

# Berks Quilts Show Heritage Of Colors

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apparently designed what she called her "cactus" quilt — dark green zig-zagged leaves on a "double blue" background. The centers of the "cacti" have a yellow star from which LeMoyne star type flowers branch out.

This pattern was chosen as the logo for the Quilt Harvest.

DuPont explained that Mahella's flair for quilting was passed down from her mother, a quilter who lived in nearby Shanesville. Mahella's daughter, Lizzie, also joined in quilting at the tender age of 6 and continued the craft for many years.

Quilts of the Victorian era, also displayed on the second floor, are much different from the earlier, cotton quilts. "Crazy quilts" were much in vogue then, said duPont, and they featured darker colors, often using silk, wool from men's suits, and store-bought appliques.

Of particular interest is the "cigar band" quilt, made by Jennie Sittler of Boyertown about 1870. Sittler's parents had a general store, duPont said, and when she was 15, she started collecting the

yellow silk ties that bound the cigar bundles.

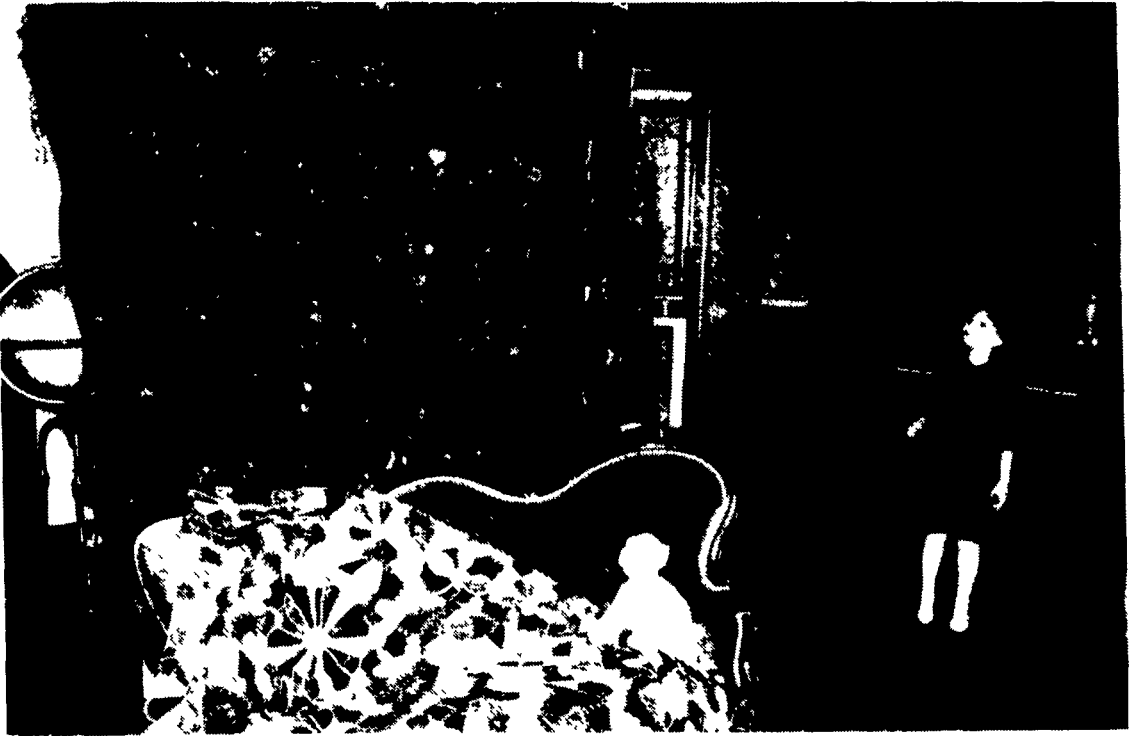
If you look carefully at it, carefully tucked away from prying hands in a glass case, you can see a definite pattern incorporated the dozens of names of cigars imprinted on the bands.

"It's the only one we've seen," duPont said, noting that she knows of only two others in the United States. But duPont didn't know about this one until Mary Bamberger of Boyertown brought it to the harvest. It was since donated to the society.

The oldest documented quilt is also made of silk around 1836. It was made by Catherine Doll for her wedding to Dr. William Moore of Womelsdorf.

In addition to quilts, the harvest also uncovered other items quilted by Berks County women — crib quilts (called "smalls"), "granny balls," bonnets, and petticoats.

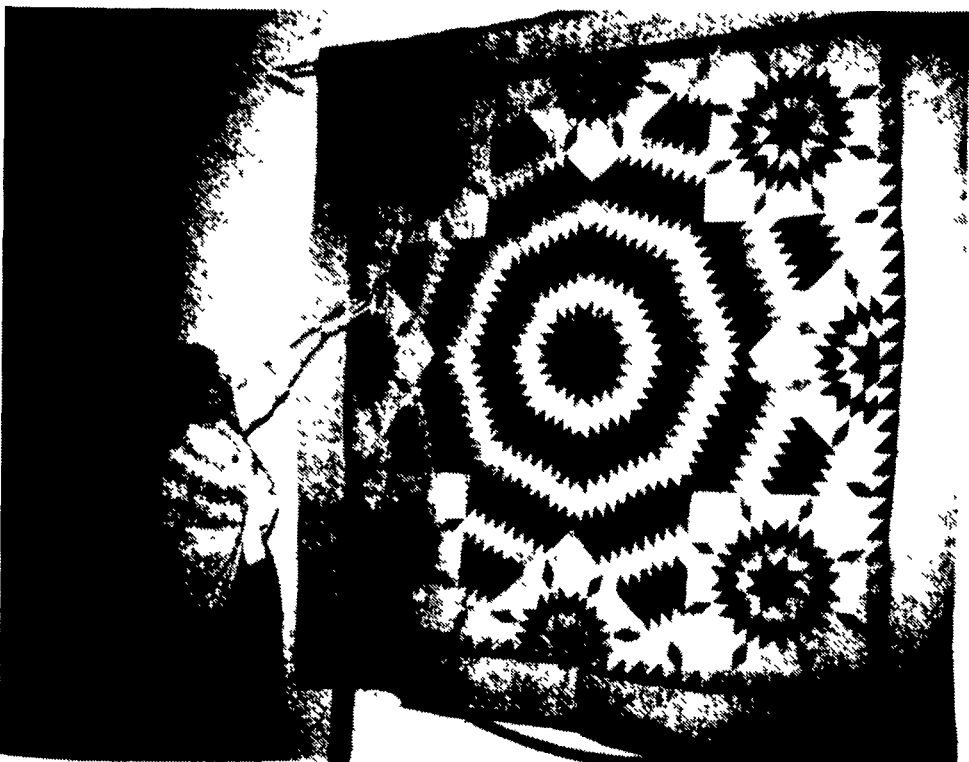
DuPont is amazed that undergarments show they were painstakingly quilted — even a pieced pocket which women wore under their dresses shows it was quilted. Same with a plain, gray bonnet



Several "crazy quilts" are displayed in the Victorian room of the historical society. A typical crazy quilt, which became fashionable in the 1870s, featured fabric in a variety of colors, irregular shapes and sizes. These quilts were made by sewing fabric "scraps" to a lightweight foundation, usually with the raw edges turned under and held in place with a variety of fancy embroidery stitches.



DuPont stands with a display honoring Mahella Wolfgang, a quilter who lived in eastern Berks County and whose "Cactus" design is unique among all the quilts catalogued in the harvest. Wolfgang's design is used as the logo for the quilt harvest.



This is one of the best star burst design quilts in the show. With its vibrant colors, the quilt is typical of the exuberant Pennsylvania Dutch designs found in the Berks County quilts.

commonly worn outside shows fanciful stitching.

"They took the time to quilt these things," she said. "But they could have just been plain."

All of these aspects of quilting show each woman's need to express herself, duPont explained. After taking care of the house, and baking, cooking, gardening, and doing laundry, quilting was a way for women to relax and express

their creativity.

"We're preserving and honoring this facet of women's heritage," said Gail Dawson-White, director of corporate involvement with Penn Savings Bank, a chief sponsor of the harvest.

The show runs through June 26 on Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. There is a \$2.50 admission charge.

## Homestead Notes

### Rush The Season By Forcing Shrubs

YORK (York Co.) — Just when you've given up on your frozen garden and decided to tough it out until spring, it's time to think about forcing garden shrubs. This is a marvelous way to rush the season.

The buds of early-flowering, woody plants were formed in the fall. They will terminate their dormancy period when they are exposed to warmth and moisture after at least six weeks of cold temperatures.

That innocuous-looking pussy willow, forsythia, quince, maple, hickory can be brought to early bloom indoors. Fruit trees, such as apple, peach, or plum may also be plucked for the same reason. Other dead-looking vines, such as clematis, ivy and honeysuckle can be brought to leaf, if not bloom, to add a hint of new growth to your winter living room.

Here's how to do it. Collect

branches ranging from one and a half to the three feet from any spring-flowering tree or shrub in late February or March. Cut branches carefully with a sharp knife or pruning tool to avoid injury. Make sure the branches you cut will not be missed when the tree flowers in the spring.

Bring the cut branches indoors and place the cut ends of the stems in water. Store the bucket in a low-light spot with a temperature of about 60 to 65 degrees F. Mist the flower buds several times a day as they start to open. As they become more plump, they will need additional light for the colors to develop.

When the branches are well developed and color is set, your spring-flowering branches are ready for display. Store in cooler rooms at night to make your arrangements last longer.