

THE MAKING OF A BICENTENNIAL QUILT

- Oct. 1988 Jean Stevenson, Shelburne Bicentennial cochairman, came to the Quiltsmith (QS) and approached Barbara Searles, then President of the Champlain Valley Quilt Guild (CVQG), about making a quilt to celebrate the 1991 Vermont Bicentennial.
- Spring 1990 Jeanette Mann, next CVQG president, came to QS asking what was known about the request for a Bicentennial quilt. Several magazines were passed among quilters with pictures of other commemorative quilts to consider how we might like to design such a quilt.
- Spring 1990 Barbara Searles, Jeanette Mann and Jeanne Detenbeck met in the Village Book Shop with Jean Stevenson, who discussed the historically significant buildings in Shelburne still in use, and it was decided to use some of those buildings in the quilt design, showing the link between past and present. Jeanette was assigned to take pictures of a number of them so that we could draft patterns. Jeanne agreed to draw up a design.
- Spring 1990 With pictures and design presented, we decided what modifications needed to be made to accomodate buildings of differing sizes. The original design called for 12 equal sized blocks of buildings with top and bottom borders depicting panoramic views of the Green Mountains and the Adirondacks, and side borders expressing the four seasons in Shelburne. The Vermont symbols - maple tree, Hermit Thrush, clover and Morgan horse, plus the Bicentennial logo, the state seal and the Shelburne seal (unkown at the time) were also included. Jeanette and Jeanne each took 6 buildings in order to draft patterns of the blocks for the quilters to work from. Barbara solicited quilters, mostly from Shelburne, to make the building blocks.
- Oct. 23 Fabric for the background squares and sashing was chosen at QS, which donated this fabric as well as the batting, backing, and a quilting stencil.
- Oct. 25 Buildings were chosen by the quilters and it was decided to do some of the other blocks in stenciling and counted cross stitch.
- Nov. 8 We met at Barbara Searles on Shelburne Farms. Quilters brought in the fabrics they had chosen for their blocks and discussed ideas for constructing the blocks. As people were getting ready to leave, the wind picked up at hurricane force and the rain fell down in buckets. Joyce Dowd said it was the only time she had ever opened her car door and had her car flooded. People were surely glad to see the lights of the main gate at the Farms but then had to follow the yellow line on the highway home due to poor visibility in the rain. It was some storm!
- January 1991 We did not meet again until January after the Holidays. We met at Jeanette Mann's house with the beginnings of blocks. We once again talked about construction of blocks and set a deadline of March 15th, the Ides of March, to have the blocks finished. We met monthly to check on progress.
- March 18, 1991 We met at Jeanette's house to decide the final placement of blocks. Within the next three weeks, the blocks were sewn together. It became apparent that the original four seasons borders made by Jeanette were not appropriate. We met at QS, agreed to eliminate those borders, and rearranged the four cross stitch corner blocks at the top of the quilt to complete the quilt design. (Sail boats from Jeanette's blocks eventually found their way into the University of Vermont's Bicentennial Quilt!)
- April 11 A meeting was held at Jeanette's to mark the quilting lines. Jeanette, Joyce Dowd and Joan Hemenway did the work. Joyce took the quilt home to finish the marking.
- April 17 We met at the Shelburne Methodist Church where we could lay the quilt out on the large tables in order to do the basting. Present were Jean Spring, Joan Hemenway, Joyce Dowd, Jeanette Mann and Jeanne Detenbeck. The quilt was then passed from quilter to quilter in order to do the quilting. Jeanne Detenbeck put the binding on and it was presented to the town at the Bicentennial celebration on the green on August 18, 1991.