

## "Carroll County Quilting Traditions"

Carroll County Times article for 24 March 1996

by Jay A. Graybeal

I recently presented a slide lecture about Maryland quilts to the members of Everybody's Quilt Guild, a group of local quilters that meet at Jerusalem Lutheran Church in Bachman's Valley. This organization is one of several in the county that perpetuate the art of quilting, an activity enjoyed by generations of local women. After viewing the slides and looking at several quilts from the Historical Society's collection, we enjoyed a social time and ample refreshments.

The latter part of the evening was not unlike a quilting party that took place in Dennings, as described in the February 25, 1921 issue of The Pilot newspaper from Union Bridge:

A most enjoyable day was spent at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Wilt of Tuesday at a quilting. Everybody was busy quilting when the invitation was given to come to the dining room where the table groaned with every good thing to eat and if you think we did not do justice, just ask Mrs. Wilt. After dinner we returned to our work. At 4 o'clock we were again invited into the dining room and there the table was loaded with cakes, candy, nuts, oranges and ice cream. All did justice and there was but one thing to regret and that was, the day was too short and we did not feel the work compared with what we ate. Sorry to say the bad weather prevented some from getting there.

Quilting also became the subject of a contest between two local newspapers during the spring of 1894. The Westminster American Sentinel newspaper had published a story about a woman who had made a quilt with more than 1,000 pieces and asked if any reader could best it.

A competing newspaper, the Democratic Advocate also of Westminster, heard from one of its readers and ran the following story:

The SENTINEL recently published that a lady had a quilt with over 1000 pieces, and wanted to know who could beat it. Mrs. E. L. Frizzell, of Cooksville, Howard county, can beat it twice. She has one quilt with 4695 pieces and another with 3247 pieces--a total for both of 7942 pieces.

The June 21, 1894 issue of the Sentinel countered with another story entitled "Only Part of the Quilt Story" which reprinted the Advocate article and added the following:

That is only part of the story and Mrs. Frizzell is still far in the rear. Mrs. Francis L. Criswell, of Daniel, this county has a single quilt that contains 2088 more pieces than both of the Howard county quilts together. An account appeared in the SENTINEL April 28th, as follows:

A correspondent at Daniel writes: "In response to the query, in the last issue of the SENTINEL, concerning quilts, we state the following: Mrs. Francis L. Criswell, of Daniel, has pieced a quilt containing 10,030 pieces. Carroll County is still ahead," Thus ended the "quilt contest" of 1894; an issue that was handled in far friendlier manner than the usual political matters published by these highly partisan papers.

Photo Caption: Members of the Ladies Aid Society of the Meadow Branch Church of the Brethren gathered in an unidentified farmhouse room for a quilting party in November 1941. Except for the

electrical ceiling lights, the scene was not unlike that of a late nineteenth century quilting party.  
Photograph by Charles F. Magee, Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Mrs. Betty Smith Yingling, 1992.