

Oversized Quilt Will Be Centerpiece For Lycoming College Play

BY BARBARA MILLER

Lycoming County Correspondent WILLIAMSPORT — For sale: One Bunyan-sized 16-by-16-foot legacy quilt composed of tradition patches each measuring 4 feet square. Presently, the quilt is being used as a backdrop for the play, "Quilters," at the Arena Summer Theatre, Lycoming College, Williamsport. It will be available after play dates, June 12 through 15 and 19 through 22.

Thinking big has become second nature to three Williamsport quilters, Gloria Gray, Pegge Emery and Marion Vogler. In April Dr. Robert Falk, director of the musical play "Quilters" contacted Gloria Gray, proprietor of Williamsport Dry Goods, William Street, Williamsport, to ask if she would assume the huge task of sewing the quilt and a number of patches to be used as props in the play.

Gray and her two employees, Emery and Vogler, began work on the quilt immediately. By working on and off Gray estimated it would take the remaining two months before the play to complete the quilt and patches.

The women are actually making the equivalent of two large quilts, Emery says, because they must make 17 additional patches to be used singly as props throughout the play. All time, labor and materials are being donated by Williamsport Dry Goods, Gray said.

"Figuring out how to make them (the patches) so big was the main problem," observes Emery, who teaches classes in quilting at the store.

Emery says the quilt is made of very old tradition block, some of which have been redesigned.

The quilt, Falk said is the focal point of the play.

"The play has a cast of seven women who portray Sarah MacKendry Bonham and her six daughters," says Falk. "It tells stories of life on the frontier moving westward through the blocks of a quilt. The blocks of the quilt become the scenes in a musical."

Elaborating further about the play, Falk explains, "The actresses transform themselves into different characters as needed — at times they play men or animals." For example, Falk notes, they take the parts of a



Marion Vogler marks a Crosses and Losses Patch on fabric.

father, preacher, sow, and a calf.

"The blocks of the quilt," Falk continues, "are standard tradition blocks known to all quilters and they all have names such as Windmill, Rocky Road to Kansas, Lone Star, Double Wedding Rings, and Four Doves. They really go through the basic cycles of life such as birth, schoolhouse, wedding, the ups and downs of families such as death, tornado, and a prairie fire. These are all enacted on stage.

"The music has a country and folk favor," Falk reports, "intertwined with familiar church and spiritual music." The seven women sing a four-part harmony in a very close musical range, he adds, and a variety of musical instruments such as harp, Irish drum, and freaka, will be used.

"Quilters," written and composed by Molly Newman and Barbara Damashek, has appeared at the Denver Center for Performing Arts, Denver, the J.F.K. Center, Washington, D.C., and in New York City for a brief period.

Peggy Emery says she enjoys

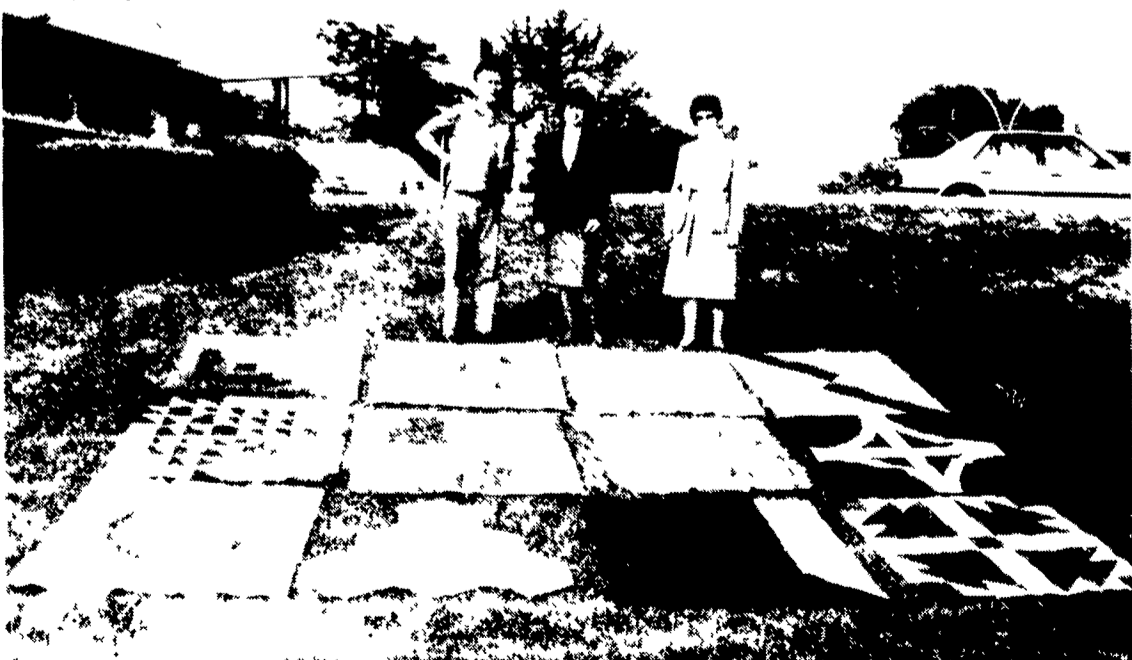
the challenge of sewing new quilting patches. She has been quilting for three years and Gray has been quilting for two years.

After her youngest child left home, Gray says, she made a decision three and a half years ago to open a sewing shop. Although she originally shared a building with other businesses in a downtown establishment, she notes happily that business has improved greatly since she moved to a building of her own.

And how does Gray feel about participating in making what is probably the largest quilt in Pennsylvania?

"I think it's so much fun. I think the overall effect will be striking when it's done. I'm proud to be working on it," she exclaims.

It's a foregone conclusion that Gray, Emery, and Vogler along with many area quilters already have purchased tickets for the upcoming play. But one wonders how much attention they'll give the play when that marvelous quilt hangs in the background.



Play director Dr. Robert Falk and Pegge Emery and Gloria Gray of Williamsport Dry Goods Co., display the 3½-foot patches that will be made into a 16-foot quilt. The quilt will be used as a backdrop for the play "Quilters" playing at the Arena Summer Theatre, Lycoming College, Williamsport, this month.

The patches, left to right starting at the top, are, Row 1: Log Cabin, Rocky Road to Kansas, Secret Drawer and Windmill. Row 2: Tree of Life, Robbin Peter to Pay Paul, Double Wedding Ring, and Country Crossroads. Row 3: Lone Star, Baby's Blocks, Shadow Block, and Four Doves in the Window. Row 4: Not yet complete but will include Crosses and Losses, Butterfly, Schoolhouse and Rebel Patch.

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