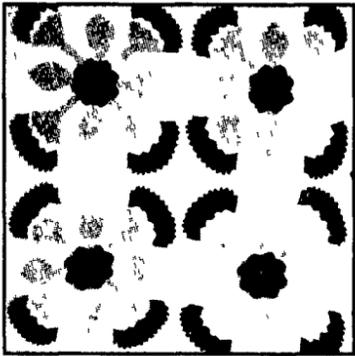


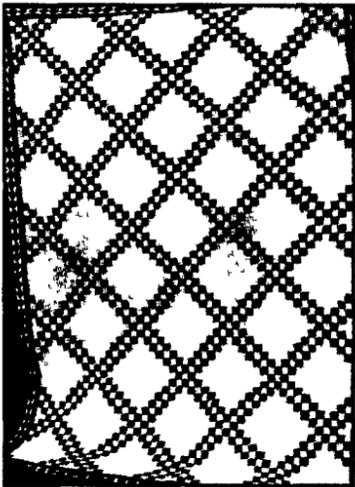
# Quilts Span 200 Years Of American History



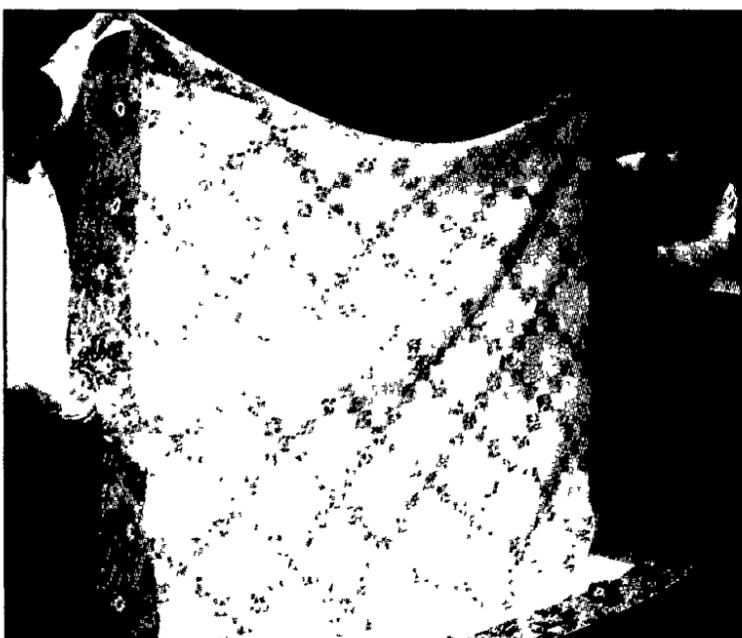
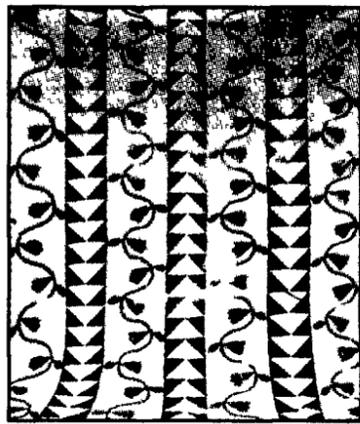
"The cheddar color in this quilt shouts the last quarter of the century," quilt experts believe.

**LOU ANN GOOD**  
*Lancaster Farming Staff*  
**HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.)** — Most people admire quilts for their colors and designs. So does Roberta Benvin, but she sees much more than outward beauty. The colors, designs, fabrics, and techniques reveal the history of America.

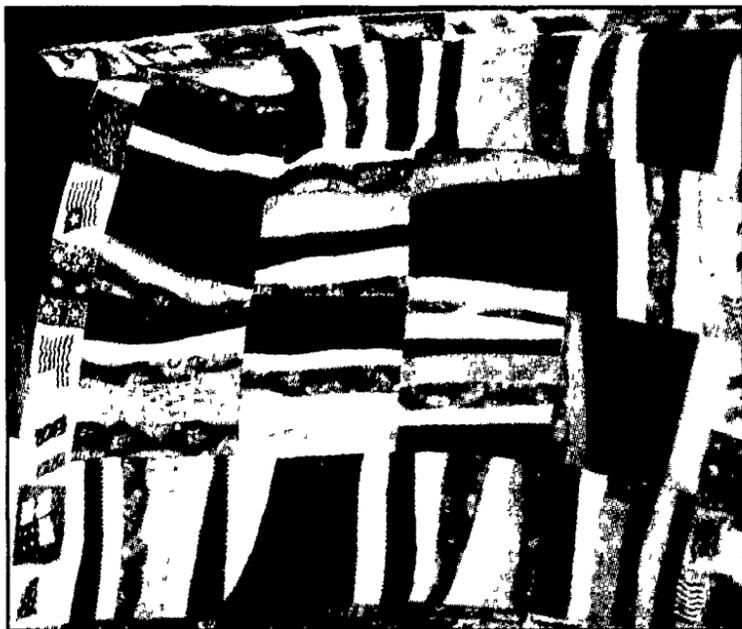
The Spring Grove quilt expert authored the soon-to-be-released book, "Early 19th Century Quilts," and has professionally restored quilts and classified them for 10 years. Benvin recently displayed her collection of quilts that span 200 years during the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Hershey.



A close inspection of the crib quilt, left, dated 1920 shows that fabric was switched at the border indicating the seamstress ran out of fabric. On the right, the 1850's quilt combined applique and piecing techniques.



This 1795 block-printed quilt uses dyes typical of the era. Roberta Benvin has written a book and helped to document more than 1,600 quilts in York County.



These novelty quilts, sometimes called crazy quilts, were popular from 1880-1920. This one is unique in that the edges uses fabric called tobacco flannels, which were used to wrap cigars or to line the cigar boxes. The cigar wrappers were stitched in flags representing many different countries.

While some families have verbal or written histories on quilts, many quilts are documented through fabric, dye, and techniques that reveal the quilts' ages.

Quilts before 1825 were block printed. About 44 yards of fabric could be printed in a day with the block printing method. Women and children then drew in details such as stems.

Benvin said quilts from the 1820-1830s were large in size because families often slept in one bed. Another reason is that beds were placed higher off the floor.

Finer fabrics are traced back to England, but many fabrics were hand dyed. Popular were indigo and Turkey reds before the Civil War.

The unique color of Turkey red was named after a technique developed in the country of Turkey. Although Americans tried to duplicate it, their efforts were often unstable. Benvin said the process required boiling it in oil and some unusual ingredients for this era.

The color cheddar was popular during the latter part of the 1800s.

Just like today, fabric and quilt designs followed the fads of the era they were made.

"I try to get into the mind of the quilt maker," Benvin said of her efforts to document the ages of quilts.

This helps her recognize when fabrics were pieced intentionally in a design or when the quilter ran out of a particular fabric and replaced it with another fabric.

One of the quilts in Benvin's collection features fabric flags around the edges. These flags from many different countries were tobacco flannels, used to wrap cigars or line cigar boxes during the latter part of the 1800s. A thrifty seamstress saw their aesthetic value and incorporated them into her quilt.

During the 1920s, penny squares were popular. These were purchased for a penny weekly or whenever the family went to town. The squares were given to children to embroider. The mother pieced the finished squares and completed a border.

Benvin said that 20th century quilts are generally not as elaborate as earlier quilts, although the Early Revivalists tried to duplicate them. One of the ways to differential the eras the quilt was made is by the batting. Cotton batting in the early quilts required close stitching to keep the batting in place.

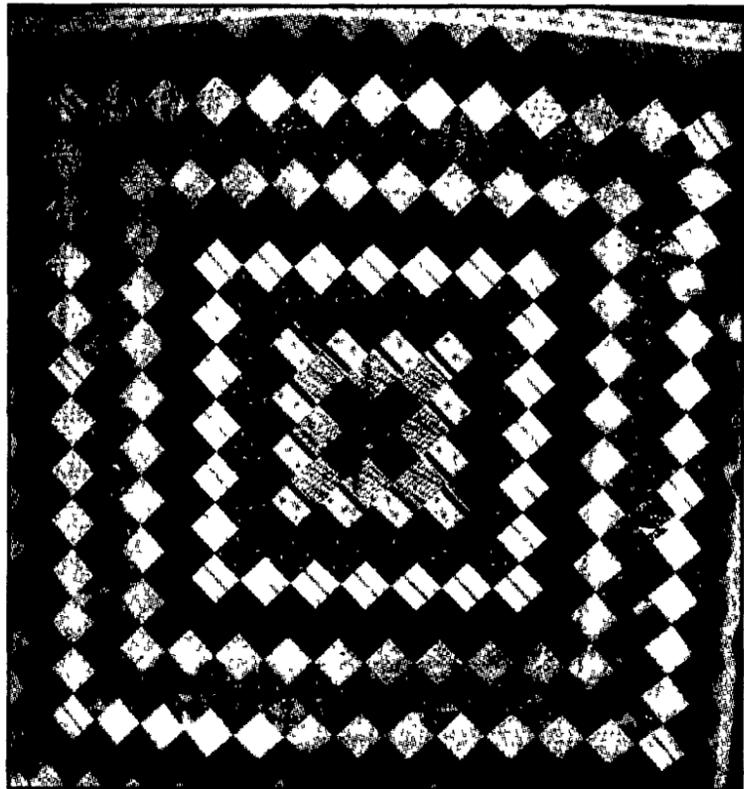
In fact, Bevins counted 20 stitches to the inch in some of the quilts she has documented. Many of the quilts reveal they were quilted by different family members because of the differences in stitching.

Several names are attributed to the same design because patterns were often passed on from state to state. In Texas, a design known as the Texas Lone Star is called Star of Bethlehem in Pennsylvania.

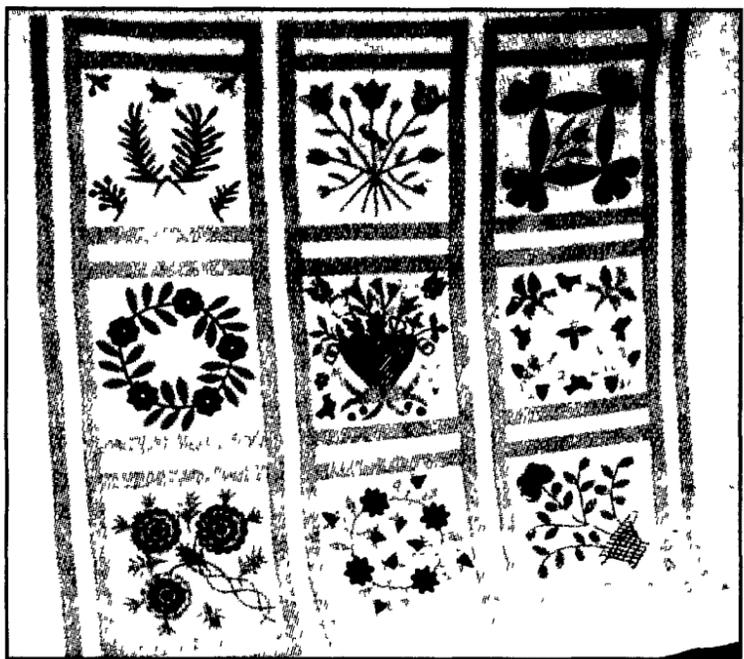
Quilts made during the 1940s featured bigger prints. Not as many quilts were made during World War I because women needed to work while their husbands were at war and the homemakers did not have time to make quilts. After the war, bedspreads were being sold in stores, and quilts lost their popularity until the Bicentennial, when interest in them was revived.

"Everything old became new again," said Bevins, who herself combined applique, piecing, embroidery, and close quilting in

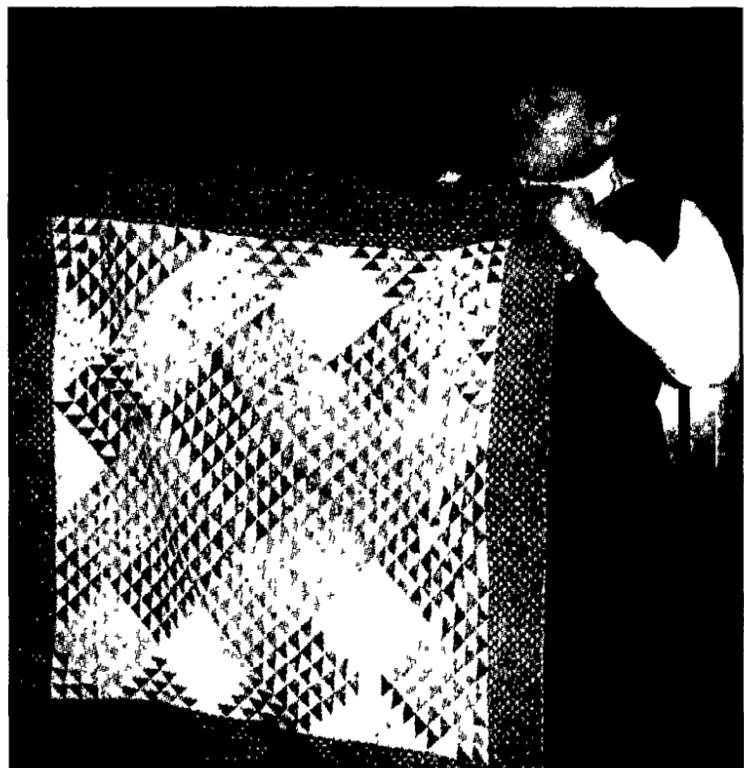
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This quilt forms an encyclopedia of fabrics typical of the 1890s.



The album quilt was popular during the 1850s-1860s. The style is influenced by the Baltimore Album quilts, which were much more detailed.



Crib quilts from the 1840s are highly prized collectibles because few survived the daily use.