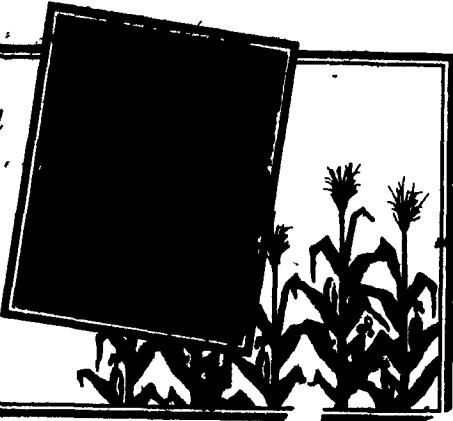


**On Being a
Farm Wife
(and other
hazards)**

Joyce Bupp



Few things define the softer side of our American heritage more than quilts.

There's an aura about a quilt, a soft, touchable piece of history one can hold in one's hand, wrap about one's shoulders, or display as a treasured piece of fabric artistry.

Actually, most of the quilts of history didn't start out to be art, but a practical piece of household necessity.

Quilts were made to keep warm with, after all. They were a job for the long confinements of winter, as well as busy-hands-work to be shared when friends or relatives visited. Quilts were both practical and special-occasion gifts for newly-weds, new babies or folks who had suffered hardships of lost homes or possessions.

The aura of a quilt always conjures up — at least in my mind — the image of our rural grandmothers. But surely village and town folks needed quilts just as much as did their country cousins on cold winter nights.

And, our ancestral foremothers did not have the luxury we enjoy of having bolts and bolts of wrinkle-free, beautifully-color-

fast, relatively inexpensive fabrics from which to choose when it came to quilt making. The raw materials were, in many cases, leftovers of other endeavors. Bits remaining from the making of a hard-working farmer's workshirt in dark, rugged fabrics. Snippets salvaged from a little girl's prized lone new calico dress for starting school. Or pieces left from shaping a long, durable farmwife's skirt which went from garden tending to wiping a child's smudged chin to serving as an impromptu basket for the hens' egg production.

Many were pieced together with whatever was available in what we today often refer to as "crazy-quilts." The daily lifestyle of a family was probably spelled out with the fabrics in many of those quilts. But with a sense of pride and appreciation for practical beauty as well, color, pattern, and symmetry came to play an important role in the quilts of our history.

When we were married, a quilt that (I think) one of my grandmothers had made somehow made the move with me from my childhood home to our present one. It

was not a fancy one by any means, not in fabric, nor in design. Just a sturdy, useful, practical quilt. Our kids made tents with it, just as my siblings and I had done. It was a handy throw on the couch when they were home from school with a cold. And made numerous trips to the beach. Over the years it became ragged around the edges and threadbare here and there over the middle.

A couple of years ago, I began to realize that, even though this was no fancy quilt or one of great meaning or heritage, it nevertheless was a quilt of the family. Suffering pangs of guilt, I promptly reoveed it from casual use and put it away upstairs.

Again, a few months ago, I did the same with another hand-stitched piece that had casually come down through the family. A thin quilt, of no great design or historical significance, except that it is handmade and quilted. And that was enough to make me decide that the colorful fabric composite really had no business being in the trunk of my car, despite the stains which exist on it from a former life.

Surely, this story must be replicated, time and again, around this area. Many quilts have been carefully stored, guarded and kept in pristine condition over the years. But, surely, others must have taken regular use, and sometimes, abuse, like mine, because they weren't particularly spectacular works of art, just quilts for use as quilts.

And what do we do with them now?

The York County Historical Society and York Quilters' Guild have recently joined efforts to do-

cument quilts and quilt-related items made here in the county before 1950. During each of the next several months through next spring, a one-day quilt-documentation site is being hosted at locations scattered across the county. Quilt items will be examined by experts, documented

and photographed, at no cost to the quilt owner, and the date available for future historians.

Just old — and battered — quilts, they are, stashed away upstairs for history's sake.

But I may take them to be documented, just to see what I can learn.

How To Participate In Quilt Documentation

are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. These sites and dates are as follows:

Oct. 24 - St. Paul Lutheran Church, 11894 S. Susquehanna Trail, Hamestown;

Nov. 7 - Hanover YWCA; Jan. 16 - Pine Grove Presbyterian Church, RD 2, Airville;

Feb. 6 - Wellsville Fire Hall, Wellsville;

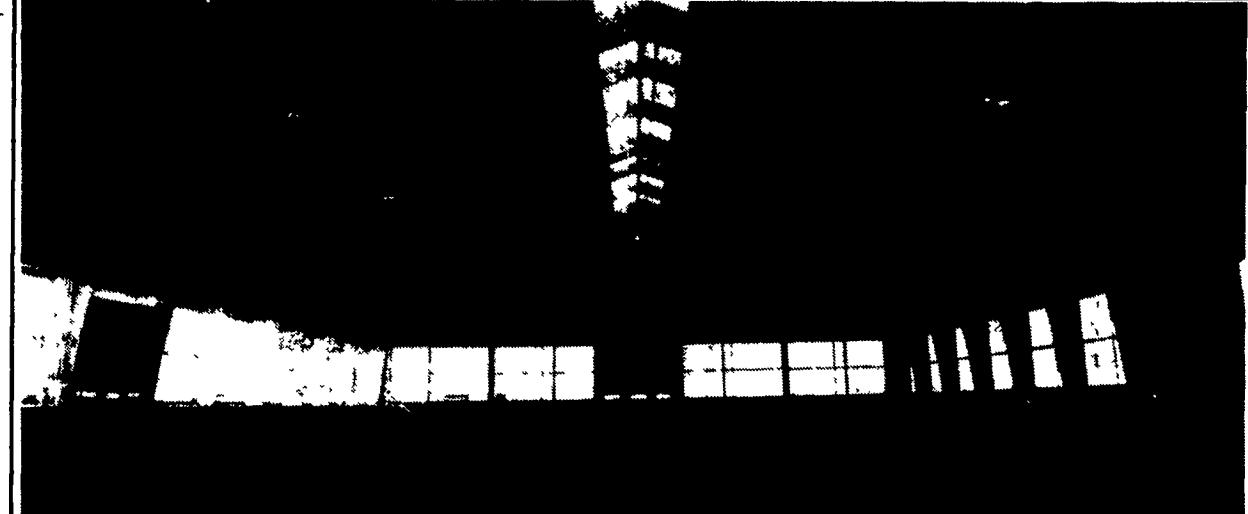
Feb. 27 - Trinity UCC, 200 E. Market St., Hellam;

Mar. 20 - St. Paul Lutheran Church, 250 Trinity Rd., West York;

Apr. 10 - Failor's Photography, 201 S. Charles St., Red Lion; May 1 - Historical Society, 250 E. Market St., York.

At the Discovery Days the quilts will be examined by quilt experts. All pertinent data regarding the quilt, the history of the quilter, and information about the owner will be taken. The quilt will be photographed and the owner will receive information on quilt care and storage. There is no cost to participate in this project. For additional information contact Joan Hamme 840-1443 (project chairman) or Sharon Angelo 845-7304 (publicity chairman).

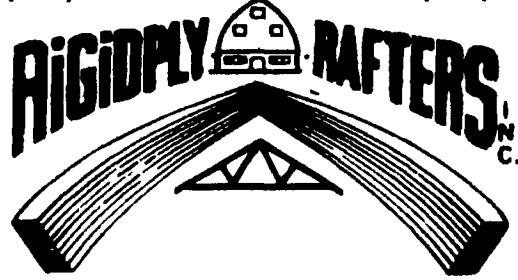
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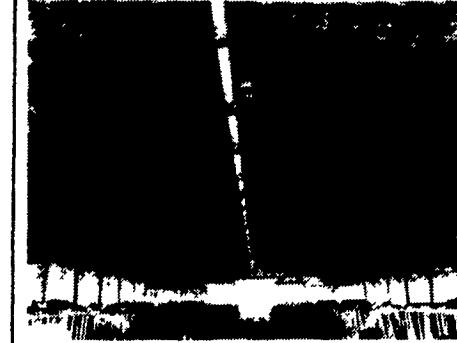
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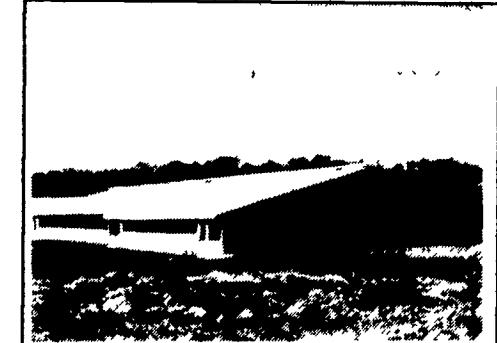
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