

# Celebration Of Quilts '88

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YORK — Since the early days of our nation's history, quilting has been stitched into the colorful patchwork of Americana. Originally a way to utilize even tiny left-over bits of scarce and expensive fabrics, quilting today has taken on the status of an art form, high prized by collectors.

With the resurgence of interest in quilting, the York Quilters Guild organized less than three years ago as a sharing and support group for both veteran and novice quilters. About ninety members are now gearing up for the Guild's first major public event, a juried quilt show.

The Guild's "A Celebration of Quilts '88" is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, April 23 and 24, at the Yorktowne Hotel, Market Street, in downtown York. Planned events include judging of several competitive categories, invitational and antique quilts on display, plus demonstrations, lectures and a merchants' mall.

Many of the quilting enthusiasts take pleasure in sharing their love of stitchery, design and color, and frequently teach their craft, either in formal class settings or casual gatherings.

Manchester farm woman Ethel Gross has been stitching lines of neat, tiny quilting designs for some fifty years. Many of the quilts she's worked with in that time have gone for community charitable purposes, including the first one she ever put a needle through.

"It was a quilt being worked on at York's Hartman Street Mennonite Church, for a relief project. My aunt told me my stitches were so long I'd get my toenails caught in them," she laughingly recalls.

Ethel's admission of making those too-long stitches as a beginner is relished by a group of quilters she is currently advising. Several members of the York County Farmers' Association are working on a queen-size Jacob's Ladder design, in shades of blue, for a fund-raiser drawing for the Association's annual farm tour in June. Many of the same ladies participate each winter in making the fund-raiser quilt — last year's took about 300 manhours — and praise Ethel's assistance.

"Ethel's fussy," they tease, adding, "but, if she says something is done well, it's a compliment."

She also works similarly with church groups, and is helping supervise quilt making for an upcoming bazaar at the Christ

Lutheran Church in Manchester.

Although she first quilted as a girl, Ethel began seriously stitching about 30 years ago. Her more than 50-year-old quilting frame, Ethel relates, came from an aunt who lent it and "just never took it back after she married." In addition to the frame's sentimental value, Ethel prizes it for the metal cogs in its design, which allow quilts to be fastened more tautly than in the wooden-cog frames.

Her initial attempt at a full-size quilt was appliqued with designs of leaves. A blanket was sewn between the quilt top and bottom, not as satisfactory in Ethel's opinion as modern quilt batting. Although worn from use, she still keeps and treasures that first quilt. But while she does have several completed quilt tops to be finished, most of Ethel's quilts have gone to proud owners elsewhere.

Among those are several made by Ethel and her four sisters for the annual Mennonite Central Committee's Relief Sale, held the first Saturday in April at the Farm Show Complex, to benefit the church's worldwide relief efforts.

A Homestead quilt made by the sisters topped the sale of \$2900 a few years ago, purchased by a "kissin' cousin" from Hanover. The central design featured a country scene. Other years, the sisters' quilts have commanded prices upwards to \$1000, and a wall hanging brought \$350.

This year's contribution to the Relief Sale is done in blues and pinks, with a Lone Star design in the center and Log Cabin pattern around the outside.

Sometimes the five sisters travel together, often to Lancaster County, to select fabrics. Quality materials, in harmonizing colors, along with straight, fine stitching, are their guidelines for making the quilts which continue to be in demand.

Holly McCaffree, who teaches quilting at Southeastern High School adult education classes and at a Delta fabric-crafts shop, also stresses fabric and color selection to her students. It was a lesson she learned through complete dissatisfaction with her first quilting square attempt.

"Now, I take my mistakes to share with my students, to show them what not to do," said Holly. "I had chosen colors and fabrics that didn't 'go' together. But, the first items of nearly anything you make just aren't perfect."

Holly, who dairy farms near Delta with her husband Jim, began quilting for her own pleasure just a few years ago. With a professed fascination for quilts, she turned to the ancient craft after becoming "saturated" with needlepoint, and a couple "disastrous" attempts at knitting.

Feeling a need for guidance in quilting, she took a class from Carol Blevins. Carol is president of the York Quilters Guild, and was instrumental in helping start the organization, in order to see the completed projects of her students.

"That is a problem for quilting teachers," Holly agrees. Bulk of a quilting class time is spent in technique, the designing, cutting and piecing of the intricate patterns of color which make each creation unique. Most of the actual hand quilting is completed at home.

Undaunted by her initial frustration with the patch that "didn't go," Holly tackled a full-size quilt in shades of gray, maroon and rose, which did "come out." Other projects and additional classes honed



For intricate color designs, like the Sunshine and Shadow wall hanging in pinks and purples, quilting instructor Holly McCaffree advises planning layout design with a mock-up on graph paper.



Six-year-old Jessica McCaffree chooses a favorite fabric in the pieced sampler wall hanging Holly uses as a guide for her beginner quilting students.



Kay Taylor, left, works at machine piecing quilt sections, while Ethel Gross, Martha Dehoff and Joann Anderson fit the intricate angles of the Jacob's Ladder design. Proceeds from the quilt help fund the York Farmer's Association annual farm tour.



The razor-like wheel on the rotary cutter is winning quilting converts away from scissors cutting of fabrics. Used with a ruled, acrylic guide, and a protective mat beneath, the cutter slices through several layers of fabrics in mere seconds.

her skills and interest. When a friend was organizing the high school's adult education program, she asked Holly, a vo-ag teacher by profession, to teach beginner quilting.

Stitch length gets less emphasis from Holly than does stitch consistency and artistic design. She believes beginning quilters do not need the extra stress over making tiny stitches on their own personal projects. Instead, she wants them to be pleased with the overall eye appeal of the quilted item.

Proper tools help make quilting design more exact, and the fabric-craft industry has responded to quilters needs. A rotary cutter is a favorite tool of Holly's, simplifying the tedious task of cutting fabric pieces. Combined with acrylic rulers and square-marked mats, the cutter can sharply slice through fabric for straight or angle-edged pieces.

Blueprint pencils, now being packaged and sold with quilting supplies, work well for marking the design to follow for stitching, and don't rub off in handling as

may chalk markings.

Holly has devised her own system of marking quilting patterns. She lays the pattern design over a piece of glass, which is suspended over a light. When the quilting fabric is laid over the pattern, the light shines through, allowing the pattern to be traced. Holding the fabric and pattern to a window or glass door also works, but almost requires an "extra hand."

Graph paper is another of Holly's recommended tools, to form a mock-up of geometric quilt designs before the fabric is cut. She finds that many of her students, however, resist doing the mathematical calculations necessary to figure yardages of materials needed for a pieced project, and prefer pre-printed instructions. Students also learn to cut cardboard and plastic templates, in the shapes needed for their quilt pieces.

Along with her teaching and quilting for friends and family, Holly is venturing into custom

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## Homestead Notes