

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Carroll County Quilt Lecture"

Carroll County Times Article for 8 October 1995

By Jay A. Graybeal

While reading the local papers of the last century, one often comes across articles about prize agricultural products and livestock. The mention of a item in one paper often brought a counter claim from the other partisan paper. Such was the case in the spring of 1894 when the Westminster American Sentinel ran a story about a local woman who had made a quilt out of more than 1,000 pieces and asked is anyone could beat it. The Democratic Advocate boasted that Mrs. E. L. Frizzell, of Cooksville, Howard County, had made two quilts composed of 4,695 and 3,247 pieces respectively. The Sentinel's challenge brought the following response from the paper's correspondent in Daniel:

"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. [Hurrah for Daniel.--ED.]"

The "quilt challenge" shows just how important quilting was in the late nineteenth century and also the competitive nature of the local papers. Because women traditionally provided the family's clothing and bedding, they tended to preserve textiles and pass them down to the next generation. For this reason, most of the Historical Society's textile collection was donated by women.

Local quilts will be the subject of a free program at the Historical Society's Shriver-Weybright Auditorium on Thursday, October 19th at 7:30 p. m. The writer will show and discuss fifteen quilts and related items from the Society's extensive textile collection. The earliest example is dated 1834 and the most recent one was made a century later. Construction styles include patchwork, applique and embroidery and materials range from locally made, hand dyed cotton to expensive, imported chintz.

One of the quilts that will be shown on October 19th is a presentation example made in 1844 for Rev. Eli B. Henkle. The quilt is composed of twenty-five, eight-point feather stars and has a saw tooth pattern border. The names of twenty-six local women, including members of the Pouder, Yingling, Wampler, Shriver, Webster and other families, are individually inscribed on the white cotton square in the center of each star motif. The central panel bears the inscription, "Presented/ to the/ Rev. E. B. Henkle/ by the Members of the Methodist Protestant Church/ of the/ Westminster Station/ February 5/ 1844," surrounded by a wreath. Ministers were the frequent recipients of quilts made by the members of their congregations. The Henkle quilt was donated to the Historical Society by Mrs. Donald B. Clary of Baltimore in 1959.

A quilt made nearly a century after the Henkle quilt documents a presentation in this century. Mrs. Cora J. Myers of Pleasant Valley received a quilt from her friends on March 5, 1941. This quilt is composed of 76 blocks featuring patchwork, applique and embroidered motifs. Each block bears a different pattern and the embroidered signature of the maker. Some of the makers chose traditional patterns frequently seen on nineteenth century quilts while other makers selected contemporary motifs. A central block features a one-room schoolhouse and the name "A. PETRY." Quilts of this type are referred to as friendship quilts and were treasured by their recipients. The Myers quilt was a gift of her family in 1979.

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If you would like to see these two quilts and others from the Historical Society's collection, please attend the program on October 19th. It will be an opportunity to have a close look at this important collection of Carroll County quilts.

Photo Caption: Margaret E. Buckey completed this patriotic quilt in 1857. Her quilt and sewing table are currently on loan to the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum in Washington, D. C. Local quilts from the Historical Society's collection will be the subject of a free program at the Historical Society of Carroll County on Thursday October 19th. Historical Society of Carroll County collection; bequest of Vivian Englar Barnes. Photo courtesy of Porterfield's Photography.