverton Manor that Sir Winston Churchill made his first political speech, to the Primrose League, in July 1897.

The American Museum in Britain, the only museum in Europe of the American decorative and domestic arts, was founded by Dr. Dallas Pratt and Mr. John Judkin, who had a great affection for Great Britain and regretted that no museum in Europe demonstrated the achievements of American craftsmen and artists during the 200 year period from the late 17th century to the Civil War. They envisioned exhibiting furniture and other decorative arts as a means of fostering Anglo-American understanding. The museum is a private foundation run by an educational trust and is not supported by national or local government. In January, 1994 an exhibition with associated events was held in London, primarily to launch a major fundraising campaign.

The Museum was conceived as a series of period rooms illustrating the way Americans lived in the earliest days of Puritan New England through the opulence of anti-bellum New Orleans. In addition to the period rooms, each of which has an actual part of the American home it represented, sections of the museum are devoted to the American Indian, the Maritime Trade, the opening of the American West and textiles. There are also small collections of silver, pewter and glass. The former stable, a semi-circular building, has been converted into a folk art gallery.

Outside attractions, including a recreation of George Washington's rose and flower garden at Mount Vernon, an arboretum which shows the variety of trees, plants and shrubs which English gardens have adopted from the North American continent, an apple orchard in which some of the older varieties of American apple are grown, an herb garden, a Conestoga wagon and a reproduction Cheyenne teepee, are placed on Claverton Manor's 125 acres.

There are nearly 200 items of furniture to be seen in the museum. This is the largest and most comprehensive group of pre-1855 furniture accessible to the public outside the United States.

Much of the furniture in the early room came from the private collection of the late Joseph Downs, an enthusiastic collector of New England furniture, who had been curator of the American wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. He was also the first curator of the Henry Francis Dupont Winterthur Museum.

The foremost attraction for many, however, is the quilt collection, which is considered the best outside the United States, and ranks high among collections anywhere. The textile room is home to a rotating display of about 50 quilts from a collection of more than 160. So popular are the quilts that a number of schools have made their own Friendship Quilt based on the objects they have seen in the museum’s collection. Quilting groups come to study in the textile room and can be given an introductory gallery talk about the collection if required. There are also rugs, woven coverlets and samplers.

The earliest quilt is inscribed "R... Porter, her bed quilt made in the year 1777(7)." The small eight-point stars are pieced from a square and eight triangles and many of the alternate white blocks are embroidered. The border is applique, swags and bows alternating with vases of flowers.

The most sophisticated quilt is a Baltimore Album quilt, made for a bride in 1847. The traditional hearts are geometric and can be seen at the end of each sashing strip.

Between these two extremes there are some fine examples of 18th century whole-cloth quilts, pieced and applique quilts of every description, also crazy quilts, quilts made in Hawaii and examples by Sioux Indian women, Amish women and slaves.

One of the most interesting quilts was made by slaves on the Mimosa Hall plantation in Marshall, Texas for the Anglican bishop from New Orleans, who toured the cotton plantations annually to baptize, confirm and marry. When the bishop had gone on his way the quilt was usually worn out by the slaves or children. The Mimosa Hall quilt, however, survived and was gifted to the museum by its owner. The blocks, which are set on point, are alternately red wholecloth and white on which a red chalice, to represent the bishop, has been appliqued. This quilt was loaned to the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia, for the exhibition Before Freedom Came, which went also to several...
other museums in the United States.

The history of many of the museum's quilts are known, including that of a beautifully worked, all-white quilt made and dated 1821 by Mary Waldron Nexen Thompson, the wife of Colonel Alexander Thompson of the United States Army. She accompanied him on all his campaigns and in 1824 they were hosts to the Marquis de Layfayette. After Colonel Thompson's death his widow lobbied a bill through Congress to provide pensions for the widows of Army officers.

A very large silk quilt pieced in a tumbling blocks pattern which forms a twelve-point star on a gray silk background, was made by Sarah Taylor Middleton Rogers, one of the first women physicians in Philadelphia. She was awarded a prize of a silver ladle for the quilt at the state fair in Trenton, New Jersey in 1852.

A rare Hawaiian flag quilt contrasts with two examples of Hawaiian appliqué quilts. Three "Star" quilts are representative of those made by Sioux Indian women, while the small collection of Amish quilts shows the contrast between those made in Lancaster County and those made in the mid-west.

One of the latest acquisitions is a quilt which was given to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt in the 1930s. She gave it to her grandson, Curtis who has now donated it to the museum. It is a "Trip Around the World" pattern made of one inch squares in a myriad of colors.

The woven coverlets range from simple blankets hand embroidered, through overshot and double cloth to elaborate Jacquard weavings. The earliest Jacquard, white and indigo, has a pattern of eagles, Independence Hall and Masonic emblems. Woven into one corner is the phrase "Agriculture and Manufacture are the foundations of our Independence, July 4, 1829."

The rugs have been made in a variety of techniques; embroidered, hooked, woven, and braided. There are floral and geometric patterns, horses, dogs and cats, even one with a flag and the word "Union" at the top; rugs hooked to the patterns of Edward Sands Frost, and an example of the high sculptured pile "Waldoboro" type rug showing a one-eyed lion with beavers at its feet.

The collection of textiles woven by Navajo Indian women includes everything from a classic second phase chief's blanket to a modern rug. Two women's wearing blankets complement those woven for men. The exuberant "eye-dazzler" blankets and rugs made with commercial Germantown yarn contrast with rugs woven from wool which had been vegetable dyed. One rug, made by Eleanor Roanhorse of Pine Springs, Arizona, in 1966 was awarded a blue ribbon by the Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff. There is a also a small number of Spanish-American blankets woven on a horizontal loom.

To the east of the main building is the new gallery, the Prince of Wales. Here there is a large exhibition hall used for temporary exhibitions, the museum's extensive library and a special gallery for the museum's collection of more than 200 antique maps and related prints which had been collected over a period of 50 years by Dr. Pratt and which he has now donated to the museum. Dr. Pratt also provided funds to build the gallery in which the maps are displayed.

The founders saw folk art as an important part of the museum and had the semi-circular stable block converted to a folk art gallery. Exhibits include two full-sized cigar store Indians, weathervanes, tin wedding anniversary gifts, duck decoys and paintings by Ammi Phillips, Joshua Johnson and unknown folk artists.

The museum's education program was designed to create a link between America and Great Britain, and has two main aims; the first is to train the eye and develop aesthetic competence, and the second is to encourage greater understanding of the United States.

All students have access to the museum's extensive library if a prior appointment is made with the librarian.

The museum is closed during January for cleaning and refurbishment, and this year will open to the public on March 26 through November 6, from 2:00 pm until 5:00 pm every day except Mondays. Parties of adults can be accommodated by prior arrangement with the secretary, Mrs. Ford (telephone 0225-460503). During mornings, Mondays and all day when the museum is not open to the public, schools and students are welcomed if prior arrangement is made with the education secretary, Mrs. Amanda Davies (telephone 0225-463538). It is sometimes possible to visit the textile room only when the museum is not open to the public, but a prior appointment must be made. A nominal fee is charged.*

Shiela Betterton, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, has been associated for 30 years with the American Museum in Britain, the last 19 as its Textile and Needlework Specialist, with a particular interest in quilts. She was born in Northumberland, England, and, she notes, "always slept under quilts." She was intrigued, on a trip to America in 1963, to discover its quilting tradition. She began patchwork and quilting research then, and has continued it around the world ever since. Ms. Betterton lectures in England and abroad on the subject, and has written six books on textiles in the Museum's collection. She has also collaborated on many other publications in the field.

*See Page 16 for an information chart on the American Museum in Britain.
American Museum in Britain

- Founded by Dallas Pratt and John Judkyn and opened in 1961.

- Housed at Claverton Manor, just outside Bath, England, which was designed in 1820 by Jeffrey Wyatville, architect to King George IV.

- Established as "a museum of the decorative arts and of American history illustrating life in America from Colonial days to the end of the nineteenth century," with the aim of fostering Anglo-American understanding.

- The collection includes galleries devoted to the American Indian, the Pennsylvania Germans, the religious community of the Shakers, and the isolated Spanish colonists of New Mexico. Exhibits depict the opening of the West, whaling, textiles including quilts, pewter, glass and silver. The gardens include an American arboretum, and a semi-circular gallery presenting the vigorous forms and primitive designs of American folk art.

- A new gallery contains a reference library covering American history and the decorative arts, a map room relating to the discovery of the New World, and a hall showing special exhibitions.

- Approximately 60,000 visitors a year, of which some 16,000 are pupils from educational institutions.

- Open daily from 2-5 p.m. (except Mondays) from March 26 until November 6. Educational tours and special adult tours are arranged year round upon advance application only.

- Address: American Museum in Britain, Claverton Manor, Bath BA2 7BD. Phone: (0225) 460503. Fax: (0225) 480726.

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