About Beth…

I decided to make my first quilt in 1974 when I was 17. I cut 959 triangles from a variety of fabrics, never worrying about silly things like fiber content or accuracy. After piecing the triangles into the Hour Glass pattern, adding 5 layers of batting and a flannel back for warmth, I machine quilted the monster on Mom’s old black Singer. That quilt survived for 5 years before dying under its own weight.

After college came marriage, motherhood and desperation to get out of the house. Pepper Cory’s Log Cabin quilt class provided a night out. There was no turning back. Quilting was an obsession and I needed to pay for my ever expanding hobby. I sold quilted items at craft shows and began teaching. I squeezed my career in between mothering duties and my business slowly grew. While teaching for Country Stitches in East Lansing (and bringing most of my paycheck home in fabric!) I wrote a series of Block of the Month patterns. Five years later they became my book, Block By Block (That Patchwork Place, 1995).

Inspired by the quilters in my local guild, I wrote Charm Quilts (EZ Quilting by Wrights, 1997.) I’ve sponsored 12 quilt retreats and had a successful quilt shop pattern service.

For the last 16 years I’ve been working at the Michigan State University and am the Assistant Coordinator for the Quilt Index. I continue to quilt, design, write, study quilt history and blog. You can find me and free patterns online at:


A History of the American Quilt

This is a power point presentation using quilts from the MSU Museum’s Great Lakes Quilt Center to illustrate the history of the American quilt. The history of American women, manufacturing, politics, scientific discoveries, migration, and the Great Depression will all be discovered through the use of quilts. The journey begins right after the revolutionary war, when fabrics were expensive, through the fabric manufacturing boom of the early 1800s, the development of the block style quilt (the truly American art form) in the 1840s, the Album quilts of the 1840-50s, the Charm quilt, Crazy quilt, and Redwork fads that began in the 1880s, through the rise of the pastel quilt in the 1920s. The 1930s were the heyday of the published newspaper pattern, the 1940s saw patriotic quilts and the lull of the 1950s-1960s. The 1970s and the bicentennial was the beginning of the new (and biggest quilt revival). By viewing the quilts from the late 18th century to the present day, you’ll notice trends in color, fabric, and style, that can help you date quilts in your own collection. Beth will bring quilts from her own collection and the audience is encouraged to bring old quilts for a show-and-tell at lecture’s end.

Power Point Lectures

Quilting in Detroit in the 1930s

Did you know that the J.L. Hudson’s store downtown had a quilt show in 1932 that drew over 50,000 visitors? Did you know that The Detroit News had a column and produced a quilt show each year at the Naval Armory that attracted 10,000s? Did you know that Detroit had 3 newspapers that all printed quilt patterns? In this power point presentation Beth discusses the vibrant quilt revival of the 1930s with particular emphasis on the Detroit area. Slides of quilts from the Clarke Family Collection at the MSU Museum are featured along with scans of original newspaper columns and patterns. Also included are Depression era quilts from Beth’s collection. The audience is encouraged to bring quilts from the 1930s for a show-and-tell at lecture’s end.

The Great Lakes Quilt Center

In 1984 the Michigan State University Museum began documenting quilts through the Michigan Quilt Project. In 1987, Michigan Quilts: 150 Years of a Textile Tradition was published showcasing the best of the over 5000 quilts documented. Michigan is one of the few states that still documents quilts and to date has documented more than 9000. These efforts have greatly increased the MSUM’s collection, which now numbers over 700 quilts and tops. Almost every state in America has had a documentation project. These projects have been joining together to form the Quilt Index, the online repository of quilt documentation. There are more than 22,000 quilts in the Index, with more being added each year. The MSU Museum has led this effort to give quilters everywhere, access to these documented quilts. The Quilt Index also serves as a way for the public to view quilts in collections that might not be on exhibit or are in private hands. The power point will include quilts found in Michigan that have been collected by the MSU Museum and screen shots of the Quilt Index and web sites from the Great Lakes Quilt Center and other states.

If the lecture site has internet access a demonstration of the searching abilities of the Index will be included.

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