

Berks Quilts Show Heritage Of Colors

CONNIE LEINBACH

Berks Co. Correspondent

READING (Berks Co.) — Most of the quilts in the quilt show at the Berks County Historical Society have histories as colorful as they are.

The show, titled "Design and Color — Quilted in Berks," highlights the best and most original quilts the society discovered during the Quilt Harvest in the last two years.

The harvest was concerned with documenting quilts made in Berks County before 1940. The work will continue, said P. Allison duPont, project coordinator, because as word spread about the harvest, she discovered that at least double the number of items already documented actually exist.

Most amazing about the more than 1,400 quilts brought to the harvest held in schools around the county was the vibrant colors, duPont said.

"What we were looking for were aspects that are unique to Berks County," she said as she led a visitor around the display on two floors of the society at 940 Centre Ave.

Bright, vibrant colors are evident in the cotton quilts displayed on the first and second floor of the society.

Several starburst quilts are featured on the second floor, where there also is set up a community quilt. Anyone is welcome to sit down at the quilt designed by

Melissa Horn and stretched on a frame and sew for as long as they like.

While doing this they can contemplate the meticulous detail used in the quilts hanging on the walls around them, done in starburst patterns. Their colors literally jump out of the backgrounds. In particular, a quilt made around 1890 by Elizabeth Harting Sweigart shows an eight-point, multi-colored star bursting out of a royal blue background. Another, featuring a "star-within-a-star" pattern, made by Edna Mutter Ellis of Boyertown about 1930, shows typical colors of the Depression — blues and oranges.

"These starburst quilts are so typically Berks County and Pennsylvania Dutch," duPont said. "You can see the exuberance of them."

One particular color theme that has recurred in quilts duPont has seen is an orange color she calls "cheddar cheese." A bright, cheesy orange is the background on which are appliquied designs in maroon and forest green.

Several of the quilts feature this color of orange.

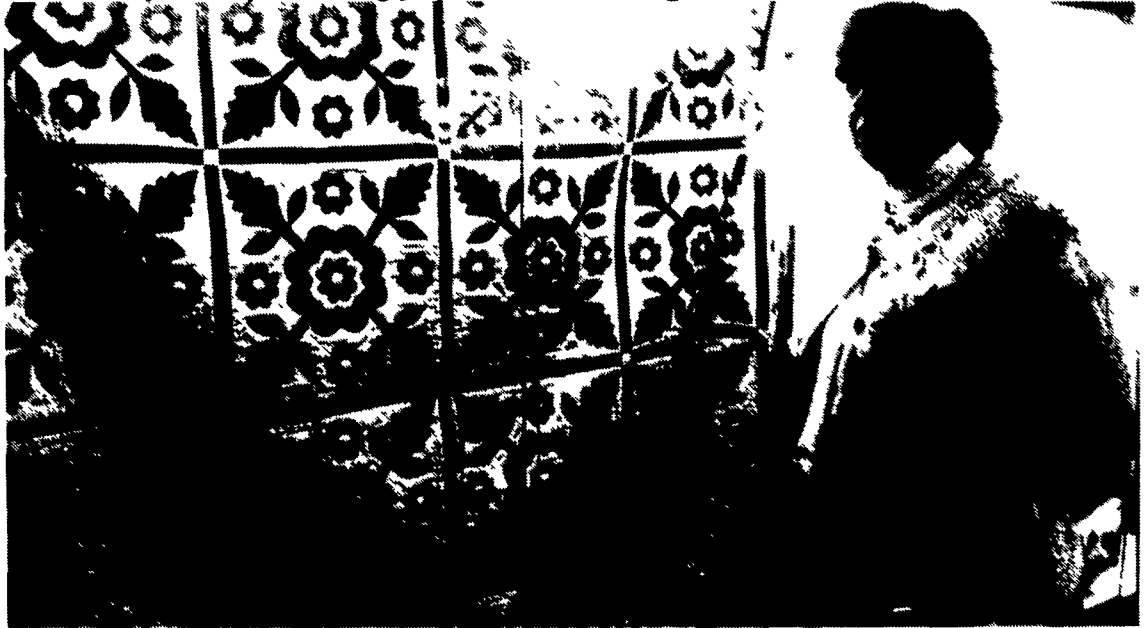
Many of the patterns were traded back and forth, duPont explained. But sometimes women would design their own, unique patterns.

Such was the case with Mahella Rhodes Wolfgang, who lived in Earl Township from the late 1800s until her death in 1940. Mahella

(Turn to Page B3)



P. Allison duPont, coordinator of the quilt harvest project and show at the Berks County Historical Society in Reading, explains that women in the latter part of the last century often painstakingly quilted their undergarments and hats.



DuPont points out that although each of the quilts discovered during the quilt harvest is unique, many follow the same patterns using blocks enclosing a colorful pattern or stylized design of flowers.

WOOD TRUSS

Family Farm to Architectural Innovation

Over Thirty Years Of Quality Service

UNIVERSAL ARCH

TUDOR ARCH

STRAIGHT BEAM

GOTHIC ARCH

RIGIDPLY RAFTERS

MANUFACTURERS OF LAMINATED RAFTERS and WOOD ROOF TRUSSES

701 E. Linden St., RICHLAND, PA 17087

Telephone: 717-866-6581
Fax: 717-866-7237

MANUFACTURERS OF

- GLU-LAM ARCHES
- GLU-LAM BEAMS
- GLU-LAM TREATED POSTS
- ROOF TRUSSES
- FLOOR TRUSSES
- T&G AND V-GROOVE DECKING
- WE CUSTOM DESIGN OR MATCH EXISTING BUILDINGS
- COMPLETE LINE OF POST FRAME BUILDING MATERIALS
- CRANE SERVICE

Everyone at Rigidply Rafters, Inc. is fully committed to serving our customers and providing them with the finest products available. The excellence that we strive for is to show our appreciation for our customers continued loyalty to Rigidply Rafters. You deserve the best!

In Engineered Timber

The Symbol Of Quality